

**ROYAL HOLLOWAY  
[UNIVERSITY OF LONDON]**

# **Radicalism Unveiled**

## **A study of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain**

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This thesis has been submitted in accordance with the rules and regulations of the University of London for the assessment of a research degree [doctor of philosophy]

## **Declaration of Authorship**

I *Farhaan Wali* hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Abstract**

My thesis uses an ‘ethnographic’ approach to explore the complexities of radicalisation within Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), a clandestine radical Islamist organisation. At the heart of this thesis is the issue of radicalisation: that is, how some young British Muslims become radicalised and why they join HT. After spending several years interacting with HT radicals, I was able to interpret their social world, enabling me to map out some of the personal trajectories into the group. There appears to be a reciprocal relationship between the radical and the social field that provides a pretext for radicalisation. My reference points were several powerful and insightful biographical accounts of members of HT. I chose these case histories, while interacting with HT members in their natural settings, because they exemplify some important theoretical points and provided a rich source of narrative concerning the pathway into Islamic radicalism. The results of my research indicated that common traits existed in certain individuals, especially prior to joining HT. I identified a host of recurring characteristics amongst most of the respondents. Activists were greatly influenced by, and matured in reaction to, adverse social interactions experienced during their early life cycle development. Members had not formed stable connections with their social environments, which would suggest that respondents’ current identities are the outcome of a failure to integrate within the social context. In this respect, the members needed the group to gain a sense of belonging. Also, HT has managed to attract a disproportionate number of middle-class recruits. This unbalanced stratification has resulted in the emergence of a homogeneous sub-group, which is uniformly represented by young, middle-class, South Asians. Therefore, the process of radicalisation within HT has distinct psychological and sociological characteristics that make it definable: a UK member profile can be formulated, defining the key features before and after radicalisation.

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## **Chapter One:**

### **Contextualising Radicalisation: A Study of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain**

Hizb ut-Tahrir<sup>1</sup> (henceforth, HT), a radical fringe group, has managed to inspire countless young people in Britain to turn away from the bedrock principles of this country, infusing them with religious fanaticism.<sup>2</sup> For over three decades HT has operated relatively unchallenged within British society, yet fairly little has been published about how this movement evolved and why its appeal among some young Muslims continues to grow. The rise of global terrorism, particular in the wake of 9/11, promoted fierce scrutiny of the Muslim community here in the UK. However, heightened security measures and stricter legislation did not prevent four home-grown terrorists from killing and injuring hundreds in Britain's largest terror attack. Unsurprisingly, radicalisation has taken centre stage. Tony Blair, in the aftermath of the 7/7 bombings, identified young British Muslims as being particularly at risk from radicalisation, a sentiment echoed across media and academic channels alike (The *Guardian*, 10/11/2005). Young British Muslims have been singled out as a problem group, because extremist elements are increasingly gaining a foothold among their disgruntled ranks, making it even more important to understand their needs. Given this concern, I chose to study HT, because it is vital to discover why some young people are attracted to the organisation.

#### **1.1 Background to Research**

I would like to start by stating my motivation to study this topic, as this will allow me to present some raw observations, which I made several years ago. On 13 August 1995, at the age of sixteen, I attended a rally in Trafalgar Square. I did not know at the time of the storm that such an event would trigger, nor could I have predicted the social upheaval that would result from it. The '*Rally for Islam*', as it was entitled by the organisers, was a pioneering event.<sup>3</sup> Surprisingly I witnessed the existence of different, and to some extent conflicting,

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<sup>1</sup> According to Hizb ut-Tahrir's official manifesto, the group is defined as an 'Islamic party that was formed in 1953 [by Taqiuddin an-Nabhani in the West Bank] with the objective of working to re-establish the Islamic way of life and to carry Islam to mankind. This work embodies striving to establish the Khilafah (Islamic State) system in an Islamic country' (Anon 2000, p.76). Refer to chapter three for insight into HT's origins, ideology and methodology (see chapter 3, p. 72).

<sup>2</sup> Religious fanaticism, as Steffen (2007, p. 81) describes, 'invokes the idea of ultimacy'. This allows religiously inspired activists to attach an overvalued meaning to actions within the frame of religious practice and belief.

<sup>3</sup> The '*Rally for Islam*' was organised by *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (HT).

identities of young Muslims. In particular, these were well educated British-born Muslims, from similar ethnic and socio-religious backgrounds. Yet they consciously appeared to reject all aspects of Western civilisation as morally corrupt and inherently wrong. What stood out with significant clarity was the apparent re-structuring of identities into a single religious perspective, which appeared to be inspired by a collective group identity. This perceived homogeneous identity appeared to melt the individual identities into a collective one, embracing the different types of identity among the spectators. I was shocked by the great devotion shown by these young Muslims to religion, especially as I was raised in a secular household, making this difficult to understand. In my encounters with other young Muslims, I perceived them to be thoroughly integrated into British society. It was this contrast that provoked in me a great deal of interest in understanding the processes involved in the making of a radical identity.

## **1.2 Contextualising Knowledge: My Journey In and Out of HT**

When I began my research, it became apparent that I was setting out to generate knowledge and insight of a social reality that I had already experienced in my youth. For this reason, I had a set of subjective assumptions about the radicalisation process, as I had already experienced HT radicalisation. So, in essence my investigation of HT was not starting from scratch, but rather from pre-existing knowledge. It became clear that I could not avoid using my own personal experiences of HT within the research, and thus I needed to identify a way of utilizing this experience rather than pretending it did not happen. I decided to validate my analytical approach through the use of feminist methodology, as this would enable me to constantly compare my research with my own experience as a member of HT and share it with the respondents. In particular, ‘conscious partiality’, as articulated by Mies (1983), stood out as a key way to maintain a real and flexible counterbalance between object and subject, which I did not want to separate in an artificial manner. In this respect, I was able to identify with HT activists, as a hallmark of feminist methodology is the ‘continual testing of the plausibility’ of the research against one’s own experiences (Parlee 1979, p. 130). In other words, as someone who has experienced HT radicalisation, I am also my own source of knowledge. As du Bois (1983, p. 111) explained, the centrality of experience means the knower is part of the matrix of what is known. The process of ‘partial identification’ with HT activists made it necessary to move away from ‘value-free objectivity’ as a methodological starting point (Mies 1983, p. 123). This is because I cannot simply assume

ignorance of those being studied, and regard them simply as objects, especially since this would deny my own experiences of HT membership.

Before I delve into my research, I want to contextualise my motivation for conducting this study by drawing upon some of my own experiences as a former member of HT. My early youth was greatly shaped by my feelings of social dislocation. In particular, I struggled to construct a coherent identity during my adolescence. I tried to develop a position that would relate my teenage life to what I had experienced before, in an effort to gain meaning. I was raised in a very secular household, in fact, religiosity was not emphasised in any way. As I matured, I could not develop a unified understanding about all the diverse aspects of my life. Religion and ethnicity were disconnected from my social identity, preventing me from establishing a unified identity. Also, I found it difficult to make sense of my ethnicity, especially since I lived in a predominantly white area. Despite rejecting my ethnicity, I still felt socially dislocated from the white working class friends I had made at secondary school. There were two reasons for this sense of exclusion. Firstly, I was raised in a middle class household, which brought me into conflict with my white working class counterparts, especially as I struggled to relate to their social world. Secondly, despite gaining some degree of acceptance amongst my white friends, I could not fully overcome their negative perception of belonging to a different ethnic group. This consequently reinforced within me the sense that my identity was artificial.

At college I was confronted, for the first time, with a multicultural environment, which to some degree forced me to re-evaluate my negative stereotypes about race and ethnicity.<sup>4</sup> This new social situation allowed me to re-invent myself; however, it was extremely intimidating and overwhelming. I felt isolated and slightly insecure, so I went in search of the ‘familiar’.<sup>5</sup> Thus, I came into contact with HT recruiters when I started to attend Friday Prayers, and they introduced me to Islamic radicalism. I had never considered myself connected to a global community and thus I was never emotionally moved by the plight of Muslims. However, this changed when I was exposed to the rhetoric of HT. I slowly began to think in terms of ‘us and them’. At this point my identity was struggling to adjust, because the new ideas being offered to me were impossible to work into a smooth and consistent whole. HT rhetoric projected a homogenous identity – one is Muslim and not British or

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<sup>4</sup> I attended Hammersmith and West London College from 1996 to 1998.

<sup>5</sup> According to Wolf (2008), homogenous peer group structures provide individuals with safe social settings, drawing people who often share similar social characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and religion.

Pakistani. However, I considered my identity evenly distributed, even when I became a member, it was a mix of positions, but this caused immense internal conflict.<sup>6</sup>

After several years of wrestling with my own contradictions, I decided to join the group. This was not a free choice; significant coercion was used in order to manipulate me into joining the organisation. Although, there was no physical pressure, the coercion was clear if you did not join HT then you were sinful and God would condemn you to the pits of hell for an eternity.<sup>7</sup> By virtue of ignorance, I was placed in a state of guilt for not working for the party aim, and thus I felt compelled to join. After a lengthy delay, I was placed into a Halaqah (private study circle) with six other individuals and a Mushrif (Teacher) was appointed to indoctrinate us into the party culture. This is considered a key stage and an instrumental part of group radicalisation. During this period, intellectual pressure is applied, forcing the novice to bend towards group expectation. In particular, the Mushrif was very keen to establish a joint construction of reality, amongst us, in order to create a new cognitive perspective. The Halaqah provided a conceptual framework, with which connections had to be made to our own social realities. To remove extreme individual differences and independent thought the Mushrif forces novices to agree with and carry the ideas presented in Halaqah. The novice is seen as intellectually inferior, especially if he or she displays independent thinking. In my Halaqah, I remember that most of the novices conformed to the Mushrif's judgements in order not to appear different. Although, this alignment of ideas is consciously arrived at, it does denote the acceptance of influence.

The party rhetoric, as cited in countless publications, has stated that the Mabda (ideology) itself to the exclusion of anything else is the basis of organising and mobilising the fraternity. In reality, this is not true, as I experienced. HT enforced ideology onto its members, demanding they obey the commands of the party hierarchy. When I became a member, I wrote a letter to the then Amir, Abdul-Qadeem Zullum, asking him about the limits of the party's authority. According to Zullum, 'it is wajib [obligatory] on the member to obey his Masool in all circumstances except if the Masool requests a haraam [forbidden] action is clear that it is haraam e.g. leaving a Fard or doing a haraam such as Zina [adultery], drinking alcohol etc.' (Answer and Question, 2002). This clearly indicates the party

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<sup>6</sup> My internal conflicts seemed partly connected to a '*dual ideological framework*'. In theory, I created a hybrid of ideological ideals, which became assimilated into my identity structure while living in a secular environment (Refer to Appendix VI: Dual Ideological Framework, p. 287)

<sup>7</sup> Refer to chapter four (p. 129) for eschatological aspect of HT recruitment.

authority has wide reaching influence and control, which is applied at the discretion of the hierarchy.

When the novice begins to convey the thoughts of HT effectively, as if they were his own, then he is considered for membership. However, the novice must show desire for membership by imposing himself on the organisation, which serves as the first indicator for their readiness. During this period, I remember that novices competed with each other to gain the recognition of members. At the time, this staged rivalry provoked some controversy among the novices, as they questioned the morality of such a policy. Senior members felt it was totally acceptable for novices 'to compete in this fashion for good deeds' (Faheem, Member). However, the atmosphere became rather polluted by individuals trying to outdo others, but for the hierarchy it showed psychological dependency for HT and a desire for membership.

I recall being summoned, without any explanation, on an early Sunday morning by a senior member. I arrived at the location to find several members already present, among them was the *Naqib* (area leader) and *Masool* (local leader). To my surprise, they offered me membership into HT, which I reluctantly accepted. Jalauddin Patel, who was the *Naqib* of West London at the time, explained that in order to become a member, I must take *al-Qasm* (the Oath). In fact, the swearing of the oath is a requirement for all prospective members, as to be assured of his sincerity and loyalty. After a few weeks, I soon realised the full ramifications of the oath, which in reality meant I belonged to HT. However, I do not believe my personal identity gave way completely to the group identity. When I was exposed to group pressure, for example, I realised that in public situations I conformed to HT. However, privately I disagreed with the group.<sup>8</sup> As a member, I found it impossible to operate without independent thought and free will. As I became submerged in party activism, my concerns heightened. Consequently, I broke party protocol and started to voice my concerns openly. Initially, I tried to create a conflict among the majority by challenging their norms, but I found it difficult to provide an alternative norm for them to consider because they only referred to HT ideology.

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<sup>8</sup> I began to question the nature of HT ideology, especially after the first year of my politics and philosophy degree which exposed me to alternative modes of thinking and ideology. In essence, I lost my initial fascination with HT ideology.

I started to question the coercive nature of HT, as Masools seemed to operate with impunity. Moreover, because I challenged the party leadership concerning its immoral practices, I was subjected to an investigation. The findings of the investigation required I fully comply with the UK branch. In order to assess my loyalty, the leadership informed me ‘the Masool has the power to prevent any member from contacting his friends if the Masool thinks this will cause harm to the party’. This allowed HT to control my interactions, especially with other members and it prevented me from contacting other Islamic scholars. The leadership issued a final warning:

...he must completely abstain from any violations or anything that affects the party or its thoughts and that he must adhere completely to the party, its thoughts and have complete trust in the party, its thoughts and its Masools. And if he does not adhere to all of this then he should be informed of his ‘ihmaal taam’ [complete removal].

I refused to comply with this request and subsequently was dismissed from HT.<sup>9</sup> Although, this is a short glimpse into my narrative with HT, it does show that I experienced huge social change. In particular, I struggled to blend and mix different identity-types together into a complete whole, which initially pulled me towards HT radicalism. Within HT my identity was totally refashioned. Even though, the sense of belonging I attained in HT overshadowed other social attachments, it was not anchored by ideology. In fact, I had little connection to HT ideology; instead I was attracted by the homogenous nature of the organisations fraternity. The members emerged from social realities and backgrounds that were very similar to mine, but after I left HT, I wanted to know whether these young people were drawn to the group by similar motivations. On the surface, HT activists appear driven by one single overriding variable, namely ideology, but I wanted to go much deeper.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, I sought to contextualise HT membership. This meant giving voice to HT narratives in a way that would allow me to understand the changing experiences and worldviews of HT activists, what they saw as important, and how they dissected their past and present experiences.

### **1.3 Framing the Research Problem**

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<sup>9</sup> My departure from HT did not greatly hinder my subsequent fieldwork, as I was still regarded as an insider by most rank and file members. However, I did experience problems with the party leadership, who remained sceptical of my motives and were not prepared to participate in the study.

<sup>10</sup> Refer to footnote 14, p. 17.

My research began by conducting a review of the literature, focusing on older and more recent works on the topic of Islamic radicalism. I initially tried to locate these sources with standard techniques, but I found that this produced far too many results. It was therefore necessary to narrow the search parameters. I needed to identify the contributions which were considered to be the main works on the study of Islamic radicalism.<sup>11</sup> However, I encountered a major problem in narrowing my search; it became apparent that social theorists did not agree on a precise conceptual definition of ‘Islamic activism’ (Esposito, 1992; Said, 1997). After extensive analysis, I was able to list the concepts that were most frequently cited by social scientists. The most frequently used terms appeared to be ‘Islamism’ (Roy, 1994; Kepel, 2002; Denoëux 2002), ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ (Voll, 1982; Martin and Appleby, 1993; Burgat, 1988), ‘radical Islam’ (Sivan, 1985; Carré and Dumont, 1985) and ‘terrorism’ (Crenshaw, 1981; Hoffman, 1998; Post, 1991; Crayton, 1983; Jenkins, 1979). This allowed me to identify the core works on the subject, providing a map of the relevant studies in the literature. However, it became apparent that there was considerable overlap between each conceptual definition, which presented a number of problems.

Firstly, Islamic radicalism had not been adequately defined, causing immense confusion in its application and usage. According to Patel (2007, p. 42), Islamic radicalism relates to ‘people seeking a fundamental change in the present political order’ in response to the Western influence in Muslim countries. This definition of Islamic radicalism is not sufficiently differentiated from other concepts. Defining the history of the term in order to place it within a given context could have done this. In chapter two, I will clarify what Islamic radicalism means, offering a historical explanation for its emergence and usage as a distinct term. Secondly, Islamic radicalism was merged in the literature with other phenomena, most notably with terrorism. Crenshaw (1981, pp. 7-8) believes that terrorism is not committed by individuals, but by radical Islamic groups ‘who reach collective decisions based on commonly held beliefs’. She fails to define Islamic radicalism as a distinct process, reducing it instead to an over-generalised form of terrorism. This constitutes a very incomplete and inadequate way of representing Islamic radicalism. Thirdly, the antecedents of Islamic radicalism had not been explored in its own right, therefore it was not possible to explain the processes involved in the making of a radical, especially in a group context. Crayton (1983, p. 37), for example, asserts that Islamic radicalism occurs in the context of ‘narcissistic injury’. It is very difficult to accept this position, because here Islamic

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<sup>11</sup> Refer to chapter 2 (pp. 46-54) for definition of Islamic radicalism, Islamism, Islamic terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism.



radicalism is seen as an internal expression of uncontrollable mental processes. The verification and reliability of data is crucial when constructing a hypothesis, yet Crayton (1983) does not substantiate his theory with detailed biographical data. This is because biographical data on Islamic groups is not easily obtainable, forcing theorists to make generalisations which cannot be tested by empirical methods. My task was now to expand my literature search to consider Islamic radicalisation, but finding an approach that could explain this phenomenon was not easy.

The literature was brimming with virtually endless accounts of the causes of radicalisation.<sup>12</sup> The vast majority of theories tended to fall into one of three categories: those concerned with the reason for radicalisation (Esposito, 1992; Fukuyama, 2002; Huntington, 1995; Roy, 2002); those concerned with how radicalisation worked (Crayton, 1983; Crenshaw, 1981; Jenkins, 1979; Post, 1990); and those concerned with the effects of radicalisation on identity (Abbas, 2007; Halliday, 1992; Jacobson, 1998; Lewis, 2008; Raza, 1991). My preliminary survey of the literature indicated a number of shortcomings. Firstly, these contributions failed to develop a coherent relationship between theory and empirical research. For instance, Roy (2004, p. 1) argues that the radicalisation of young Muslims is a ‘pathological outcome of the Westernisation of Islam’. Roy, like many other researchers, could not explain why some individuals became radicalised while others did not. Secondly, the majority of scholars did not substantiate their respective theories with case studies showing how individuals become radicalised. Post (1991), for example, believes Islamic radicals exhibit a mental disorder, yet he could not support this assertion with any biographical data. Thirdly, an effective methodology had not been established in relation to the radicalisation of British Muslims. For instance, Jacobson (1998) adopts a structural explanation of British Muslim identity, but she fails to understand the relationship between increased religiosity and the impact of Islamic radicalism on Muslim identities. Fourthly, no clear definition of radicalisation could be found in the literature, making it difficult to frame in a broader context. In chapter two, I attempt to define Islamic radicalisation in order to distinguish it from similar phenomena such as religious conversion. This was necessary since the literature has limited explanatory accounts of the meaning of radicalisation, especially as a distinct process of Muslim engagement.

#### **1.4 Defining HT Radicalisation**

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<sup>12</sup> See chapter two (pp. 46-54) for an overview of key concepts and theories related to Islamic radicalism.

Within the social sciences a robust debate has been underway since 11 September 2001 concerning the causes and consequences of radicalisation. In a British context, however, the debate has been focusing on Muslim identity and the role of radical Islamist groups. Janet Williams, the commanding officer of the Muslim Contact Unit (Metropolitan Police Special Branch), declared that ‘radicalisation’ was the single biggest threat to national security (BBC, 22/06/2005). Tony Blair, shortly after the London Bombings (2005), proscribed a number of radical Islamist movements.<sup>13</sup> This was designed to tackle the processes of radicalisation that appeared to be taking place among young British Muslims. Within this context, I seek to explore the processes of radicalisation, focusing on the issues that have allowed HT to radicalise some young Muslims in Britain.

A few years ago, I attended a panel discussion on the broad issue of Islam and the West, at a community centre in Tooting, South London. Taji Mustafa, the media representative of HT in Britain, asked the audience, ‘When exactly did ‘radicalisation’ become a dirty word?’ He argued that, ‘what the government maligns as radicalisation is in fact politicisation... Young Muslims are taking an interest in global politics and getting engaged in non-violent discussion and campaigning, which is surely a good thing?’ This attempt to revise the parameters of ‘radicalisation’ is a strong indicator of radical groups, like HT, trying to be seen as legitimate political activists. After the gathering, Adam (member, 29) suggested it was a ‘government trap to redefine Islamic politics’. As a former member, I was not surprised to hear points of view like this, as activists are trained to defend the party. In particular, I recall attending a member’s meeting after the 9/11 terror attacks, in which the UK leadership instructed the fraternity to ‘manufacture positive and negative stereotypes’ in order to dilute the threat HT pose. Ultimately, the aim of such actions was to avoid any form of legal sanction against the party in the UK. In the end, however, these comments illustrate the need to define ‘radicalisation’.

In the course of this study, I have explored many different ways of framing the subject of radicalisation<sup>14</sup>, and I believe social psychology is a good starting point. This is because

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<sup>13</sup> Al-Ghurabaa and the Saved Sect became the first UK-based Islamist groups to be banned under laws outlawing the glorification of terrorism (BBC, 17/07/2006).

<sup>14</sup>The study of groups has always been rooted in two distinct fields of study: social psychology and political sociology. Although, I have sought to contextualise HT radicalisation within a social psychology and cognitive framework, it is worth noting that political sociology can offer perspective on the mobilisation of HT. Speaking from a narrow perspective, some political sociologists reduce the rise of movements, like HT, to their ideology (Bendix and Lipset 1966, p. 10). At a basic level, HT is a political party that is stimulated by a distinct

social psychology, as can be inferred from its description, combines the ways in which both social and mental processes determine identity (Rom and Lamb, 1986). Radicalisation, in a social psychology context, refers to a considerable departure from traditional ideals, constituting a full and real change at the root of the personality (Poppstone and McPherson, 1988). This definition offers a good starting point, but I need to amend this definition because it is incomplete and far too general in its scope and application. For instance, the same definition of radicalisation could be given to those who undergo a religious conversion. According to Rambo (cited in Eliade 1987, p. 77), there are two transformations that are central to the conversion process: ‘total change in all other aspects of life, and a new awareness of the well-being of others’. In general, the act of religious conversion might have a similar end result to radicalisation, but these two forms of identity change are not identical.

Despite accumulating a vast array of new data regarding HT members and their backgrounds, it is still extremely difficult to pinpoint precisely why some young Muslims join HT, since radicalisation is a ‘complex process that does not follow a linear path’ (Pargeter 2006, p. 737). Therefore, if HT radicalisation takes place amongst a disproportionate number of young middle class Asians, then I must understand the trajectories of these individuals and sketch out commonalities. The evidence for this will be shown in the course of following chapters. My immediate concern here is to provide a definition of HT radicalisation before any serious study of the topic can be made. Firstly, I prefer to use the idiom *HT radicalisation*, instead of more generic terms like *Islamic radicalisation*. This is because from social constructivist theory<sup>15</sup>, ‘framing’ of radicalisation draws upon a collective phenomenon that is essentially contextualised to two key agents: the group and the individual (Snow et al., 1986). Thus, the definition of HT radicalisation I have

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ideology, which establishes a scheme for how society should function (refer to chapter three, pp. 86-94). Its political ideology encapsulates two elements: (1) its political aim, which is the reestablishment of the Islamic State; and (2) its method, which relates to how it will establish its aim in society. Political ideology is an important factor in group mobilisation. Capoccia (2007, p. 33), in his seminal piece ‘Defending Democracy’, illustrates the influential role ideology plays amongst political actors and institutions. The analysis offered by Capoccia (2007, p. 291) allows one to understand why political actors mobilise against institutions, often moderating their ideological disposition once in political office. Therefore, political sociology can offer theoretical explanation into how and why HT formed. Taji-Farouki (1996), for example, uses a political-historical approach to explore the ideological formation of HT. In her study, she is greatly preoccupied with explaining the ideological undercurrents of the group and its structural nature. However, she does not contextualise HT’s growth in Britain and does not explain why HT has mobilised a homogenous subgroup of young British Muslims. This intellectual puzzle cannot be explained by a study of HT ideology and aims, as direct reference needs to be made to its members – addressing why they were drawn to the movement.

<sup>15</sup> Social constructivist theory is grounded within the sociological school of thought, it relates to the mechanisms individual’s experience when participating in group settings (Greene and Kropf 2009, p. 123).

crafted can be separated into three distinct parts: (1) a new cognitive perspective is engineered that is (2) internalised, so that (3) a new collective HT identity is created (fostering a feeling of empowerment and solidarity).

#### **1.4.1 New Cognitive Perspective**

The most fundamental part of HT radicalisation is the deep process of indoctrination, which provides a new cognitive perspective with which to view the social world. At this point, I want to briefly look at cognitive theory, in order to clarify its meaning in the context of radicalisation. Social cognitive theory defines behaviour as a reciprocal interaction between an internal emotional state and triggers that are available in the environment (Bandura, 1977). Social psychologists have long tried to identify the key cognitive and motivational changes that occur within individuals when they become group members. The radical group is the primary setting for the creation of a new cognitive perspective, because members are willing to ‘bend towards group expectation’ (Newcomb 1952, p. 221). This explanation shows the strong interplay between individuals and groups, which enables the group to change the cognitive perspective of members. Wiktorowicz (2005, p. 19) in her study of Al-Muhajiroun, now disbanded, discovered contact with the radical group often required a ‘cognitive opening’. This cognitive opening is a gateway to the wholesale transformation of previously held beliefs. According to Wiktorowicz (2005, p. 20), this is often inspired by ‘identity crisis’, which renders the recipient more susceptible to radical ideology. Thus, early fascination with the radical group often leads to a ‘cognitive opening’, activating a process of ‘religious seeking’ (Wiktorowicz 2005, p. 19). The triggers for this opening are multifaceted and greatly hinge on the experiences of the individual, making them vulnerable to the movement.<sup>16</sup>

This view of cognitive change in perception within a group setting has also been referred to as a new shared group norm, and involves members privately and publicly adopting this as their own choice (Appelbaum, Duneir and Giddens 2009). As a result, individuals are categorised, and placed in an in-group. This membership is then internalised by members as an aspect of their identity (Tajfel, 1981). In this respect, the basis for a member’s self-definition changes within the group, allowing his or her personal identity to be submerged

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<sup>16</sup> The connection between ‘cognitive openings’ and ‘identity crisis’ is complex, since crisis can take multiple and diverse forms. In chapters 4, 5 and 6 I observe how social triggers like racism prompted HT members to re-evaluate their cognitive outlook.

into a collective identity (Post, 1991). According to Triplett (1898), moving from a state of social exclusion to a group setting can drastically diminish one's sense of individuality. Similarly, Newcomb (1943) found that increased interaction with other members prompts individuals to change their attitudes in accordance with the group consensus. In other words, for the cognitive transformation to take effect the individual must align his viewpoint with HT. As Wiktorowicz (2005, p. 16) explains:

‘The movement’s schemata must resonate with an individual’s own interpretive framework to facilitate participation. The alignment is contingent on fidelity with cultural narratives, symbols, and identities; the reputation of the frame articulator and consistency of the frame; the frame’s empirical credibility, and the personal salience of the frame for potential participant. Movements must compete with frames proffered by governments, counter-movements and intra-movement rivals’.

In a group setting, members come to understand their social world by way of shared perspectives and representations. According to Snow (1986), cognitive change provides a framework for understanding the external world, by rendering a situation meaningful. At this stage of the HT radicalisation process, an individual aligns their cognitive perspective with that of the group. This alignment acts as a unifying force, moulding the individual’s ideas and actions into synchronization with HT collective identity (Noakes, 2000). This makes the cognitive process an active force in the construction of one’s reality (Jones, 1989). At the heart of this cognitive process is the making sense of the ‘other’. A set of processes are undergone through which individuals are reconfigured and various forms of ‘us and them’ are constructed (Bandura, 1990; Bar-Tal, 1998). Some social theorists believe that this occurs in individuals who have suffered some form of emotional damage, usually at the hands of the ‘other’, during early life (Freud, 1930; Knutson, 1973). In theory, the individual then internalises these representations in their actions and responses. Forging a new cognitive essence requires a change in the way an individual thinks and acts, until he or she becomes a walking manifestation of the radical identity.

A good preliminary illustration of this cognitive transformation is Mohammed, a British born Muslim from London.<sup>17</sup> I knew Mohammed for many years and spoke to him regularly in a casual fashion. There appeared to be one primary social trigger that influenced his

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<sup>17</sup> Mohammad (actual name changed for privacy) is a 26 year old HT novice. In chapter 4 more detailed case studies will be utilised.

newfound cognitive perspective and his resulting radicalisation into HT. Firstly he seemed to develop a greater malevolence towards British society. I recall running into Mohammad several days after a brutal assault had taken place in the local area, in which a gang of white youths had attacked two Asian youths. This rather unsettling episode played a key role in his cognitive transformation. In particular, he ranted about the evil nature of British society and people. In the midst of this discussion, I noticed that he used derogatory terms in describing non-Muslims, something he never did before. Several months after the incident, I bumped into Mohammad outside his local Mosque where he was distributing HT paraphernalia. I was rather surprised by this and asked why he had joined HT. He explained: ‘it is *Fard* (duty) to work for Allah’s *deen* (religion) on this earth...and to expose the Kufar system’. Though a very simplistic illustration, it does exemplify how Mohammad’s cognitive perspective had been radically reformatted, internalised and embedded within a new radical HT identity.

### **1.4.2 Internalisation**

Internalisation is a general term for the process of incorporating concepts and behaviours into one’s self, and embedding features of the external world into the internal world (Meissner, 1981; Scharff, 1992; Wallis, 2001). This ‘internal world’ is strongly influenced by group involvement, which actively imposes constraints on behaviour and defines the external world. These representations of the self-exist in relation to other objects, which may be external or internal (Fairbairn, 1952; Winnicott, 1969). In other words, perceptions of ‘others’ become rooted into one’s own behaviour (Heider, 1958). In regards to the radicalisation process, when a novice<sup>18</sup> enters the group setting in HT, his or her perceptions of others change in accordance with HT’s perceptions, allowing him or her to internalise the collective HT identity. This internalisation of ideas and beliefs actively occurs through the culturing process, which completely alters the disposition and creates group loyalty. For instance, a college teacher in London told me, during the 7 July remembrance ceremony, some of his Muslim students made excessive physical gestures throughout the minute of silence. When he asked them what they were doing, they replied no remembrance was afforded those Muslims killed in Iraq. I later discovered young HT members had orchestrated what they described as a ‘non-verbal protest’, which was sanctioned by the group hierarchy. By adopting a new cognitive perspective, one internalises a new set of beliefs and attitudes, replacing the old perspective. As Wiktorowicz (2005, p. 167) discovered from his respondents, ‘the only way to achieve salvation and enter Paradise on

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<sup>18</sup> Within HT the terms ‘*daris*’ and ‘*shab*’ are used interchangeably to describe new recruits or novices.

Judgment Day is to follow the movement's prescribed strategy'. This transformative phase is integral to HT radicalisation, as it infuses the individual to the group.

### **1.4.3 New Collective HT Identity and Empowerment**

HT is a significant actor in the conditioning of a new cognitive and behavioural disposition, especially as it is the sole interpreter of the radical ideology. Within the group setting, the novice is indoctrinated into thinking in accordance with the group perspective. This is manifested in a new way of viewing the social world, which may contradict established convention (Hassan, 2001). Thus, the first significant aspect of HT radicalisation relates to the establishment of a new cognitive perspective that reflects the group identity. According to Sherif and Sherif (1969, p. 252), the group setting has a powerful influence on individual behaviour, justifying the 'in-group's negative opinions of the out-group'. Similarly, David and Turner (1999) argue that in a group setting people tend to 'depersonalise' and 'stereotype' themselves and other people. Consequently, HT members focus more on the similarities between themselves, which makes it easier to impose differences between them and the 'others'. More importantly, the new cognitive perspective, gained in a group environment, spawns greater self-esteem and empowerment (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Empowerment is an essential part of the radicalisation process, increasing the ideological strength of individuals; the empowered develop a greater sense of confidence in their own abilities.<sup>19</sup> In chapter four, I look at the real-world impact of HT radicalisation on identity, as the individual is transformed to incorporate the radical identity. In the context of HT, for example, the member must 'adopt the opinions of the group, its thoughts and its constitution by word and deed' (Anon 1998, p. 1). This means that anyone who becomes a member of HT has to pledge an oath to adopt everything the group calls for even if he or she is not convinced of some of it (Anon 1998, p. 2).

Mohammad was not politically orientated, especially during his teenage years, believing instead Muslims should concentrate on spiritual affairs. However, his encounters with HT provided him with a new cognitive perspective that gave him a greater impetus to engage in political activism. However, this radical change should not be confused with politicisation, because the latter pertains to a social, economic or legal issue that has become political in nature, making people become active over that issue, but not making them seek to change

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<sup>19</sup> The sense of empowerment gained from membership with HT essentially enables young Muslims, who have become greatly disaffected by British society, to find belonging amongst similar individuals.

the whole social order. In contrast, HT radicalisation is stimulated by a cognitive change at the root of one's identity, which creates a new social perspective. For instance, this newfound outlook inspired powerful emotions in Mohammad, most notably deep frustration in not finding a place within British society. On the other hand, an individual who becomes frustrated could just as well become involved with non-radical politics. To choose to become a HT radical requires sufficient motivation.<sup>20</sup> However motivation is still not enough. The radical would also need the opportunity to join HT, and be accepted (Shaw, 1986).<sup>21</sup> As Wiktorowicz (2005, p. 127) describes, before the group can reformat the viewpoint of the perspective recruit, a 'cognitive opening' must be made in which the recruit is prepared to expose themselves to the ideology of the group. At this stage, HT seek to build a connection between the social problems experienced by the recruit and the solutions group membership will generate for them in their social life (e.g. empowerment). This allows the individual to derive their sense of identity, at least in part, from the collective group identity (Knutson, 1973). The group is a powerful force that imposes conformity, which in turn assimilates the novice as a fully functioning member. Taken as a whole, the theory of HT radicalisation will encompass individual and collective life, identifying the shifting patterns of behaviour that take place at the root of a personality.

#### 1.4.4 Agency and Ideology: Differing Modes of Agency in HT

A large part of my fieldwork on HT radicalisation entailed accumulating personal narratives. Abdul, Tariq, and many other HT activists shared their past and present experiences and narratives with me. Many recurring themes emerged from these personal narratives, but one particularly vivid and consistent issue emphasised by most, if not all the respondents, concerned 'agency'. Although, I talk about agency in chapter five, it is worth prompting an introductory discussion about agency here that explains its theoretical framing within the spectre of HT radicalisation. At the heart of the debate about HT radicalisation is whether or not HT activists are free agents in the radicalisation process. According to Sen (1985, p. 204), agency relates to 'what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important'. In this sense, agency is general, applying to individuals in different social settings. I do not wish to get bogged down further by trying to

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<sup>20</sup> According to a *Policy Memorandum on Radicalism and Radicalisation*, issued by the Dutch Ministry of Justice, two elements are integral to the radicalisation process: (1) individual experiences (e.g. identity related dilemmas), and (2) contact with radical agents (usually the group). These two interconnected elements often stimulate the radicalisation process.

<sup>21</sup> In chapter 4 (p. 112) the role of peer group associations will be explored in the trajectory of HT recruits.



conceptualise agency in more depth, as there is little agreement amongst scholars on this debate, as human ‘agency’ is a highly complex phenomenon (Mahmood, 2005). Instead, I want to examine the interconnection between HT ideology and agency.

Dreze and Sen (1995, p. 104) believe that participation within groups is a direct expression of human agency. The agency for HT activists relates to their capacity to make choices and to implement those choices in reality. In other words, HT activists make their decision to join the group; it is an act of a free agent, who can leave at any point. However, as the case studies in chapter four will illustrate, structural forces play a key role in influencing HT activist choices. HT recruiters, for example, often argue that joining HT is a religious obligation in which one has no choice but to comply with this religious commandment.<sup>22</sup> In reality, structural strains do not exclusively determine a member’s pathway, despite the activist being contained within a system that imposes a worldview onto them, because they control their choices. Therefore, a balance between structure and agency exists (Bourdieu, 1990). So, a HT activist may be influenced by structural forces, but they are capable of removing themselves from the social structures they are embedded within.<sup>23</sup> In particular, as the narratives in chapter four will show, the recruits took time grappling with their decision to join HT, and in some cases members choose to leave the group.

Within HT, however, joint forms of agency are often constructed, in which a member builds his or her identity in conformity with HT ideology.<sup>24</sup> According to Allport (1924, p. 6), ‘there is no psychology of groups which is not essentially and entirely a psychology of individuals’. However, HT is more than the sum of its parts (e.g. the members that make it up). For instance, the group, in one sense, is nothing but the members who have joined, but it is also much more than the aggregate of individuals. Through their interactions over time, their social structures, rules, roles and shared understandings are collectively created, and these in turn shape members’ responses. This view presents a problem for determining the extent to which the properties of HT membership can be reduced to individual agency. Tajfel (1981) provides some insights into this problem by making a critical distinction between agency and group identities. According to Tajfel (1981), social identity is influenced by a

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<sup>22</sup> Refer to chapter four, p. 129.

<sup>23</sup> According to Giddens (1984), the ‘duality of structure’ means social structure is the process and the end result of social action. In other words, human agents are embedded within structural systems (e.g. norms or culture etc), but the agent is capable of consciously changing his or her seeding in the structural makeup of society.

<sup>24</sup> For further discussion regarding HT ideology refer to chapter three, pp. 86-94.

continuum of interaction, which, on one end, is governed by the membership of various groups and, at the other, is directed more by human agency.

In this project, I construct a social psychology picture of HT radicalisation, which essentially reduces the phenomenon of HT recruitment to a specific demographic constituency. Even though the evidence clearly shows that HT is predominately represented by middle class Asians, who share a common set of social experiences and problems, there is a need to consider other variables. In theory, ideology should play an important role in attracting individuals to HT. According to Wilkinson (1974, p. 133), Islamic activism cannot be fully grasped unless one accounts for the development of a radical's ideology, belief and life-style. Activists are seen as free agents, as Crenshaw (1981, p. 10) contends, who act on rational choices. However, Crenshaw (1981, p. 10) believes that terrorism is not committed by individuals, but 'by groups who reach collective decisions based on commonly held beliefs'. This analytical approach tends to reduce the rational characteristics of free agents to the group, as group goals are seen through the narrow lens of collective rationality. This approach ignores the individual, which should be the primary measure of analysis, especially if one seeks to understand why some young Muslims are drawn to HT.

Ideology and agency, if one goes beyond recruitment, should play a role in keeping activists with HT. A salient feature of attachment to HT ideology is the creation of a 'we' versus 'them' dichotomy. From a social context, it is beneficial for people to seek out attachments to groups because groups offer protection in unfamiliar and hostile settings (Darwin, 1998). In this respect, members are drawn to HT to secure specific social needs. Amongst these fundamental needs are recognition, security and identity.<sup>25</sup> During my experience with the group, when the members failed to attain these needs from society, they became frustrated, which in turn caused them to develop a deep psychological need for a sense of belonging. Consequently, within HT, the members swiftly developed a distrust of non-believers and began breeding a hostile identity towards them. According to Dawud (ex-member, 32), 'the members constantly malign the Kufr [non-Muslims], while not understanding that Islam came for the whole of mankind'. By developing an ideology around 'we-ness', a member is made aware that beyond HT is a 'they' that constitutes the dominant culture. This distinction between themselves and the larger society allows HT to shape members' ideologies and identities, which plays a significant role in the very being and functioning of HT. In other

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<sup>25</sup> For further insight, refer chapter four, pp. 113-138.

words, members adjust their sense of identity—their thoughts and behaviours—to match the collectively defined ideology of HT.

When individuals join HT, they belong to the group because they will derive their sense of identity, at least in part, from that group. Also, the majority of HT members whom I observed enhanced their sense of identity by making comparisons with out-groups. In the case of HT, the maintenance of the group's cohesion is achieved through specific internal forces, which create a collective ideology. In particular, I observed four distinct symptoms of an HT group ideology. Firstly, members had unquestioning belief in the moral correctness of the group and ideology. According to Aminur (member, 25), '... the *Hizb* is based on divine text, so the *fikra* [thoughts] and the *tariqa* [methods] are correct, making them irrefutable'. Secondly, HT manufactured negative stereotypes about the out-group. As Fahim (member, 35) commented, 'the *kufar* [non-Muslims] are totally corrupt, shallow and evil ... look at the way they worship celebrities and footballers'. Members are indoctrinated into stereotyping others, especially members of other groups, by focusing on alleged characteristics and ignoring variations. Thirdly, there was strong group pressure towards conformity at every level of the group structure. According to Yemin (ex-member, 40), 'they [HT] train novices to think robotically.... I remember during the sighting of the moon fiasco, members were fully aware that the party had made a mistake, but they followed blindly like sheep, even though the rest of the ummah [community] were telling them they were wrong'. This example also demonstrates how HT protects the group from contrary viewpoints, especially by using self-appointed vanguards. According to one member, 'the party uses people to spy and report on other members, to assess whether they're loyal... they have kangaroo-style courts in which members have to disclose every personal detail, just to fulfil the whim of the leadership'. Fourthly, self-censorship helped ensure that members maintain group loyalty. As one ex-member commented, 'membership is the final stage of radicalisation, because you feel that you cannot live without the group'. The novice develops a strong emotional attachment to the group through indoctrination and institutionalisation, creating ideological dependency. I would like to postpone trying to examine these highly complex processes here, as I explore these issues in greater detail in other chapters.

## **1.5 Contextualising Radicalisation in Britain: The Muslim Community**

Since the September 11 terror attack, a growing body of literature has sprung forth regarding the increase of radicalisation in Great Britain. The contextualisation and framing of the Muslim community in Britain is crucially important, especially if one seeks to understand radicalisation, because each country has unique social properties. A cursory glance at the Muslim community before 2001, before the emergence of radicalisation as a widely accepted phenomenon, will provide a broader historical perspective on the existing literature. I have separated the scholarly literature into two divergent, but inter-connected, historical periods and conceptual themes: (1) the pre-2001 literature; and (2) the post-2001 literature.<sup>26</sup>

### **1.5.1 Pre-2001 Literature: Migration and Settlement**

In order to demystify the complex nature of radicalisation, I must survey the literature on Muslim identity within a British context. There has been substantial research conducted on Muslim experiences and encounters over the past several decades. By looking at the Muslim community from specific historical and contextual frames, I am able to understand the varied experiences of Muslim actors and communities as described in the literature. In the wake of the *Rushdie affair* (1989), the question of Muslim identity started to become a salient issue and generated much debate. From a cursory overview of the large body of literature, it is somewhat clear that concepts and categories of analysis concerning Muslim identity formation are widely contested. In particular, structural forces like religion, class, ethnicity and nationality have been treated as explanatory factors (Jacobson, 1998). However, simplifying the concept of identity-formation into these restrictive parameters does not necessarily explain the emergence of British Muslim identities. The Muslim communities in Britain are greatly influenced by the diversity of migration, which has taken place within a global context. Therefore, it is important to develop a theory of identity that recognises, but does not restrict, the social structures from which young Muslims emerge. In the following sections, I will be reflecting on some of the key literature related to Muslim identity formation.

#### **1.5.1.1 First Generation:**

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<sup>26</sup> To start with, I have focused on the migration experiences and settlement of the first generation from the post-war period. I also explore the regional perspectives on the study of the Muslim community and its development, concentrating particularly on second generation identity formation. The second section provides a brief look at the post 9/11 literature in the United Kingdom.

Anecdotal evidence would suggest the first generation of Muslim migrants appear less inclined towards HT radicalisation, as they have seemingly developed a healthier relationship with the wider society while retaining their ethno-religious identity. Conversely, the offspring of the early settlers seem socially and politically displaced, making them far more susceptible to HT radicalisation. For this reason it is crucial to first consider the writings of theorist's pre-1990, before the emergence of radical actors and groups. This will enable me to gain a broader understanding of the changing social context of migrant identities, providing theoretical insight into the historical processes that have shaped identity issues.

I have identified several useful studies conducted during this particular time period, allowing me to forge three basic conclusions. Firstly, religion was not seen as a salient feature of identity among early Muslim settlers. To begin with, South Asian minorities were often classified into a single racial cluster.<sup>27</sup> Taylor (1962) in his study, *the half-way generation*, made no distinction between the racial and religious cleavages of Asian youth in Newcastle. Similarly, Evens (1971) in his study of young immigrant attitudes isolates the Pakistani racial-group, as being the most introverted. Yet, he neglects the historical influence of religion in the formation of identity amongst his chosen demographic, which he perceived in fixed and settled terms. However, I am not suggesting Muslim identity is constituted by a single definable factor, because a sense of identity is often extracted from multiple sources related to one's group membership.<sup>28</sup> However, social theorists have frequently sought to examine minority identity issues within rigid parameters that emphasise a generic ethnic or racial identity. Treating these dimensions as an explanatory factor neglects the formation of differing perceptions among young Muslims. These features must be assessed in terms of religion, ethnicity, class and nationality, because they are susceptible to historical processes and determine the social context.

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<sup>27</sup> As Rex and Moore (1967) point out, race dominated the discourse about immigrant minorities during the post-war era.

<sup>28</sup> Turner (1987) believes self-concept governs the way individuals view themselves, which he separates into two distinct forms: 'personal identity and social identity'. In his view, personal identity reflects self-descriptions concerning ones individuality, forming distinct behavioural characteristics. In contrast, social identity refers to a category-based perception of an individual that belongs to a group, which enables him or her to derive a sense of identity from that group. Thus, identity is greatly influenced by a member's affiliation to a well-defined and clearly distinct social category. This gives rise to homogenous group behaviour, which produces inter-group favouritism, as members associate themselves with the various common attributes and norms that represent the group.

Secondly, the research provided a skewed portrait of South-Asian homogeneity. In particular, socio-political difficulties were treated as common problems amongst South-Asian communities, with little recognition of ethno-religious multiplicity. Anwar (1982), for instance, writes about the problems South Asians face in adjusting to British society, concentrating particularly on a lack of opportunities and rights. Early theorists were not particularly concerned by religious differences and boundaries, for two possible reasons: Firstly, the actors never actively identified themselves through narrow religious faultlines; and secondly, South Asians initially sought to secure collective interests based on shared ethno-cultural needs (Baumann 1996).<sup>29</sup>

Thirdly, the subject matter concerning identity has been examined in relatively narrow and restrictive terms. This indicates early researcher's never conceptualised religion as a significant factor in fostering identity. However, contemporary literature defines the communities from South Asia as having strong religious links, especially in forming a social identity. Saeed (cited in Ansari 2004, p. 18) discovered 'that a Muslim identity was chosen by double the number of those who chose the Pakistani alternative'. There seems to be a slight inconsistency between the two accounts. Ansari (2004, p. 1) provides an explanation of this discrepancy, as he suggests, the construction of 'British Muslim identities' must be assessed 'within a range of historical perspectives'. In other words, changing historical events and forces greatly influenced the way in which Muslim identity was manufactured. The *Rushdie Affair* (1989), for example, is often cited as a significant turning point in which Muslim actors and groups became deeply animated by the scandal (Lewis 1993, p. 5). The Muslim community as a whole was provoked into a state of unmitigated indignation, as the controversial book *Satanic Verses* was published, which united a community in their absolute condemnation.<sup>30</sup> The scandal exposed the fragile relationship the Muslim community had with the state, and marginalised it further when the demands it made concerning the banning of the book were ignored (Abbas, 2005). In the aftermath of the Rushdie Affair, some elements within the Muslim community sought to preserve cardinal aspects of their religious-cultural beliefs and practices.<sup>31</sup> The rededication to religious

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<sup>29</sup> Racism, housing and education were just some of the common issues and problems that Asian migrants sought to resolve in a collective capacity.

<sup>30</sup> The initial response to *The Satanic Verses* began in a localised fashion, namely with a small demonstration in Bradford. The demonstrations were originally orchestrated by the Bradford Council of Mosques, a body which acted as an 'advocate of Muslim concerns' (Lewis 2002, p. 24).

<sup>31</sup> The British Muslim community is not a homogenous entity. In fact, as Lewis (2002, pp. 153-169) points out, the Rushdie Affair (1989) revealed a spectrum of religious-sectarian differences in beliefs and practices amongst British Muslims (e.g. Barelwi and Deobandi religious split).

identification naturally degraded the augmentation of an Asian identity.<sup>32</sup> This would explain the demise of the 'Asian Youth Movement' in the early 1980s (Lewis 2002, p. 68). According to Ansari (2004, p. 1), British Muslims began to question and debate identity construction after the Rushdie Affair, because they became to be 'imagined as outsiders'.

### **1.5.1.2 The Second Generation: The Salience of *Religion* in Identity Formation**

The radicalisation of some young British Muslims underscores the necessity for better consideration of the tensions and fragilities in young Muslim identity construction. Radical groups, like HT, introduced a radical dimension to Muslim identity development, which sought to contest the legitimacy of British culture. This was made apparent on August 24<sup>th</sup> 2003, when HT arranged a conference entitled: '*British or Muslim*'. The conference consciously sought to circumvent integration by re-structuring Muslim identities into a single collective religious identity. As noted earlier, modern theorists have actively sought to rationalise the seemingly sudden revitalisation of religion as a key marker for Muslim identification (Ballard, 1996; Saeed, 1999; Samad, 1996; Statham, 2003). The socio-political landscape has greatly shifted, especially after the Rushdie Affair and the Gulf War, which widened the labelling of South Asians into specific ethno-religious categories. However, as Hutnik (1985) confirmed in his study of South Asians, eighty per cent of his respondents regarded religious membership an integral part of their identity makeup. This is important because his research was carried out prior to the Rushdie Affair. To explain radicalisation in Britain, I need to explore why some second generation Muslims are turning to religiously laden identities.

From a primordial perspective, the ethno-religious attachments of South Asian Muslims are greatly entangled and cannot be simply removed (Kucukcan, 1999).<sup>33</sup> This implies deep-rooted primordial linkages to kin and religion (Shils, 1957). If these attachments truly exist, as permanent features of human identity, then early Muslim settlers would have imported them from their places of origin (Geertz, 1973). In theory, a sense of belonging is reinforced amongst community members and provides a means to conceive of their identity through sharing a common ethno-religious past. It is somewhat difficult to actualise the primordial approach in totality, since it degrades the social context. For instance, the importation of

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<sup>32</sup> South-Asians have a common linguistic and ethnic bond, but this was eroded as a form of identity.

<sup>33</sup> Islam in contemporary Britain forms a significant source of identity for the Muslim community. 'The Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities' reported that two-thirds of the Pakistani respondent's aged 16-34 stated religion is 'very important' to the way they live their lives ([www.data-archive.ac.uk](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk)).

cultural attachments into a host country needs to be merged with the national identity. The process of synchronising identities can be highly problematic as it is dependent on the actors themselves. Thus, despite some residual linkages to kin and country of origin, religious identity is a fluid and mobile construct. In other words, religious identification becomes active within a given context. Saeed (1999) discovered that younger Muslims preferred to be recognised through multiple identity-types, namely Scottish-Muslim. However, when asked to place these hyphenated formations in order of preference, eighty-one per cent regarded themselves Muslim first. This statistic, though important, slightly underplays Muslim youth identity formation, which I assert is a far more complicated process: one that is constructed through negotiation during different periods of socialisation.

To start with, as Markstrom-Adams (1992, p. 174) contends, identity construction is not merely an individualistic process since it is reliant on ‘family relations, ethnic and racial group membership and religiosity’. These interconnected social threads are significant, as Hayek (1992, p. 12) stipulates, because attachments stem from a ‘tradition of learnt rules of conduct’. Jacobson’s (1998) study of second generation British Muslims in the London Borough of Waltham Forest revealed that many young British-born Pakistanis hold religion as a strong element of their identity. As she states: ‘I have suggested that Islam survives as a source of meaning in the respondents lives partly because the content of its messages is accessible and appealing to the young people’ (1998, p. 126). This rather simplistic observation greatly underplays the complexities of identity negotiation through various stages of the life cycle. In reality, socialisation provides a way for young people to learn about their religious heritage, enabling them to become active members of their community and thus perpetuating religious affiliation for newer generations (Brim, 1980). Therefore, socialisation becomes an essential element in the process of identity formation, as the process of upgrading and differentiating take place, gradually shaping specific characteristics through the complexities of the life cycle (Parsons, 1964). In reference to second generation Muslims, the complex nature of the upgrading process is greatly amplified since they emerge from two diverse social worlds. This makes it extremely difficult for them to adjust their identity to different social settings. Children of immigrants in Britain, Weinreich (1986, p. 304) explained, are exposed to dual socialisation processes: in the home they form primary identification with their parent’s cultural mores; while at school they encounter an opposing culture. In most cases, young Muslims struggle to overcome conflicts with elements that are perceived to be incompatible with their ethno-religious home-based identities. This situation



is often exacerbated by the fact that second generation Muslims are born and raised in Britain, and thus view their parent's country of origin as foreign (Gardner and Shakur, 1994).

Trying to frame religious identity within a discreet and essentialist framework is extremely problematic, as identity construction is repeatedly negotiated within different periods of the life cycle. Identity negotiation is firmly embedded within the process of socialisation, which may result in the centralisation of identity into a core structure, providing balance to the other disjointed identities (Gecas, 1982). The centralisation of religiosity is contingent on the interchange between individuals recurring encounters and experiences within society (Lofland, 1969). In the case of second generation Muslim identity, I tentatively assume it is not directed by a stable core identity structure because, as Bhabha (1994, p. 185) suggests, settlement has generated 'hybrid identities'. These multiple identities allow the individual to define for themselves who they are within different social settings, but this can often lead to dual loyalties and conflict. Consequently, the failure to establish stable identities can cultivate disaffection among some young Muslims who may become marginalised through socialisation. More significantly, radical groups, like HT, offer young recruits a strong core identity based on religiosity. In this regard, HT activists view themselves as symbolic disciples of Islam (Monroe and Kreidie, 1997). In a broader context, young Muslims that contextualise religion as a core element of their identity often dichotomise the 'other' in antagonistic terms, posing a threat to their religious heritage.<sup>34</sup>

This is greatly compounded by the broad struggle of young Muslims 'to discover how to be a Muslim as a minority in a non-Muslim society' (Lewis 2007, p. 6). Stratham (2003) equates the rise in overt religious affiliation amongst some Muslims to two interconnected social realities: (1) Islam seeks to assert itself within the public realm, and (2) Muslim identity formation is an acute response to social deprivation and discrimination. In regards to the latter, Muslim self-consciousness is often reinforced by negative media stereotypes. The public vilification of Muslim belief and practice tends to lead to introverted responses: 'Muslim communities closing ranks' (Samad 1996, p. 97). Similarly, Ballard (1996) believes the marginalisation of Muslims from the majority culture has triggered a reaffirmation of religion. This is because young Muslims perceive their religious identity to be under

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<sup>34</sup> From a historical perspective, the British Empire often 'privileged religious identities' in order to exert control, 'which inevitably helped to sharpen distinctions between Muslim and non-Muslim' (Robinson, 1998 p. 5). This contextualisation of India had a residual influence in the way migrants to Britain were categorised according to ethno-religious markers.

constant threat, and not their ethnicity, resulting in greater mobility towards Muslim identity. This movement away from ethno-identity labels is exacerbated by the declining attachment to South Asia, as a cultural and linguistic reference point. As Samad (2004, p. 17) suggests, 'identification with Pakistan and Bangladesh – countries that young people may only briefly visit – becomes less significant and Muslim as an identity becomes more important'. In this respect, religious identity, Gardner and Shaker (1994, p. 164) explain, 'provides both a positive identity, in which solidarity can be found, together with an escape from the oppressive tedium of being constantly identified in negative terms'.

The examination of religious affiliation and identity amongst young Muslims in Britain has its inherent problems. As Lewis (2007, p. 1) explains, there is a tendency to miniaturise young South Asian identity to 'one single affiliation', namely their religious makeup. This is quite dangerous as Muslim identity is bound to different threads, as Lewis (2007, p. 2) points out: 'for some, their 'Muslimness' is as much 'cultural' as religious...for others, it is a vehicle of 'identity politics''. Thus, pinpointing a coherent connection between an increase in religiosity – in terms of religious practice – and as a source of identity is not easy and highly complicated (Samad, 2004). In his most seminal piece, Lewis (2002) sets out in his research to explore the inner dynamics of Muslim communities in Britain, focusing on Bradford as his case study. His work has provided my research with some valuable insights. In particular, he observes 'signs of a British Muslim culture developing' (2002, p. 209). This would suggest young Muslims are actively trying to negotiate and merge diverse elements of their ethno-religious cultural roots with the complexities and realities of modern Britain. Significantly, Lewis (2002, p. 207) points out, this process has 'bypassed the ulama', which means young Muslims are searching for identity solutions beyond traditional religious institutions and structures. It is clear from the cursory review of the literature concerning young Muslims that Islam remains a salient feature of identity construction, but this does not necessarily mean it leads to an increase in religiosity or radicalism. Thus, as Samad (1996) argues, the development of Muslim identification becomes more visible and prominent when young people acquire a sense of becoming British (Samad, 1996).

### **1.5.2 Post-2001: Radicalisation in Britain**

The phenomenon of radicalisation in Britain cannot be easily divorced from the milieu in which second generation Muslim youth find themselves embedded in, making the process of identity formation critical to this problem. In the section directly above, I explored the

complex realities and issues, as documented in the literature, concerning the seemingly sudden rededication to religiosity amongst younger Muslim practitioners. If a rise in religiosity has taken place then it needs to be correlated with radicalisation, as the latter has been singled out as a major threat to national security.<sup>35</sup> More than ever, therefore, there is a need to understand radicalisation – and what impact it is having on Muslim youth in Britain. For this reason, I will address some of the salient debates taking place amongst scholars in the national context.<sup>36</sup>

It is clear radicalisation is a growing problem amongst some young British Muslims, but one cannot attribute the underlying causes of this phenomenon to a single trigger or theory. As explained earlier, radicalisation is a transformative process, taking place at the root of the personality whereby an individual adopts a radical new outlook. Some studies suggest radicalisation incorporates several phases: pre-radicalisation, self-identification, indoctrination and militancy (NYPD 2007, p. 3). After surveying the available literature, it is relatively clear that most scholars agree radicalisation involves three fundamental ingredients: (1) individual change (Ongering, 2007); (2) interaction with social environments and external situations (Wiktorowicz, 2005); and (3) contact with radical actors and groups (Segeman, 2007).<sup>37</sup> As Segeman (2007, p. 3) points out, within these transformative phases individuals develop negative associations (e.g. discrimination or social deprivation), which distort their reading of the social world, making them susceptible to radical groups. Importantly, it is worth noting these phases are not necessarily sequential or transparent in nature, as they greatly depend on the contextual realities and experiences of the individual. Furthermore, there is general acknowledgement amongst most theorists that identifying generic profiles of radicals is unreliable and problematic (Home Office 2005, p. 31). A cursory look at Islamic radicals reveals their ‘normality’ (Gill, 2007).

At first sight, it might be difficult to rationalise why seemingly ‘normal’ young Muslims in Britain join radical groups, like HT. According to Devji (2005, p. 20), radical behaviour and identities diverge in accordance with the plethora of reasons for joining radical Islamist groups. It is apparent Muslims in this part of the world contend with an array of issues

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<sup>35</sup> Janet Williams, the commanding officer of the Muslim Contact Unit of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch, BBC, 22/06/2005

<sup>36</sup> I will explore the extensive literature related to ‘causes’ in chapter 2: Antecedents of Radicalisation, and thus in this section I will only be exploring key conceptual themes related to radicalisation post 2001.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Virtual’ radicalisation (e.g. that may take place within cyber space) still involves these elements, but without the physical interaction (Mandaville, 2005).

concerning ‘identity, the adaptation of religio-cultural norms and values, and issues of everyday citizenship’ (Abbas 2007, p. 3). Radicalisation is a multifaceted phenomenon, which in turn, raises questions concerning ‘whether Muslims can be or are willing to be integrated into European society and political values’ (Modood 2005, p. viii). In particular, two identifiable conditions are commonly cited as catalysts for radicalisation: discrimination and deprivation. Despite the fact these two interrelated conditions have been developed and argued within a specific socio-political and economic frame, they do not deplete the entire range of literature.<sup>38</sup> In other words, radicalisation seemingly appears to flourish amongst those who experience political, social and economic dislocation.

### **1.5.2.1 Relative Deprivation: Social, Political and Economic**

Relative deprivation, a theory strongly equated to Gurr (1970), is frequently mentioned as a salient cause of Muslim radicalisation in Britain (Ferrero, 2005). Socio-economic and political discontent is often exacerbated by the realisation that the gap between what young Muslims expect to obtain from society and what they actually get are quite different. The bleak realities of Muslim social life in the UK – such as high unemployment and low academic attainment – foster a sense of dissatisfaction and frustration (Modood et al., 1997). Supposedly, these socio-economic conditions provide a fundamental prerequisite for radicalisation. However, as my study into HT radicalisation has demonstrated, formulating such a causal link between radicalisation and deprivation is rather problematic. Recent studies have shown that despite the fact British Muslims languish at the bottom of the economic stratum, radicals often emerge from a wide social and economic background (Sageman, 2004). For instance, HT activists are largely positioned amongst the ranks of the professional middle-classes, firmly undermining the blanket assertion equating radicalisation with socio-economic deprivation. Similarly, Krueger and Maleckova’s (2003) study of radical support and activism in the West Bank illustrated that educated people appeared more inclined towards radicalisation. Although, young British Muslims appear economically dislocated, generating a direct correlation with radicalisation is difficult because individual backgrounds and experiences greatly diverge. Clearly, deprivation as a direct catalyst for radicalisation is difficult to substantiate, but I must acknowledge in some cases ‘relative deprivation’ is a magnifying factor. In this regard, a lack of social mobility and perceived

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<sup>38</sup> Chapter two: Antecedents of radicalism provides a wider outline of the literature.

inequalities seem to exacerbate a sense of exclusion, weakening young Muslim attachment to the state (Ferrero 2005, p 200).

In terms of socio-political dislocation from the wider society, it is argued Muslims struggle to integrate at the political level (Modood, 2005). In particular, there appears to be disproportionate representation of Muslims within the institutional structures of government, making it difficult to identify with the political system. As a result, young Muslims feel greatly detached from the political process, creating less integrated citizens (Twenge et al., 2007). This feeling of exclusion can foster a sense of not belonging, which brings into question issues of citizenship and identity. As mentioned earlier, the Rushdie Affair brought a number of these grievances to the fore, in particular, the ‘negative reaction to the anti-Rushdie campaign shocked Muslims’ (McRoy 2006, p. 25). This incident highlighted some of the blaring cultural and ideological differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in British society. As McRoy (2006, p. 25) affirmed, the Rushdie Affair exposed ‘a clash of values’. The state’s refusal to extend Blasphemy Laws beyond its existing remit to include Muslim religious beliefs inflated Muslim dislocation in some quarters. Firstly, it inspired a rededication to religious belief and practice, which to some degree resulted in the prioritising of Muslim identity (Lewis, 1994). Secondly, the perceived intransigency of the legal process and the lack of access to the political system encouraged some Muslims to seek out more extreme forms of politics. Beyond the national setting, globalised events like the genocide in Bosnia animated Muslims into political activism.<sup>39</sup> The refusal of the government to intervene within the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, despite significant efforts to lobby the government by British Muslims, seemed to perpetuate a sense of double standard and did little to encourage political integration. More recently, in the aftermath of the northern riots (2001), a key ingredient in the civil unrest appeared to be a lack of social and political integration (Denham, 2002). National events, like the disturbances in the north of England and the Rushdie affair, appear to act as a dividing line between the white majority and Muslim community. In many ways, these explosive events seem to fuel Muslim dislocation and thus impede their political and socio-economic integration.

The above issues do bring some important contextual debates to the surface. A recurring theme amongst Muslim experiences in Britain appears to revolve around discrimination and stigmatisation. This was further strengthened by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism

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<sup>39</sup> For further expansion of the impact Bosnia had on the Muslim psyche refer to McRoy (2006) pp. 20-23.

and Xenophobia (2006, p. 110), which stated: 'it is evident that Muslims often experience various levels of discrimination and marginalisation in employment, education and housing, and are also victims of negative stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes'. The sense of exclusion brought about by social discrimination may reinforce a perception that Muslims are not entirely accepted by the white majority. As Wiktorowicz (2004) suggests, the experience of racism and Islamophobia has impelled some young Muslims to re-evaluate their identity and how it relates to the wider society. Therefore, the radicalisation process allows young Muslims to interpret their negative social experiences in a seemingly positive light. In other words, radicalisation provides young Muslims with an idealised sense of society and the good, while explaining that their problem is the consequence of British society and its unequal power structures (and thus Islam provides a solution).

### **1.5.2.2 Identity Crisis and Radicalisation**

The struggle for identity is a critical element of the radicalisation process. As mentioned in earlier sections, young British Muslims are fixed within a recurring cycle of identity negotiation. Indeed, young Muslims find themselves embedded within two opposing cultural frames: at home their parents' ethno-cultural traditions provide them with a set of rigid identity markers which often leave them displaced from the dominant culture. Thus, as Roy (2004, p. 315) suggests, young Muslims seek to reconnect to a 'lost identity'. Crafting a new identity, fashioned from an idealised perception of religion, gives young Muslims a sense of belonging that transcends community and society. Contemporary studies of radicalisation frequently cite identity crisis as a salient formula in the transformative process, which is often ignited by adverse social experiences (Wiktorowicz, 2004). More significantly, as Ansari (2004) explains, the perception of 'othering' Muslims as outsiders pushed younger Muslims to question their place in British society. As my field work and interviews will show identity was a recurring theme in the biographies of young radicals. As former Islamist Ed Husain (2007, p. 73) explains, 'Cut off from Britain, isolated from the Eastern culture life of our parents, Islamism provided us with a purpose and a place in life'. In this respect, the interactions and experiences of radicals provides an insight into why they identify with radical Islam in adulthood. Identification with particular social groups depends on context and setting (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). If young Muslims struggle to relate to their social settings, then identity dislocation can be triggered. This implies when young Muslims feel their social trajectory becomes restricted by rejection (e.g. white peer group or an inability to relate to their own social group), then radical Islam can offer a sense of identity and

belonging (Abbas et al., 2007). Also, entrenching one's identity within a rigid religious dimension can lead to greater internalization, equating any real or imagined threat to Islam as a personal threat to their well-being (Roy, 2004). Therefore, religious discrimination may trigger stronger identification with Islam, and thus weaken other identity affiliations (e.g. national identity).

## **1.6 Studying HT in Britain: Methodology**

The topic of radicalisation is highly contested amongst social theorists, who continue to strive for answers to such questions as, who are radicals? Are there common characteristics associated with radicals? Do radicals vary among themselves; and if so, how do they differ? A cursory survey of the literature has indicated that no single variable, or theory, exclusively explains why radicalisation occurs.<sup>40</sup> In chapter two, I examine several leading theories such as 'globalisation' (Roy, 2004; Ahmed, 1994), 'secularism and modernisation' (Esposito, 1992; Lewis, 1990), 'frustration – political, social, economic, cultural disaffection' (Crenshaw, 1981; Gurr, 1970; Hoffman, 1998; Piven and Cloward, 1977; Roy, 2004), 'intensification of religiosity' (Buckser and Glazier, 2003), 'psychological traits' (Crayton, 1983; Jenkins, 1979; Post, 1990) and 'group dynamics' (Sageman, 2005). The current research and debates on radicalisation, with which I have become familiar, have made it possible for me to identify my areas of interest. Firstly, my overall assessment of these contributions asserts that they have failed to develop a coherent relationship between theory and methodology. For instance, the theorists I have cited all tend not to substantiate their respective theories with case studies that show how some Muslims become radicalised, especially in a group context.

Understanding the impact radicalisation has had on some young Muslims requires the investigation of a specific radical Islamic movement. I have decided to study HT, because the case of HT has rarely been cited by social scientists studying radicalisation. In my early encounters with members of HT, I noticed, on the surface, they appeared thoroughly 'westernised' in relation to dress, language and leisure activities. However, these young men had become radicalised, turning against liberal and secular values.<sup>41</sup> I wanted to find out what processes contributed to this change. The work of fellow researchers appeared to be

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<sup>40</sup> Refer to chapter two: Antecedents of Islamic Radicalism (pp. 58-69).

<sup>41</sup> Similar observations were made by Taji-Farouki (1996) in her highly acclaimed book on the formation of Hizb ut-Tahrir in the Middle East.

characterised by their fascination for radicalisation, from a distance (Esposito, 1992; Fukuyama, 2002; Roy, 2002; Crayton, 1983; Crenshaw, 1981; Jenkins, 1979; Post, 1990). A major reason for this neglect has been the difficulty in collecting primary data, because groups like HT operate in a clandestine manner. So, this begs the question, how does one study HT?

### **1.6.1 Ethnographic Approach**

Although there has been significant study of radicalisation, little research has used an empirical approach to study this phenomenon. After reading major works, and through personal contact with some of the main theorists and researchers engaged in the debates, I noticed a number of problems concerning methodology. Firstly, there was a considerable lack of access to reliable data sources. This is because radical Islamic groups, like HT, operate in a clandestine manner and use morally unacceptable behaviour to achieve their goals, making it difficult to record their activities in real settings (Post, 1991). Secondly, the relationship between data and theory was not properly constructed, providing only a partial picture of the radicalisation process.

After spending several years interacting with members of HT, I was able to interpret their social world, giving me an insight into how they became radicalised. Initially, I needed to overcome the major problem of accessibility in order to examine the processes of radicalisation. None of the existing approaches I had studied gave sufficient insight into this. For this reason, I adopted the 'ethnomethodological' approach, because it provided me with an opportunity to study the activities of group members in their natural surroundings (Garfinkel, 1991; Atkinson, 1982). This ethnomethodological approach specifically allows one to study the activities of group members, to see how they make sense of their surroundings (Heath, 1983). A critical appraisal of previous approaches to radicalisation showed that most theorists rejected 'participant observation' of radical groups, because it was adjudged impractical and unworkable (Coleman, 1968). There are two reasons for this view: ethnomethodology is often difficult to understand, and it is even harder to apply. However, I am in a very fortunate position, because my study can observe radical members through participant observation, which most social scientists have been unable to do when trying to understand processes of radicalisation in a group setting. Burgess (1984, p. 79)



believes ‘the value of being a participant observer lies in the opportunity that is available to collect rich and detailed data based on observations in natural settings’.

In essence, I seek to gain an understanding of why some young Muslims are attracted to HT, from their point of view. Harvey (1990, pp. 9-10) believes that ‘the emphasis for most ethnography is usually on forms of social interaction and the meanings which lie behind these’. This is very important, because obtaining accounts and narratives from various respondents enables us to use a flexible methodology. This will involve extracting information from natural social settings, rather than ‘constructs of artificial situations that are provided by the researcher’ in the form of survey research (Burgess 1984, p. 79). Thus, participant observation allows me to gather more detailed information, accessing the meaning of events and social interactions as understood by HT. Previous researchers have attempted to make assertions on the nature of Islamic organisations based on artificial situations. Post (1991) equates mental illness to the antecedents of radical behaviour among individuals and groups. This generic observation is based on unscientific generalisations, because biographical data from radical groups like HT is not readily available. However, my access to HT puts me in the unique position of being able to gather the biographical databases required for the development of a valid scientific approach. This will allow me to generate a truthful representation of HT.<sup>42</sup>

The approach used to acquire data from my participants relied extensively on a large network of contacts within HT. This has enabled me to capture the opinions of the members, allowing me to articulate their views related to ethnicity, culture, religion and identity. This was achieved by assuming the role of a ‘participant-as-observer’ to obtain access to a wide group of participants in their natural environment (Gold, pp. 217-220). This allowed me to get close to my respondents, which provided me with a visible picture of HT activities and the everyday experiences of members. According to Emerson (1995, p. 2), ‘getting close’ to one’s subjects requires ‘physical and social proximity to the daily rounds of people’s lives and activities...in order to observe and understand them’. I spent several years attending HT events and activities. This provided me with insight, as a participant, of the inner workings of the organisational structure. This, furthermore, made my fieldwork easier because I was not considered an outsider, and was given open access to members and to HT culture. This

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<sup>42</sup> Representation of HT will entail: (1) data concerning the social base (social class, age, gender, and ethnicity etc) of HT membership; (2) the internal processes of radicalisation (indoctrination and group radicalisation); (3) socio-cultural backgrounds of members (through biographical studies)

study is unique because, for the first time, an academic is able to get close to the activities and everyday experiences of members of a radical Islamic movement. Thus, my research has two distinct aims, namely to comprehend the causes of HT radicalisation from an individual and also from a group perspective. In order to produce credible findings, it is necessary to develop an array of empirical research documenting how radicalism is stimulated. In this respect, I am very fortunate because this study can observe the radical group from primary sources, which most social scientists cannot do when trying to understand group dynamics. In summary, the justification for my study is primarily based on methodological grounds. I believe this will enable me to answer one key question: why some young British Muslims join HT.

### **1.6.2 Integrating Objectivity**

To begin with, what distinguishes this research from other scholarly work on HT is my involvement with HT. However, it is precisely this involvement in HT which raised a set of methodological concerns. Firstly, how could I maintain ‘objectivity’ and ‘neutrality’ in my fieldwork? Well, as explained earlier, I resorted to feminist methodology as a way to anchor my research. This meant the value-free objectivity, ‘of neutrality and indifference towards research objects’, had to be replaced by ‘conscious partiality’ (Mies 1983, p. 122). In keeping with this feminist methodological tradition, HT activists were not looked upon as simple research objects but as mirror images of me. As a result, HT members slowly lost their initial suspicion that I might misuse and exploit their histories. This allowed for an open exchange of information, as Mies (1983, p. 123) notes:

The researcher takes the side of a certain group, partly identifies, and in a conscious process creates space for critical dialogues and reflection on both sides. This enables both research ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’ to become more aware of the power differences and dynamics involved, and of distortions of perceptions to be corrected on both sides. Paradoxically, precisely through this process of *partial identification* a critical and *dialectical distance* is created between the researcher and the researched.

This ‘conscious partiality’ enabled me to voice my own experiences of HT membership, which led to an open and contextualized knowledge of subjective experiences. It was this method of collective perception of our experiences that led to, what Westkott (1979)

described as, 'inter-subjectivity'. This, as Huizer (1986, p.237) points out, is a natural advantage that comes from 'rejecting neutrality in the name of scientific objectivity'.

Secondly, despite adopting less conventional approaches to research objectivity, I was fully aware of the lack of social distance between myself and the respondents. As an ex-member of HT, I had already been involved in what I was studying. This meant I shared similar patterns of ethno-religious socialisation and life-experiences as the respondents. However, this is not a problem, as Mamak (1978, p. 168) observed:

'I found that my academic training in the methodological views of western social science and its emphasis on 'scientific objectivity' conflicted with the experiences of my colonial past. The traditional way in which social science research is conducted proved inadequate for an understanding of the people I was researching.

In this respect, the traditional scientific perspective that views the researched as mere objects of data collection are out-moulded for this research, because to penetrate clandestine actors required personal connection and involvement. However, as Alder and Alder (1987, p. 8) point out, when investigating a clandestine group the 'researchers must assume social roles that fit the worlds they are studying'. In general, scholars studying HT tend to lack insider perspective of HT activism, as they cannot penetrate the clandestine veil of the organisation, hindering their ability to formulate meaningful conclusions. However, I did not require immersing myself into the culture of HT to gain an insider's experience of the group, as I had already gained knowledge through my own experiences. This gave me a unique perspective and standpoint on HT. Therefore, using 'conscious partiality', I sought not only to hear the life histories of HT activists, but to also observe and compare their social reality and experiences to my own.

Therefore, from the commencement of my project, I was aware I could not divorce my personal involvement with HT from my research. In actuality, my subjectivity was intimately embroiled in the research, as it guided my choice of topic and it influenced the selection of my methodology. Consequently, I was concerned that my subjectivity may skew my reading of the social reality of HT activists. For this reason, I took steps to prevent this from happening. Firstly, I only selected HT activists whom I did not know, so when they revealed their life histories to me it was unknown. In theory, HT activists have an autonomous

psychology, possessing a wide range of personality traits that are different and unique.<sup>43</sup> For that reason, I did not enter my fieldwork with a preconceived profile of HT activists. Instead, I wanted to rely heavily on the data I collected. This meant utilising appropriate methodological techniques, namely interviews and surveys, to solicit complete and meaningful data that could be used to construct a picture of HT radicalisation.<sup>44</sup> Secondly, since the research focused on unravelling the back stories of activists, I disclosed from the outset my involvement with HT.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, as complete objectivity was considered impractical, I made every effort to acknowledge and integrate my subjectivity within a contained methodological standpoint.

Although, my own experiences provided the backdrop for my research, it became clear that I needed to place HT activists at the centre of my research. Constructing knowledge around the life experiences of activists within a fringe group, like HT, made it incumbent to tailor my methodology around the sensitivity of the respondents. This is because, as Collins (1990, p. 209) explains, it is activist's experiences that provide a concrete 'criterion for credibility'. This enabled me to objectively interpret my research findings, while acknowledging my prior involvement in what I was studying. As mentioned, I decided to use my previously gained knowledge to enhance my research. In this respect, my experiences as a former HT member gave me a distinct standpoint, which is not available to other social scientists who have attempted to study HT. For this reason, I actively used the knowledge of my former membership to interpret the social world of HT activists. I integrated my knowledge of HT in a number of ways into my research. Firstly, I used it to cut through programmed and robotic rhetoric often spouted to 'outsiders'. Secondly, most of the respondents I interviewed shared similar social experiences and backgrounds to me, which allowed me to ask more penetrating and targeted questions. These two points are very important, as respondents can easily sabotage any attempt to research them (Evans-Pritchard 1940, p. 13). This was unlikely to occur in my research as I was already inside the social world of HT. Therefore, my personal involvement in HT gave me an open gateway to explore the lives of HT activists, without it I

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<sup>43</sup> As Rowe et al., (2002, p. 106) point out, based on self-agency, individuals tend to manufacture and transform personal meanings about their social reality.

<sup>44</sup> In terms of methodology, I assigned 'meaning units' to interview transcripts, which identified distinct meanings within the respondent statements. In most cases, collection of statements formed a unit, for example, when respondents emphasised their 'hatred for non-Muslims and British society'. However, I did also identify single words as meaning units (e.g. racism and Islamophobia). As Ratner (2002) asserts, meaning units objectively summarise personal meanings of the respondents.

<sup>45</sup> I also did not hide my research identity and purpose, which was received positively by most respondents. However, after the 7/7 London bombings, the HT leadership and some respondents became greatly sceptical and thus my penetration into the organisation ground to a temporary halt.

would not have been able to scratch the surface of HT. My experiences placed me in an advantageous position from which to build knowledge and construct a more accurate image of HT's social world.

### **1.6.3 Incorporating 'Intersectionality' into the Research Methodology**

I decided to use narratives as one way of exploring HT radicalisation. As Peterson (2006, p. 721) asserts, there is a need to study the 'intersecting experiences' of activists. By drawing on the personal experiences of HT activists, I was able to explore HT radicalisation and its multiple intersections with class and ethnicity.<sup>46</sup> The concept of 'intersectionality',<sup>47</sup> as framed by feminist scholars<sup>48</sup>, sheds light on the intersection between different social categories – such as gender, ethnicity, class and so on – making it possible to observe the social divergences that exist amongst people (Davis 2008, p. 67). It is important to look at the multiple categories of differentiation amongst British Muslims, because HT activists appear to emerge from a narrow and closed social reality. In fact, as the data in chapter four and five reveal, HT identity revolves around a South Asian middle class identity configuration. This would suggest that HT activists may experience 'discrimination' in largely different ways than working class British Muslims.<sup>49</sup> In this respect, I seek to explore the impact class and ethnicity has had on HT member's lives, and how it shaped their trajectory towards HT radicalisation. As the narratives in chapter four will show, the experiences of Abdul and Tariq fell in large part between the intersections of ethnicity and class. After contextualising their experiences it became clear their middle class upbringing and South Asian ethnicity were key features in their narratives. Therefore, it would be a mistake to assume British Muslims share similar life experiences, as they do not emerge from homogeneous social backgrounds. This means working class Muslims do not represent a glimpse into HT activists, and thus class and ethnicity need to be explored in a different way to how it has been done amongst working class Muslims. For this reason, in order to understand why HT radicalisation takes place amongst a homogenous group of South Asian Middle class Muslims, requires looking at how these activists have been shaped by class,

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<sup>46</sup> However, I am not suggesting that these two social constructs alone radicalise young HT activists, as age, religion, culture and gender may equally have relevant connections with radicalisation.

<sup>47</sup> In this section, I do not wish to get bogged down by trying to conceptualise intersectionality. This is because, as Davis (2008, p. 69) rightly suggests, it is a vague and open concept. Instead, I want to discuss how I intend to use intersectionality alongside personal narratives to explore HT radicalisation.

<sup>48</sup> Refer to Crenshaw (1989) and Collins (2000) for further insight into the theoretical underpinnings of intersectionality theory.

<sup>49</sup> According to Collins (2000, p. 42), discrimination is firmly connected by the intersectional structure of modern society.

ethnicity and religion. Therefore, by utilising intersectionality, I will be able to understand the different intersections of HT membership.

#### **1.6.4 Studying HT: Scholars and Literature**

It is clear from my methodological standpoint that I think a substantial amount of scholarship on HT in Britain has not contributed to a penetrative study. Instead the publications and research I have surveyed continue to explore HT from its ‘exterior’ rather than its ‘interior’. I define ‘exterior’ research as an attempt to explore the internal world of HT radicalism, but without a penetrative method of accessing primary data sources. A number of articles have been furnished using ‘exterior’ research, especially in the aftermath of the 2005 London bombings, which attempt to explain the appeal of HT to young British Muslims.<sup>50</sup> However, these studies often lack access to HT members, forcing them to resort to either interviewing ex-members or using secondary literature. In order to shed light on the appeal of HT, scholars must engage with ‘live’ and ‘active’ HT narratives. The use of narrative research has revealed the ‘dialogic’ nature of HT identities in which historical and psycho-social constructions of HT identity are investigated through the voices of HT activists, in respect to their experiences as young middle class Muslims. In other words, one cannot hope to explore the appeal of HT without the use of ‘interior’ data sources.

As stated earlier, although in the last decade scholars have assembled a colossal body of knowledge on radicalisation, much of this has seldom investigated HT. A chief explanation for this oversight has been the impenetrability of HT, because of its clandestine and secretive nature. Nonetheless, there have been several noteworthy contributions, making it imperative to review these studies and place them within my research context.

Firstly, Taji-Farouki’s influential piece written in 1996, ‘A Fundamental Quest’, is the closest attempt by a western academic to unlock the mysterious nature of HT. Her study sets out to document the chronological evolution of HT in the Middle East, providing insight into the formative period of the organisation and its founder.<sup>51</sup> At this point, I feel it is important to bring to light some methodological observations, which I have drawn out of her study to inform my own work. Firstly, the piece employs a historical methodology by which Taji-Farouki used internal HT documents and leaflets to construct a historical picture of the

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<sup>50</sup> Abbas et al., (2005) and (2007); Lewis (2007); McRoy (2005); Afshar et al., (2005).

<sup>51</sup> Refer to chapter three for discussion on the historical inception of HT (p. 72).

inception of the movement. How she acquired and accessed these sources is somewhat sketchy. She does not explain her methodology in her book, 'A fundamental quest' (1996), which raises significant questions about how she gained access to internal HT material. Secondly, the piece is not concerned with the socio-cultural factors related to HT radicalisation; instead it is a factual exploration of the emergence of HT in the Middle East. For this reason, the study does not claim to investigate why some young British Muslims are joining HT in Great Britain, making it crucial to develop new insight into the evolution of HT radicalisation in this country.

In contrast to this scholarly work, the autobiographical narrative written by Mohammed Mahbub Husain (Ed Husain) has been championed as a noteworthy insight into HT in Britain, yet this ignores the many contextual deficiencies and inaccuracies in the piece. Before I elaborate on these issues, it is worth briefly noting that autobiographical information relates and contains data about the self (Brewer, 1986). With that said, the book written by Ed Husain is based on his alleged encounters with members of HT, in the early 1990s. These short encounters form the basis for his analysis. Yet, as he confirms, he was never a member of HT (Hussain, 2007). This is highly significant as his observations would have been greatly restricted by organisational and structural confidentiality. HT operates behind a set of rigid administrative codes, which are only accessible to members. In practical terms, this means he had no way of determining how HT operate and execute their plans. Many social scientists have questioned the usefulness of autobiographical accounts since it is difficult to ground the data into a constant and reliable measurement for analysis (Berryman, 1999).<sup>52</sup>

Secondly, the narrative is exclusively based on autobiographical declarations, which cannot be substantiated and offers little scientific value. This brings into question the quality and validity of his assertions, as no scientific approach was employed to acquire the data. It is vital when dealing with information that has been fashioned by a researcher's own experiences to use specific techniques to maintain analytical integrity and rigour (Berryman, 1999). However, the *Islamist* is not an academic examination of HT and radicalisation, rather it is simply a piece of work based on Husain's own assumptions and experiences. In that regard, the usefulness of the piece is greatly reduced.

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<sup>52</sup> Autobiography is a written account that depicts the life experiences of an individual, which is written by that individual (Berryman, 1999).

Beyond the work of Taji-Farouki, scholars have displayed a passing interest in HT. A major body of the literature contributing to the discourse on HT in Britain relates to unlocking the nature and causes of HT radicalisation. Before I reflect upon some of these contributions, it is clear that the individual is greatly influenced by his or her social reality and experiences. Hence, my personal experiences and the data collected from the respondents has shown personal experiences play a defining role in the radicalisation process. For this reason, my review of the literature begins with the generic concern that scholarship on HT of previous years has not contributed to unlocking the inner world of HT. This is because scholars have not gotten inside HT, and thus my overview of the literature will ultimately expose this methodological oversight as the primary reason for a lack of knowledge regarding HT.

I want to start with the piece written by Parveen Akhtar, '(Re)turn to religion' (Abbas et al. 2005, pp. 164-176). The author theorises that HT radicalisation is grounded within a complex spectrum of religious awakening, in which religion provides an ideological identity. Though fascinating, Akhtar cannot substantiate theory with empirical fact. In reality, the author makes no attempt to consult primary sources and extract data that may support their assertions, which detracts from the content and value of the piece. In particular, the author seeks to 'examine the reasons why Hizb ut-Tahrir appeals to young Muslims' without articulating or giving voice to lived experience (Abbas et al. 2005, p. 173). The author claims 'studying the group in isolation cannot account for why its qualities suddenly appeal to a generation of British Muslims' (Abbas et al. 2005, p. 174). This statement perpetuates a number of misconceptions. Firstly, HT has not procured mass appeal amongst young British Muslims. In fact, they have only gained support amongst a homogenous group of young middle class Asian Muslims. Unfortunately, despite claiming to 'contextualise Hizb ut-Tahrir', the author appears unaware of HT's middle class appeal. This makes it essential to study the narratives of HT activists, which the author fails to do, in order to gain insight into the appeal of HT.

The analysis offered by Lewis (2007, p. 119), in his book '*Young, British and Muslim*', provides some interesting insight, especially as the author acknowledges HT as 'a useful window into the recruitment techniques, appeal and ideology of radical Islam'. However, the author overly relies on the testimonies of ex-members. In particular, he places significant credence in the narrative offered by Shiraz Maher, an ex-HT activist who joined after 2001. The account given by Shiraz counterpoises HT radicalism to the 'Biradri system' (cited in



Lewis 2007, p. 122). This standpoint ignores the social reality and sociological base of HT membership. As my data will show, those young people attracted to HT often emerge from secular middle class households, and thus are not socially embedded within the traditional paradox of the 'Biradri system'. It can be analytically risky to depend solely on narratives from ex-activists when trying to ascertain the appeal of HT. This is because the attitudes of active members will strongly differ from ex-members, skewing ones research if they rely on a pre-selected population (e.g. ex-activists). Another problem with using ex-members is the phenomenon of 'faking' (Beere 1979, p. 385). When I conducted interviews with ex-HT activists, I quickly realised through my ability to corroborate their narratives with my own experiences that most tended to consciously distort and give socially pleasing responses.

Similarly, a piece written by Sadek Hamid attempted to assess whether HT had influenced the development of radical Islam in Britain. In particular, the author sought to answer 'why British Muslim youth join HT' (Hamid in Abbas et al. 2007, p. 149). The author makes some crude conclusions, for example, he believes 'young people were attracted to HT entirely due to their slick appearance, and their ability to be well-spoken and seemingly possess religious knowledge at the same time' (Hamid in Abbas et al. 2007, p. 150). Despite providing no empirical evidence for this claim, it is worth deconstructing this socially constructed misrepresentation of HT. Firstly, within the closed circuit of peer group relations, which is often the setting for HT radicalisation, young people are attracted to the familiar. As I will discuss in my fieldwork chapters, young HT activists were drawn to HT recruiters by sharing the same social upbringing and critical life-experiences. Secondly, this account ignores the psychological and sociological triggers of radicalisation, reducing the phenomenon to the radical group. Thirdly, the author articulates HT radicalisation within a traditional-modern paradox, believing HT offer young people a modern re-tailored conception of religion. This ignores the non-religious triggers of HT radicalisation, as my data will show religion is not necessarily a precursor for joining HT. Overall this article lacks empirical substance, unfortunately Hamid does not have any physical access to HT and thus attempts to craft a picture of HT from some anonymous ex-members. These singular accounts offer little substance in relation to why these men became radicalised (e.g. what is their social background and experience). The literature is overwhelmingly dominated by articles looking to explain the phenomenon of HT radicalisation from a distance. Subsequently, they do not offer any empirical data to corroborate theory as scholars struggle to penetrate HT, which greatly weakens their usefulness.

Despite an increased focus on HT activism, the vast majority of contributions have failed to develop a coherent way to study HT. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that the scholarly contributions on HT, presented in this overview, exhibit similar methodological shortcomings. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, they tend to make analytical observations from a distance, as they are not able to penetrate the interior of the organisation. An article co-authored by Heleh Afshar, Rob Aitken and Myfanwy Franks, for example, tries to engage Muslim identity by using HT as a case study. However, the authors do not refer to a single active or ex-member of HT. Consequently, their findings regarding HT are limited to exterior observations, which they make from a distance. Consequently, the authors perceive HT as a male dominated space, claiming ‘it was felt Hizb ut-Tahrir...were indeed all men’ (Afshar et al., 2005, p. 276). However, as my data in chapter six has shown, HT is equally distributed across the gender divide.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, from a methodological standpoint, it can be highly problematic to attempt to piece together the social composition of HT without referring to primary data.

Secondly, with the exception of a small handful of studies, there has been a lack of ethnographic engagement with HT.<sup>54</sup> HT radicalisation is a highly complex phenomenon and cannot be reduced to generic variables found in broader studies of Islamic activism. This makes it essential to contextualise HT, as radicalisation is influenced by multiple-factors and variables, which takes place within a specific setting. Therefore, to gain a deep understanding of this closed reality, scholars will need to use ethnographic methods in order to unlock the closed world of HT.<sup>55</sup> Thirdly, broader generalisations about Islamic

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<sup>53</sup> Refer to chapter six: sociological, p. 191.

<sup>54</sup> A useful study conducted of Al-Muhajiroun (disbanded in 2004), a splinter group from HT, by Quinton Wiktorwicz (2005) provides some methodological parallels. The research was generated from interviews with activists, which they augmented with observation and participation (2005, pp. 30-32). However, Wiktorwicz (2005) was only granted surface level access to ALM. For example, he did not observe the Halaqah (e.g. the culturing process), and thus was greatly restricted to public activism. Wiktorwicz (2005) imposes a social movement theory on Al-Muhajiroun (henceforth, ALM), but utilising an established conceptual scheme can be problematic, as it condenses and downgrades a social reality. In particular, radicalisation is framed within the social movement paradigm (e.g. the collective), greatly diminishing the role of individual experiences and interactions. In particular, the individual is depicted as a passive subject that becomes overwhelmed by the social movement; this is again problematic, as the individual narrative is crucial to unlocking radicalisation. In order to study radicalisation processes a great deal of psychological and sociological data needs to be woven into the work.

<sup>55</sup> There are some more recent representations of HT that use ethnographic data to establish scholarly theory. Such as Justin Guest’s (2010) recent publication that examines the phenomenon on social alienation. He uses HT, as a partial case study, to explore social and cultural life in the East End. Although, the focus of his study is quite different from mine, he does make a number of similar observations about the group. After conducting his fieldwork in the East End of London, he also concluded that HT attract young alienated Muslims to the group, who have struggled to gain a sense of belonging and acceptance in British society (Gest 2010, p. 96).

movements were narrowed to fit the HT paradigm. For example, Hamid (cited in Abbas et al. 2007, p. 150) believes young people are attracted to HT as they ‘offer an attractive ideological alternative to the...inward looking politics of the older generation’. This statement may be true amongst working class Muslims, who are more firmly embedded within the traditional identity-community politics of the first generation, but HT activists emerge from different social settings and realities. Therefore, trying to develop an understanding of HT radicalisation from the myriad of research on other Islamic groups will distort the inner reality of HT.

## **1.7 Empirical Approach: Interviews, Focus groups and Surveys**

My primary research goal was to bring together a structured body of empirical knowledge, which would allow me to make generalisations and explain the data observed. The assemblage of data involved ethnography, in-depth interviews and surveys. The ethnographic method lasted several years, during which time I had access to the social settings and interactions of HT members. Also, as I will describe, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with over thirty HT members, providing a rich and stimulating source of data. After I had completed the ethnographic and interview stages, I began administering a survey. As Bryman (2001, p. 274) points out, it is vital for the researcher to use more than one ‘source of data in the study of social phenomena’.

### **1.7.1 Exploring Trajectories – Pathways into Radicalism**

As I have already mentioned I joined HT in early 1996 when I was at college. HT made contact with me when I attended some public talks and events. In 2000, after several years of intense indoctrination through ‘*Halaqah*’ (private circle), I became a member.<sup>56</sup> These initial encounters provided me with valuable experiences, which would later serve as my motivation to study the causes of HT radicalisation in Britain. The observations I made during this period as a member provided me with a unique source of background information. When I left HT in early 2002, many issues from my experiences continued to affect my thoughts. In particular, I could not understand why HT seemed to attract only a homogenous group of young middle class South Asians. From a personal perspective, I attributed leaving HT to several factors, but perhaps the most significant issue was to do with

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<sup>56</sup> *Halaqah* is a compulsory circle designed to indoctrinate novices into the group.

why I joined in the first place. I was recruited into HT at sixteen. At that age I had not developed a stable identity nor had I experienced life, and this made me very impressionable. Therefore, I felt it important to address this matter in my study, which required gathering new data through lengthy fieldwork, participant observation and in-depth interviews. Although I had spent several years with HT, fieldwork experience as an outsider would enable me to contrast my experiences with qualitative research. This was very important because I wanted to avoid disrupting my findings by looking at things from a purely personal perspective. However, I did not want to completely ignore my previous experiences, so I used that familiarity to make data collection easier. As a former member, I was fully aware of the backgrounds of HT members before I started my fieldwork. This allowed me to locate suitable respondents without any difficulty, but I decided to carry out in-depth interviews with young members I did not know.<sup>57</sup>

### **1.7.2 Interviewing Members<sup>58</sup>**

My research began in a participatory manner, because I wanted to monitor members' activities, thinking that this would provide insight into the social world of the radical. However, in documenting the types of group interaction it soon became apparent that there were other, much more important issues to be examined in relation to the causes of radicalisation. It became clear that I needed to conduct interviews, in part to examine some of the ideas that were emerging from the ethnography. It was self-evident that HT is not only made up of many separate individuals, but that some of those individuals are alike to one another, and so can be differentiated from other members. Thus, trying to paint a portrait of a typical HT member in as accurate and vivid a manner as possible is extremely difficult. In the end, then, detailed interviews were undertaken, in some instances, more as conversations in a series of natural settings. Rather surprisingly, on many occasions the ethnographic work and interviews became joined at the hip, particularly when members of group conversations began, without any triggering, to reflect on their own and each other's life histories. Thus, the interviews conducted with the male respondents revealed a rich source of narrative concerning the routes taken into HT.<sup>59</sup> These qualitative accounts concentrate on life

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<sup>57</sup> Many regional studies have sought to examine different Muslim communities, such as Birmingham (Joly 1995), Waltham Forest (Jacobson 1998), Leeds (Geaves 1995), Bradford (Lewis 2002, Knott and Khoker 1993), Southall (Baumann 1996), Coventry (Ellis 1991) and Tower Hamlets (Eade 1989).

<sup>58</sup> Full breakdown of interview questions can be found in the Appendix (pp. 246-252).

<sup>59</sup> In reference to the ethical standards employed throughout the interview stages, I made extra effort to explain the aim of my research to my respondents. Refer to Appendix (pp. 246-252)

narratives: to be exact, their social background and upbringing, with attention given to the context of radicalisation (e.g. how and where they encountered HT).

My research has one key goal, to determine why some young Muslims join HT. In a broader sense, I discovered a reciprocal relationship exists between the radical and the social world, which provides a pretext for radicalisation. As stated, my reference points were several powerful and insightful biographical accounts of HT members. I chose these case histories, while interacting with HT members in their natural settings, because they exemplify some important theoretical points and provided a rich source of narrative concerning the pathway into radicalism. After interviewing twenty-eight male respondents, my findings have uncovered some common themes. A recurring theme, which emerged in the accounts from my respondents, is that of identity; and how their current identities seemed greatly dependent on their past and present experiences. The goal of my research was to map out the ‘turning-point moments’ in the lives of HT members who have undergone a life-altering experience (Denzin, 1989, p. 7). Consequently, each of the radicals I interviewed exhibits a distinct social world of lived experience. Therefore, in chapter four, the accounts I have selected may seem somewhat dramatic, but they offer me a glimpse into the construction of a radical in different social settings and from rather different perspectives.

The results of my research indicated common traits existed in certain individuals, especially prior to joining HT. I identified a host of recurring characteristics within all the respondents. Firstly, during early socialisation they had all endured some form of racial discrimination, which increased their frustration and anger towards the larger culture. These frustrations at being externalised led to their social alienation and developed their need to find a strong sense of belonging. Members had not formed stable connections with their social environments, which would suggest that respondents’ current identities are the outcome of a failure to integrate with the social context. In this respect, the members needed the group to gain a sense of belonging. The HT radicalisation has some generic psychological and sociological characteristics, making it somewhat definable. Despite not being a homogenous movement, the profile of a UK HT member can be roughly sketched out, which defines the key features before and after radicalisation.

In addition to a series of standardised interviews with ordinary HT members, I conducted in-depth interviews with the former leadership of HT. These documented conversations were

designed to explore issues related to the emergence of HT in Britain, identifying the key pioneers. I adopted a semi-structured interview approach, as a structured interview would have been impossible to plan, because events and activities were not documented. Thus, semi-structured interviews gave the respondents flexibility to explain their experiences and divulge internal information concerning policy and strategy. For instance, in order to document how HT evolved in Britain during the early 1980s required conducting in-depth interviews with the key pioneers, notably Farid Kassim and Omar Bakri Muhammad. In each interview I constructed detailed interview guides, because members were interviewed from various time periods, as recruitment has been taking place over a period of three decades. Therefore, this study has entailed conducting lengthy fieldwork that has been carried out among HT members. The initial analysis is largely constructed on material collected personally, which has been gathered from semi-structured interviews and in part in the form of field investigation, among HT members. Thus, the collection of data involved intensive fieldwork, participant observation, interviews and specifically designed questionnaires.

### **1.7.3 Accessing Female Members**

When I began this study I chose to look at male and female HT members together. After consulting the literature on Muslim women (Hussain, 1984), however, I realised that a combined approach would reduce the importance of gender. Conducting a short review of the literature on Muslim women, I quickly identified some distorted views about their role. Wade and Souter (1992), for example, asserted that Muslim women are unable to lead a normal, functional life because of religious and cultural constraints. This implies that Muslim women cannot pursue educational and career interests, as they are bound to a patriarchal culture. Although I do not fully accept this position, it is very important to look at the issue through the experiences of the female HT members. My research has pointed to several important themes, such as family upbringing, ethnicity, class and gender. As a result, I have looked closely at these and other topics.<sup>60</sup>

#### **1.7.3.1 Using a Focus Group<sup>61</sup>**

In order to access and collect data from female members, I needed to find a way to bypass strict HT segregation rules between the sexes.<sup>62</sup> For this reason, I decided to set up a *focus*

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<sup>60</sup> Refer to Chapter Five Profiles of HT female members (pp. 142-152).

<sup>61</sup> Refer to Appendix III for breakdown of focus group respondents and questions (p. 257)

*group*, because this would allow me to study female members in a more natural and comfortable setting than that offered by individual interviews (Marshall and Rossman, 1999).<sup>63</sup> I assembled a group of female members to discuss and comment from personal experience on the issue of why they joined HT. This allowed me to gain a wider understanding of the women's shared experiences of everyday life and the influences within other social settings. The focus group provided a rich source of data, which allowed me to find out why certain issues were salient. I did encounter some problems with this research method, however, when talking about indoctrination. The responses of each participant were not independent and a few of the more dominant female members skewed the discussion about indoctrination. Although this discussion became less reliable, the women did express their own definitive individual views openly and confidently.

In order for the focus group to be effective, I had to spend considerable time planning how to set up and implement the discussion. After verifying my approach with the literature, I sought to gather seven female activists together. Unfortunately, owing to unforeseen events, two women chose to opt out and I could only manage to organise one meeting. As Litosseliti (2003, p. 8) observes, I had to be very careful in selecting a neutral and accessible venue. I chose a central London university, because I was keen to avoid any negative connections with the location (e.g. private dwellings and rented facilities). Trying to identify a group of female activists was extremely difficult and complex. After several months of contacting and negotiating with my inside contacts, and through the use of existing networks, I was finally able to secure a group discussion. Initially, I was slightly unhappy with the composition of the group because it seemed too homogeneous and I feared that diverse experiences and views might not be aired. In the event, this did not prove to be a significant problem, as the women appeared eager to communicate their experiences and thoughts. The case study presented in chapter five examined a single issue: why a group of young Muslim women joined HT.

#### **1.7.4 Control Group**

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<sup>62</sup> Strict HT policies regulate the mixing between the sexes, which is forbidden in relation to group activity.

<sup>63</sup> There are other definitions used in the literature – such as organised discussion, collective activity and interaction (Litosseliti, 2003) – but focus group is my preferred usage.

In order to understand why some young British Muslims join HT, while most others do not required establishing a ‘control group’.<sup>64</sup> This entailed convening two group discussions. The first grouping comprised exclusively of non-affiliated young British Muslims from similar social backgrounds as HT activists, who seemed just as zealous about religion and politics yet engage in non-radical activism. This control group was very important to my research, as I wanted to avoid the common mistake of solely focusing on those who have become radicalised. This is quite crucial. If I only concentrated on HT activists, then I would not be in a suitable position to work out what made them so dissimilar from those who did not join HT. In particular, I managed to track down young Muslim activists<sup>65</sup> (not affiliated to any organisation or group), but who had been approached by HT recruiters. It was interesting finding out why HT radicalisation proved to be unsuccessful on these young people, despite sharing similar social backgrounds and realities. The second control group involved ex-HT members; I wanted to discover what had led them to leave the organisation, because the roots of their change and departure are equally as important as those who do not join HT.

### **1.7.5 Sociological Study of HT:**

After I conducted my interviews with male and female members, it became incumbent upon me to verify this information. I sought to determine whether the views and experiences expressed by my respondents were representative of the wider HT population. Therefore, I quickly recognized the inescapable necessity for administering a series of surveys. More importantly, the surveys became a key mechanism for unlocking the social base of HT membership. I needed to understand the nature of social embeddedness of HT members. In other words, HT members are fixed and rooted within multifaceted social realities that define and confine their social identities. Thus, from a social perspective, my study has demonstrated that most HT member’s identities are fashioned from their social experiences and backgrounds – the place of their families in the class structure in which they grew up, university and peer groups, the significance of ethnicity and race, and the cultural gap between the first and second generations that defines what is expected of children outside of the home. This sociological analysis provides an alternative way of looking at the developments that have taken place amongst the membership of HT in Britain. Traditionally, sociologists are interested in identifying the relationships between social structures and

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<sup>64</sup> Refer to Appendix V (p. 259) for further information about the control group.

<sup>65</sup> Refer to Appendix V (p. 259) for further information about the control group.



processes, as they place greater emphasis on individuals moving from one social setting to another (Erikson, 1950). Therefore, in my sociological chapter, I sought to expound and distil upon the key sociological features of HT membership – such as class, age, gender, ethnicity and race, and religion etc. By focusing on these interrelated components, I was able to formulate a quantitative image of HT’s membership, which included: demographic composition, socio-economic status and origin, recruitment areas, attitudes towards family and religion.

#### **1.7.5.1 Sample Survey<sup>66</sup>**

Statistics for the total number of members in Britain cannot be independently verified, as the group operates in a clandestine manner. Aminur, a member from South London, suggested that the British branch consists of ‘approximately two thousand members’. While Abdul asserted that the group has an ever-expanding membership, which currently stands at ‘five to six thousand’. During my fieldwork, I noticed that this discrepancy in numbers was widespread. Many members tended to embellish the size and successes of HT, while others underrepresented the party’s growth in order to remain off the radar, so to speak. This uncertainty makes it very difficult to carry out a sample survey, because it is necessary to define the target population from which a sample is to be drawn (Pfefferman 2009, p. 34). In theory, there are several methods that could be used to determine sample size: (1) national lists for small populations; (2) replicating a sample size of comparable studies; and (3) using published data (Lyman and Longnecker 2008, p. 277). Firstly, it was not feasible to make the entire population my sample, as I cannot locate all HT members. Secondly, no empirical data currently exists on HT membership, making it impossible to draw upon other studies. Thus, I needed to determine another way for calculating the sample size.

In trying to consider the dynamics of my target population, I was aware HT is relatively homogenous. However, I still wanted to analyse my data in multiple ways, for example, differentiating between genders, age groups, and so on. After consulting various party documents, I found the administrative file of HT. This is a secret document that outlines the way in which the group must be structured and organised. I promptly realised that the file could be used to calculate an appropriate sample size, which would reflect the population being studied. In order to describe this process, I need to first explain some basic issues

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<sup>66</sup> Refer to chapter six for breakdown of sociological field work and results (pp. 170-199).

related to the *At-Takattul Al-Hizbi* (party structure). Firstly, the *Wilayah Committee* (executive) is a group of elected members entrusted with safeguarding the values, the ideological principles and the strategic direction of HT (Anon, 1965). Secondly, the day-to-day activities of the organisation are delegated to the Local Committees. It is important to bear in mind that for a particular area to be constituted as a *Wilayah*, there must be no less than fifteen members, enabling the construction of a *Wilayah*. Forming the *Wilayah Committee* (WC) requires the number of its members to be five until the number of members exceeds two hundred and fifty. Then the number of *Wilayah Committee* members will be distributed in relation to the scale of members in the area. This is determined by the presence of an extra fifty members, which will equate to one member in the WC. If the number of members exceeds five hundred, then for every extra five hundred members there will be one member installed on the WC.

On 13 March 2004, HT announced the results of the UK *Wilayah Committee* elections.<sup>67</sup> More importantly, since nine male members were elected to the WC, I was able to estimate the target population, which equates to nine hundred members.<sup>68</sup> In theory, I could extend this calculation to encompass novices, but this would increase the chance of error and inference. Indeed, a larger sample that includes novices will only make things worse, because it will distort the credibility of the sample. In order to apply a consistent sampling technique, it was necessary to establish a large sample. If the population of members is nine hundred, then a good sample is 200 because it equates to 22.2 per cent of the population. The survey encompassed two main sections: the first part was interested in demographic questions and upbringing. The second section of the survey was designed to obtain data on location of recruitment, social experiences, religiosity and peer groups.<sup>69</sup> Thus, in all cases, I surveyed ninety-five male and ninety-one female members.

### **1.7.5.2 Administering the Survey**

A general rule for administering a survey is standardisation (Chilisa and Preece 2005, p. 114). In other words, I had to provide my respondents with a structured set of survey questions. However, administering the survey was not an easy task. I arranged to have some

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<sup>67</sup> Press statement, 1924.org 17/03/2004

<sup>68</sup> Nine female members were also elected to the women's WC

<sup>69</sup> Three surveys were invalid, as the randomly selected respondents did not answer several questions properly. Also, eleven respondents declined to participate because of confidentiality, despite my insistence that personal identification was not required.

casual discussions with my respondents, whom I identified from my previous research, in order to ask them about the best way to administer the survey. This gave me the opportunity to test my survey, as surveys ‘do not emerge fully fledged’ (Oppenheim 1992, p. 47). Approaching similar types of members as those whom I intended to sample provided me with a way to review question format and structure. I realised very quickly that several questions had to be rephrased, because they were perceived as ambiguous. In regards to administering the survey, there were no simple answers to this question. However, I had to develop a method of accessing HT members in such a way to ensure that every member had an equal chance of being included in the sample. Although, most simple random samples require minimal knowledge of the wider population, I had to use my early observations of HT as a basis for accessing the sample. After careful thought, I decided to administer the surveys at nationwide events, namely HT’s annual conference, because this attracts the entire UK party fraternity. In the survey data that follows, a total of two hundred members in the conference were reported upon.<sup>70</sup>

## **1.7 Conclusion**

The identity of young British Muslims has received new-found attention after 9/11, especially as it became apparent that radical Islamist movements were engineering a popular base of support. For this reason, I have decided to study HT, because they have become a galvanising force within the context of emerging radical Islamist youth movements. The sudden rise of HT is connected to providing a growing group of estranged youth a meaningful identity. This has enabled them to construct identities that, to some extent, control the perceived complexities of western society, offering a broad platform for acceptance and belonging. The existing literature has shown a significant gap in empirically focused studies on radicalisation. Thus, many social theorists have tried to understand the causes of radicalisation, but without being able to study the group from within, they have failed to match theory with empirical fact. In contrast, my study has observed some of the complex processes that take place within a radical group setting. This has given me an invaluable source of data, allowing me to construct a workable theory. This theory will help me explain why some young British Muslims are attracted to HT. Thus, my research has been narrowed to HT radicalisation in Britain, and yet I still must be careful when drawing conclusions about why some young Muslims join HT. In theory, this is because

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<sup>70</sup> Refer to chapter six for an analysis of my sociological findings (pp. 170-199).

radicalisation is a distinctly personal process. For a radical, the pathway into HT may take a variety of trajectories, making the causal precursors unique to his or her experiences and interactions. In this respect, my research will aim first to document and catalogue multiple biographies of HT radicals in order to map out their trajectory into the group. This will allow me to determine whether commonality amongst HT radicals and specific demographic susceptibility exists.<sup>71</sup> More significantly, I will be able to explore the social ‘triggers’ that inspire some young Muslims to HT, giving me a richer portrait of HT radicalisation.

This thesis attempts to tackle the issue of HT radicalisation, an issue, despite the ever-expanding literature on radicalisation, is still not properly understood. Despite the fact that a better understanding of radicalisation has been achieved, there is a great deal missing in our knowledge about the contextualised cases of groups like HT. In particular, what kinds of conditions and social stimuli prompt some young Muslims to join HT? Why are young middle-class South Asians the most vulnerable demographic to HT radicalisation processes. Therefore, I seek to bridge this gap, by providing a fully developed and scientific theory of HT radicalisation in Britain.

From a historical and contextual perspective, HT emerged as a pioneering radical Muslim youth movement, during the early 1980s, in Britain.<sup>72</sup> What is surprising about the group’s rapid growth and appeal amongst young British Muslims is the fact that its historical origins are disconnected from their contemporary recruits, who are primarily young South Asians. In order to understand HT radicalisation, it is vital to find out why its allure is focalised amongst a homogeneous sub-group demographic, which is uniformly represented by young, middle-class, Asians. This disproportionate and unbalanced stratification of HT recruitment makes it essential to examine class and ethnicity within the spectrum of radicalisation. More significantly, the appeal of HT is not a condition restricted to the poor or uneducated; rather their recruitment pool continues to be amongst the ranks of the educated middle-classes. This makes it imperative to understand why a disproportionate number of young middle-class South Asians appear to be more susceptible to the appeal of HT and why HT have failed to attract working class, ethnic minorities? These are just some of the questions I will be exploring through the course of this study.

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<sup>71</sup> From a theoretical perspective, it is difficult to identify a particular demographic that is more likely to be inclined to radical Islam, but HT radical behaviour may have common sociological traits, which I explore in chapter six (p. 170).

<sup>72</sup> In chapter three I chart the evolution of HT in Britain (pp. 82-95).

## **Chapter Two:** **The Antecedents of Islamic Radicalism**

In this exploratory chapter, I will examine an assemblage of issues related to radicalisation. Events such as the 7 July 2005 London bombings and the assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, push social theoretical explanation to its boundaries. These events are often of global significance; the chilling testimonies of Mohammad Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer make clear reference to the maelstrom of violence in Iraq. These disturbing incidents all involve Muslims, who refer to Islam as the major source of their socio-political actions and behaviours. But is this an accurate definition of Islamic radicalism? More importantly, what processes contribute to the transformation of seemingly ‘ordinary Muslims’ into members of HT (radicals)? In order to focus on these specific contextual issues, I have broken them down into two key points. In the first section, the main emphasis will be on developing a coherent definition of ‘Islamic radicalism’. This will require classification of the following conceptual definitions: ‘Islamism’, ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, ‘Islamic terrorism’ and ‘Islamic radicalism’. A critical evaluation of the main concepts, based on existing literature, will show that all relevant debates have been identified and analysed. In the second section, a rigorous review of the literature on Islamic radicalism will outline the theoretical and the historical antecedents of this phenomenon.

### **2.1 Definition of Concepts**

From my initial review of the literature, I could not avoid the difficult question of how to label those HT activists who refer to Islam as the central source of their identity. For the purpose of my study, should they be labelled Islamic radicals, fundamentalists, terrorists, or are they better defined as Islamists? This was a significant problem that needed to be solved, because there was no agreement among social theorists in the literature as to a precise definition. The issue of how to define Islamic activity is subject to much debate, making it impossible to avoid but, beyond the discussion of usage, lies the more difficult question of the nature of the phenomenon itself. However, the two debates, over terminology and analytical understanding, are in many ways inseparable in the literature. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, social theorists tend to extrapolate conceptual definitions that suit their methodologies. For instance, Esposito (1992, p. 7) prefers to use the term ‘Islamic revivalism’, as this allows him to equate the antecedents of this broad revivalism to the ‘failure of secular nationalism’. He believes that this failure then triggered the greater

Islamic renewal (Esposito 1994, p. 7). This view has become largely obsolete, receiving considerable criticism, because it seemingly failed to represent the political dimension of an Islamic resurgence (Kramer, 1987). In contrast, Roy (1994) uses an assortment of terms such as ‘Islamic radicalism’, ‘political Islam’, ‘fundamentalist Islam’, ‘Islamism’ and ‘neofundamentalism’. Roy has been criticised for using a selective and over-generalised approach in defining Islamic activism (Hirschkind 2010, pp. 145-181). It is impossible to exaggerate the dimensions of this conceptual problem, especially as theorists continue to debate newer terms such as: ‘Political Islam’ (Fuller, 2006; Kepel, 2002), ‘Islamic activism’ (Esposito, 1992), ‘Jihadism’ (Gerges, 2006; Phares, 2007), ‘Militant Islam’ (Rashid, 2001) and ‘Islamic Fascism’ (Fukuyama, 2002; Pipes, 2002). The first part of my literature review will be focused on resolving this conceptual problem, by evaluating the ways in which definitions on the topic have conventionally been organised. It is very difficult to classify these contrasting labels, because they have common characteristics. This makes it essential to place each concept within a fixed framework, allowing me to systematically eliminate alternative explanations and definitions.

### **2.1.1 Islamism**

The concept of Islamism, its meaning and the ways in which the term can be used is a major source of debate. For this reason, I will need to trace the origins of the term by focusing on the historical features that explain its development and usage, allowing me to place it within a contemporary context. The term ‘Islamism’ was first coined by French academics in the mid-eighteenth century (Kramer 2003, p.65). It was a generic term applied to the adherents of the Islamic faith, as conveyed by Muhammad. Voltaire (cited in Kramer, 2003), the famous French philosopher, first used the label ‘Islamism’ to describe the religion of Muhammad. As a result, the term gained popularity and usage throughout the nineteenth century. The most meaningful example appeared in the New English Dictionary, published in 1900, in which ‘Islamist’ was defined as ‘an orthodox Mohammedan’ (Kramer 2003, p.66). This trend towards the recognition of Islam was focused on generating a better understanding of Islam as a religion, which neglected the political aspect. The term ‘Islamism’ failed to displace the erroneous and, at times, derogatory notion of ‘Mohammedanism’. Gibbs (1949, p. 1) argues that many ‘Muslims dislike the terms Mohammedan and Mohammedanism, which seem to them to carry the implication of worship of Mohammed’. By the end of the First World War, ‘Islamism’ and

‘Mohammedanism’ had become redundant terms, as they were widely replaced by the favoured Arabic term, Islam. However, the term ‘Islamism’ reappeared with the emergence of Islamic activism and conflict. This meant a distinction was required, to separate this modern phenomenon from Islam as a faith.

‘Islamism’, as a term, gained significant renewal in France during the late 1970s, despite its contextual problems; it was no longer seen as a synonym for Islam. The revised term was used to represent the political manifestations of modern Islamic movements (Kepel, 1984). It was seen as an alternative to the widely accepted term ‘Islamic fundamentalist’, which remained embedded in its original Christian context. Fuller (1991, p. 2) argued that Islamic fundamentalism was an unsatisfactory term, while Islamism, he argued, is better placed to describe ‘the ideological merits of new Islamic movements’. The goal of many theorists who use Islamism in their arguments is to give greater meaning to events and conflicts that provoke Muslims to action. In this sense, Denoëux (2002, p. 61) believes that Islamism signifies and correlates with the upsurge of ideologically driven movements that draw directly upon the ‘Islamic tradition in order to articulate a distinctly political agenda’. There were two distinct elements discernible in the definition of Islamism. Firstly, some theorists continued to concentrate on newer Islamic movements, restricting its usage and scope (Denoëux, 2002; Kepel, 1984; Roy, 2004). Secondly, Islamism was seen as a modern brand of political discourse that inspired activism (Esposito, 1992; Sayyid, 1997).

Islamism has attracted considerable attention, but in many ways theorists continue to take its definition for granted. This has created a number of problems. Firstly, some theorists have focused on the contextual deficiencies of Islamism (Burgat, 1988; Munson, 1988). According to Rodinson (cited by Burgat 1988, p. 14), ‘if one chooses this term (Islamism), the reader may become confused between an excited extremist who wishes to kill everyone and a reasonable person who believes in God in the Muslim manner, something perfectly respectable’. Islamism has received considerable criticism because it has not generated a new classification (Munson, 1988). Instead, it has revived an old definition of a concept that originated in the late 1850s. The term is extremely ambiguous: modern theorists have defined Islamism in many different ways. Some examples include: ‘political philosophy’ (Spencer, 2006); ‘new Muslim movements’ (Lapidus, 1984) and ‘ideological protest’ (Butko, 2004). Secondly, the boundaries of the term are continually modified, allowing it to become aligned with acts of ‘extremism’ and ‘militancy’. For instance, Pipes (2001)

described Islamism as a ‘totalitarian ideology’, equating it to a dangerous form of ‘fascism’. In this respect, Islamism has become attributed to acts of violence, but in a British context ‘only a small minority’ is devoted to a program of violent confrontation (Ansari, 2007).

Thirdly, Islamism is very general in its description of Islamic group phenomena, which some have suggested limits its usefulness (Roussillon, 2001). In 2007 David Cameron, for example, declared that the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) espouses Islamist ideals (The *Telegraph*, 31/01/2007). This magnifies the contextual problems of Islamism because it is often used to describe a wide array of heterogeneous groups. Roussillon (cited by Kramer 2003, p. 68) argues that theorists in effect make ‘Muslims into exceptions and postulate one truth of Islam that supposedly defines Muslims from one end of the Islamic world to the other, creating a confusion between Islam and Islamism, which reduces the analysis of contemporary Muslim societies to the discourse and practices of their most radical and marginal components’. Roy (2001) rejects this view, arguing instead that Muslims themselves constructed this term. However, Roy ignores the fact that this is a western-engineered term, originating in France, making it very difficult for many Muslims to embrace (Burgat and Dowell, 1993; Yousef and Jobain, 1992).

Fourthly, Islamism does not make a clear distinction between ‘reformist’ Islam and radical Islam.<sup>73</sup> This is important, because reformists reject the term with respect to themselves. For instance, I remember having a lengthy discussion with Imran, a twenty-three-year old student and member of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), about the 2006 transatlantic terror plots.<sup>74</sup> In the midst of the discussion, he suggested that ‘*Islamism is a term used by liberal Muslims to separate their beliefs from politics*’. Some Muslims find this view of ‘Islamism’ rather troublesome, because it offers an excessive partition between ‘Islamism’ and ‘Islam’, which some find difficult to acknowledge. For instance, during the same discussion a number of Muslim spectators interrupted. Ali (student, 21) proudly claimed that ‘*Islam was a complete Deen (way of life)... (And) Islamism implies a deviation from Islam*’, while Tariq (Consultant, 28) suggested it was wrong to define those who advocate living according to the legal, social and political principles of Islam as Islamist, because most Muslims hold these principles. In essence, they were trying to say that one could be a Muslim without being an Islamist. For instance, Tariq advocated greater political

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<sup>73</sup> ‘Reformist’ refers to those Muslims that seek to gradually inject the public sphere with Islam and they tend to operate within the political system.

<sup>74</sup> The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) is a reformist organisation that advocates ‘special’ group rights for Muslims by lobbying various governmental bodies.



participation and wider identification with British culture. Ali, wearing his England football top, embraced his British identity, feeling well adjusted and fully integrated. However, the ideas put forward by them still appear Islamist, as they believe Islam has a political and ideological bearing on their social life.

These four contextual problems need to be resolved before trying to develop a broad understanding of the term Islamism. According to Burgat (1988), the term Islamism covers:

1) quite a variety of institutional forms, be they local groups or international networks, 2) very different political forms, underground as well as tolerated, in opposition, and 3) very different methods of action, ranging from encouraging conversion from within the mosques to more radical social action and this also includes violent action (cited in Pederson 1999, p 16).

This view of Islamism provides a more succinct way of looking at this phenomenon, because it encompasses the whole political field.<sup>75</sup> As Ansari (2007, p. 3) notes, ‘What these trends have in common is that they derive their source of legitimacy from Islam’. This, as Fuller (1991) believes, allows Islamists to provide an alternative way of ordering modern society. In this respect, much of the confusion surrounding Islamism is to do with its perceived monolithic properties. According to Ansari (2007, p. 4) ‘it is necessary to challenge this simplistic assumption in order to appreciate properly the complex character of Islamism’. In the context of Britain, for example, there exist numerous Islamic groups with divergent viewpoints and objectives. With a few exceptions, most of these groups have non-violent aspirations. However, telling these groups apart is difficult, because they all strongly contest how Muslims should live and the sorts of government that they should support in Modern Britain.

### **2.1.2 Islamic Fundamentalism**

At this point, I want to understand the process by which Islamic fundamentalism emerged and the causes attributed, within the literature, to its appeal. Islamic fundamentalism is often seen as a ‘distinctively modern movement’ albeit one with historical antecedents (Woodhead

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<sup>75</sup> The ‘political field’ comprises a host of different political positions that range from liberal to conservative, from modern to traditional, from moderate to radical, from democratic to theocratic, and from peaceful to violent (Ansari, 2007).

and Heelas 2000, p. 32). Islamic fundamentalism, as a label, gained notoriety largely due to the media coverage of the Iranian revolution (1979), which made it the most cited form of fundamentalism (Kramer, 2001). According to Lewis (1988, p. 117), the term is broadly recognised, but it can be ‘misleading’. This is because, from a historical perspective, fundamentalism was used to describe Christian doctrines that were based on a literal interpretation of the Bible (Armstrong, 2001). However, as a broad term, it is widely applied to a multitude of groups outside the corpus of Christianity, especially, but not exclusively, to Islamic actors. In this regard, fundamentalism can be applied to those Islamic groups that relate contemporary developments to literal interpretations of religious text (Haynes, 1999). Omar Bakri Muhammad, for example, uses religious texts both to challenge secular laws and to propose a programme for fundamental change.<sup>76</sup> Under these circumstances it was often relatively easy for Omar Bakri to gain the support of those who felt that in some way the development of society was not proceeding according to God’s will. Therefore, Islamic fundamentalism is rooted in its ‘aggressive rejection of western secular modernity’, such as declining morals (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, p 32).

Esposito (1992, p. 7) argues that Islamic fundamentalism, as a generic term, fails to represent the nature of ‘Islamic activism and Islamic revivalism’. Similarly, Said (1997, p. xvi) is very sceptical of the term Islamic fundamentalism, as he argues that it is employed deliberately in association with Islam to ensure that people see ‘Islam and fundamentalism as essentially the same thing’. These contributions suggest that Islamic fundamentalism is an ‘empty and therefore meaningless term’, erroneously and casually employed ‘to refer to a broad spectrum of religious phenomena’ which have little in common (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, p. 32). Notwithstanding such criticism, the idiom has become progressively more common within academic and mainstream circles. Voll (1982) argued that fundamentalism remains the most commonly used identification for the various revivalist impulses among Muslims. However, since 11 September 2001, the term has lost considerable relevance and applicability, since many Islamic groups desire to influence the public arena, while others actively work to disengage from social and political issues. As a result, it is asserted, the ‘broad use of the term has become increasingly irrelevant’, especially as it is seen as a derogatory label, tied to Western presuppositions (Hallencrutz and Westerlund 1996, p. 4).

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<sup>76</sup> Omar Bakri Muhammad is a radical Islamist scholar. He was the leading figure in several radical Islamist movements, such as HT (UK leader), Al-Muhajiroun (founder 1996) and Al-Ghurabaa (founder, 2003). He fled the UK in 2005, seeking refuge in Lebanon, following stories that he would be prosecuted under treason laws.

There are still many advocates of the term, despite the analytical flaws inherent within it. Munson (1988), for example, accepts the relevance of the term Islamic fundamentalism, as he states: ‘I cannot think of an adequate alternative term to characterise those Muslims who advocate a strictly Islamic policy’. Fuller (1991) strongly rejects this view, suggesting it implies a narrow return to the primitive structures and traditions of early Islam. He believes that Islamic fundamentalism is more reflective of traditional views, and that the term fails to recognise the ideological tenets of modern Islamic movements. Similarly, Pelletreau (Middle East Policy Council, 1994) warned that Islamic fundamentalism had to be used with requisite caution, especially when related to the broad revival of Islam. Muslim activists also emphatically reject the use of the term Islamic fundamentalism, principally because it reflects negative connotations implied by Western usage (Yousef and Jobain, 1992). According to Madani, the leader of the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), fundamentalism and Islamism are both unacceptable, because any term but Muslim is pejorative by definition. He states: ‘it is Islam that is at work in Algeria, nothing but Islam...we are Muslims’ (cited in Burgat and Dowell 1993, p. 10). In contrast, Sayyid (1997, p. 7) describes Islamic fundamentalism ‘as a way of representing and analysing a series of events involving Muslim communities’. This view oversimplifies the divergent trends of Islamic activism, reducing its usefulness as a descriptive term. In short, Islamic movements are not all fundamentalist and thus cannot be grouped together into one categorisation.

### **2.1.3 Islamic Terrorism**

The rise of terrorism in many western nations is often linked to watershed events, most notably 11 September 2001 and 7 July 2005.<sup>77</sup> In the aftermath of such terror attacks, intense and wide-ranging debate has ensued regarding the subject of terrorism. After the 7 July 2005 attacks, Tony Blair declared that the ‘evil ideologies’ of Islamic radicals must be combated. In doing so, he crucially redefined the phenomenon of global terrorism, as an ideology that ‘can be used to engage young people at a certain level and in a certain way’ (Blair, cited by BBC 2005). Not surprisingly, a vast amount of research is focusing on the subject of terrorism. Parliament and the media are becoming embroiled in combating terrorism, while social scientists appear more concerned with uncovering the causes behind the phenomenon. Reich (1990, pp. 25-26) suggests that terrorism is ‘a strategy of violence designed to

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<sup>77</sup> These are recent events however; earlier examples, such as the Iranian Revolution (1979), the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979-1989), the establishment of Israel (1948) and even the destruction of the Ottoman Empire (1924) provide a historical context for Islamic terrorism.

promote desired outcomes by instilling fear in the public at large'. Johnson (1978) makes the claim that terrorism is the methodical and measured killing of the innocent in order to stimulate panic and fear. It has become increasingly problematic to provide a clear picture of what terrorism is, as applied to the contemporary situation, because most definitions are vague and subjective (Schmid and Jongman et al., 1988). Clearly, what is termed terrorism appears to be contingent upon one's perspective and standpoint (Jenkins, 1975).

With regard to my study, it is important to assess whether the term Islamic terrorism can be correctly applied to the emergence of Islamic activism. Terrorism, in its most conventional usage, is essentially a violent act that deliberately seeks to subvert the social order (Schmid and Jongman et al., 1988). By attempting to define terrorism, in its most widely accepted usage, it can be appreciated that this term has very little importance to my study. This is because most Islamic groups, like HT, cannot be labelled as terrorists according to the most common definition.<sup>78</sup> The problem of definition is exacerbated by the fact that most Islamic groups have political ambitions, but openly reject the use of violence. The danger of labelling groups like HT as terrorist is compounded when governments try to depict the organisation as fanatical and irrational so as to instate a ban on it. Crenshaw (1995) makes an interesting point when she asserts that it is difficult to be neutral in the task of definition. For instance, by defining the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) as a terrorist organisation, the Israeli government precluded recognition or negotiations with it. Thus, for the purpose of my research, it is problematic to review the activities of Islamic groups, especially HT, from a terrorist perspective. The term 'terrorism' cannot be accurately applied to HT because they do not use violence in the pursuance of their beliefs, even though they hold extreme and radical ideals. Islamic Radicalism should not be confused with terrorism, as it has distinct properties that make it a separate phenomenon altogether.

#### **2.1.4 Islamic Radicalism**

One of my earliest discoveries regarding HT was that, to my surprise members often labelled themselves as 'radical', thinking it a somewhat less negatively connoted term. Yet, HT is desperately anxious not to be thought 'extremist', a view echoed by Imran Waheed (spokesman for HT, UK) who said, '*Muslims want to be able to engage in legitimate political expression...without fear of being branded extremist*'. To what degree, I asked

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<sup>78</sup> Refer to chapter three for a detailed account of HT, pp. 72-100.

myself, could one postulate a difference in definition between ‘Islamic extremism’<sup>79</sup> and ‘Islamic radicalism’? These terms are not mutually exclusive, as I came to recognise the great heterogeneity among Islamic groups. Nevertheless, one can attribute the use of violence more easily to extremism (Keane, 2004). This draws attention to the subjective ways in which terms apply to situations, so that acts that appear irrational to one observer can seem rational and sensible to another (Wetherell, 1987). For instance, HT is incensed when the label ‘Islamic extremist’ is attached to their activities. This term is seen as pejorative, since it implies that their ideology is irrational and unrealistic. In some respects, this aversion to ‘extremism’ is linked to the recent proposal by Tony Blair to ban HT, despite the objections of senior police officers (BBC, 19/11/2006). The logic of a ban appears grounded in the government’s assertion that Islamic radicalism is a catalyst for breeding extremism and violence (Blair cited by BBC, 19/11/2006). The usage of the term ‘extremist’ does evoke a sense of illegitimacy, but is Islamic radicalism any different? The answer to this question lies in the historical context in which ‘political radicalism’ emerged. The idiom ‘radical’ is derived from the Latin word ‘radix’, which simply means ‘pertaining to the root’ (Heinemann English Dictionary, 1987 pp. 888-89). In a political context, the term ‘political radical’ has various meanings, diverging from a host of political positions, such as extremist, fanatic and revolutionary, or it can refer to a progressive liberal.<sup>80</sup> The disorderly nature of the term is caused by its ambiguous history which leads to multiple usages in a host of disciplines.

The concept of Islamic radicalism cannot be understood without grasping the meaning of political radicalism and offering a historical explanation for its emergence and usage. The first person to be described as a ‘political radical’ was Charles James Fox, in 1797 (Mitchell, 1992). During this period, the aims of political radicalism were strongly connected to electoral reform in Britain, widening to include ‘republicanism’ (Horowitz 1968, p. 109). This became more apparent in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, when it became unlawful to publically promote republicanism in France until 1848, so republicans often referred to themselves as ‘radicals in order to avoid oppression’ (Methvin 1978, p. 102). By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the term was confined to the middle-classes, referring to all those who supported the movement for parliamentary reform (Thompson, 1978). However, when the

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<sup>79</sup> Extremism is actions and behaviour taken outside of the mainstream political framework, e.g. those who advocate violence (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2002). By extension, Islamic extremism is the advocacy of violence to achieve Islamic ideological and political aims (Wintrobe 2011, p. 5).

<sup>80</sup> Radicalism may also apply to the ‘radical right’, which is a term often used to describe the politics and position of right-wing groups (Hiliard and Michael, 1999).

‘popular radicals’ emerged, they generated extensive agitation amongst the working classes in the face of severe government suppression.

‘Political radicalism’, when it came into popular usage, was applied to mean a total opposition to the existing political and social order (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1999). This definition was restricted to the ideas of those perceived to be holding extreme ideological beliefs, not to their political methods of action. In contrast, contemporary usage of the term extends beyond extreme political beliefs, encompassing both ideals and methods. In this context, political radicalism could be used to describe those actively pursuing or supporting extreme ideological change in society (AIVD, 2006). The point I want to emphasise here is that this description does not necessarily imply the explicit use of violence. Why define it in this way? One clue is hinted at in the description itself: there must be complete opposition to the existing political system. Terrorism is used to subvert the functioning of the existing social order, and thus it is not expected to bring about a holistic change. In contrast, political radicalism will identify the roots of a social problem, such as institutions and systems, in order to begin afresh on seemingly superior foundations. In essence, political radicalism seeks to change people’s ideas and concepts about the social order<sup>81</sup>, while terrorism is designed to exact a measure of revenge and to inflict fear among a target audience (Laqueur, 1977). In summary, political radicalism refers to fundamental social change, focusing political action on the systems and institutions, so as to overthrow the existing social order (Bealey, 1999). Therefore, political radicalism involves creating a social change, which targets the nature of social structures, institutions, norms and systems (Diamond, 2005).

I have provided a definition of political radicalism, but how can this generalisation be extended to encompass the character of Islamic radicalism? Firstly, I need to extract my definition of Islamic radicalism from western discourse, or more precisely from political radicalism. This is because political radicalism is rooted within a western ideological framework which confines it to the extreme right of the political spectrum (Horowitz, 1968). There are key elements in the definition of political radicalism that can be incorporated in the definition of Islamic radicalism. As discussed earlier, ‘political radicalism’ refers to a comprehensive change of the existing social order (Oxford English Dictionary, 2002). The key elements of this definition are ‘comprehensive change’ and ‘social order’, which places

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<sup>81</sup> It should be noted that ‘social order’ is a highly contested concept, as many theorists have proposed different explanations for what a social order consists of (Hobbes, 2002; Locke, 1998; Rousseau, 1998). In its simplest sense, social order refers to a set of interconnected institutions and systems, which remain relatively constant over time.

Islamic radicalism within a nexus of social and political issues revolving around state-society interactions. Islamic radicalism is a distinct doctrine that addresses the social, political, economic and cultural problems faced by Muslims in order to provide solutions to them. Hasan al-Banna, the founder of 'Ikhwan al-Muslimun' (Muslim Brotherhood) in Egypt, for instance, reacted against western imperialism by advocating violent political opposition, in order to alter the prevailing social and political realities of the existing system. Ultimately, al-Banna sought the total abolition of all political parties in Egypt and the creation of a single Islamic party, which he modelled on the one-party system of the Soviet Union (Choueiri 2002, p. 55). Thus, Islamic radicalism 'provides a comprehensive critique of the existing order' (Denoeux 2002, p. 61).

In this respect, a clear distinction can be made between Islamic radicals and Islamic fundamentalists.<sup>82</sup> The latter are inclined towards maintaining traditional values, which are perceived to be under threat from unwelcome alien influences, especially secularly orientated governments (Fuller, 1991). As a result, Islamic fundamentalists, believing themselves threatened by 'modernisation' have sought to reform society in accordance with what they believe are suitable Islamic tenets and to change laws, morality and social norms (Sivan, 1985). Islamic fundamentalists ultimately seek 'reIslamisation'<sup>83</sup> in order to create a traditional Islamic society, which is less modernised (Roy, 2004; Fukuyama, 2002). In contrast, Islamic radicalism is directed towards the political and social configurations of their polity, directing their attention towards a complete social upheaval. Al-Ghurabaa, for example, is a proscribed radical Islamic group that seeks to destroy the social order in Britain, because it represents man-made systems and institutions. According to Abu Hafs (member, 31), Muslims living in Britain must '*distinguish themselves from the social order and systems' by openly condemning man-made law*'. The goal of Islamic radicalism is to replace the existing man-made laws and systems (social order), with the Islamic social order. Furthermore, it is crucial at this point to make a clear distinction between 'Islamic radicals' and 'Islamic reformists'. Those who advocate reform do not seek to comprehensively transform the political and social order; rather they desire specific changes to the existing

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<sup>82</sup> Both these descriptive labels seek 'revivalism'; however, they can be qualified in a way that accounts for their contrasting political ends. To start with, Islamic fundamentalism seeks to revive the past, forcing society to return to the practice of medieval Islam. In contrast, Islamic radicalism seeks to establish a modern Islamic state that incorporates Islamic law, but using components fashioned from modern nation-states (e.g. education system, electoral voting for the ruler, decentralisation of political power, and public sector institutions).

<sup>83</sup> Salafi inspired groups seek to establish a society fashioned on the model of Prophet Mohammed, this would entail a literal application and dogmatic revival of early Islam (e.g. traditional clothing, banning of television, segregation and so on).

system. Al-Afghani, for example, advocated political reform, which sought to overthrow individual rulers whom he perceived as subservient to foreigners (Keddie 1972, p. 226). Similarly, Navvab Safavi advocated elections, but all representatives had to be ‘devout Muslims’ (cited Arjomand 1984, p. 210). Reformists do not challenge the existing social order; instead they use religion to contest legislation as to propose a programme for reform.<sup>84</sup>

In many respects, Islamic radicalism and Islamism have very different properties. Islamism is a broad term that spans the whole political spectrum, while Islamic radicalism is more identifiable. Radicals, for example, have constructed an ideological critique of western society, ‘and, on the basis of their critiques of the existing political and socio-economic system, they aim to change fundamentally the structure of society, their ambition being to replace this system with *al-hakimiyya* (God’s governance)’ (Ansari 2007, p. 6). Most threads of Islamism desire political power; on the other hand, there are those who seek gradual social and political reform. The MCB, for example, promote greater Muslim participation within the existing system as to provide a voice for Muslim issues. However, some political commentators have argued that the MCB is an Islamist organisation, albeit with a reformist slant (Macloughlin, 2003).<sup>85</sup> This is clearly a problem, how can I distinguish between radicals and reformists? Firstly, Islamic radicalism has to account for the diversity of Islamic movements, which can be achieved by positioning it opposite to reformist Islam. This will allow me to distinguish between reformists, who choose to practise their religion devoutly, and radicals, who use this devotion for political ends. Therefore, ‘Islamic radicalism’ is better suited to my purpose, since it implies that radical groups object to the existing political and social order, challenging it, as they ultimately seek to provide a clear political alternative. The HT slogan, for example, ‘Khilafah is the solution’ is a radical notion used to attract and mobilise the masses in defiance of the current political systems (Anon, 1996, p.1). This makes it easier to separate reformist Islamists, like the MCB, as they are not concerned with radically altering the societal infrastructure. Thus, ‘Islamic radicalism’ refers to a movement to overthrow an old regime and effect complete change in the fundamental institutions of society.

I have used the term ‘Islamic radicalism’ from specific theoretical and historical sources, making it easier to identify the characteristics of radical Islamic groups. At this point, it is

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<sup>84</sup> Al-Fatiha Foundation, a modern Islamic reformist movements, advocate homosexuality and seek reformation of Islamic rulings regarding sexual orientation.

<sup>85</sup> The MCB support of Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Hamas has been seen as an illustration of its Islamist tendencies.



crucial to document briefly the radical attributes of HT, providing a practical illustration of Islamic radicalism.<sup>86</sup> There are two identifiable characteristics that make HT a distinct radical group: its ideology and its dogmatic interpretation and implementation of its ideology (often referred to as its methodology).<sup>87</sup> Firstly, the ideology is the fundamental principle on which HT has developed its distinct ethos. According to al-Nabhani (2002b, p. 21), an ideology ‘is a rational doctrine from which a system emanates’. The ideology is defined as an all-encompassing theory, making it the central point of reference for temporal and spiritual problems. The advancement achieved by non-Islamic ideologies is false, according to HT, because the growth accomplished is ‘devoid of the relationship with God’ (Al-Nabhani 2002a, p. 14). Secondly, by implementing HT ideology, the problems of the Muslim and non-Muslim world will be resolved. The current decay is a human problem, affecting all societies, the solution of which requires the seizing of political authority. The Islamic ideology will transform all the existing state institutions and systems (educational, political, social, judicial and economic), giving full political sovereignty to Islam (Al-Nabhani, 2002a). Finally, HT is the sole interpreter of ideology, making their ideology uncompromising and dogmatic, since they claim to speak with divine mandate. HT’s ideology is a useful example of Islamic radicalism, because it wants to establish a ‘new social order’, namely Islam, over the whole world.<sup>88</sup>

## **2.2 The Antecedents of Islamic Radicalism**

This section will provide a thorough review of the relevant literature, which has contributed to my understanding of the causes of Islamic radicalism. Islamic radicalism does not emerge randomly, or in a vacuum. Rather, it is stimulated by specific causative factors that differ according to the context in which Muslim radicalisation has emerged. Although multiple predictive variables tend to recur throughout much of the research, many theorists do acknowledge that no single variable or theory exclusively explains the processes of ‘Islamic radicalism’. To understand Islamic radicalism and its impact on Muslim identity, especially in a global context, a proper investigation of the following relevant causes needs to be carried out: ‘globalisation’ (Ahmed, 1994; Ameli, 2002; Roy, 2004), ‘secularism and modernisation’ (Esposito, 1992; Lewis, 1990), ‘frustration – political, social, economic,

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<sup>86</sup> See chapter 3 for a detailed account of HT in relation to their origins, aims, and strategies (pp. 73-81).

<sup>87</sup> Refer to chapter three for more insight into HT ideology (pp. 73-83).

<sup>88</sup> Unlike traditionalist and fundamentalist groups, HT does not seek to establish a state literally based on early Islam; rather it wants to create a modern Islamic state that incorporates modern institutions but retaining Islam as the sole source legislation.

cultural disaffection ' (Crenshaw, 1981; Gurr, 1970; Hoffman, 1998; Piven and Cloward, 1977; Roy, 2004), 'intensification of religiosity' (Buckser and Glazier, 2003), 'psychological traits' (Crayton, 1983; Jenkins, 1979; Post, 1990) and 'group dynamics' (Sageman, 2005). Since these contributions to the literature have offered significant insights, I have abridged the most relevant theories, in the subsequent sections, in order to help me identify the context in which Islamic radicalism has emerged among some Muslims.

### **2.2.1 Globalisation**

I have confined my study of globalisation to its cultural domain, because this overriding characteristic penetrates every facet of society (Baudrillard, 1993). In a general sense, 'cultural globalisation' has facilitated greater interconnectedness, especially concerning the global flow of culture, which has prompted a few dominant cultures to influence native cultures (Andrews, 1998; Beyer, 1998; Pieterse, 1995). The key issue that needs to be addressed here is whether 'cultural globalisation', at the local and global level, has had an impact on Islamic radicalism. According to Roy (2004), Islamic radicalism is largely the result of the globalisation of Islam, and not just a by-product of the crisis in the Middle East. Haddad and Esposito (1997, p. xvi) believe that for Islamic radicals the 'primary threat of the West is cultural rather than political or economic'. This cultural dependency, they argue, deprives people of their identity, destroying 'Islam and the Islamic community far more effectively than political rule' (Haddad and Esposito 1997, p. xvi). Globalisation processes are therefore often thought to have consequences for Islamic radicalism, because of the cultural reaction to 'westernisation' by traditional Muslim societies (Roy, 2004). In this context, globalisation is perceived as a fragmenting process, synonymous with 'westernisation', which erodes the socio-religious identity of Muslims (Beyer, 1994; Featherstone, 1995; Pieterse, 1995; Waters, 1995). This view would suggest that globalisation is a highly destructive process, tantamount to a newly conceived form of Western imperialism (Cvetkovich and Kellner, 1998). Some theorists have questioned the assumptions underpinning this position, drawing a distinction between 'westernisation' and globalisation (Giddens, 1990). In contrast, Beyer (1994, p. 82) argues that globalisation has introduced western modernity to the 'non-west', which is perceived as 'less global'. This is further complicated by the fact that western values originate from a secular tradition, while Islam derives much of its cultural heritage from religious sources. Within this context, it is

important to try to understand how Islamic radicalism arose, and why secularism and modernism have helped incite Muslim radicals to action.

### **2.2.2 Secularisation and Modernisation**

Why has Islamic radicalism become such an important political and social actor in the world? A number of competing explanations have been put forward, yet the most consistently proposed explanation is still the assumption that Islamic radicalism is a response to secularism and modernisation (Esposito, 1992; Huntington, 1997; Lewis, 1988; Roy, 2004). According to Kepel (2005, p. 225), Islamic radicals are 'living symbols' of the failure of modernisation. Fukuyama (2002) argues that the emergence of Islamic radicalism, in a sociological sense, is not dissimilar from the antecedents of 'European fascism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century'. He believes that the Muslim world has experienced large-scale population displacement, making this 'new form of radical Islam' more appealing as it emphasises 'the loss of values and cultural disorientation that the modernisation process itself has engendered' (Fukuyama, cited in Newsweek January, 2002). It was widely believed that the developing world would become secular as it modernised, urbanised and industrialised (Haynes, 1999). When these states emerged from the legacy of colonial rule, it was thought that they would adopt the western model, in which religion lost its public significance. Instead, greater connections were forged between religion and politics, for instance in the Iranian revolution (1979). According to Falk (2001, p. 61), the failure of secularism was inevitable, as such a tradition 'is not indigenous to such countries and as an artificial implant is not nearly as deeply rooted in the cultural life of such societies'. Consequently, Lewis (1988, p. 52-58) argues that the global expansion of secularism has triggered the Muslim world into a reactionary struggle against the West's secular heritage. Secularism excluded the consideration of religious identity as a viable expression of 'sovereignty', invoking greater resistance towards the privatisation of religion (Jorgensen, 1992).

Globalisation processes have had a major impact on developing countries, most notably in strengthening ethno-religious identities, which has reduced the relevance of secularism. According to Weigel (cited in Huntington 1993, p. 26), a global religious revitalisation is taking place, in which religious actors are actively advocating the 'un-secularization of the world'. This assumption has, in some respect been supported by the revival of religious

markers in many parts of the world.<sup>89</sup> According to Esposito (1998, p. 19), the ‘global religious resurgence has challenged the expectations of modernisation theory, the progressive secularisation and Westernisation of developing societies’. He believes that religion has become a major ideological, social and political force (Esposito 1998, p. 19). The emergence of radical Islamic groups concerned with political and social issues indicates ‘undeniable evidence of a deep malaise’ in Muslim society (Kepel 1994, p. 24). In recent decades, the increasing appeal of Islamic radicalism has coincided with the intensification of globalisation. This demonstrates in some way that this is a reaction against the expansion of western culture. However, this is not a phenomenon restricted to the Muslim world. In fact, the great majority of the third world, as well as some countries in the west, have recast religion as a significant source of identity. According to Marshall (1998, p. 16), this vital quest for identity and authenticity is a native response to the changing conditions brought by globalisation. It would be problematic to assert that modernism and secularism are definite preconditions for Islamic radicalism, given the diversity of political circumstances in different parts of the world – from Latin America to Asia and Africa.

For the purposes of my study, it is important to note that globalisation has aided the growth and influence of radical Islamic groups. In fact, the expansion of Islamic radicalism, and much of its appeal, is owed to global networks for information exchange. Islamic groups have quickly harnessed the strengths of modern technologies, and advancements in global communications have allowed radicals to spread their message across the globe in seconds. For instance, the countless videotapes featuring Osama bin Laden, which have surfaced over the years, are distributed via the internet to a global audience. According to Rudolph and Piscatori (1997), Islamic groups use global networks to exchange ideas and raise funds for activism. This was made more apparent by the efforts of the United States to cut off financial support for al-Qaeda by confiscating assets and strictly controlling the flow of global finance (Levitt, 2006). George (1996, p. 12) believes that Islamic groups in the Middle East have ‘spread very quickly’ in a global manner, through a ‘network of intellectual and political contacts between societies’. The use of global networks has one primary objective: to maintain the integrity of the global Muslim community. Roy (1994) asserts that Islamic radicals’ vision of global Ummah is both a mirror of, and a form of revenge against, the globalisation that made them what they are. For instance, the issue of Bosnia drew many

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<sup>89</sup> This religious upsurge is not restricted to the developing world. A Christian revival, for instance, has taken root post-9/11 in the United States. In fact, former President George W. Bush described this newfound religious devotion as the ‘Third Awakening’, taking place in the backdrop of ‘a confrontation between good and evil’ (The *Washington Post*, 13/09/2006).

young Muslims into greater action, creating a renewed sense of global community (Ahmed, 1994). The notion of a global community, or Ummah, constitutes a shared sense of belonging, and provides a devotee with a 'collective identity' (Ahmad, 1997; Dallal, 1995). Globalisation has been crucial to the development of a global community, helping Muslims become increasingly religious and politically active (Rudolph and Piscatori, 1997). As Beyer (1994, p. 1) puts it, 'we live in a globalizing social reality, one in which previously effective barriers to communication no longer exist'. As a result, many young Muslims appear more politically aware of perceived Muslim suffering, such as that in Iraq and Afghanistan (FOSIS, 2005). Paz (2002, p. 1) describes this reaction as the 'brotherhood of the oppressed'. These global events have triggered an acceleration of recruitment among young Muslims into radical Islamic movements, illustrating the effect of globalisation (Fawaz, (2006).

More importantly, the national context has been greatly affected by globalisation; Islamic movements have been inspired by global developments which have had an impact on their political and social goals (Haynes, 1999). The effects of modernisation, especially on the national and local levels, challenge traditional values. According to Jameson (1998, p. 58), the concept of 'national culture' has been significantly weakened by cultures that have been imported through the flow of cultural globalisation. This aroused a new sense of religious identity, providing considerable renewal, which is not restricted by class or gender. Clearly, one cannot describe this phenomenon as simply a modern expression of class upheaval, using religion as a substitute for class. Recent studies have shown that Islamic radicalism has a high level of appeal among the educated middle classes, concentrating its recruitment in urban centres – areas greatly shaped by globalisation processes (Crenshaw, 1981).

### **2.2.3 Frustration – Socio-Political, Economic and Cultural Disaffection**

In order to identify the most likely settings for Islamic radicalism, one must explore the political, social, economic and cultural causes of this phenomenon. A commonly cited trigger of Islamic radicalism is frustration, which is usually inspired by environmental conditions. The underlying assumption is that frustrations are a predictable reaction to defined stimuli, prompting extreme behaviour and collective action (Burgat and Dowell 1993; Dekmejian 1995; Keddie 1995). Empirical research conducted by Buss (1961), Berkowitz (1962), and Himmelweit (1950), has shown that frustration can be caused by a diverse set of social conditions. The anger induced by frustration can be a strong motivating

factor, which if sufficiently prolonged, might trigger radical behaviour. According to Appelbaum and Chambliss (1997), a precipitating event is required before a change in behaviour occurs, which they refer to as a 'trigger'. According to Gurr (1970, p. 36), 'men who are frustrated have an innate disposition to do violence to its source in proportion to the intensity of their frustrations'. If frustration is believed to occur once a sufficient stimulus has been triggered, then what are the sources of Muslim disaffection?

#### **2.2.4 Economic Disaffection**

The division of wealth and rising inequalities have been suggested as possible causes of Islamic radicalism. Brandt (1980) famously proclaimed 'while hunger rules peace cannot prevail'. This rather apt statement simplifies the poverty argument, which has been suggested by Murphy (1999), Hoffman (1998) and Fukuyama (2002). According to Hoffman (1998, p. 209), poverty is a significant factor in stimulating radical Islam because it leads to 'desperation and desperation to violence'. Similarly, Lewis (2004, p. 119) asserts that 'massive unemployment' appears to be a significant factor in fostering young Muslim disaffection, providing a pathway into radical Islam. Recent trends concerning global poverty indicate a considerable increase. For instance, between 1995 and 2001 the number of impoverished people rose by twenty per cent (Azam, 2001). Galtung (2002) believes that the 'Third World – First World dichotomy' has reformatted traditional class conflicts based on structural violence. However, varying economic conditions across the globe do not directly correspond with the occurrence of Islamic radicalism or social upheaval (Hafez, 2003; Tilly, 1978). The problem with this assertion is amplified by the lack of social upheaval in the developing world, which makes it difficult to apply this view of structural violence as a causative feature of Islamic radicalism. Economic deprivation may be a trigger that leads to frustration among the working classes, but Islamic radicalism is not inherently a working class phenomenon. For instance, the Iranian revolution took place under stable economic conditions, and from a wider Muslim context this argument fails to match the antecedents of Islamic movements (Hafez, 2003). Some social theorists have attached too great an importance to this variable, because the vast majority of profiles of Islamic radicals indicate that they are from economically stable backgrounds (Crenshaw, 1981; Hovland and Sears, 1940; Mintz, 1946). A survey of Hizballah found that the group has minimal support among the working classes. Instead the vast majority of its affiliates come from the 'middle and upper classes' (Harik 1996, p. 55). Furthermore, Snyder and Tilly (1972) conducted a

significant study which showed no substantial correlation exists between collective violence and economic hardship; instead they found that levels of collective violence were determined largely by the degree of conflict over resources, amount of political activity and the extent of state repression. This motivating factor does not therefore provide insight into the causes of Islamic radicalism, especially among young Muslim radicals in Britain, since the majority emerge from middle-class backgrounds.

### **2.2.5 Cultural Disaffection**

The formation of strong cultural attachments can shape and motivate people to commit acts, such as ‘martyrdom operations’, which appear unreasonable to outside observers. These deep-seated associations stem from a ‘tradition of learnt rules of conduct’ (Hayek 1992, p. 12). For instance, religion is considered to be the most intense of cultural identifiers, because it entails an association with a deeply-held belief system. Schiffman (1999, p. 2) argues that cultural identity is shaped from a sense of ‘people-hood’, which he believes is a natural aspect of group identity. He contends that this collective identity is passed down from each generation, connecting individuals by solidarity with a larger collective that differentiates members of the group from non-members. According to Monroe and Kreidie (1997), a major determining factor behind Islamic radicalism is ‘perspective’, because radicals see themselves as symbols of their religion. This assumes that radicals perceive ‘outsiders’ as a threat to their cultural heritage, which gives vigour to Islamic radicalism. According to Sayyid (1997, p. 22), Islamic radicalism is an indigenous ‘response to inclusion in a western-led global system’. Similarly, Moore (1966) believes that when an established culture has begun to be eroded, threatening some of the population, people have responded by reaffirming the traditional ways of life with increasing energy. This fear, pertaining to a loss of culture, is stimulated by what Taylor (1991) described as the ‘malaise of modernity’. Eisenstadt (1983) believes the ‘clash of cultures’ has a destructive effect on members of the weaker culture, who become socially excluded and reviled.

Within this context, some social theorists contend that cultural differences and religiously based identities are the primary sources of conflict (Fukuyama, 1992; Huntington 1997; Kaplan, 1994; Lewis, 1990). According to Lewis (1990, pp. 52-58), this conflict is rooted in ancient tensions between ‘two rival civilisations’. Similarly, Huntington (1997) equates this conflict of cultures to deeply-held beliefs which are incompatible with western tradition. He

believes that this will create a 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington 1997, p. 109). Furthermore, Kaplan (1994, p. 56) believes that cultural differences will erupt in 'extreme global violence'. However, this monolithic view of cultures is problematic. Firstly, there is no single unifying conception of Islam. This makes it difficult to assign a fixed monolithic meaning, because Islam is shaped by diverse historical, ethnic and traditional interpretations (Hunter, 1998). Secondly, these culturally based explanations do not account for internal tensions within the Islamic civilisation, such as the Sunni-Shiite conflict. Thirdly, this view assumes that religion will become the most pronounced marker of identity, yet in other parts of the world religion is less active (Mahbubani, 1993). Culturally based explanations tend to create a position of incompatibility between the west and the Muslim world, giving rise to a fixed monolithic entity. In reality, this oversimplification neglects the complexities of the Islamic tradition, even as a strong primordial bond, Islam does not induce its followers to form a cultural bloc.

#### **2.2.6 Socio-Political Disaffection**

Causes of Islamic radicalism can be found in influences emanating from the socio-political environment in diverse global and national settings, encouraging individuals to interpret their experience of harsh conditions in a negative way (Fanon, 1968; Piven and Cloward 1977; Swilling, 1987). This type of disaffection has been described as the subjective feeling of powerlessness and a lack of confidence in the processes, systems and institutions of a given society (Di Palma 1970, p. 30). Socio-political frustration can be a strong motivator in seeking better conditions, heightening widespread disaffection. In the wake of the French Revolution, de Tocqueville (1856, p. 176) declared that if the source of socio-political disaffection were 'patiently endured' then it would become 'intolerable once the possibility of removing it crosses men's minds'. This type of disaffection can be aroused in a number of different ways. Some examples include: 'casual conversations' (Perry and Pugh, 1978), 'exposure to rhetoric' (Reich, 1948), and 'exposure to the media' (Posel, 1989). However, the most powerful source of this disaffection occurs when individuals become active participants in a movement that makes these socio-political issues a distinct cause (Coser, 1974; Swilling, 1987).

In a British context, Lewis (2004) argues that young Muslims are drawn to the cause of radical Islam by political and social disaffection. In particular, he believes that Muslim youth



lack a sense of ‘belongingness and togetherness’ inside British society (Lewis, 2004, p. 201). The 2001 riots in the North of England highlighted a cluster of attitudes relating to a lack of engagement and under-representation, which left many young Muslims feeling disaffected from the state. Generally speaking, this disaffection is stimulated by various frustrations that are connected to unfulfilled expectations (Gamson, 1975). In a political context, disaffection can occur when an individual loses confidence in the government’s ability to resolve problems they regard as important (Dahl, 1971). This socio-political imbalance has considerable impact on identity construction, as young Muslims struggle to think, feel and act in accordance with their national ‘level of self’ (Turner, 1991). From a global perspective, the Muslim world is stimulated by diverse socio-political conditions, which are likely to be affected by changing social forces, such as ‘urbanisation, modernisation and industrialisation’ (Haynes, 1999). Piven and Cloward (1977) argue that active resistance groups form when newfound political awareness is achieved. Thus, political disaffection is linked both to social changes and to authoritarian politics in the Muslim world, which are combustible material for political radicalism (Fukuyama, 2002).

In summary, frustration relates to unfulfilled expectations; if this condition persists it can result in disaffection (Crosby and Hennigan, 1977). In this situation a precipitating event is required before a change in behaviour occurs. A recent survey of Muslim students found that 83 per cent were frustrated by US aggression towards the Muslim world (FOSIS, 2005). The relationship between disaffection and frustration can be strengthened if an individual perceives that change will not occur, such as the failure of mass protest to change a political outcome, intensifying disaffection. Frustration can breed disaffection, as it emphasises feelings of loss and powerlessness, often becoming more violent (Kelly and Nicholson, 1980). This view is problematic because many parts of the world experience disaffection and frustration, but they do not exhibit higher levels of violence. Therefore, it is somewhat problematic to assign fixed or monolithic causes to Muslim frustration, because this oversimplifies the complexities of Muslim communities, states, and groups (Nair, 1997). In a British context, Muslims are one of the most deprived social groups in the UK, but this alone does not account for frustration. HT, for instance, is predominantly composed of white-collar professionals, educated to degree level, many of which are employed in large commercial firms in the city.<sup>90</sup> Why do some Muslims with similar levels of frustration and disaffection decide to join different Islamic groups? The Iraq War, for example, can trigger different

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<sup>90</sup> Refer to chapter six: sociological study of HT in Britain (p. 175).

social responses among Muslims, such as depression, apathy, non-violent demonstrations, and in some extreme instances ‘Jihadism’. If Muslims can be stimulated by the same frustrations, then frustration alone cannot distinguish non-radical and radical behavioural choices.<sup>91</sup> Frustration is only one, and not necessarily the most important, factor affecting the expression of radical behaviour (Bandura, 1977).

### **2.2.7 Intensification of Religiosity**

Many social theorists view religious renewal as a salient dynamic of identity change (Buckser and Glazier, 2003). This argument presumes that a radical is first galvanised by a spontaneous, in some cases gradual, intensification of religiosity. According to Esposito (1992, p. 12), ‘the indices of an Islamic awakening in personal life are many: increased attention to religious observances, more emphasis on Islamic dress and values’. Esposito (1992) believes this extensive renewal of religion has been supplemented by Islam’s reaffirmation within civil society, through governments and opposition movements both seeking to appeal to the popularising of Islam. According to Browsers and Kurzman (2004, p. 165), in times of ‘great social transformation’, a natural recourse is the ‘revival of religion’. However, recent studies have generally shown that this variable is not significant, especially since very few Islamic radicals undergo a powerful transcending religious experience. Merari (1980, p. 206) conducted extensive interviews with Islamic radicals; he noted that religion seemed to be relatively unimportant in the phenomenon of Islamic radicalism. The more evidence of debates about Islamic radicalism that I amassed, the more unimportant ‘religiosity’ became. Hussain Osman, one of the 21/7 failed suicide bombers, insisted that ‘religion’ played no role in his motivation to carry out terror attacks (Campbell and Hooper, 2005). In contrast, he suggested that the sight of war in Iraq, as portrayed through ‘Jihadist’ propaganda videos, stirred his response. It can be greatly problematic, when trying to identify the causes of Islamic radicalism, to focus on religion, because there is no correlation between religiosity and membership of radical Islamic groups. According to Harik (1996, p. 41), members of Hizballah in Lebanon do not display greater levels of religiosity than do adherents of secular parties. This sentiment agrees with surveys conducted in Palestine,

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<sup>91</sup> The data collected from control group 1 (appendix V, p 259) indicated that despite sharing similar frustrations as HT activists, the respondents opted for non-radical trajectories. This is because there are different channels for frustration. In particular, most non-radical activists sought either local community outreach projects or charity organisations. According to Irfan (participant in control group 1), ‘HT ignore local problems and issues...they only care about politics and establishing the Islamic State but this does not address the needs of Muslims in the community’

which indicated that less than three per cent of Palestinians desire an Islamic state (Public Opinion Poll No. 42, 2001).

### **2.5.8 Psychological Explanations**

In approaching the problem of why some individuals become drawn to Islamic radicalism, psychologists tend to view personalities as single entities (Fromm, 1939; Lecky, 1945; Mead, 1934; Rogers, 1951). There is an implicit assumption here that I find problematic. Psychology, in the broad sense of the term, has a tendency to remove phenomena from their social context. For instance, some psychologists wrongfully assert that Muslim radicals exhibit a mental imbalance, as a result of suffering ‘narcissistic injury’ during childhood (Crayton 1983, p. 37; Post 1990, p. 25). It is difficult to validate such a narrow perspective, since it presumes that radicals are mentally dysfunctional, and neglects other social stimuli. According to Crenshaw (1981, p. 12), ‘the outstanding common characteristic’ of Muslim radicals is their ‘normality’. Likewise, Merari (1980, pp. 279-80) conducted extensive interviews of the friends and family of suicide bombers; he concluded that such radicals were not ‘psychopaths’, and in most cases they did not have any ‘psychological flaws’ that set them apart from ordinary citizens. Silke (1998) argues that it is very rare to find a radical who suffers from a clinically defined personality disorder, or who could be regarded as mentally ill in any other way. Therefore, it appears that, in most instances, radicals do not exhibit any mental illness. The causes of Islamic radicalism cannot be explained simply by innate psychological traits, because this neglects the social settings from which radicals emerge (Fanon, 1968; Gurr, 1970; Piven and Cloward, 1977; Swilling, 1987). Having established this, profiles of mentally unstable individuals would seem to be of little, if any, use in determining why some young Muslims become radicalised.

### **2.5.9 Group Dynamics**

An increasingly powerful argument, that has been given greater currency in recent years, relates to the radical group itself (Gould 1991; McAdam 1986; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Stark and Bainbridge 1980). According to McAdam (1986), social networks provide a consistent pathway into social movements. Within these movements the individuals are organised into small cells and given countless hours of intense spiritual training, resulting in the creation of a collective identity (Brooks, 2002). However, within the field of social

psychology, theorists have conceptualised the notion of the group in multiple ways. Sherif (1969) associates group dynamics with social structures in the form of a family, which determine status and role relationships. According to Mead (1934), Asch (1952) and Lewin (1948) the individual and group identities need to be examined in connection. However, the most vital component in the group dynamic is a shared conception of the members as belonging to the same social unit (Hitch, 1983). Therefore, identity emerges from people's common perceptions of themselves as members of the same group. Islamic radicals enter the group and are immediately subjected to indoctrination that contains aspects of glorification of their own group, religion and extensive anti-enemy propaganda (Moghadam, 2003). More importantly, the group acts as the sole interpreter of ideology, forcing the novice to be completely dependent upon the radical group. Knutson (cited in Sprinzak 1990, p. 79) believes that as radicalisation becomes more embedded, 'the collective group identity takes over much of the individual identity of the members'. According to Sageman (2005), the social networks of friends, formed while uprooted from their home environment, provide the radical group with a wealth of recruitment.<sup>92</sup> However, some have argued that this hypothetical explanation of the causes of Islamic radicalism greatly ignores the individual life histories which directly contribute to the following of radical pathways.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has posed many theoretical questions concerning Islamic radicalism. My initial focus was on navigating the immense confusion caused by ambiguous definitions, in which interconnected theories were respectively used to understand divergent issues such as 'terrorism', 'Islamism', 'fundamentalism' and 'radicalism'. Although these terms appear broadly connected, they are in fact unsystematically applied to similar realities, compounding the problem. Moreover, they do not necessarily refer to the same phenomenon. Fundamentalism, for example, is still used to describe Islamic activism, but it is firmly embedded within a religious dimension. Despite the fact that I prefer using the term Islamic radicalism to describe HT activism, it is not a blanket description of all forms and types of Islamic activism. Rather, the framework of Islamic radicalism is relatively restricted to Islamic groups that seek to change the whole social and political structure of society, which implies they are more politically orientated. This does not provide systematic insight into the discrepancies and evolutionary character of Islamic movements. Therefore, the aim of

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<sup>92</sup> The radical group replicates the emotional bonds of the family in a new environmental setting (refer to chapter four for more insight into peer group associations in HT, p. 113 and p. 128).

addressing the terminological issues was to make some formal distinctions in the application of radicalism, as it applies to HT, so its meaning is distinguished from similar terms like fundamentalism and Islamism.

Even though this chapter has brought different threads of radicalisation theory together, it is still extremely difficult to fit and frame HT radicalisation into one of these theoretical threads. It is rather clear that a large portion of young British Muslims feel frustrated and socially excluded, but what pushes some of these young people to join HT. Within the broad literature regarding radicalisation, there is a great deal of emphasis placed upon trying to unlock the causative triggers of the phenomenon. For this reason, theorists have sought to identify the roots of young Muslim grievances. The theories that have sprung forth as a result are quite extensive and far-reaching: such as, social deprivation, increase in religiosity, identity crisis, and a host of others. However, none of these theories provide a satisfactory insight into why some young British Muslims join HT. When I surveyed the plethora of possible causes behind young Muslim frustration, I was struck by the fact that these grievances are largely prevalent amongst British Muslims, but HT recruitment is not. In fact, HT radicalisation is exclusively restricted to a homogenous grouping of young, middle-class, south Asians. This would suggest HT recruitment and radicalisation is greatly contextualised to the realities and experiences of its activists, and thus a penetrating study is required to unlock the question of why a specific social demographic is attracted to HT in the UK.

The contextual reality plays a large role in unlocking radicalisation – modernity and the clash with western culture, authoritarianism and lack of democracy – are theories more relatable to the development and situation in the Arab world. While economic deprivation is more likely to trigger young Muslims from working class backgrounds. More significantly, the preceding literature has revealed that radicals do not correspond to a given theory or profile. As Sageman (2004) has suggested, radicals emerge from diverse social realities and settings. This would imply that no uniform theories of radicalisation can be applied to young British Muslims, because there is a great deal of ethno-religious and class diversity. Within the complexity of causes, it is easy to lose sight of the group. HT has successfully mobilised young Muslim frustrations and channelled it into radicalism. Therefore, there are two key elements of my study: the activist and the group. These two lines of inquiry provide a useful insight and guide to my study of HT radicalisation.

## **Chapter Three:**

### **The Evolution of Hizb ut-Tahrir (The Liberation Party)**

Historically, HT was one of the most vocal radical Islamic movements in Britain, becoming a galvanising force among some young Muslims. HT emerged as the pioneering radical Muslim youth movement during the early 1990s; it was dubbed ‘Europe’s fastest growing Muslim group’ (*The Observer*, 13/08/1995). It infiltrated university campuses in a concerted effort to create an Islamic awakening among the placid student population. As a result, it quickly gained media-wide notoriety for its combative public activity and evangelical style of recruitment. The national press branded it a ‘fanatical group of Muslim extremists’ (*Daily Mirror*, 04/03/1994).<sup>93</sup> The rise to national prominence, in part, was achieved due to their sheer determination to take full control of university campuses and to build a strong recruitment base among second generation South-Asian British Muslims. However, it is difficult to rationalise this success, especially since the movement was inspired by historical events which occurred after World War II in the Middle East. In my search for explanation, it became clear that I had to begin my investigation by looking at the historical triggers that inspired the inception of the movement. This chapter seeks to unlock two very significant historical realities: (a) the inception of HT in 1952 and (b) its transportation to the United Kingdom in the early 1980s. These two distinct periods are quite disconnected from each other, yet the growth of HT in Britain cannot be properly explored until I shed light on the background of HT’s launch.

#### **3.1 Origins of HT: Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani**

According to Taji-Farouki (1996, p.114), the inception of the movement ‘lies in the response...to the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, the fragmentation of its territories into nation-states, the creation of Israel and the impotence of Muslim societies in the face of neo-imperialism’. These historical events induced Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani to respond by establishing a new political party, HT. Nabhani was a relatively unknown scholar with little political experience, except for the time he spent under the tutelage of the famous Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam. After completing his studies at Al-Azhar University in 1932, he returned to Palestine, even more disgusted with the continued supremacy of western imperialism.

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<sup>93</sup> During the 1990s HT was the focus of media attention from both the tabloids and broadsheets (refer to bibliography, pp. 285-287).

However, it took the establishment of Israel to entice Nabhani to greater activism. His early writings and political views were greatly influenced by *al-qawmiyya al-`arabiyya* (Arab nationalism).<sup>94</sup> In 1950 he published his first book entitled '*Inqadh Filastin*' (Saving Palestine) followed by '*Risalat al-Arab*' (The Message of the Arabs). Initially, he sought to establish a legitimate political party, making a formal request to the Jordanian authorities on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1952, in accordance with the new constitutional guidelines (Taji-Farouki, 1996). Nabhani (2001, p.1) described the new group as 'a political party with Islam as its ideology and the goal of resuming an Islamic way of life by establishing an Islamic State, which will implement Islam and propagate it worldwide'. However, his request was denied, because his political party operated on a platform that was considered incompatible with the newly conceived Jordanian constitution. Nevertheless, the movement continued to operate, expressing a collection of revolutionary ideals aimed at re-establishing the *Dawlah Islamiya* (Islamic State)<sup>95</sup>. As a result, the Jordanian authorities sanctioned a strict decree proscribing HT and declaring its activities unlawful. However, this did not stop the movement from gaining considerable support, as it established new cells throughout the Muslim world.

### **3.2 Deconstructing HT: Ideology, Aim and Methodology<sup>96</sup>**

The *mabda'a* (ideology) of HT was conceived by Nabhani within a specific historical and political frame. Nabhani was disgusted with the continued supremacy of western imperialism, which he sought to vanquish by reviving the Muslim populace. 'The Western culture was the dagger drawn by the West in the face of the Islamic State and by which it fatally stabbed her' (Nabhani 1953a, p. 4). This heightened fury towards western culture plays a significant role in the construction of HT ideology. Nabhani's cardinal ideological beliefs seem to be greatly inspired by two fairly narrow responses. The first, as Davis (1984, p. 134) has identified within Islamic radicalist thought, is to a perceived 'culture conflict' with the west. The ideology of HT is deeply laced within the dogmatic narrative of

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<sup>94</sup> *Al-qawmiyya al-`arabiyya*: Arab Nationalism was the notion that the Arab people shared a common sense of language and history, giving rise to a distinct national identity (Hourani, 1998). This phenomenon gradually became an articulated political doctrine, with specific political aims, linked to Arab independence. Arab nationalism grew as a phenomenon during the colonial period. It articulated a response to foreign aggression based on the need to emancipate the Arabian Peninsula under the banner of an exclusive nationalist ideology. This ideology generated intense solidarity amongst Arab people, who apart from celebrating their civilisation and culture had a framework to regain political hegemony (Choueiri, 2001).

<sup>95</sup> *Dawlah Islamiya* (Islamic State) is a state that implements Islamic law at all institutional levels and in particular the source of legislation and governance is Islam.

<sup>96</sup> According to HT's manifesto, HT is a 'political party whose ideology is Islam, so politics is its work and Islam is its ideology. It works within the *Ummah* [Muslim Nation] and together with her, so that she adopts Islam as her cause and is led to restore the Khilafah and the ruling by what Allah [God] revealed' (Anon 2000, p. 1).

confrontation. The ‘west’ is identified as a significant source of conflict. Nabhani perceived secularism, for example, as purely a western construct that was alien to Islam. The disintegration of the *Dawlah Islamiya* (Islamic State) was exacerbated by the influx of western secular ideas which challenged the role of Islam in state practice. The second conforms to Dekmejian’s (1988, p. 4) observation that most Islamist groups express their revivalist programme in response to ‘internal decay’. These two rather predictable facets of Nabhani’s rhetoric and discourse are greatly perpetuated across the spectrum of Islamist movements (Ismail 2006, p. 32).

### 3.2.1 Ideology of Confrontation

The development of HT ideology can be traced back to the colonial and post-colonial period. It was articulated in response to the perceived cultural and political dominance of the West, and thus was contrived within a specific framework of confrontation.<sup>97</sup> Firstly, Nabhani framed the conflict with the West into a religious dichotomy, as the inevitable clash between ‘*Iman*’<sup>98</sup> and ‘*kufur*’<sup>99</sup> (Nabhani 1953c, p.23). This, as Kurtz and Turpin (1999, p. 641) explained, gives the confrontation a ‘larger-than-life’ dimension. Secondly, as the interaction with the West matured, Nabhani sought to fabricate a distorted narrative of confrontation with the West, depicting it as monolithic and dangerous. In particular, Nabhani was particularly concerned with the Western cultural and intellectual invasion of Muslim society. As he warned:

The Muslims failed to realize the contradiction between the Islamic and European concepts. Another cause was their failure to distinguish between science, industry and inventions which Islam encourages Muslims to acquire, regardless of the source, and culture and ideology which can only be adopted from Islam (Nabhani 1953, p. 173)

Nabhani was deeply critical of the Arab response to the internal decay, especially those who espoused the intellectual superiority of western culture and ideology. This is because Nabhani manufactured a dogmatic cultural polarisation between Islam and the west. He

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<sup>97</sup> This antagonist reading of the ‘other’ was not entirely imagined. History is ripe with extremely bigoted examples of colonial attitude towards native Arabs, such as Lord Cromer, who believed Arabs ‘were an inherently backward people’ in need of colonisation (cited in Armstrong 2001, p. 161). Therefore, to some degree, Nabhani’s adversarial framing of Muslim relations with the other reflects a ‘discourse of protest against the West’ (Milton-Edwards 2006, p. 81).

<sup>98</sup> *Iman* relates to Islamic belief (the righteous Muslim).

<sup>99</sup> *Kufr* is the opposite of *Iman*, it relates to disbelief in Islam (those who conceal or reject the truth).



viewed Islam as a complete system of human governance that deciphers all facets of human identity, and thus the world is thereby composed into a single frame of competing cultures, between ‘*Haq*’ (Truth, Islam) and ‘*Batil*’ (evil, non-Islam) (Nabhani 1953c, p. 18). Therefore, anything that emanates from the ideology of western society is *Batil* and thus must be excluded from Muslim society and identity. The demonising of Western culture allowed HT to establish a framework of action in which Muslim people could reinforce a perception of shared Muslim identity.

Thirdly, Nabhani identified the transformative effects brought about by those Muslim intellectuals and reformers who have been ‘seduced by Western culture’ (Nabhani 1953, p. 1). These intellectuals are viewed as a corrosive force within Muslim society. Therefore, HT ideology was counter-poised not just to the West, but also to some Muslims within the Arab world, and thus HT had created a ‘multi-faceted other’ (Ismail 2006, p.37).<sup>100</sup> Mohammed Abdu’s views were wholly condemned by Nabhani, for instance, as they promoted western ideology through the backdoor.<sup>101</sup> Abdu strongly believed secular ideology was being introduced far too rapidly into a religiously orientated society, and thus advocated a more gradual reformation of Islamic faith in the public sphere (Armstrong, 2001; Hourani, 1998).

### **3.2.2 Reconstructing History: Muslim Decay**

The theme of internal decay constitutes an important fragment in HT ideology, which I feel merits further exploration. As mentioned, Nabhani’s intellectual outlook was to a great extent provoked by colonisation. This encounter awakened his consciousness regarding the plight of the Arab world, which he felt had sunk into the ‘abyss of decline’ (Al-Nabhani 2002d, p.1). As Dekmejian (1995) noted this type of reaction is often embedded within the religious revivalist paradigm. In other words, HT ideology is rooted in generic cycles of revivalism that were a response to perceived crisis and internal decay (Dekmejian 1995, p. 4). To begin with, Nabhani sought to understand why the Arab world had lost its high standing, seeing that ‘for many centuries the world of Islam was in the forefront of human civilisation and achievement’ (Lewis 2002, p. 3). In pursuing an answer to this question, Nabhani acknowledged that the internal decay had commenced well before the first

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<sup>100</sup> According to HT, ‘it is prohibited for Muslims to establish groups on the basis of Capitalism, Communism, Socialism, Nationalism, Patriotism, Sectarianism or Masonic parties or to associate themselves with such parties or to promote them, since they are Kufr parties which call for Kufr’ (Nabhani 2002b, p. 6)

<sup>101</sup> Mohammad Abduh was an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Egyptian reformer, who sought to bridge the intellectual gap that had been created between the West and the East, through reason and rationality (Hourani, 1998).

colonialists had stepped foot on Arab soil. Thus, Nabhani made the history of Islam and Muslims his initial point of departure. The socio-political contexts in which Nabhani engineered his ideology were to some degree preceded by his assumptions that the continuity of the Islamic historical narrative had become disrupted. For him determining the exact formula for the processes that resulted in the internal decay were considered integral to producing a coherent and workable model of revival for the contemporary Arab world. The evolution of Nabhani's radical thought in large part corresponds to Esposito's (1983) theory of Islamist revivalist movements. Esposito in *Islam and Politics* (1983, p. 30) outlined the need for the Islamic radical to construct the 'totality of Islam'. This entailed extending Islam's continuity and history, from the idealised period of the Prophet Mohammad to the present, in a way that merged the political and spiritual. As Esposito (1983, p. 32) explains, the reactionary development of 'pre-modern revivalism' to the socio-political decay is a key component in ideological construction. For Nabhani, the process of comprehending 'what went wrong', lead him to articulate the precise causes for the intellectual decay in relation to the idealised.<sup>102</sup>

The Muslim world did not reach such a cataclysmic state of unconsciousness, it was asserted, through a single lapse rather it was due to many historical factors accumulating over a lengthy period of time, which according to Nabhani was caused by the correct understanding of Islam being eroded (Nabhani, 2002d). This 'moralising discourse' grew from Nabhani's discontent towards a general state of decay amongst Muslim society, which he felt had become far removed from the idealised condition as laid down by Mohammad.<sup>103</sup> Voll (1982) provides a seminal deconstruction of how Islamic radicals, like Nabhani, perceive continuity in Islamic history, which greatly informs their ideology and methods. Voll (1982, p. 4) makes two highly significant observations: firstly spiritual incentive guides the revivalism and second the past plays a notable part in directing contemporary behaviour and action. Nabhani's revivalism sought to recapture the strength of Islam by providing a simple framework for understanding the earlier historical periods.

For Nabhani, the Muslim decay came about due to the 'mighty weakness that overtook the minds in understanding Islam' (Nabhani 2002b, p 1). This lack of understanding arose as a direct result of detaching the spirit of the Arabic language from the authority of Islam. The

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<sup>102</sup> The *idealised* refers to the ideal Muslim society as constituted by the Prophet Mohammed in Medina.

<sup>103</sup> 'Moralising discourse' relates to those individuals or groups that uphold and claim moral authenticity (Marsden 2005, p. 67).

Arabic language is bestowed with indispensable attributes when attached to the Quran, which according to HT is the language of Islam (Nabhani 1953b, p 1). When the Islamic State spread across vast quadrants it failed to establish the vitality of the Arabic language. Consequently, the Arabic language began to be ignored and became absent from the State's apparatus, especially during the Ottoman rule. Progression was suspended, as the extraction of divine rulings through the process of *Ijtihad*<sup>104</sup> became neglected (Nabhani 1953, p. 167-68). 'The understanding of Islam from its sources does not come about but in Arabic and the extracting of the divine rules cannot be accomplished except in Arabic' (Nabhani 1953a, pp. 186-7). This very simplistic reading of Muslim decay, greatly underplays the complexity of Islamic historiography. Some historians believe that a reliable and authentic rebuilding of Islamic religious tradition cannot be exclusively extrapolated from Muslim source material alone (Crone 1987, p. 204). Crone (2003, p. 7), for instance, asserts that religious tradition from Muslim sources is a 'monument to the destruction rather than the preservation of the past'. Dormer (1998, p. 26) provides a more balanced nuance to this problematic issue, he insists upon making a division between 'information' and 'historicisation'.<sup>105</sup> Nabhani's skewed appraisal of Muslim history reflects his overreaching tendency to manufacture a narrative that fits his socio-political agenda. This reconstruction of narrative about Muslim decay is embedded within his personalised reading, and thus little consensus exists concerning this 'historicisation' (Hourani, 1998; Lapidus, 1998).

### **3.2.3 Contextual Influences on Ideology: Merging Religion and Politics**

Within the academic literature concerning the evolution of Islamic radicalism, significant weight has been attributed to the socio-political causes of this rather disturbing trend.<sup>106</sup> Nabhani was not immune to the wider debates taking place across the Arab World. HT ideology was certainly contrived within a particular framework of understanding and in relation to competing intellectual responses to the socio-political decay: such as, (a) Arab reformers and modernists; (b) Arab nationalism; and (c) other radical Islamist movements (e.g. Muslim Brotherhood). These intellectual movements, including HT, were essentially the native response to two distinct social phenomena – colonisation and independence (Sayyid, 2003).

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<sup>104</sup> *Ijtihad* relates to the 'effort exercised by a jurist to extract a law or ruling from non-explicit scriptural sources or to formulate a specific legal opinion in the absence of texts of reference' (Ramadan 1998, p. 239).

<sup>105</sup> 'Information' relates to recollections of significant events, while 'historicisation' is associated with the manufacturing of historical narrative (Dormer 1998, p. 26).

<sup>106</sup> Refer to chapter two, pp. 58-69.

Arab reformist and modernist movements emerged rapidly during the early colonial period, but this intellectual tradition faded, to some degree, and generally had mixed influences on the post-independence period (Hourani, 1998). These movements initially sought to attest Islam's compatibility with western civilisation in response to colonial assertions of its backwardness (Armstrong 2001, p. 162; Ismail 2006, p. 44). A shift towards modernisation projects eventually proceeded, which sought to resurrect the Arabian Peninsula by following 'western achievements' (Dabashi 1993, p. 326). Secular ideals and institutions were seen as the intellectual backbone of Western modernity, and despite its introduction into an excessively religious setting, began to take root. Even though a number of these developments took place before Nabhani, it is clear that these events shaped his understanding of Arab history during the 1950s. In particular, he was trying to formulate a new manifesto that could transcend the national and regional context of the Middle East. In order to achieve this grand vision, he grounded his political readings of the period within a dogmatic Islamic framework. Nabhani perceived Islam as a divine doctrine which gives individuals systematic answers to a whole range of human quandary. So, it is no surprise that Nabhani believed 'political thought' is the 'highest types of thought' (Nabhani 1956, p. 1). But for this conception to be realised within a newly formulated manifesto, Nabhani needed to merge Islam with politics. In this regard he said: 'the Islamic Aqeedah (doctrine) is a political idea...distinguished from other Aqeedahs and ideologies in that it is spiritual and political' (Nabhani 1956, p. 1). This rendering of Islamic belief, as an all-encompassing system, naturally signified opposition to secularism. Secularism, in the sense of separating the spiritual and political realms, became an alien concept to HT. Consequently, as Nabhani (2002a, p. 6) noted, Mohammad established the first *Dawlah Islamiya* (Islamic state), a state in which divine rules were amalgamated within a political dimension and reality, resembling theocratic states in Christendom.

This demonising of Arab nationalism was greatly reactionary to the historical and modern developments taking place around Nabhani. Yet, his rejection of Arab nationalism can be traced to his rather simplistic reading of the decline of the Arab people and nation. As mentioned, Nabhani's early writings were monopolised by two distinct questions: why the Arab world declined and how can it be revived? The process of deconstructing Arab decline necessitated understanding what made the Arabs great in the first place? In simple terms, he concluded that Islam was the primary catalyst for the Arab ascent. Pre-Islamic Arabia was a

backward wasteland in which lawless tribes fought in protracted feuds (Crone, 2003). Therefore, the advent of Islam liberated the Arab, as it unified tribes under a single banner and provided an ideological platform to seek progression. This logic eventually saw Nabhani discard Arab nationalism in all its guises. He concluded that the Islamic thought had to have complete clarity, for it to be pure, and thus nationalistic revivalist theories were totally incompatible with Islam. Arab nationalism, as a movement, sought to establish an Arab revival upon an ambiguous basis that was non-Islamic, which became transparent with the rise of the Ba'th party, in Damascus during the 1940s, as they promoted religious secularism and nationality as an integral whole (Nabhani 1953c, p. 1).

Socio-political factors, as discussed in the introduction chapter, provide important contextual insight into the evolution of radical Islam. For Nabhani, witnessing the social disintegration of his homeland and the establishment of Israel certainly had a transformative effect on him in terms of his ideology. These events transformed the geo-political map of the Middle East, and so it is not surprising that HT ideology evolved from this socio-historical frame. Firstly, HT ideology was configured against the backdrop of regional socio-political shifts and various dislocations. Socio-political dislocations<sup>107</sup> were linked to all facets of state functionality which were purported as clear and definitive signs of the failure of man-made ideology.<sup>108</sup> Essentially, HT ideology was crafted in response to these perceived problems. This socio-political reading of the inception of radical Islam is somewhat skewed towards the outcomes of the milieu caused by modernisation: such as urbanisation and industrialisation, disaffection of people towards the failures of incumbent Muslim rulers (Ayubi, 1991; Esposito, 2002). In particular, Ayubi (1991, p. 179) believes the evolution of radical Islam can be explained through the 'paradigm of frustrated expectations' in relation to the failure of modernisation. For HT, the failure of Muslim nation-states to resolve the frustrations of its citizenry provided fertile soil to plant their radical ideology. As Anderson (1997, p. 23) explained, radical Islam manifested itself as a result of the milieu created by Muslim governments. In sum, the socio-political context surrounding Nabhani played an instrumental role in the development of his ideology and activism.

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<sup>107</sup> Socio-political dislocations were explained in terms of economic (unemployment, inflation and corruption), social (conflict, immorality and western cultural invasion), political (state failures, non-implementation of Islamic law, occupation of Muslim land etc.).

<sup>108</sup> HT proclaims three ideological theories exist in the modern era: democratic capitalism, communism and the Islamic system. The advancement achieved by non-Islamic ideologies is false as the growth accomplished is devoid of the relationship with God. Nabhani outlines his opposition to capitalism, in the book '*Nidham al-Islam*' (System of Islam), as a materialistic philosophy that denies the instinct of religiosity (Refer to Nabhani 2002c, '*Nidhan al-Islam*', pp. 14-20).

### 3.2.4 The ‘Utopian’ Ideology: *Dawlah Islamiya* (Islamic State)

For HT, the *mabda'a* (ideology)<sup>109</sup> is considered the ‘soul of its existence’ (Nabhani 1953d, p. 1). Consequently, HT has adopted Islam as its ideology. From this ideology emanates a host of systems that deal with all of man’s perceived problems (Nabhani 1953c, p. 18). As Mannheim (1936) pointed out, ideology is a means through which individuals make sense and interpret their social world.<sup>110</sup> According to Nabhani (1953c, p. 13), an ideology ‘is a rational doctrine from which a system emanates’. In its practical formation, the ideology is fashioned from an intellectual ideal that generates a host of conceptions, which in theory supply detailed solutions to temporal and metaphysical problems. The doctrine has been defined as an all-encompassing theory that is established upon ‘a comprehensive idea about the universe, man and life’ (Nabhani 1953c, p. 13). Theoretically, this conclusive idea leads to a comprehensive set of solutions resulting in progressive ascent for humankind. As Bloch (1986) suggested, ideologies contain within them the notion of supremacy and utopianism. Consequently, ideology imposes itself into all facets of human existence, making it excessively overbearing and dangerous.

The term ideology appears frequently in the philosophical principles of Nabhani; however the term has evolved a distinct ethos that defines HT theology. Theology, in the sense of supplying the basic tenets of Islamic faith and practice, became integrated with politics which gave rise to HT ideology. This rendering of HT ideology possesses significant problems. In particular, the ideology is only a theoretical model, which is a revised interpretation of the Islamic tradition that has encapsulated modern dimensions. Many theorists have displayed strong scepticism towards theories that proclaim to be all encompassing, as unrealistic and unworldly (Heywood, 2003). HT ideology exists simply in theory, which a group of individuals seek to establish, and thus according to these individuals it is a workable theory that has a real dimension to it. Nabhani stipulated the essential importance of a method that implements the ideology, as he states without it ‘the idea (ideology) would turn to be a hypothetical and fanciful philosophy in pages of books without any effect in the life’ (Nabhani 1953c, p. 13).

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<sup>109</sup> Ideology is not an easy term to define and there are broad definitions that can be used. One such definition, taken from the Britannica encyclopaedia, states the term ideology as a doctrine that wants to change the world (Britannica online encyclopaedia, 2002).

<sup>110</sup> Mannheim (1936) dissected ideology into two distinct forms: ‘Particular’ and ‘total’.

This ideology cannot be enacted or brought into practice since the *Dawlah Islamiya* (Islamic state) was destroyed in 1924, and therefore HT ideology is only a conceptual model embedded within the minds of its members. Despite the *Dawlah Isamiya* being a highly vague and idealised concept, it has become entrenched within HT ideology and rhetoric. HT was established with one overriding aim to re-establish the *Dawlah Isamiya*, which is considered the practical instrument of implementing HT ideology.<sup>111</sup> The state envisaged by Nabhani was greatly inspired by two contradictory state systems: (1) Mohammad's Islamic State in Medina (632 CE); and (2) the modern nation-state system. Essentially, he extracted the key mechanisms of the nation-state and gave it an Islamic twist. However, this to some degree is an over simplification, as Nabhani's ideology advocates the institutionalisation of Islamic laws and values through the state. HT sought to revive the Islamic world based upon a new ideology that could recapture the idealised message of Mohammad. In fact, Nabhani perceived Mohammad as a divinely appointed statesmen and prophet, with no formal distinction between religious and political practice. In sum, the utopian nature of HT ideology makes it radically counter-opposed to the west, as HT only accept one conception of Islam and thus this boundless version of Islam transcends theology to impact all aspects of socio-political life.

### **3.2.5 Methodology: Violent or Political ideology<sup>112</sup>**

What kind of label best defines HT ideology: political or violent? On the surface, politics appears to be the central defining feature of HT ideology. This might be a somewhat contentious description, since HT ideology is also shaped by religious proclamations (e.g. Shariah law) and to a much lesser extent violent militancy. It is therefore problematic to reduce the complex ideology of HT to a single thread, such as politics or violence. Clearly, HT cannot exist without theology, but politics brings HT ideology to the physical world. I feel the convoluted nature of HT ideology makes it difficult to classify its ideology into single bloc, and thus requires me to list the lines of distinction between violent and political ideology. Firstly, HT does not promote violence as a means to secure power and re-establish the *Dawlah Islamiya*. This is an important demarcation between HT and other violent radical ideologies (e.g. Hizballah or Al-Qaida). Groups espousing violence as a means for creating ideological change are wholly condemned by HT. As asserted by Imran Waheed, in the wake

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<sup>111</sup> The Islamic ruling system, as defined by Nabhani (1953g), requires the installation of a religious and political figure, commonly referred to as the Caliph (Fuller 2003, p. 14).

<sup>112</sup> For further insight into the debate surrounding HT militancy refer to chapter seven (pp. 202-218).

of the 7/7 London bombings: ‘The entire Muslim community has made its position on the London bombings clear — these actions have no justification as far as Islam is concerned’ (*worldpress.org*, 12/09/2005).

Secondly, violent radical ideology is often rationalised in accord with the paradigm of conflict: namely between Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Kufr (land of Islam and land of infidels). Violent ideology emanates from groups sanctioning armed struggle against regimes that implement non-Islam, because sovereignty belongs to God (Ismail 2006, p. 28). HT is critical of such movements, especially those who endorse material struggle, as they failed to differentiate properly between ‘Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Kufr’. Nabhani felt Muslim society resembled Mecca at the time of Mohammad, because the rules and systems were non-Islamic, making the Muslim world ‘Dar al-Kufr’. Therefore, HT activism and ideology must be performed through ‘political action and not by material means’ (Anon 1994, p. 9).

HT, above all, considers itself to be a political party (Anon 1994, p. 3). This means its ideology is skewed towards radical politics. This inference of ‘radical’ is quite important, since HT are not ‘passive radicals’ (Dekmejian, 1995). Firstly, HT, as the principle actor, identifies and portrays their ideology as ‘radical’. In other words, they do not seek gradual reform nor do they participate within the political process, rather they advocate radical transformation. Secondly, HT believes their approach is in keeping with Mohammad, who as Lewis (1988b, p. 2) suggests: (The Prophet) ‘as rebel has provided a sort of paradigm of revolution—opposition and rejection, withdrawal and departure, exile and return’. This representation of Mohammed as a political radical, allows HT to express their ideology in the language of Islam, despite following a purely political project (e.g. pursuit of political authority). What then of violence? This is a complex and problematic question, from which I would like to focus on one key issue. As mentioned, HT does not endorse violence or armed struggle against Muslim governments. However, upon the establishment of the *Dawlah Islamiya* HT advocate Jihad against all non-Islamic nations in order to institute Islamic law across the globe. Thus, HT accepts violence within their ideological framework, but in terms of activism they are non-violent.<sup>113</sup> Subsequently, from this perspective, I would argue that HT augments varying forms of politics, theology and violence into its ideology at different stages of its activism.

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<sup>113</sup> This apparent contradiction is qualified by the assumption that HT does not engage in violence at any stage (e.g. the Islamic state undertakes Jihad not HT).



### 3.3 The Origins of HT Activism in Britain

In chapter four, I explain how HT, with its middle class social base, is not orientated to attracting young working class Muslims to their radical cause.<sup>114</sup> This greatly limits their mass appeal. HT members exclusively prioritise non-welfare politics, as their economic interests are secured and thus, on the surface, ideology plays a fundamental role in recruitment and activism.<sup>115</sup> This begs the question, how and why the ideology of Nabhani had an influence on the behaviour and minds of a specific demographic of British Muslims (namely middle class South Asians)? Trying to work out how and why HT successfully recruited a large homogenous cluster of young Muslims will invariably be the focus of my attention for the following chapters. At this stage, I have two rather simple, but ambitious, aims: (a) Firstly, I want to understand the background of HT's historical development in the UK, and (b) I hope to use some of the large body of academic literature on radicalisation to dissect the actions, actors and activities of HT in Britain.

After looking over the extensive literature, it was clear radicalisation had come sharply into view as a subject of scholarly debate and enquiry, but I realised the development of HT had received little attention. Taji-Farouki's (1996, pp. 171-187) contribution still remains the most noteworthy research on HT, despite the fact she only devotes a handful of pages to the UK branch. She believes the appeal of the movement within a national context lies in its ability to offer disgruntled young Asian Muslims a 'simple message' (Taji-Farouki 1996, p. 177). This message advocates the supremacy of Islam in two distinct ways: firstly as an ideology that addresses all human problems and secondly through the reestablishment of the Caliphate which enacts the ideology. This rather simplistic assessment of HT attraction fails to engage with more critical questions, such as why increasing numbers of indigenous Asian Muslim youth became radicalised by HT. The reason for this lack of engagement can be attributed to when the research took place, namely in the early 1990s, and thus radicalisation is of little interest to her. Also, the context of the piece centres on a historical narrative of the movements inception in 1952 and its subsequent development in the Middle East. Consequently, only a cursory overview of HT activism in the UK is provided, but Taji-Farouki (1996, p. 186) does acknowledge the need to explore further 'the British experience' of HT, as it forms a 'fascinating chapter in HT's career'. Interest in HT activism grew in

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<sup>114</sup> The social base of HT membership is examined in chapter 6: A Sociological Study of HT in Britain

<sup>115</sup> The polarisation of working class and middle class politics is discussed in chapter 6: A Sociological Study of HT in Britain (pp. 175-178).

conjunction with the 2005 London Terror attacks. Several minor contributions have been made, but these pieces frequently lack empirical depth.<sup>116</sup> In particular, two specific features are often missing: (1) insight into HT's evolution in Britain, and (2) empirical data concerning HT radicalisation (e.g. sociological data on demographic support, biographical accounts of radicalisation and interviews with senior members etc.). For these reasons my study, in the proceeding chapters, is an attempt to explore the contextual factors that contribute to HT radicalisation in Britain.

Trying to put together a historical narrative of HT was very challenging, because locating the relevant members would be extremely problematic since most of them had left the group. After several discussions with some senior members, I was able to identify a list of members – who were considered the pioneers, namely Farid Kassim and Omar Bakri Mohammed. Arranging interviews proved to be a long process, as in most cases, I had to use wider contacts and networks to establish contact with the members. Before conducting the interviews, I realised the best way to elicit information was through unstructured interviews and in-depth conversations. Thankfully, this technique proved very effective, seeing that I gained considerable insight into the activities and strategies as they were formulated and applied. However, to my great surprise, the accounts did not match. In fact, both men provided me with two opposing chronologies. In some ways this disparity was understandable since the men recounted and drew upon divergent social and political realities. Thus, trying to locate the truth was not an easy task.

### **3.4 Farid Kassim: The Starting Point for UK Activism**

The unexpected rise of HT during the early 1990s came as a shock to some Western academics (Taji-Farouki, 1996). In reality, their growth and development had been underway since the early 1980s, which had been orchestrated by a few home-grown affiliates. Farid Kassim became the first indigenous member of the UK branch, as he stated: 'There is nobody in Hizb ut-Tahrir (UK) that was around when I was, when it began' (Kassim, interview 26/06/2004). Farid was born and educated in the United Kingdom, with part of his secondary school education at the acclaimed Furzedown grammar school in Battersea.

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<sup>116</sup> McRoy (2006, pp. 186-194); Hamid (2007, in *Islamic Political Radicalisation*, ed Abbas, pp. 145-159); Jacobson (1998).

Although Farid emerged from a middle class background<sup>117</sup>, it was immediately noticeable that he did not want to indicate which social class he felt he belonged to growing up. His refusal to talk about class, and his subsequent attempts to devalue his middle class upbringing, indicated that his political sympathies did not lie with his own class. Indeed, his family had extended ties to the Labour Party; his maternal grandfather was a well-respected member of the Labour Party.<sup>118</sup> This legacy had a substantial influence on Farid, and by the age of sixteen he became a member of the Labour Party. Reflecting on this period, Farid commented: ‘I sincerely thought that I could make a difference within the Labour Party...believing that society could be alleviated by greater distribution of wealth’ (Ibid., 26/06/2004). In spite of this, his political outlook started to change, and he adopted a more Marxist ideology. This newfound ideology, in many ways, was not amenable with his middle class status. This somewhat subtle contradiction was brought out in the interview, as it became clear that he exhibited symbolic signs of withdrawal from activities linked to his class culture. Despite his family’s income and background, he continued to identify with the radical left.

By the end of 1980, Farid enrolled at Nottingham University, completely unaware of the life-altering experience that awaited him. As he commented: ‘I was a student at Nottingham University, and I embraced Islam there, from a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir’ (Ibid., 25/06/2004). This chance encounter had formally introduced him to a small group of transient members, belonging to the relatively unknown HT, who were studying at the same institution. These enigmatic characters were enrolled as foreign students, holding citizenship of a host of Middle Eastern countries, which enabled them to conduct activity in a clandestine manner. They were primarily responsible for Farid’s eventual conversion to Islam, as he described in vivid detail:

Before I embraced Islam I was an agnostic, I thought of myself as a Communist...He [member of HT] approached me in a very puristic way, in terms of the *Aqeedah* [doctrine] of Islam. He really opened my eyes, showing me how you should think, not in terms of thinking logically or scientifically, but thinking rationally. So, after a lot of discussion, I embraced Islam... it [Islam] gave my life meaning. (Ibid., 26/05/2004)

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<sup>117</sup> Farid’s father arrived in the UK from Iraq in the late 1950s, with the pinnacle of Iraqi elite and intellectuals. His father was an Arab nationalist and for him Islam was not a clinical part of modern political theory. Therefore, Farid was not brought up in a traditional Islamic environment. In contrast, his family had strong affiliations with the Labour party.

<sup>118</sup> Donald Algure, Farid’s maternal grandfather, was a well-respected member of the Labour party. He was a significant figure during the 1960s for transport and health within the Labour movement.

This period proved to be a significant turning point in his life. Farid had become greatly invigorated by his discovery of HT, as he explained, ‘When I first started with Hizb ut-Tahrir I felt excited, it brings light to you, which you want to bring to the Ummah [Muslim community]’ (Ibid., 26/05/2004). Clearly, a central part of this overall experience is about finding, or searching for, meaning. Farid struggled to gain a deep sense of purpose with his involvement in left wing politics, because he found it tough to be committed to the achievement of material goals. In contrast to this, HT provided him with a definite ideology, which was far less orientated to the attainment of material or economic advantage. This gave Farid a new way of looking at the world around him and an appreciation of how it can be changed. Thus, swapping his political and ideological allegiances was a relatively easy affair, since he had been strongly opposed to the major values of capitalist society.

### **3.4.1 The Educated Middle Class**

The empirical research, which I present in subsequent chapters, has indicated membership within HT embodies a kind of radicalism that is typically middle class in nature. As Esposito (1998, p. 167) notes, this is not entirely surprising since radical actors are often economically privileged and well educated individuals who have become disenchanted by western society. Likewise, the study conducted by Glynn (2002) of Muslim groups in Tower Hamlets observed that non-radical organisations attracted a disproportionate number of educated middle-classes. While trying to chart the way HT developed, I was struck by the need to ask whether early members were drawn from the ranks of the educated middle classes. The answer to this question was somewhat complex, as it greatly hinged upon Farid’s recollections. To start with, Farid acknowledged enlisting the help of a small band of students, allowing him to initiate a starting point for wider campus activity. As he states: ‘we all came from very similar economic backgrounds’ (Ibid., 26/05/2004). The attraction of middle-class youths to HT was greatly advanced by their identification with Muslim students who shared their own middle-class background and experiences.

From my discussions with Farid, it was clear that he made deliberate and frequent reference to the context of Islamic activism on university campuses. In particular, native students felt deprived of a voice. So, the few individuals who had been co-opted by Farid became increasingly frustrated by the absence of scholarship, as transient members solely directed their activity towards Arab nationals. However, this difficulty would eventually be

overturned by the persistence of Farid, who negotiated a source of culture from transient HT members. As he stated:

We were frustrated, we wanted knowledge, and we knew that there were some guys from Hizb ut-Tahrir, they had a great command of politics and a great command of intellectual issues, they talked about issues in a radical way, but they were all Arabs...so we pushed them hard. Everything had an intellectual thread to it. They convinced us of the method to establish the *Khilafah* [Islamic State] and the need to revive Muslims. So from that they could see our interest, and we were intellectuals. There were a few non-Arab speakers in Nottingham, and we were very enthusiastic to get the culture. So, they appointed one brother to go through *Dowla Islami* (Islamic State)...this was the first time, certainly in Britain, any non-Arab had got culture from Hizb ut-Tahrir from a book, in a formalised manner, it was not a formal *Halaqah*, but they were going through the book, a paragraph at a time, which is the style of *Halaqah*.

This account indicates that the core recruits considered themselves to be ‘intellectuals’. Although the term is highly ambiguous, in this context, it was almost certainly used to describe a Marxist view. In a Marxist context, ‘anti-establishment intellectuals’ are often seen as those individuals continuously occupied by political and intellectual struggle against the state (Jennings and Kemp-Welch 1997, p. 69). In a broader sense, intellectuals should not be classified in relation to their profession, but rather by the values they uphold and propagate (Furedi, 2005). More significantly, as Hoffer (1982) points out, an intellectual’s involvement with radical politics is often a symptom of personal anxieties and disaffection. On the surface, as Taji-Farouki (1996, p. 177) notes, the attraction of HT lay in its outwardly perception of being considered ‘intellectually sophisticated’ by early recruits. By projecting themselves as radical intellectuals HT were able ‘to exploit the growing cultural chasm between such youth and their tradition bound-elders’ (Taji-Farouki 1996, p. 177). In other words, HT took advantage of disaffected youth who were struggling to develop a stable identity, as they found themselves ensnared by their parents’ sub-continent values and issues. If this is true, then it is important to understand why some young Muslims felt discontent.

It was noticeable that the majority of early activists emerged from similar social realities. A variety of educated, middle class Muslim students were making the conscious choice to join the group. Many of these activists were drawn to HT, not by Islam, but through a variety of

political and social issues. The reason for this is explained by Halliday (1999, p. 896), who suggests: 'Islam may, in some contexts, be the prime form of political and social identity, but it is never the sole form and is often not the primary one within Muslim societies and communities'. The new HT recruits sought to structure their ethnicity, nationality and religion in a manner that brought them into conflict with British society. Trying to decipher the pathway early recruits took towards HT can be somewhat problematic, since on the surface ideology is suggested as the sole trigger for their activism. According to Stratham (2003), two overriding markers can be identified concerning Muslim activism: Firstly, if Islam is interpreted as a doctrine that amalgamates the temporal and spiritual, then it is natural for it to seek expression beyond the private realm. For Farid, 'the party ideology exposed the fallacy of man-made law', which meant HT mobilised recruits to focus on the public sphere (Ibid., 26/05/2004). Secondly, by focusing on the public sphere HT recruits became acutely aware of socio-economic deprivation and corruption, making much of their activism a very real response to these perceived injustices. Consequently, the outcome after joining HT appears to be increased in-group solidarity and empowerment (Samad, 1996; Saeed, 1999).

Farid suggested the instability of the political landscape during the early 1980s provided a natural source of activism and recruitment. In fact, student activists were greatly animated by the plight of the Muslim world, and HT was seen as the champion of the oppressed and exploited. The global situation concerning the Muslim world during this period was undergoing immense transformation: the Iranian revolution (1979); the Iran-Iraq war (1980 - 1988); and the continuing war in Afghanistan (1979 - 1989) generated an increase in Islamic militancy. Farid attempted to describe the contextual reasons behind the rapid evolution of HT, as he saw it:

Think about it politically, at that time, the Iranian Revolution had taken place. The war in Afghanistan was happening... So Muslim students were talking about these issues, but groups like the Islamic Foundation had a namby-pamby approach. So, when we would talk we'd speak out openly against what happened in Iran and Afghanistan<sup>119</sup>, although we were a bit

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<sup>119</sup> HT opposed the Iranian Revolution and was greatly critical of the Muslim response to the war in Afghanistan. As Farid explained: 'Think about it politically, at that time, the war in Afghanistan was taking place, CIA backed Jihad sponsored by coca-cola, and the Iranian revolution in 1979, and at that time Hizb ut-Tahrir produced a leaflet, which stated this Jihad is not the right method to establish the Islamic State, because these groups were mixing the objective of getting ride of the enemy and establishing the state, but as it transpired the whole thing was well orchestrated by the CIA. And then there was the Iranian Revolution, which Hizb ut-Tahrir was very clear about that America had organized that' (Ibid., 26/05/2004).

careful, because people were very naïve...but we made an impact...these became Muslim issues. We sought to elevate Muslim thought by attacking concepts like nationalism (Ibid., 26/05/2004).

HT's ideology certainly provided a new basis for self-identification and empowerment. As Ballard (1996) explained, a rather palpable example of Muslim mobilisation was the preferred usage of the label 'Muslim' compared with other ethnic identifiers, which reflected their feelings of marginalisation from the majority culture. HT ideology, which for recruits was synonymous with Islam, became paramount to their identity because it was considered the solution to all worldly problems and provided a road map to 'political mobilisation'.

This historical overview of campus activism during the early 1980s is somewhat difficult to quantify in relation to the rise of HT. Farid insisted a key motivating force behind student mobilisation was Muslim conflict, which he defined within an international context. However, the events he described gradually wound down during the middle of the 1980s, when HT started to gain a presence on campus.<sup>120</sup> Although, these global conflicts were widely unpopular across campus, the supporters failed to mobilise the student body. More significantly, they lacked tactical direction, contributing to their inability to expand or recruit. Despite these obvious shortcomings, Farid strongly believes the supporter's deliberate focus on international issues, at the expense of local problems, helped create a starting point for national activity. As I will show later, this is one of the major issues of contention between Farid and Omar Bakri.

Farid mentioned that local problems, which he described as pragmatic, dragged HT away from its global ideology and message. Therefore, those attracted to local affairs are often driven by materialistic concerns, and thus not disposed to idealistic politics (Parkin, 1968). In contrast, rival Muslim groups, like Young Muslims, *Jamaati Islami* and the Islamic Foundation, were operating from a pre-defined position that centred on developing their role within the immigrant Muslim communities. Professing this as a critical error, Farid described how their oversight had negated Islam as a global entity, and this to some extent explained the initial inroads HT made among Muslim students. The Muslims from the sub-continent have a broad association to the culture of their origin. However, they have an equal affinity to the global *Ummah*, and, as a consequence, they were deeply affected by the continuing war in Afghanistan and the conflict between Iran and Iraq. It was argued, by

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<sup>120</sup> The Gulf War (1991), according to Farid, proved to be a very big catalyst in mobilising student activism.

Farid, HT was the only significant political actor, as other groups were largely concerned with localised issues, giving HT full supremacy to articulate the Muslim student response to global events.

### 3.4.2 Lack of Islamic Activism

The beginnings of HT in Britain can be traced back to transient members and the small group of indigenous Muslims who became affiliated to the movement. After the transient members returned home, the home-grown affiliates began to initiate activities on their own. This period marked a significant turning point for the indigenous affiliates, as the student population was gradually becoming more politically active, notably characterised by the sudden emergence of opposing Islamic movements, like the Young Muslims in Whitechapel, Jam'iat Lhyaa' Minhaaj Al-Sunnah (JIMAS)<sup>121</sup>, and to a lesser extent HT. For these three fledgling organisations, it marked a new stage in the history of Muslim activism in the UK. As Farid explained:

...By about 1985 I had travelled to London, and if you're talking about Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain then you need to understand the scene at that time you had Jimas, Young Muslims and Hizb ut-Tahrir. So, we were three new groups just starting out, so it was a really interesting time in the Muslim community at that time...so they perceived us as being a competitor, although I didn't, but they did. So, I moved down to London and we started to attend different events that were taking place. The Islamic activity at that time was very different; you had very few circles and lectures. I remember attending some exhibitions. More or less anything taking place in London would be covered, for example YMO circles in Whitechapel. At that time we started to get more people into *Halaqah*, and *Halaqahs* started to grow, then later on more people came in (Ibid., 26/05/2004).

It is understandable that Farid did not consider HT as a realistic competitor, as they only had a few affiliates, yet these organisations immediately perceived HT as a credible rival. The reason for this agitated response to initial HT activity concerned the scope of political discussion that they introduced to the landscape, which was previously lacking a political dimension.

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<sup>121</sup> JIMAS is a UK based Muslim charity organisation that was established in 1984 (for more information refer to: <http://www.jimas.org/aims.htm>).



Farid prior to his arrival in London had made intermittent visits; in particular during the summer of 1984, he attended the ‘third Islamic exhibition’ at the University of London. This conference saw a host of Islamic scholars debate the contemporary problems of the Muslim world. Farid’s initial observations of the event were positive, as conferences of this nature are important. However, after further reflection he became deeply sceptical, especially as it was convened with the support of Muslim leaders, which undermined the very essence of the event. In an article in the newly launched *Al-Fajr* magazine, they articulated their position, as the following passage demonstrated:

Indeed we challenge those dignitaries and participants who attend such conferences to speak the truth; both to the leaders and our people. The fact is that all the rulers of the Muslim countries do not intend or wish to solve the problems of the *Ummah*. Their participation in Islamic conferences is nothing more than pretentious, merely to satisfy the people of their countries who strongly feel for the teachings of Islam. (*al-Fajr Magazine*, Oct 1986)

Furthermore, Farid and his associates attended the annual winter gathering of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS), convened in December 1984 under the auspicious title of ‘Reconstruction of the Muslim Ummah’. Once again, HT affiliates empathised with the delegate’s enthusiasm and optimism, yet as Farid commented, ‘Conferences of this nature failed to get to grips with the vital problem’ (Kassim, 26/05/2004). The group continued their observations of Islamic activity, attending other such events, which revealed a recurring theme of failure to address the vital issues. This has critical importance because it places the pending expansion into a better context, as HT members were exploring gaps in the discourses taking place at the time.

### **3.4.3 Organisational Problems and Lack of Scholarship**

Farid was established in London, yet this did not restrict his ‘shuttle diplomacy’ across the country. In particular, on a small stay in Bristol he was able to establish a group of contacts who soon became the platform for activity in the west of England. Preceding this, Farid had successfully established a number of contacts and a stable cell had been convened in Cardiff.<sup>122</sup> The UK affiliates were meticulously erecting contacts and cells, in an endeavour to expand the interior platform of HT. The foundations of the UK branch had been

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<sup>122</sup> Farid was also responsible for establishing other circles and *Halaqaqs*, which he did not disclose.

established by indigenous affiliates, which owed greatly to Farid's extraordinary enthusiasm and dedication. Although young Muslims joined the group in growing numbers, it became more difficult to control and organise the affiliates. Farid, for example, mentioned that a central theme discussed by senior officials during the 1980s was concerned with how to organise the UK activity.

The founding *Amir* [leader] of Hizb ut-Tahrir never envisaged that Hizb ut-Tahrir would be firmly rooted in Europe or will have any structure in Europe...As Hizb ut-Tahrir was developing during the 1980s, growing in size, it became an issue of how do we structure and organise ourselves. The *Halaqah* and the party culture is the bedrock of Hizb ut-Tahrir, so it was a new subject for the party. We tried to make analogies with *Masab ibn-Amir* [Medina], but neither of these quite fit our reality. Also, it wasn't a global village, back then, and thus it was a new subject for the party. (Ibid., 26/05/2004)

HT ideology does not establish any protocols for the group structure to exist outside of the designated area of work (*Majal*). Therefore, as HT began to expand throughout the 1980s, it became an issue for the affiliates to address the question of organising the party body. This vital component had to be incorporated into a developing body of individuals, yet the tools required to accomplish this goal were greatly lacking. HT was still a small dysfunctional group of individuals who lacked the ability to transcend to the next stage. This disordered approach to the organisation of the fraternity left Farid extremely frustrated, as he stated:

To be honest with you when talking about the enthusiasm we had. I used to moan about the Hizb in Britain, we're not moving, not doing anything, were not making contacts etc...There was no structured approach, but from the late 1980s we started to structure ourselves really properly. We took advantage of the people we had to organise it properly, to organise circles, lectures, Regents Park Mosque circles were established [1987]. We had the old red and white *Khilafah Magazine*, which we used to produce once every two weeks. (Ibid., 26/05/2004)

Clearly, they were in need of expertise in the art of organising public activity. This disparity appeared to be rectified by the arrival of experienced members from the Middle East by the late 1980s.

### 3.5 Omar Bakri Muhammad<sup>123</sup>: Radicalism and Scholarship

The Islamic political landscape would be forever transformed by the arrival of Omar Bakri Muhammad, on 14 January 1986. Since his arrival, Bakri had been shrouded in controversy, yet his central goal to establish a global Islamic State, ‘starting here in the UK’, remained the same (Ibid., 02/06/2004). Surprisingly, the British press had given Bakri extensive coverage, enabling him to voice his extremist rhetoric. This made Bakri a divisive figure among the Muslim community, but what is less clear is how he helped engineer the birth of Muslim youth radicalism. On his immediate arrival he established regular public circles at the Muslim Welfare House (Finsbury Park), ‘concerning *Fiqh* and other political issues’, which were conducted exclusively in Arabic (Ibid., 02/06/2004). The arrival of Bakri provided Farid, and his small band of affiliates, with a new sense of constructive purpose and a stable outlet for scholarship.

#### 3.5.1 Activism in Britain: Bakri’s Perspective

It is interesting to note on his arrival in the UK, Bakri made several observations of the state of Islamic activism that sharply contrasted with those made by Farid. He was initially very sceptical, as his early perceptions were formed from media reports and the general Muslim public. As he stated:

When I come to Britain...I find Muslim talking about *halal* meat that’s [the] main discussion about Islam with non-Muslim. I was surprised really, they were discussing minor issue, like [the] circumcision of woman, is that Islam as a way of life? Islam is great civilisation for 1300 years of rule, in the end we don’t want Islam to be about the circumcision of woman or *halal* meat.

This rather simplistic overview of Muslim interaction with the British state is quite interesting because it reveals how Bakri views Muslim demands for acceptance in British society as a negative development. According to Ansari (2004), early Muslim migrants made little demands on the state for acceptance since they subscribed doggedly to the myth of

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<sup>123</sup> Omar Bakri Mohammed was born in Syria, into an affluent upper middle-class family (Ronson, 2002). According to Bakri, he was sent to al-Kutaab Islamic school where he studied the Islamic core sources. As a teenager, Bakri joined the Muslim Brotherhood. However, by the age of seventeen he had joined HT in Lebanon, growing increasingly critical of his association to the Muslim Brotherhood, which had fragmented into a politically apathetic organisation leading to the holistic erosion of its cardinal principles (Ibid., 02/06/2004).

returning to their homelands. More significantly, Bakri fails to acknowledge the need for Muslims to advocate demands in response to the host country's unwillingness to recognise Muslim religious practice in the public sphere. As Ansari (2004) notes, this forced Muslims to generate closer communal connections in order to overcome segregation, which left them a sporadically integrated community.

Furthermore, Bakri was greatly restricted by language and geography, making these preliminary observations difficult to substantiate. Despite these obvious limitations, Bakri was partially correct in his appraisal of the lack of radical activism in the UK. This inability to project political Islam into British society left a lasting impression on Bakri, since he was deeply cynical of the recurring themes of discourse that he had encountered. In particular, the Muslim community lacked intellectual and political leadership. This form of leadership is very different from the traditional and modern cultural leadership that is often found in Muslim communities (McLoughlin, 2002).<sup>124</sup> In particular, traditional leaders found it extremely difficult to communicate with newer generations as they often lacked basic linguistic competency and thus struggled to relate to young people. More significantly, as Michael (2004, p. 20) points out, young Muslims found it hard to gain access to local and national political structures because the older generation monopolised local institutions. For this reason, Bakri immediately singled out Muslim students, because they were perceived to be at the forefront of social protest and change. Also, they had no outlet within the community to express their socio-political interests, which arguably reinforced their alienation from both community and society. Bakri proclaimed 'the future of the Muslim community' was the youth, because from within their ranks revival would take place (Ibid., 25/06/2004). As a result, Bakri immediately enacted a plan to culture British Muslims. This provided Farid and his small band of affiliates with a new sense of constructive purpose and a stable outlet for scholarship. Thus, Bakri's arrival heralded the launch of a sustained campaign on the Muslim youth of Britain.

Bakri developed a strategy to target university campuses, as this offered HT a natural way to contact the youth. They quickly began visiting universities across the country, forming societies and holding talks. Initially, the activity was instigated in a very simple and informal way, as Bakri explained:

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<sup>124</sup> Traditional leadership relates to religious figures or *ulama*, while recently more modern forms of leadership have emerged relying on educated, business professionals (McLoughlin, 2002).

...we put stall[s] outside just [a] table, Farid and me. I get anyone who speak[s] Arabic, while anyone English speak[s] to Farid. And we convince them Islam is supreme way of life, Islam [is] total submission to God, Islam [is] unique way of life and it duty to call for Islam to implement Islam. So we say be proud of your *Deen* [Islam], we [Muslim] were great civilisation because we establish Islam, there is no Islamic state today...So, people start to sympathise with us, we should do something, we can do a lot, we can form societies, so they start to form societies and we enter into universities. Now we have students inside. (Ibid., 02/06/2004)

This enabled them to recruit novices at these universities, providing them with a permanent link to these institutions. This groundwork formed the method of introductory activity, which was replicated nationwide allowing the men to generate active cells. HT during this period operated almost exclusively on university campuses, in order to build and indoctrinate a large body of student activists. HT radicalism was built on two key recruitment triggers: external plight and internal identity.<sup>125</sup> The construction of internal empowerment provided HT with the means to draw disaffected Muslim students to its ranks. Glynn (2002) noted, Islamic organisations provide identity reinforcement and connection to an idealised past. As she states: ‘Islam is something to be proud of, with a great history and international presence as well as religious promises of future glory, which can all transport its followers from the grey confines of the inner city’ (Glynn 2002, p. 980). This approach enabled HT to recruit novices at universities, providing them with permanent links to these institutions. This groundwork formed the method of introductory activity, which was replicated nationwide allowing the men to generate active cells. HT during this period operated almost exclusively on university campuses, in order to build and culture a large body of activists. This secretive period of recruitment was essential, because it allowed the movement to make contact with the student population and turn some of them into activists who believed in the ideology of HT.

### **3.5.2 Focusing on Britain: Targeting Muslim Youth**

It was asserted by Bakri that young Muslims were deprived of intellectual leadership concerning political Islam. Bakri immediately went about defining a way to target Muslim students. He started discrediting minor topics, namely issues about *halal* meat, and focused on the discord of Western society and ideology. More significantly, Bakri wanted to single

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<sup>125</sup> Refer to fieldwork in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

out the 'educated younger generation', as he felt the older generation would be reluctant to embrace HT's radical ideology. Lewis (2007) makes an interesting observation about recent trends amongst educated British born Muslims, who appear to be actively making space for themselves in civil society with Islam. Thus, it was not surprising Bakri assigned such emphasis to this specific sub-demographic of young educated Muslims. In contrast, in the case of the first generation, Bakri felt they were wedged firmly within the confines of their immigrant culture, which they had transported from their countries of origin. 'All they wanted [first generation] was money, roof over their head, some *halal* meat and a place to pray, that's all' (Ibid., 02/06/2004). The young recruits felt HT could provide them with a way to oppose the negative culture of the first generation, as they fused religion and culture together (Archer, 2001). In contrast, young recruits were mindful of the distinction between 'Islam' and 'culture', and thus acceptance of HT ideology meant they were explicitly rejecting ethnic cultural traditions (like dress and marriage practices) (Knott and Khokher, 1993). Bakri explained that immigrant parents failed to understand, or were incapable of empathising with, their children's experiences in Britain. As he described: 'They just work and go home...they isolated themselves from British society' (Ibid., 02/06/2004). Dwyer (1999) suggests, those young Muslims that seek greater identification with Islam often use it as a means to repel parental cultural norms and control. Through espousing religious authority HT recruits were able to define their identity away from cultural interface. In this respect, HT ideology allowed recruits to construct a positive framing of their identity, which gave them a way to adapt to British society, and thus religiosity was only a paradoxical outcome (Gardner and Shuker 1994, p. 164; Samad 2004, p. 17). Thus, Bakri swiftly identified race and identity as integral issues for young British Muslims.

It was clear to Bakri that young Muslims struggled to balance their Western identity with their cultural and religious values. Young Muslims often develop multiple identities, which shape their attitudes within different social contexts (Phinney, 1993). This perpetuated what Bakri described as the '*Bobby and Abdullah syndrome*' (Ibid., 02/06/2004). The inability to adapt to changes and resolve problems during socialisation created a hybrid identity. At home the Abdullah persona would revert to an ethnic association, speaking the language of his forefathers and adhering to their customs. However, beyond this remit the Bobby persona would materialise; he would drink, go clubbing and be a fully integrated member of British society. Some social theorists contend that this duality signifies the formation of 'dynamic mixed cultures' (Cohen and Kennedy 2000, p. 363). In theory, a hybrid identity allows

individuals to interact with opposing cultural mores, creating new identity options. In spite of this, Bakri asserted that this hybridisation could not be preserved and in due course stimulated identity problems, which prevented assimilation. As he commented:

This is where [universities] I met Bobby, because when he starts to rave and dance with them [non-Muslims], they call him *Paki*, now that's a crisis. He sacrifice[d] everything, then you call me *Paki*...we tell him no you are Abdullah; you belong to [a] great nation, to the *ummah* [nation] of Islam. So, we invite them, we integrate them to our beliefs not to integrate with their [non-Muslims] beliefs. They're supposed to accept to integrate with our way of life not integrate with their way of life, it's completely opposite. Come with us let's interact, so no isolation, no integration, there is only interaction, let's interact with the belief we carry and be proud about it, be proud to be Abdullah and Muslim. (Ibid., 02/06/2004)

This rather revealing extract shows, in a nutshell, according to Bakri, the fallacy of assimilation into British society. To start, it seems pretty clear having a preference towards the host identity is regarded as artificial, since non-Muslims are believed to be inherently ambivalent towards minorities. Furthermore, the mixing of identities is prone to contradictions since the ethno-religious culture cannot be reconciled within new cultural settings, like university. Bakri constantly stressed the importance of universities and colleges, because these local environments allowed HT to locate disaffected young people. Parkin (1968) has suggested that socially alienated people are more inclined to the appeals of radical movements. In general, for ethnic minorities, identity and race are very powerful markers that can affect psychological well-being (Lecky, 1945; Jacobson, 1998). Thus, it is not surprising that local issues were used to generate party cells.

Assuming the recollections of Bakri are accurate, one could surmise that greater emphasis was placed on local issues and events. In fact, throughout my interview, he made it clear that HT strategy focused on the social realities of young British Muslims. Although, international issues were important to him, Bakri prioritised the local in order to inspire an Islamic awakening. This meant targeting problems that young Muslims experienced growing up in Britain, and giving them an Islamist spin. As he described:

So, when we carry Islam in British campuses or [in] society, we invite non-Muslims as [a] spiritual belief if he accept ok, Allah guides, if not then as political belief. So he can solve his

own economic and political problems. So we start to pick on [the] problem[s] in society and give solutions from Islam, racism, housing problem, moral decline, mortgage, homosexuality, this *dawah* [was] carrying Islam as [an] intellectual belief, and with the help of God we [were] very successful. (Ibid., 02/06/2004)

This approach gave HT the illusion of being able to define and solve individual problems. They catered their message to young educated Muslims. Global phenomena, like the Iran-Iraq war, had little, if any, impact on HT recruits. In reality, by talking about local Muslim issues, HT was able to directly agitate a person's immediate interests. Bakri makes reference to a range of localised problems, which broadly relate to the religious, social, political and economic fields of life. In essence, HT activists shared the experiences of young British Muslims, but their socialisation was rooted in a more middle class framework. As a result, HT appealed to middle class Muslims, because its activists sought out relationships that reflected similar social backgrounds.

Trying to understand the social bases of membership for HT is not an easy task, so I decided to ask Bakri why such a large number of middle class Asians joined HT. To my surprise he was willing to engage this issue, unlike Farid. Although Bakri was reluctant to limit HT recruitment to a particular social class, he accepted the fact middle class Asians formed the largest pool of activists. Bakri had several explanations for this attraction. To start with, he suggested students found the intellectual message of HT very appealing. As he asserted, 'we attract them [middle class Asians] to our concepts, because [its] new for them...and they [are] educated so they want to discuss with us' (Ibid., 02/06/2004). In other words, the educated middle class had a greater appreciation of the intellectual spirit of HT, which they presumably felt was superior to their own. According to Lenski's (1954, pp. 405-414) theory of status crystallisation<sup>126</sup>, despite HT members acquiring middle class status they still felt frustrated by discrimination and racial prejudice. Therefore, individuals who feel socially isolated from society are more typically drawn to radical movements, especially if it brings about greater class solidarity (Arendt, 1988; Hoffer, 1951; Parkin, 1968).

Bakri espoused a shared sense of belonging as another possible reason for why middle class Asians seemed more inclined to HT radicalism. To some extent, this argument is consistent with the conclusions reached in previous chapters, but it is worth revisiting from Bakri's

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<sup>126</sup> Status crystallisation relates to people whose status is inconsistent (Lenski's 1954, pp. 405-414).



perspective. Bakri talked about the social realities of campus life, namely racism and alienation, which left a mark on many Asian students. According to Bakri, the students he encountered were 'lost', having 'no personality of their own' (Ibid, 02/06/2004). These middle class Asians were stripped of their identity, as Bakri commented, 'Their identity is corrupt, you feel pain, because the Western culture created racism, you have [the] Western personality, [this] must be taken out'. Consequently, Asian students had a tendency to seek out HT members, as Bakri suggests, 'They come to HT for true brotherhood... *kufir* [non-Muslims] cannot give this' (Ibid., 02/06/2004). There are two simple justifications for this type of attachment: biological necessity and 'preference for similarity' (Rubinstein, 1988). Firstly, from a social context, it is beneficial for people to seek out attachments to groups, as they offer protection in unfamiliar and hostile settings (Darwin, 1998). Secondly, certainly among the members I interviewed, the overwhelming majority of HT activists emerged from a similar social background and upbringing. Several studies have shown a strong link between peer group friendships and class background (Howe, 2010). Thus, it is not surprising to see recruits finding solidarity according to social cleavage, as they share interests and lifestyles.

The final, and perhaps most noteworthy, cause of skewed HT recruitment related to agitation of localised problems. Bakri confidently proclaimed working class Muslims were motivated by 'bread and butter politics'. In contrast, middle class HT members, he suggested, were more inclined to intellectual concerns because they were not materialistically orientated. In other words, middle class recruits are not usually motivated by economic conditions, rather they appear more inclined to idealistic causes (Parkin, 1968). More significantly, Bakri claimed that they agitated young people's needs and interests. This could mean HT tapped into the psychological needs of middle class Asians. Some historians, like Kulikoff (1988), believe class identification helps individuals to reinforce their place in the wider society. As a result, young activists exerted their collective class identity through HT, which offered them a way to develop a coherent ideology that met their social needs. This may partially explain why middle class Asians showed greater attraction to the socio-political issues raised by HT. But were these issues manufactured deliberately by HT to target middle class students? Although, Bakri accepted social needs were agitated by HT, he refused to simplify recruitment within a class paradigm. Yet, if HT, as he acknowledged, targeted the social realities of middle class students, then it is fair to attribute recruitment to aspects of class manipulation. Bakri himself declared that the politics of middle class students was different

from those of the working class. Throughout the interview, he suggested that working class parents placed added emphasis on seeking out immediate economic reward. This created two opposing social realities and value systems, which, in turn, made it easier to recruit middle class Asians as they were more responsive to idealistic messages.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have looked at two historical episodes. It was vital to understand the emergence and consolidation of HT in Britain since its inception in the Arab world. HT from its commencement had a skewed political outlook, which can be attributed to its founder, al-Nabhani, who had been deeply affected by European colonisation. HT adopted a dogmatic and confrontational ideology, in which the world was dichotomised into us and them. Not surprisingly, this ‘othering’ of non-Muslims can be vividly seen in the narrative of Omar Bakri and Farid Kassim. However, trying to understand the appeal of HT in Britain is not an easy task, especially since the movement has only carved out its membership from a particular social demographic: namely young middle class Asians. Taji-Farouki (1996, p. 177) equates this to a ‘growing cultural chasm’ between the younger and older generations. This may be true, but the depth of HT appeal and radicalisation stretches much deeper. In particular, a recurring thread in the narratives of both founding members was ideology, which was seen as the precursor for youth involvement and engagement. According to Bakri, young middle-class Muslims were plagued by all sorts of social problems and difficulties (such as racism, alienation, identity crises and so on). This, as Bakri candidly revealed, allowed HT members to exploit the social realities of educated young Muslims at British Universities. In particular, HT ideology was visualised as the only solution to all human problems. For young recruits, this created a strong attachment to HT ideology, as novices equated their social deficiencies and dilemmas to western society and culture. In this context, HT was seen as a means to counteract the west and the social frustrations they had experienced.

There were several noteworthy debates taking place amongst the members about HT activism in the UK. This was to be expected since HT had not set or defined any clear protocols for activism outside of the Arab world. One such debate, namely between internationalism and localism, had been underway since Bakri arrived. This created a number of internal tensions and conflicts, as members struggled to find agreement.

Throughout the early 1980s, HT was engrossed by international events, which seemed natural given that they wanted to generate a global revolution. In spite of this, Bakri's arrival marked a sizeable shift in strategy towards Britain. In other words, he wanted to engage in an "intellectual and political struggle" against the British way of life. It was not surprising, therefore, to find that HT Dawah was rarely divorced from political and social events throughout the 1990s. More significantly, events like the Gulf War and Bosnia were localised. As exemplified in one local leaflet entitled: '*Bosnia today Bradford Tomorrow*'. HT rhetoric, as orchestrated by Bakri, prioritised the problems faced by young middle class Muslims (e.g. identity crisis, racism and social alienation).<sup>127</sup> At the initial stage of recruitment, these issues provoked greater sensitivity as they aroused feelings of personal dissatisfaction. In contrast, international events were detached from the recruit's reality, and only after joining HT did activists become agitated by Muslim global plight. More significantly, HT recruitment was relatively low during the late 1980s and early 1990s, but rapidly grew once Bakri shifted emphasis to localised issues and problems.

One of the key conclusions to draw from this chapter is the types of young people attracted to HT. There are complex and diverse factors driving radicalisation, making it very difficult to define a theory that provides a single answer. However, an intrinsic component of HT radicalisation appears to be the homogeneity of its social base, which is drawn almost exclusively from young middle class Asians.<sup>128</sup> Trying to formulate a hypothesis for the mobilisation of this specific social demographic is critical. As Bakri asserted, this group of young people reacted to social discrimination by joining HT. This is somewhat difficult to resolve. Firstly, as Ansari (2004) points out, the first generation opted for accommodation, placing them outside the majority culture framework, which denied them recognition. However, this contextual reality seemingly dissolved with the emergence of the second generation. Then, why do some young Muslims join HT? Do they feel the host culture continues to withhold its social acceptance of them? In order to unlock the deeper facets of HT radicalisation and its disproportionate recruitment required carrying out extensive fieldwork. For that reason, as chapter four and five reveal, I examined the social realities and backgrounds of HT activists. This provided insight into the trajectories taken by young HT

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<sup>127</sup> There was some feeling growing amongst certain members that coverage of national and international affairs was not balanced. Dropping its international focus to concentrate more on local issues limited the party's global identity, some believed. Yet, Bakri continued to advance his belief that national and international events had localised impact, and thus HT had to confront these matters from an intellectual and political perspective.

<sup>128</sup> See chapter six (pp. 177-180).

activists. Secondly, in chapter six, I present my fieldwork findings of the social base of HT and thus attempt to answer why a specific social demographic is disproportionately drawn to the organisation. The fieldwork is critical as it will substantiate a great deal of the issues raised from my interviews with the founding members.

## **Chapter Four:**

### **Radical Pathways I - Profiles of Male HT Members**

When reading the newspapers today it is difficult not to be confronted with examples of Islamic radicalism. One might recall the 2010 European terror plot<sup>129</sup> (The *Washington Post*, 29/09/2010), or that of Roshonara Choudhry, a student from East London, who attempted to murder British MP Stephen Timms in 2010 (The *Guardian*, 02/11/2010). Social scientists do not attribute these disturbing incidents to a single observable cause, except perhaps for their acknowledgment that radicalisation constitutes a distinct and real change in the individual (Crenshaw, 1981; Hoffman, 1998; Roy, 2004). One of the issues I will need to investigate in this chapter, as I think about the causes of radicalisation, is whether the motives and pathways of Islamic radicals can be sketched out. It should be emphasised, however, that my empirical research does not aim to investigate radicalism merely as a psychological process, but to analyse how the radicals' attitudes were affected by the world around them. Without wishing to pre-empt a necessary discussion of these issues, my research in this chapter can be characterised as a case study of male members of HT. Personal accounts of, and reflections on, the radicalisation process are replete with stories of members '*finding themselves*'. Clearly, one could not hope to provide a definitive explanation of radicalisation, but these reflective accounts have the advantage of making the social world of the radical open to investigation.

#### **4.1 The Context of the Case Studies**

The studies reported in this chapter are set in the national context of Britain, a country struggling with radicalisation. Some political commentators believe the message of HT, for example, 'is attracting more and more young Muslims, and this is worrying Britain's wider Islamic community' (*Newsnight* Report, 27/08/2003). HT tends to operate in a clandestine and murky manner, which makes an investigation into its activities difficult. However, in this study, I will provide detailed analysis of several selected case studies by which, it is hoped, the process of radicalisation may be better understood. Two main case studies are presented in this chapter, each of which could in itself provide a good starting point for a discussion of the development of radicalisation. Each is like a sketch, from a particular

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<sup>129</sup> The 2010 European terror plot was a plan to launch 'commando-style' attacks in Britain and France (Miller, Greg .(2010) 'CIA acts on fear of Al-Qaeda plot to hit in Europe', The *Washington Post*, 29/09/2010).

perspective, of a partially glimpsed event. These sketches, or cases, relate and overlap, but they are not reducible to a single view. And, although, when combined, they offer the beginnings of a complete description, my knowledge of the whole is still imperfect. The meaning and significance of these cases will become clearer as each is developed and interpreted. But the cases are not self-contained. Each takes as its focus a different aspect of the same whole process. Each draws upon the same essential phenomenon – the process of radicalisation.

After interviewing and observing twenty-eight respondents<sup>130</sup>, my findings have uncovered some common themes. A recurring theme, which emerged in the accounts from my respondents, is that of identity; and how their current identities seemed greatly dependent on their past and present experiences. Although, I was not surprised that this topic came up so frequently, it was difficult to deal with because identity is crafted from many different sources. Thus, a number of themes and issues must be discussed to reveal the importance of the social settings in which my respondents are embedded.<sup>131</sup> Some respondents, for example, concentrated particularly on race and ethnicity, but other respondents picked up on other features such as religion, home environment and family background, class, and so on. The goal of my research is to map out the ‘turning-point moments’ in the lives of HT members who have undergone a life-altering experience (Denzin, 1989, p. 7). Consequently, each of the radicals I interviewed exhibits a distinct social world of lived experience. Therefore, the two accounts that I have selected may seem somewhat dramatic, but they offer me a glimpse into the construction of an HT radical in different social settings and from rather different perspectives.

#### **4.2 Case Study One – Abdul<sup>132</sup>**

Abdul, 27, is a senior software engineer living in London, and is a member of HT. In order to understand why Abdul, at the age of nineteen, joined HT requires dissecting the narratives of his past. This case study explores the impact of change and transition on the subject during specific stages of his life-cycle development. Many social theorists have pointed out the complexities and diversities of youth transitions to adulthood (Beck, 1992; Coleman,

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<sup>130</sup> Refer to Appendix II for breakdown of respondents and questions (pp. 251-252).

<sup>131</sup> Identity, apart from the individual level, can be constructed at the larger, collective level of context or setting (i.e., community or school) where individual members are located or embedded.

<sup>132</sup> The names and personal details of the respondents have been altered, as requested by them to ensure their safety and security.

1961; Griffin, 1993). The paradoxes that young Muslims have to cope with on a day-to-day basis are immense. As Abdul explained: *'integrating into a society, where the culture and viewpoint is different, is impossible'*. To some extent, this somewhat bleak view may be traced to Abdul's upbringing in an isolated community that was predominantly white. This makes understanding his early social interaction crucial, because individuals belonging to minority groups may develop multiple pathways to adulthood (Rodney and Bainbridge, 1980).

#### **4.2.1 Home Environment: Family Life**

Historically, traditional Pakistani families tend to exhibit similar features, which typically consist of several generations living together within the same household (Anwar, 1982).<sup>133</sup> The family is usually patriarchal, with elder males dominating the social affairs of the family. Within any family structure, children are considered as dependents, making them subject to parental control and authority. In other words, the family is a very important social institution, acting as the means by which persons inherit religious and class identity (Annette, 2003; Bandura and Walters, 1959). So what role did Abdul's family life play in shaping his identity? Firstly, as a child Abdul did not experience severe family disruption or upheaval, as he suggested: *'my home life was stable, loving and quite normal'*. In dealing with Abdul's family life, it is clear that his parents created a stable and caring home environment in which he received love and encouragement. Secondly, one must understand the patterns of interaction among family members in different generations because this will provide insight into the customs and beliefs transmitted between one generation and another of Abdul's family:

'My parents were not a traditional Pakistani family. Of course, they wanted us [children] to have an appreciation of our cultural heritage, but like most parents they found it difficult to pass on their beliefs. For instance, none of my brothers and I can speak Urdu. Also, my parents were very secular and for them religion was not an important part of life. So, they'd drink at social occasions, we'd celebrate Christmas. And, in relation to Islam, we were not taught how to pray nor did we fast at Ramadan. [Did your parents try to enforce any subcontinent values or customs?] Yes. My parents were quite traditional when it came to having girlfriends, for example, so we had to hide that from them... They'd want us to be connected more to

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<sup>133</sup> Joint families are less likely in the UK because of limited housing space.

our culture but they couldn't enforce it because there were too many contradictions with their beliefs and our beliefs.' (Abdul; Interview 1, 05/11/2004).

To some extent, Abdul and his parents have different cultural standpoints. His parents appear concerned with the continuity of cultural values, which they inherited in Pakistan, while Abdul is attempting to establish independence from his parents' value system. More importantly, his parents appear to construct tradition differently, when compared with other Pakistani parents. The background of his parents may offer an explanation for this perceived difference. Firstly, both his parents are university graduates, albeit from Pakistan, which gave them greater opportunities when they settled in the UK. His mother, for example, is a regional manager for a small UK-based firm and his father is a senior accountant for a large commercial bank in the city. Secondly, because of his parents' secular beliefs they seem more willing to adopt the values of the majority culture, unlike working-class Pakistani parents who often remain more attached to their cultural and religious heritage (Joly, 1995; Lewis 2002). Abdul explains, for example, that his mother '*rarely wore traditional Pakistani dress, except for special occasions*' (Abdul; Interview 1, 05/11/2004).

#### **4.2.2 Family Structure: Control and Power**

As mentioned earlier, traditional Pakistani families tend to be strongly patriarchal; this assumes that women perform the housework, while men are the economic providers. In Abdul's case, his parents appear to function more as a unit, as he described:

'My father acted as the head of the family, but my mother had a leading role, mainly because she worked. Also, my dad worked very long hours, so my mother had a more dominant role in the house. Overall, they operated like a partnership, they'd make joint decisions about how to manage money, about where to live, schooling and so on.' (Ibid., 05/11/2004).

In theory, the structure of Abdul's household is hierarchal, with the father at the head, but in practice both parents assume the role of head. Abdul's mother has equal power in relation to decision-making. For example, she hires a maid to help with household chores. According to Blood and Wolfe (1960), power within a family was apportioned between husbands and wives based on the relative resources that each contributed to the family. In the context of Abdul's family, both parents have equal access to educational, financial, and occupational resources in society, providing a more evenly balanced distribution of power within their



family. Similarly, Chibucos (1983) found that when men earned more income than their wives, they were more likely to exercise greater control in financial decision-making when compared with husbands that made about the same income as their wives. Also, Oropesa (1997) discovered that wives with higher education were equal to their husbands in family influence and experienced greater fulfilment with their power in the family. Thus, Abdul's parents have a mutual understanding about their role and influence within the family, which is not solely based on gender.

#### **4.2.3 Family Aspiration: Education**

Within a developmental context, a growing body of literature has shown that the quality of family interactions has important links with children's academic achievement (Kellaghan, 1993). In Abdul's case, the family environment was a powerful influence in determining his academic achievement. As Abdul explains:

'Education was assigned high importance by my parents, even my father took an active role in our education because expectation was so high...there was an unwritten rivalry between my brothers that was endorsed by our parents because it meant better grades.' (Ibid., 05/11/2004).

His parents' involvement in learning development had substantial emotional and intellectual benefit. Certainly for Abdul, school success was strongly influenced by a supportive family structure, unlike children that experience family upheaval (divorce or separation).<sup>134</sup> It should already be apparent from Abdul's account that a close correspondence exists between family aspiration and schooling. The competition evident among his siblings and the ability to display individual success were converted easily into the school setting.

#### **4.2.4 Family Lifestyle and Class**

Like most children, Abdul's lifestyle was dependent on his parents' income and their decisions about how that income should be spent.

'I received a weekly allowance when I was younger, but that was dependent on good behaviour and keeping my room tidy. I could spend the money on anything I wanted, but most of the

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<sup>134</sup> Research has shown that children in single-parent families have lower academic performance (Kellaghan, 1993).

time my parents would buy us gifts and stuff we wanted like football shirts and sports equipment etc....my father had a tendency to spoil us.’

In the context of a labour market, Abdul’s class position can be measured in terms of the income and wealth enjoyed by his parents. His parents have gained upward social mobility through education, occupation and property. As Abdul described, ‘By the time I was four or five my parents had bought another house so we had a relatively lavish lifestyle’. When his parents entered the social hierarchy, as immigrants, they were positioned near the bottom. They improved their social position mainly through occupation and they ‘invested in shares’ when the government privatised state industries. As a result of all these factors, Abdul’s parents’ social status improved throughout the course of his life. Moreover, Abdul thinks of himself as middle class, as he stated: ‘I consider myself middle class because of my parent’s social standing’.<sup>135</sup>

#### **4.2.5 Social Environment: School**

An examination of Abdul’s social life will show the differences that exist between the home environment and the social environment. Although, both are interconnected, it is important to isolate the way each impacted his identity. Abdul described with vivid detail his early childhood experiences, as he commented:

‘When I was young, everything was ok; I had no Muslim friends, but felt perfectly normal, even though all my friends were white. But everything changed at secondary school; when we moved to a different area, it was a complete shake-up. I’d never been called a Paki in my life, but it soon became a regular occurrence. I remember the first time I experienced racism; being called a Paki at age eleven is a hard thing to deal with. At first I became ashamed of who I was, I wanted to be normal and normal meant being white...so I felt like an outsider, which made me feel depressed. As time went on I hated myself; then, I hated those kids that abused me, until I started ignoring it, and that’s when you get accustomed to it [racism]. I was small back then and didn’t know how to handle myself; besides, I didn’t want to get into fights, so I kept to myself, making friends with Asians – we understood each other, because anyone non-white was a victim.’ (Abdul; Interview 1, 05/11/2004)

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<sup>135</sup> Although Abdul uses the term middle class to describe his social status, it is a very complex term that can mean different things to different people.

Abdul mentioned that he found it easier to mix with white children at primary school, but then found it increasingly difficult at secondary school. This begs the question, what changed? His primary school was located in an affluent area outside of London, but his parents decided to move to London in order to gain access to better resources. As Abdul suggested: 'My parents moved to a large house, but unknowingly enrolled me in a nearby school that was very close to a council estate, full of working class jobs'. Thus, at primary school, Abdul developed a sense of shared identity, an 'us' which contained his early patterns of interaction with other children. As he explained: 'I got on well with them [whites] at primary school' (Abdul; Interview 1, 05/11/2004). In contrast, when he moved to secondary school, he encountered, for the first time, considerable racism. In the broadest sense of the term, 'racism' is the process of marginalising and discriminating against those perceived as different on the basis of their skin colour or ethnicity (Wetherell, 1996, p. 178). In Abdul's case, racism was perceived as a shared way of behaving, especially amongst his fellow classmates. It is apparent that not all norms are shared, and that people see different norms as requiring different degrees of adherence. Yet, Abdul does not accept this; he believes 'they're all racist...some just hide it better' (Abdul; Interview 1, 05/11/2004).

Abdul was not discriminated against purely because of his racial composition, as he asserted: 'They hated me because I was seen as a rich Paki, which made them hate me even more since they were all poor'. Abdul's exclusion from the dominant social group was a source of conflict and tension for him at school. However, before I examine this issue, it is important to understand why his parents seemed unaware of the negative school environment. Abdul reflects on this point, as he stated:

'My parents were very naïve about schooling in the west, their education took place in Pakistan and so they were influenced by the Raj mentality...they had no comprehension of the social conditions of the area, they thought that Britain was a magical place where all people sought academic excellence...they realised far too late for me. Thankfully my younger brothers went to private school.'

To some degree, Abdul places the lack of parental involvement in context, but what he does not mention here is his own lack of communication. He failed to express to his parents the feelings of exclusion and harassment that he was experiencing, as he suggests, because he did not 'want to worry them or involve them' in his problems.

Returning to the issue of exclusion, it is very difficult to address the multitude of problems that Abdul experienced, but it is important to understand the origins of his exclusion and the effects it had on his development. Children began to exclude Abdul on the basis of his race, ethnicity and class. Recent research in the field of developmental psychology has focused on peer rejection and peer victimisation in the context of exclusion from social groups (Graham and Juvonen, 1998). These studies have shown that children, like Abdul, who are rejected from social groups experience 'self-destructive' tendencies (Chansky, 2001). For example, young people who are rejected by social groups are at risk of poor academic achievement, increased depression and delinquency (Chibucos, 2005; Bandura and Walters, 1959). Did Abdul experience any of these negative conditions? In Abdul's account, he does not cite any circumstance of poor academic achievement or delinquency. On the contrary, his grades were excellent and he never received any bad reports from school concerning behaviour. This is testimony to his positive home environment, which provided a sense of order and motivation, and which allowed him to achieve high grades.

However, it is clear that Abdul became frustrated when his fellow classmates did not consider him normal. His expectations evaporated, and he forcibly adjusted his personality to cope with his hostile surroundings. He expressed passive anger towards those who were responsible, which was then displaced towards his family members. As he says: 'I don't know why, but I'd take out my frustrations on my parents. They were an easy target and, perhaps, there was a sub-conscious hate there for being Pakistani; I'm not sure' (Abdul; Interview 1, 05/11/2004). This frustration was eventually directed towards those culpable; but it was a passive response, which then became indifference by his acceptance of being an outsider. During early socialisation, racism is extremely destructive, especially for the victim, as it emasculates a person (Graham and Juvonen, 1998). This was certainly the case for Abdul, who, as the victim, suffered by believing the distortions that were created. This had an adverse effect on his identity development.

#### **4.2.6 Identity, rejection and exclusion**

A recurring theme in Abdul's childhood was his inability to resolve the question of his identity. At first, he found it very difficult to understand, responding immediately by forming a closer association with his ethnicity. He made friends with Asians and began to distance himself from British culture by supporting the Pakistan cricket team. As he explained:

‘The day I realised I wasn’t British was the day a few of my friends were set upon by a gang of white youths. Being called a Paki was normal, but being physically attacked, because you’re not white, was shocking! That’s when I started hating everything British; I stopped supporting England and started supporting Paki-land at cricket. I felt helpless and angry. I just wanted to be around my own people, if you know what I mean, but I was trapped among a population of racist thugs.’ (Abdul; Interview 1, 05/11/2004)

Throughout Abdul’s schooling social groups excluded him, because he did not conform to the expectations of the group, and these expectations reflect criteria regarding group membership, such as race and class. This form of rejection was not a result of his lack of social skills but was an outcome of prejudice and stereotyping. It is important to find out how Abdul evaluates the social events, issues, and transgressions he experienced:

‘I felt completely alienated and frustrated from British culture, my school, and friends [why your friends?] They were Asian, so they acted like Pakis. They saw me as a coconut, white on the inside and brown on the outside. And to tell you the truth I felt much more alienated from them.’

Abdul’s reactionary attempts to disassociate himself from British culture were based on localised triggers. From his remarks, one can identify three social contexts; friends, peer group and school. Abdul found it extremely difficult to adjust to these settings. In relation to the peer group that rejected him, he embraced a form of defiance: ‘If you don’t want me, then I’ll go to someone that will’ (Abdul; Interview 1, 05/11/2004). Witnessing racial violence in the form of an unprovoked physical attack only accelerated his exclusion, as he suggested: ‘After the attack I never felt British again. [Did you want to punish those responsible?] Yeah, but they were much older and I feared the consequences’. Although Abdul did not act on his desire to seek retribution, it is clear that if he could have hurt the culprits without any form of reprisals, then he would have no moral objection to violence. Thus, this would indicate that the effects of adverse socialisation, like exclusion, could lead to increased instances of aggression and violence. Abdul showed a strong desire to punish and hurt those responsible for inflicting suffering, in order to restore the imbalance of his feeling powerless. From a psychological perspective, it appears that Abdul could not express his feelings and emotions after the attack, which may have forced him to cope with the situation by internalising his anger (Chansky, 2001). Thus, a negative identity was created.

Negative identity is the perceived notion that an individual develops a covert antagonistic rejection of the roles and rules laid out for them by their family, community and society (Knutson, 1981).

It is clear that Abdul's identity is greatly influenced by his rejection from social groups. He slowly felt alienated; his rejection of British culture was a formal divorce from society. However, after a long family trip to Pakistan he returned even more disconnected and disillusioned, as he described:

'I was looking forward to our family trip to Paki-land, but as soon as I got off the plane and onto the runway, I realised that Paki-land was a complete shit-hole. Out there, I realised that I hated Pakistan more than England. Everything was foreign: the people, the food, the language. I couldn't fit in and, worse than that, they would call me Gora [white person], because I couldn't speak Paki. That drove me over the edge; I felt rejected; what was I? I wasn't English and I wasn't Pakistani; Islam had no role in my life at the time, so I was lost. So, in answer to your question, ethnicity to me is an empty concept; I realised that at age fifteen.' (Abdul; Interview 1, 05/11/2004)

His visit had illustrated the complete lack of association with Pakistani culture – he did not speak Urdu, nor could he understand the cultural and traditional differences. The trip to Pakistan made him feel even more isolated and excluded. Inevitably, Abdul became deeply cynical and hateful, and this only furthered his withdrawal from society, especially with his Asian friends. As he commented:

'When I came back [from Pakistan] I just became unsociable. I concentrated on my studies and passed the time watching TV and playing computer games. I only had contact with my friends at school, because I just didn't feel comfortable; they were Asian, and I just was incapable of understanding them. So, I retreated to my home that was my only sanctuary... [Did you feel alienated?] Of course I did. I wasn't British; I wasn't Pakistani or Asian; so what was I? I didn't have a clue; I couldn't answer that question.' (Abdul; Interview 1, 05/11/2004)

A primary function of early socialisation is to integrate the individual into the cultural norms of the society to which he or she resides, which would entail the roles they are to play in life (Talcott, 1960). However, Abdul's passive rejection of these forms resulted in the adoption of an opposing behaviour pattern. Abdul's voluntary rejection of his nationality had

excluded him from society, making him susceptible to radicalisation. Socialisation is an essential process of personality formation, and if it is conceived wrongly it will lead to the individual's estrangement from society (Talcott, 1960). Also, it is important to illustrate that Abdul completely rejected his ethnic tradition; this was manifested in a total revolt against the traditional language, feeling disconnected from his Asian friends and, thus, leading to a withdrawal from sub-continent culture. After completing his A-levels, he went to university, and there he encountered Muslims for the first time. This initial encounter enabled Abdul to forge strong relationships, providing him with a perceived sense of belonging.

#### **4.2.7 Encountering HT: The 'Turning Point'**

Radicalisation is a highly complex process, for Abdul it involved a major life change. In fact, apart from the changes one undergoes during infancy and adolescence, it is unlikely that Abdul will experience greater changes at any other stage in his life cycle. So, how can we understand such a fundamental shift in his personality development, and make sense of the effects that they have had upon him? In general, there are two distinct methods I can use to account for Abdul's radicalisation. Firstly, I can look to theory, as I did in chapter one, to establish the strength of different theoretical notions and approaches to radicalisation. Secondly, I can look at the empirical evidence collected from my interview with Abdul, which provided me with a factual base upon which to make an assessment of his life cycle. However, it should be noted that it is my view that neither approach can provide a complete answer, but they will yield some valuable insight into the process of radicalisation.

#### **4.2.8 University Life – Peer Groups**

As Abdul's initial accounts have described, his route towards adulthood was far from straightforward. However, he saw university as an opportunity to start afresh, but his newfound independence was a daunting prospect at first. As he explained:

‘I was really looking forward to moving out of my parents’ house and going to live on my own at university. My first few weeks, however, were a little unsettled. I’d never lived away from home. So I felt homesick, but that changed when I met the brothers [members of HT]’.

Many students consider the first year to be one of the hardest, because a lot of adjustments have to be made. In Abdul's case, he was leaving home for the first time and naturally

suffered from a bit of homesickness. He suddenly found himself missing the familiarity of home, and did not know quite how to cope with the resulting emotions. This is entirely normal, especially in the first few weeks, and often students long for the secure and the familiar (Newcomb and Feldman, 1994). However, during this period of uncertainty, I think it is quite significant that Abdul encounters HT:

‘I remember that I was headed towards the canteen, when I saw a mass of students gathered around outside. I stopped to see what was happening, to my surprise a few Muslims had a stall outside, and they were debating and discussing issues that were totally foreign to me. [What kinds of issues were being discussed and did you know that they were members of HT?] I didn’t know that they were members nor did I know about Hizb ut-Tahrir...they discussed many issues, such as proof of God, how Islam is a complete system and so on. I was really impressed by them, in particular, one of the members was debating with a socialist and he totally destroyed him intellectually and rationally. [Did they target you as a potential contact?] Possibly, I’m not sure...I was invited to a talk, I think it was about the Islamic civilisation, I can’t quite remember. After the talk I met with a couple of members, we went to their halls and had some food. I remember we had a long discussion about my purpose in life, and to tell you the truth I’d never really thought about it...I started to meet with the brothers regularly after that, we’d go to talks together at other universities, I’d help with the stall from time to time, but mainly we’d just chill out in the halls...we became very close. The brothers helped me a lot, for instance, they taught me how to pray, so I’d try and pray with the brothers as often as I could. It was a real turning point in my life, so I am very grateful to Allah [God] for guiding me to the truth.’

A couple of key points emerge from the above account: first, the creation of a peer group, and second the transition towards greater religiosity. In Abdul’s biography, it is important to consider his university friendships, because on the surface these ties appear to be freely chosen. How he forms his friendships, what activities he engages in, who his friends are, all seem to be extremely relevant to the radicalisation process. Firstly, Abdul is able to form successful relationships with his university peers, spending an ever-increasing amount of time with his friends. As he recalls, ‘I know it sounds bad, but I hardly went back home to visit my family...I’d do everything with the brothers from cooking to washing my clothes’. The role played by peers during this period of Abdul’s life is very critical. To some degree, the peer group replaces parental influence, allowing for a transfer in closeness from parents to peers. As Howe (2010) points out, teenagers spend twice as much of their time with peers



as with parents. He suggests that the influence of peer groups becomes stronger when family relationships are not supportive, turning young people to a peer group for emotional comfort.

According to Howe (2010), as the amount of time spent with peers' increases, so does the influence and support they provide. So, why is Abdul attracted to the peer group? Loosely defined peer groups provide a sense of identity and belonging (Howe, 2010). On the surface, Abdul's peer group opted to associate with each other based on a common identification with Islam. Young people tend to be friends with those who are most like them, which explains Abdul's attraction to the members. Indeed, recent research has shown that socio-demographic characteristics are key components in peer group formation (Way and Hamm, 2005). Thus, what is the composition of Abdul's peer group? According to Abdul:

'The brothers' backgrounds were very similar to mine...they came from all across the country...I'm fairly sure that they were all middle-class because their parents were doctors, accountants or teachers. I had this very superficial worldview growing up that Pakistanis were all poor and unemployed, and that my family was the only well-off family. But the brothers were just like me...we even had similar experiences growing-up [Racial harassment?] Yes. The kuffar [non-Muslims] can tolerate you under their feet, but if you have money then you'll see how much they despise you. So the brothers, like me, suffered from racism. If I'm honest, I think some had it far worse than me [What do you mean?] I wasn't physically attacked.'

It is quite apparent that the peer group attracted the same types of individuals. These individuals emerged from similar social, cultural and economic backgrounds. More broadly, living away from home at university enabled Abdul to develop greater autonomy, which enabled him to see situations from another person's point of view. Therefore, as Abdul's account shows, class and ethnicity were important features in patterning his friendships, but perhaps the most crucial structural feature was religion.

#### **4.2.9 The Role of Religion**

There is a long history in Abdul's account of things not being quite what they first seemed. His biographical insight of the radicalisation process is jam-packed with 'turning points'. In its simplest form, this term can be understood as a pivotal moment that shapes one's life. In trying to uncover the various turning points Abdul experiences in his life, I realised that

more attention needed to be paid to the role of religion. As his early biography indicated, although he emerged from a very non-religious household, he had the potential for religiosity. As he commented, ‘I grew up knowing nothing about Islam, which is sad. But I do remember, as a child, having a strong craving to learn more about my religion’. However, Abdul experiences an abrupt intensification of religiosity after just four weeks of attending university. The intensity and tempo of the religious awakening, from a non-religious state, in Abdul’s personal life becomes quickly visible; increased attention to religious practices, greater emphasis on Islamic dress and custom. So what triggered this seemingly spontaneous intensification of religiosity?

#### 4.2.10 Religious Change

One thing that emerges strongly from Abdul’s account is a sense of acceptance which he received from his peers. However, does this properly explain his heightened state of religiosity? Abdul firmly believes that his religious enlightenment took shape within an intellectual framework.<sup>136</sup> As he described:

‘In Islam, a Muslim cannot arrive at faith through imitation or blind faith. In contrast, to other religions, the Islamic *Aqeedah* (doctrine) is *attasdiq al-jazim* (decisive belief). A basic condition for *attasdiq al-jazim* is rational proof, which must agree with reality. So, in regards to myself, I became convinced through rational proofs. I was pushed to think about existence for the first time, so I started to think about what came before this life and what will come after it. [Is this not just from *Nidham al-Islam*?]<sup>137</sup> Of course, the party pieced together the way I think, I am trying to rationalise my experiences so you can understand why I became practising...As soon as I realised Islam was the truth, I knew that I had to live my life according to it, so this realisation was reached through rational thinking.’

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<sup>136</sup> Abdul’s insistence that his religious transformation was firmly embedded within the intellectual greatly undervalues the eschatological influences of HT rhetoric and ideology. From an eschatological perspective, HT seeks to connect individual behaviour and actions to the afterlife, or more significantly the ‘*Qiyamah*’ (Day of Judgment). This connection to the afterlife is critical, because it allows HT to apply fear of punishment in the afterlife as a way to influence actions in the present. Therefore, if a recruit wishes to gain salvation in the next life, then he or she must work for HT. The fear of punishment in the afterlife has mixed responses, as one member suggested: ‘if the shab (novice) has a religious basis then you can link their actions to jannah (Heaven) and Jahannam (Hell)...but if there not religious then you need to convince them through social ills’. This would indicate that some novices are coerced by the fear of punishment. Therefore, Abdul, who had a religious awakening through the HT peer group, was influenced by the fear of the afterlife and joining HT was connected to the eschatological.

<sup>137</sup> *Nidham al-Islam* (The System of Islam) is the first book studied in the Halaqah.

As you can see, there is a richness and complexity to Abdul's account, forcing me to concentrate on some key themes. Firstly, many religious experiences invoke the feelings of being 'called' or 'chosen' by a higher power. In spite of this, Abdul never refers to himself as someone who has been appointed (Stendahl, 1976, p. 9). His experiences are more closely related to the phenomenon of conversion, because he seemingly undergoes a sudden transformation.

Secondly, Abdul reduces this process to the cognitive aspect, leaving the impression that his religious experience was distinctly private and individualistic. In reality, his religious experience takes root through the interaction of the public and private spheres. In particular, the transformation is experienced in the context of the peer group. Abdul stresses how he was part of a group, in which the brothers would 'hang out' and talk to each other about Islam. Therefore, even though Abdul spent a considerable amount of his time mulling over his existence, this was not without its social dimension. In other words, a social encounter occurs in which Abdul, the religious seeker, meets and interacts with HT members who seemingly have already found the answers to the questions being asked. Thirdly, as the religious transformation progressed, Abdul was encouraged to engage in further study of the party culture and to cut off his contact with non-Muslims who might deplete his new-found beliefs.<sup>138</sup> As Abdul makes clear: 'my behaviour completely changed when I became practising...for instance, my classmates found it strange when I stopped mixing with them'. The 'turning away' from one's past life and behaviour could indicate that Abdul finally became 'converted' or 'practising'. More importantly, the question remains, at what point in the process did Abdul become radicalised?

#### **4.2.11 Radicalisation**

In this section, I want to look at radicalisation from a group perspective. This will help me to understand why HT affected Abdul so strongly. It is very difficult to establish when Abdul developed into a radical, because radicalisation might be conceived as a continuing process. As he explained:

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<sup>138</sup> This attempt to control the social environment of a recruit is very similar to the indoctrination tactics used by cults. Singer (1995) points out that 'cults have used tactics of coercive mind control to negatively impact victims'. It has been argued that cults often use behaviour modification techniques on recruits. For instance, Hassan (2001) suggests that 'thought-stopping tactics' and installing an 'us-versus-them' mindset help to coerce the person into joining the group.

‘I think after seven or eight weeks I joined the party. I was invited after some discussion to Halaqah.<sup>139</sup> At this point, everything was new. In many ways, I was a blank canvas...and that’s why it took me a few months to carry Dawah, because I wanted to be fully convinced. [Convinced of Islam or HT?] Both.’

A brief glimpse into Abdul’s early university life revealed that he was not fully radicalised until he joined HT. For the moment, I want to consider what happened to Abdul’s identity when he started to attend *Halaqah*. Abdul described the *Halaqah* as a ‘deep and profound culturing experience’, giving him a totally new cognitive perspective with which to view the social world. This would indicate that, first of all, the *Halaqah* was the basis for the creation of Abdul’s new cognitive perspective, as his personal identity gives way to the group identity. Abdul explained that the *Halaqah* would be used, as the fundamental process to ensure that both the ‘*Aqlyya*’ (mentality) and the ‘*Nafsyya*’ (disposition) of the novices were radically transformed.

The *Halaqah* was used to indoctrinate Abdul with a new belief system, awakening in him a host of feelings and ideas entirely different from those to which he was accustomed. As he explained:

‘When I started to study the culture [HT] it immediately had an impact. My parents quickly noticed a difference in my behaviour and personality. [What was their reaction to you joining HT?] It was very negative. I had a big clash with my father, our viewpoints were totally at odds, and so it caused problems.’

The short-term effects of the indoctrination programme could be seen once Abdul returned home. The conflicts at home pushed Abdul to isolate himself from his family, alienating him from his previous group memberships. As Abdul’s case has shown, given the intensive challenges he received to his newfound beliefs, it was not surprising that he emerged stronger and unchanged. This shows the strong interplay between individuals and groups, which enabled HT to permanently change Abdul’s identity.

### 4.3 Case Study Two – Tariq

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<sup>139</sup> Within HT literature the term ‘*Halaqah*’ has been translated in many ways, such as: *private circle*; *culturing circle*; *intensive culturing*; *concentrated circle*; and *secret culturing*. However, the two key components of this circle are *privacy* and *culturing*, so I have defined *Halaqah* as ‘private culturing circle’.

Tariq, 26, is a successful computer analyst living in Berkshire, and is an active member of HT. The purpose of this case study is to provide a personalised explanation of how he joined HT. A biographical study of HT members is fascinating not only because it has the potential to tell us so much about the processes of radicalisation, but because it can also tell us so much about the early social life of members. Like all life histories, Tariq's account is actively woven together to tell a story from his life experiences. This type of approach has been necessary in order to draw out more clearly some of the differences and commonalities that exist between HT members. Having identified the focus for the case study, the next step will be to develop a precise understanding of how Tariq came to construct his identity and how this, in turn, made him susceptible to radicalisation.

#### **4.3.1 Home Environment: Family Life, Class and Upbringing**

Tariq, a British-born Muslim of mixed-race, found it very difficult to come to terms with his own ethnicity. He talked, for example, about the way his identity had to be formed from fragmented sources. As he described:

‘My dad is Pakistani and my mum is [a non-Muslim] English [white]. So I felt out of place in family situations as a kid. I'd be conscious of my fair skin when I was with my dad's family. My parents never understood... I couldn't explain it to them. I was different from them. I wasn't fully Pakistani or English.’  
(Tariq; Interview 2, 07/11/2004).

This brief glimpse into Tariq's early experiences reveals how difficult it was for him to integrate contradictory parts of his identity into a coherent whole. We see, in this extract, neither his mother nor father were capable of empathic understanding, because they are not mixed-race. His parents failed to provide Tariq with all the cultural knowledge necessary to construct his identity as mixed-race. As several social theorists have noted, unless a unified perception of the child is maintained, ethnicity can become a constant worry (Wetherell, 1987; Jenkins, 2004). Research on parents in an Asian-white marriage has focused on the need to foster a multi-cultural behavioural range in order to guarantee their multi-racial children's survival (Piscacek and Golub, 1973). The awareness of being different in physical complexion from the rest of the family reinforced Tariq's feelings of 'not belonging'. In adult life, ethnicity is still a salient feature of his identity. He told me, even though he has

both Pakistani and English heritage, he never found complete acceptance in either community. As Wilson (1987) points out, mixed-race children find it difficult to balance between majority values and minority culture.

#### **4.3.2 Family conflict – Religious Identity**

The years from about the ages of six to twelve were very important in the development of Tariq's identity. During these years, he became aware of the religious and cultural differences between his parents. As Tariq explained:

‘My parents always fought about how to raise us [Tariq and two younger siblings]. I'd be forced to take sides... Eventually, I became closer to my dad, so I started to go to the Mosque with him, which upset my mum. Ironically, back then my father was not that religious – he was influenced by Paki pride. [What do you mean?] His sons couldn't be Christians, that'd bring shame on the family.’

By not being able to involve Tariq in both sides of their religious heritage – such as celebrating religious events – his parents made him feel marginalised. This feeling of exclusion experienced within the family setting greatly impeded his relationship with his mother. As Tariq explained, ‘...my mother was distant. All day she'd go on about how much she had to suffer from my dad and his family, so she'd take it out on us [Tariq and his siblings]’. According to Knowles and Cole (1990, p. 161), if a mother's efforts are rejected it can lead to a vicious cycle in which the mother feels emotionally wounded. Some social theorists argue that conflict and frustration is natural in the mother-son dynamic because mothers misunderstand what their sons need (Smith, 1997). In other words, when adolescent boys conceal their vulnerability, mothers can mistake this emotional posturing for masculinity.

In family gatherings, the religious beliefs of Tariq's mother were often degraded and stigmatised. This unsettled environment made forming a coherent religious identity for Tariq more challenging than for those adolescents in non-mixed religious households. As a result, he experienced a period of confusion and exploration before accepting a religion. As he explained,

‘I really started to ask myself what religion I should belong to, but I had no help from my parents...they just wanted me to follow them blindly. So, I really felt lost and confused.’

It is very important to help children of mixed religious heritage to understand that they are part of both groups, allowing them to ask questions about their identity (Rom and Lamb, 1986). In Tariq’s case, when family conflict arose, his parents expected him to categorise himself into one specific religion, not accepting that he could belong to two. This prejudice was reinforced in family gatherings, for example, spending time with his father’s relatives helped skew his view of Christianity. Tariq was greatly inspired by hearing his uncles’ and grandparent’s accounts about Islam, but this overlooked his mother’s religious and cultural heritage.

Living between two religious traditions had shaped some of Tariq’s values and beliefs. However, family conflict over religion pushed him away from religion as he grew up. As he mentioned:

‘My dad just wanted me to be Muslim, so I accepted that. But I was not religious. I never prayed, fasted or cared about Islam. I saw religion as something bad; it caused so many problems at home...So, I considered myself Muslim in name only.’

To some extent, this period marked a time of exploration of different ways of looking at his religious and racial identity. Raised Muslim, Tariq appeared very fair, and felt that he was an outsider. According to Marcia (1993, p.146), the balance between identity and confusion lies in making a ‘commitment to an identity’. Although, Tariq was actively involved in exploring different identities, he did not make a real commitment to a religious identity. Some social theorists believe that those young people who make a strong commitment to an identity tend to be happier than those who do not (Marcia, 1993).

### **4.3.3 Family structure<sup>140</sup>**

Recent research has shown that the quality of family interactions has important associations with the formation of a child’s identity (Kellaghan, 1993). This makes it essential to examine the ways in which Tariq’s family members interacted. So far we have observed that Tariq’s

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<sup>140</sup> Family structure refers to the hidden ‘set of functional demands’ that sort out the manner in which family members communicate and interact (Minuchin, 1974, p. 51).

parents were unable to offer a balanced religious perspective. Within the family setting, Tariq's parents failed to provide a unified set of experiences for their children. Unlike most families, his household was fragmented by religious and cultural differences. It was on this muddled foundation that Tariq set out to find and shape his own identity. As he explained, 'I grew up very confused about my religion... So it [religion] was not a defining feature of my childhood'. Alongside the parental conflicts there were major shifts in his family's structure and the relationships within the family were clearly disrupted. As he commented: 'Religion became the focal point of conflict and I remember that my father left for a while. When he returned, my mother was less confrontational. She pretty much gave in to his demands.' In fact, his parents tried to re-negotiate the balance of power within their relationship. His mother surrendered to her husband's religious demands, after a short separation. According to Kayser (1996), estrangement can become an opportunity for growth or decline; it can serve as an incentive to modify the boundaries of relationships. Accompanying this hierarchal change was a revision of his mother's role and boundaries within the family, which prevented her from influencing the children's religious upbringing.

In the family, all decisions inevitably became dominated by Tariq's father. As he explained, '[after the separation] my dad really started interfering in my personal life... he'd wanna know about everything, especially the conversations I'd had between my mum and brothers'. A somewhat common problem in fragmented families is a weak boundary between sub-systems<sup>141</sup>. As Minuchin (1974) points out, for a family to function correctly it must have cohesion among the parental sub-system. Unsurprisingly, the shifting role of Tariq's father can be attributed to the conflict over child rearing. In particular, his father tried to become more involved with Tariq's religious upbringing. As Tariq explained, 'When my dad came back home, he really pushed us to pray, but I knew it was a fake gesture...because after a while he couldn't be bothered.' Both parents were competing for the parental sub-system role in order to exact their authority over the children. However, after the short separation, the rules that regulated the interactions between parent and child became distorted. His mother, for example, assumed the responsibility for nurturing and his father took greater control of family decision-making.

#### **4.3.4 Class**

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<sup>141</sup> There are two key types of family subsystems: (1) the 'executive subsystem' which consists of the parents and the (2) 'sibling subsystem' is that of the children (Minuchin, 1974).



Over the past three decades, class has played a greater role in Tariq's life and upbringing. The movement of his family up and down the economic ladder has made him very sensitive to class cleavages. When his father immigrated to the United Kingdom from Pakistan in the early 1970s, he struggled to support himself despite having a master's degree in electronic engineering. As he commented:

‘My dad worked in a factory for years when he came over from Pakistan. He was highly educated, he was an engineer. So, I remember life being very hard for my family in the early days. We lived in a small flat, and both my parents worked. [Is your mother educated?] Yes, she has a degree in English...she is a primary school teacher... So, we were a working class family, in a financial sense, during the 70s. But my parents came from middle class backgrounds.’

Whilst migration forced downward economic mobility for his family, his migrant father still held onto his middle-class values and aspirations. However, the changing political and economic landscape of the 1980s radically altered his family's economic fortunes. In fact, after the privatisation of British Aerospace, Tariq's father was employed as an engineer. The family saw their standard of living dramatically improve. Soon, his father took a position as a senior engineer. His parents bought a large house outside London, where they raised their family. Tariq's family have gained considerable economic independence since the early 1980s. However, economic self-sufficiency is not the sole determinant of an individual's position in the class hierarchy. In general, social theorists believe that a variety of social factors need to be considered in order to identify class – such as education, employment status and grade, home ownership and lifestyle (Goldthorpe e al., 1987).

At this point, I wanted to understand how Tariq conceptualised class, and thus I asked him to which class grouping he felt he belonged:

‘I think I'm middle class, because my parents are both educated professionals, they own several freehold properties and the home I grew up in... and I went to university. So, I think that makes me middle class.’

What strikes me about this extract is Tariq's need to be recognised as middle class. This can be problematic, as Hutter (1976) points out, since individuals tend to distort or exaggerate their social aspirations. According to objective standards, Tariq and his family should be

considered middle class (Goldthorpe et al., 1987). However, in the United Kingdom, social lifestyle and status are also considered important indicators for determining class – such as accent, manners, place of education, heritage and acquaintances (Cooper, 1979). Some of these issues are important because when I first met Tariq, he did not strike me as being middle class. He seemed to retain the mannerisms of his original social group. He talked about this briefly:

‘I never went to private school, for some reason my parents wanted me to go to a good state school. I really regret not having the benefit of private schooling...my friends come from mixed backgrounds but most of them were working class, which was hard because I had to hide things from them. [Can you give any examples?] My parents enrolled me into a private tennis club.’

My interview with Tariq showed that he is very aware of class issues. He talked, for example, about articulating a middle-class identity, within a set context, in order to fit in with his middle-class friends. However, with his working-class friends, he would hide aspects of his social lifestyle and status.

#### **4.3.5 Finding Identity – Friendship, Schooling and Racism**

In the preceding discussion, I looked at the central most important interactions and relationships in Tariq’s family life. As Laursen (1993) notes, the diverse function of friendship is fundamentally different to a parent-child relationship. Like most people, Tariq has formed strong ties and relationships that have evolved, developed and changed over time. As a result, I need to look at what these relationships mean to Tariq and what he has gained from them.

When it comes to understanding Tariq’s friendships, one must appreciate the situational factors that seem to influence his friendship selections. By this, I mean that his friendships cannot be viewed simply as a ‘private and voluntary act’ (Bell and Coleman, 1999). Rather, as Allan (1989) notes, friendship is constituted within the constraints of class, age, ethnicity, gender and proximity. This is very important because in one setting, the tennis club, Tariq would describe his friends as close, but not in other settings. This places substantial doubt upon the notion that friendship is based on voluntary selection. As Tariq points out:

‘My school friends and I weren’t close, they were just school friends. And that’s the same for my mates at the [tennis] club...At school my friends came from poorer backgrounds, and my recreational interests never quite matched-up.’

If, as Tariq suggested, he did not share in his friends’ interests then, apart from geography, why did he associate with his working-class friends? The relationships he formed with his working-class friends at school were simply based upon utility. This explains why these friendships eroded when he went to college, utility changes according to need and circumstances. As Tariq explained he was pursuing his own advantage:

‘School was divided by race [and] in order to survive I made friends with ethnic kids. It was benefit. That’s why I never hung out after school... I never even liked’em.’

Recent research has found that young people who lack friends can suffer from psychological problems later in life (Howe, 2010). It seems clear that the type of relationships Tariq is able to form in different social settings is based on practical necessity, rather than choice. Thus, by and large, Tariq’s friends remain bounded by the initial setting for interaction, such as school or the tennis club.

#### **4.3.6 School and College**

Recent research into student transition has revealed that children need to feel socially connected to their school (Newcomb and Feldman, 1994). In other words, they want to be socially accepted by their peers and teachers. As Osterman (2000) points out, this is important because those students who feel disconnected display greater behavioural problems. In Tariq’s case, he experienced significant difficulties adjusting to his secondary school, which had a negative effect on his attitudes about British society. In particular, his school experiences are littered with frustrations based on the inability to fit into a racially-divided community. As Tariq explained:

‘On my first day of school a white kid came up to me and asked if I was a Paki...I reacted [to racism] with hate; I hated white people [and] being called a Paki every day made me feel different...Race became a big issue for me because the school was divided by skin colour. The whites kept to themselves, which was fine, because I despised them. So, school was us against them, whites versus. ethnics, which would always erupt

in a fight, and it was clear which side I was on...So all this talk about integration is complete rubbish; white people will never accept a Paki. I realised that at school, you can't integrate with white people, or be their friends. I was only comfortable hanging around my own kind...I felt safe with Asians and Blacks [Afro-Caribbean and Somali]...Also, the teachers would always favour the white kids; they were all racist [teachers]'. (Tariq; Interview 2, 07/11/2004)

This highly revealing extract shows us that racism is a very destructive phenomenon (Bryant-Davis, 2005). It distorts Tariq's image of white people, leaving him emotionally and mentally discounted. The racial interplay between the multi-ethnic communities manifested itself in an excessive divide that had a significant impact on Tariq's social development. He was exposed to severe racial discrimination during his childhood, finding it extremely difficult to adjust. He experienced all forms of racial prejudice as a child; ridicule, abuse, physical assault and harassment. Tariq found it easier to cope with these direct forms of racism, becoming acclimatised to them because they were overt acts. In contrast, the perception of covert racism seemed to agitate Tariq more intensely than the overt type, because gradually he developed a means of protection against direct racism by associating with Asian and Black gangs. Vigil (2002) argues that problems of identity among minority groups are most often concentrated in larger, inner-city schools that are breeding grounds for gangs. However, a gang cannot provide an individual with protection from covert racism, perceived in an institutional form, i.e., teachers and police officers. As Sanchez-Hucles (1998, p. 74) notes: 'The trauma and emotional abusiveness of racism is as likely to be due to chronic systemic, and individual assaults on the personhoods of ethnic minorities as a single catastrophic event'. Thus, a social distrust was aroused, especially concerning institutions, which became more pronounced as Tariq grew older.

The racial discrimination that Tariq experienced had a number of parallels with Abdul's case; it adversely affected his personality in the same way. However, unlike Abdul, Tariq did not adopt a solitary lifestyle; rather, he sought shelter in groups. This had a major influence on his entire outlook; he felt a sense of confidence within the gang environment. As he explained: 'there was power in numbers, and I knew my friends had my back' (Tariq; Interview 2, 07/11/2004). Tariq's socialisation should be viewed within the context of the sub-culture from which he emerges. The gang environment offered him, and other members, a form of protection and belonging, which originated in response to a common problem felt by all gang members. A subculture is a specific sub-division within the dominant culture

that has its own norms, values and ideals (Ferracuti and Wolfgang, 1982, pp. 129–41). The gang brought together young Asian and Black children from similar circumstances and backgrounds for mutual support, as they found themselves isolated and neglected within mainstream society.<sup>142</sup> Within the gang, Tariq adopted the sub-culture of violence in a passive manner, which accepts violence in certain social situations. As he described:

‘When you’re in a gang, as I was, there’s always instances of violence; for instance a white kid insulted me at school once; soon after we [the gang] reacted by giving him a beating.’  
(Tariq; Interview 2, 07/11/2004)

The approval of violence, as a norm, affected Tariq’s daily behaviour, because it was in conflict with conventional society. However, the experience of a sub-culture environment did not establish a permanent connection between Tariq and the behavioural patterns of the gang. Rather, once he was at college, Tariq was able to adjust to a more stable environment. As he described:

‘I suppose I was alienated in the social sense. I had minimal contact with whites, though things changed as I matured. I started reading the works of Trotsky and that really helped...I found myself drifting to the labour movement. At college, I found the Socialist Workers; they offered an outlet. I thought I had found a group of individuals that I could integrate with, although I had my own views on issues.’ (Tariq; Interview 2, 07/11/2004)

The experiences at college reinforced the implicit need Tariq displayed to be part of a group; also, on finding the Socialist Workers, he instantly formed a bond with them. They restructured his sub-culture ideals according to the ideology of socialism, reshaping his mindset and providing him with a renewed feeling of belonging. However, this did not erode his frustrations, as he had been raised a Muslim and felt that this was under-represented in his disposition. As he explained:

‘I remember getting vexed with some SW [Socialist Workers] member’s in the canteen, they insulted Muslims and Islam badly. And I ignored it, which burned me deep. From that day I

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<sup>142</sup> According to Alexander (2000), the attraction of Asian gangs primarily takes place within the backdrop of cultural conflict and social deprivation.

realised that the socialists were fools, but this incident really sparked my interest to learn about the deen [Islam].’

From a social perspective, Tariq was not able to establish close ties, because he was still overwhelmed by identity issues.

#### 4.3.7 University – Finding Islam

Like many students, Tariq found moving to university a huge transition. Going to university meant moving away from home for the first time, which he found daunting and unsettling. As he explained:

‘University was a big step. I always relied on my mum for everything...so I had to take responsibility for myself, which was really hard at first. I never liked my halls [of residence], it was constant jahiliyah<sup>143</sup>. This made me miss home, I felt detached from these people [non-Muslims]. So I went clubbing with my neighbours a few times. But I realised this was wrong.’

Most university students enjoy the transition from home life to complete freedom. It gives them the opportunity to find new friends and enjoy an adult social life. However, for Tariq, living among non-Muslims greatly unsettled him. He felt alienated by his initial experiences, and there was no help and support when he needed it. However, he soon found the support and love he needed. In the morning, after a night of clubbing, he awoke feeling very guilty. He decided to go to Friday prayer, for the first time at university. As he mentioned:

‘You need to understand that for the first few months I was trying to integrate, I went clubbing two or three times a week and I never bothered about Islam during that time. But I couldn’t remove the guilt...I knew what I was doing was wrong. So, *alhumdullah* [praise be to God], I went to Jummah [Friday prayer] and that changed my life. I met the brothers [members of HT] there for the first time. In fact, one of the brothers was giving the *Khutbah* [service/speech] on the topic of raving – he destroyed the issue of split personality – living like a *kaffir* [non-Muslim] and Muslim. It was so true; I’d been living that life. So, after the *Khutbah*, I went and met the brothers [and] they invited me to have some food with them.’

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<sup>143</sup> *Jahiliyah* literally means ignorance. However, it is commonly used to refer to corrupt and ignorant practices, e.g., like fornication and drinking alcohol (as based upon Islamic scripture).

After an unpleasant few months at university, Tariq was thrilled to discover that the university setting provided him an opportunity to know peers whose backgrounds and lifestyles were similar to his own. This interpersonal experience, taking place in an environment that encouraged intellectual inquiry, seemed to foster profound personal growth.

#### **4.3.8 Finding Brotherhood – The Peer Group**

Tariq's interview, and that of other HT members in my sample, has revealed an important link to peer group relations. As Asher (1990, p.3) makes clear, peer relationships are important sources of companionship, providing 'stability in times of stress and transition'. If as suggested, Tariq experienced great difficulty in adjusting to university life, feeling alone and disconnected, then it makes sense given his penchant for collectivity. Tariq's peer relationships developed strongly because he felt the group could facilitate his goal of becoming Islamic, which he believed would influence him in a positive way. As he explained:

'I realised after meeting the brothers that they'd teach me about the *Deen* [Islam]. So I spent time with them, attending events, which introduced me to the party [HT] culture...I'd never heard of Hizb ut-Tahrir before university. [What motivated you to join?] First of I was convinced, and still am today, that it is a duty to work for the *Khilafah*...and thus if you do not perform this duty you'll be sinful. Also, I never knew about political Islam: that Islam offered an alternative ideology. So, in a nutshell, I joined the party in my first year and, yes, I did feel like I belonged to something real, because everyone had the same collective goal; we were working [carrying the party mission], learning and living like brothers.' (Tariq; Interview 2, 07/11/2004)

This extract gives us some insight into Tariq's emotional need to belong. He seeks out support from his peers, which in this instance is facilitated by HT. In effect, this provides him with a collective identity and purpose.

Tariq's description of his relationship with the peer group raises some intriguing questions about what attracted him to this group of young Muslims. As Newcomb and Feldman (1994) points out, commonality among peers based on attributes such as attitudes, interests, and

beliefs facilitates social attraction.<sup>144</sup> Recent research has shown that individuals are less likely to accept, or will avoid communicating with, those who are different (Howe, 2010). Unsurprisingly, Tariq is attracted to the cultural homogeneity of the peer group. As he explained: ‘The brothers were just like me, we’d grown up in this cesspit [Britain] and faced the same problems [and] troubles...we were Asians from good backgrounds, but that did not unite us, it was Islam that brought us together’. Islam might have been the overt symbol of the peer group, but it was similarity in attitudes, age, ethnicity and class that attracted Tariq to the group. According to Carley (1991), individuals make a greater effort to seek out homogeneity in their social relations. Recent research has indicated that students are more likely to form friendship ties based on commonality of race and ethnicity (Mollica, Gray, and Trevino, 2003).

#### **4.3.9 Beginning the Indoctrination Process: Contact**

The goal of this section is to show how indoctrination is used in HT. In order to do this, I have used Tariq’s account because it provides an overview of indoctrination at three key stages; contact, novice and member. As Singer and Lalich (1995) note, indoctrination is the systematic application of psychological and social influence techniques. The primary aim is to fabricate behavioural changes within a closed and structured setting (Lifton, 1989). As briefly described earlier, Tariq felt excessively isolated and lonely. These negative feelings soon went away once he became friends with HT recruiters at university. This stage is critical because Tariq became emotionally and intellectually connected to the peer group. Speaking retrospectively, Tariq candidly talked about his experiences as a ‘contact’<sup>145</sup>:

‘I never knew that I was a contact or that the brothers had an agenda other than friendship. I was completely innocent at the time, but now I know what they were up to [recruitment], because I use the same methods. They first sought to develop a relationship with me. This allowed them to get to know me: My thoughts, concepts and personality. For example, I mentioned that I went clubbing the night before, which gave the brothers insight into what thoughts I was clearly lacking...Developing a relationship also means living with the contact, as the brothers did with me, in a natural way. This

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<sup>144</sup> Newcomb’s research is very important as he conducted his study on university students (Newcomb and Feldman, 1994). He discovered that the vast majority of student friendships were constituted by common attitudes.

<sup>145</sup> Potential recruits are often referred to as ‘contacts’ by HT insiders.



allowed them to guide my *aqlyya* [mentality] and *nafsyya* [disposition].’

This extract has given me considerable insight into the beginning of Tariq’s indoctrination. Firstly, the peer group sought to form a ‘physical relationship’ with him in order to understand, and then exploit, his personality.<sup>146</sup> According to Lifton (1989, p. 5), indoctrination consists of two key elements: ‘confession’ and ‘re-education’. In Tariq’s case, the members encouraged him to confess and renounce his sins in order to begin the process of individual change. Secondly, unprepared for their indoctrination techniques, Tariq concluded that only the members could re-educate him, providing absolute certainty and conviction in Islam. He was unaware that the members sought to ‘remake’ him in HT image (Lifton 1989, p.5).

#### **4.3.10 Intermediate Stage: Becoming a Novice**

Tariq spent considerable time with his new peers, interacting in the same social space. More significantly, he started to view the world in a similar fashion, transforming his behaviour to gain ‘peer acceptance’ (Howe, 2010). Tariq talked, for example, about modelling his behaviour around the members. He changed his style of dress and use of language in an effort to consolidate his group membership. More significantly, the peer group conditioned Tariq to internalise HT ideology, reshaping his thoughts and behaviour (Hassan, 2002). As he commented: ‘I started maturing in the [HT] culture, and I really pushed the guys for more...so eventually they asked me to join the Halaqah.’

As an observer, I am struck by the way in which Tariq so willingly surrendered his individuality for the group experience. As Triplett (1898) points out, moving from a state of isolation to a group context can reduce one’s sense of individuality. In *Halaqah*, Tariq adjusted his thoughts and personality to match the collectively defined ideology of HT. The perspective of Tariq, a member of HT, is surprisingly open and frank on the issue of the *Halaqah*. As he commented:

‘The *Halaqah* is designed to culture the *daris* [novice], building them with the correct thoughts and ideas about Islam. So, we begin each *Halaqah* with *Nidham al-Islam* [System of

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<sup>146</sup> The importance assigned to building a relationship with contacts is extensively documented in HT literature: (1) ‘*Living with the Ummah*’ (Leaflet)

Islam, book]. This is the best party book, in my opinion, because it builds the Islamic foundation. For example, the first chapter talks about change: in order to create change [individual and society] one must change the thoughts because thoughts lead to action. This is a fundamental concept; it allowed me to appreciate how to create change in myself and society. So, take a simple example, a Muslim drinks alcohol, this is a corrupt action. So, if you want to change that action then you need to address the corrupt thoughts that motivate that action, like freedom...I want to make it clear that the Halaqah does not brainwash, I became convinced by the intellectual arguments of Hizb ut-Tahrir, and if you do not accept that then you are distorting the reality of the culturing process of the party.'

This observation underscores some of the limitations of the interview method. Tariq, for example, is not aware of all the contextual factors that are influencing his behaviour and personality. Consequently, he cannot identify or understand the types of indoctrination techniques being employed against him.

Lifton (1989), a prominent psychiatrist, observed three psychological techniques used by the Chinese government to indoctrinate young students. As Lifton (1989, p. 7) points out, these techniques 'represent the successive psychological climates to which the student is exposed as he is guided along the path of his symbolic death and rebirth; the great togetherness, the closing of the milieu, and submission and rebirth'. During the intermediate stage of indoctrination Tariq became a novice and joined a six-person Halaqah in which he received culturing on HT ideology and aim. Then, after three months, a noticeable change took place – there was a large shift in emphasis from the intellectual and ideological to the behavioural. Tariq casually acknowledged this shift, as he commented: 'The first three chapters of *Nidham* [System of Islam] focus on *aqlyya* [mentality] – the correct way of thinking – and chapter four really targets *naffsyya* [behaviour] because the concepts need life'. Tariq began to realise that his views came under intense scrutiny and his Mushrif (Halaqah teacher) started to exert considerable pressure on him to adopt HT ideology in totality. 'Milieu control' was a powerful technique used to control Tariq's environment (Lifton, 1989). According to Tariq: 'the party [HT] is the only group today that understands the Islamic ideology [and] the Halaqah maintains this purity and knowledge'. The concepts he studied in Halaqah were strictly controlled, and thus no alternative sources could be used, as this would distort the new world view being crafted.

#### 4.3.11 Final Stage: Membership and Ideology

When Tariq began conveying the thoughts of HT effectively, as if they were his own, then he was considered for membership. This was not a free choice; significant coercion was used in order to manipulate him into joining the organisation. Although, there was no physical pressure, the coercion was clear. During the weekly Halaqah, intellectual pressure was applied, which forced Tariq to bend towards group expectation. The novice is seen as intellectually inferior, especially if he or she displays independent thinking. According to Fahim (senior member), ‘most *shab* join the Hizb knowing very little...they are like empty pieces of clay, making it the *Mushrif*'s job to mould them into members’. However, Tariq showed desire for membership by imposing himself on the organisation, which served as the first indicator of his readiness. He talked openly about his membership:

‘I recall being summoned, without any explanation, on an early Sunday morning by a senior member. I arrived at the location to find several members already present, among them was the Naqib [committee head] and Masool [area leader]. To my surprise, they offered me membership into the party, which I accepted. The Naqib at the time explained that the party stipulated that in order to become a member, I must take al-Qasm [the Oath].’

The swearing of the oath is a requirement for all prospective members, to be assured of their loyalty. The following is the oath in full:

[I declare that I will be] (1) a faithful guardian of Islam, [and I swear] (2) to adopt the opinions of this Hizb ut-Tahrir, its thoughts and its constitution [administrative laws] by word and deed. (3) to trust its leadership, (4) to execute its resolutions even if they are different from my opinion, (5) to exhaust all my efforts to achieve its objective, (6) [all this for] as long as I am a member. (Anon., leaflet *Al-Qasm*, 20/08/1998).

The first condition of the oath demands that a member must be ‘a faithful guardian of Islam’. To be a guardian of Islam entailed that Tariq propagate the Islamic message, as interpreted by HT, in a political fashion to the wider society. Secondly, anyone who becomes a member of the organisation has to adopt the party ideology. In this respect, the member must be a walking manifestation of the ideology, acting in full accordance with it, even if he disagrees with some aspect of it. According to Lifton (1989, p. 430), another characteristic of

indoctrination is ‘the subordination of human experience to the claims of doctrine’. In other words, Tariq’s personal experiences were subordinated to the ideology because HT doctrine is more important than the individual. The third condition relates to confidence and trust in the leadership, which is imperative. The fourth requirement stipulates that once the oath has been taken a member must execute every decision made by the party, regardless of his own view, ‘as decisions are made for implementation’. The fifth condition demands that as a member you commit to carry the party ideology with all your effort and energy. Finally, the oath ends with a self-declaration to uphold all the aforementioned conditions, confirming this oath with God as the witness. This is very important, as violation of this oath would be considered a contravention against God’s law.

#### **4.4 Becoming a Radical – Common Trends**

Although I looked at nearly thirty case studies, this chapter has documented the radicalisation of just two young Muslims. The extracts have provided a powerful source of information, and now I need to make sense of them. There are many characteristics that I can identify, and diverse kinds of category that I could use to conceptualise these accounts; but any type of analysis will be selective in the features it focuses on and the categories used to classify them. So what features should I use? Although each respondent is unique, common patterns of experience can be singled out. However, as I will show, these are not conclusive. They constitute issues to be discussed, rather than clear-cut features of radicalisation. My analysis has drawn out three key commonalities; socialisation, peer group formation and collective identity.

##### **4.4.1 Socialisation<sup>147</sup>**

The collection of case material clearly indicates that the respondents did not operate independently from society. Instead, I discovered that the respondents were embedded in a complex set of relationships with other social forces and settings outside of the family, such as school and peer group contexts. Abdul, for example, tailored his identity at home in relation to his ethnic culture, but beyond the home he struggled to develop relationships with

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<sup>147</sup> Social theorists generally agree that *socialisation* is a process by which individuals learn about the culture that surrounds them and the roles they are to play, making those persons more or less able members of their society. Thus, socialisation is a process by which the child growing up accepts the basic social identities that are exhibited by his family, community and society (Shils and Pitts, 1961; Talcott, 1964; Brim, 1984).

the white majority. In spite of this recognition, a great deal remains to be examined about the ways in which these social influences affected the respondents.

To be a radical, or, more precisely, to be susceptible to becoming one, involves subjective experiences. Each case history provided important insights into the cognitive ways in which the respondents processed and made sense of their adverse experiences. Each of the respondents experienced the world through their own particular frame of recognition, actively trying to understand, predict and explain their own perspective. Much of Abdul's awareness, for example, is made up of racial discrimination, which deeply affected his perception of the 'other'. The very way Tariq presented himself emphasised the fragmentation of his ethnic identity. Leading psychologists suggest that the ways in which children cope with adverse experiences is dependent on the individual's early emotional history and the unconscious motivations that this history produces (Freud, 1932; Storr, 2005). This can provide a way of coping with the world, and of maintaining some sense of control.

It is noticeable that in both cases the respondents' childhood experiences became a trigger for radicalisation. Storr (2005) believes the anger provoked by a sense of powerlessness in childhood is likely to be twisted into hate in adulthood. Many of the respondents became disaffected and marginalised through their experiences; for instance, Abdul and Tariq never fully recovered from racial victimisation. Those young people that suffer an abusive socialisation are more likely to develop a dysfunctional identity (Chansky, 2001). According to Adler (2002), feelings of helplessness that originate in childhood precipitate an inferiority complex, and can encourage a child to compensate for these feelings in adulthood.

Socialisation assumes the individual is constituted by their inherited culture, but, in the case of the respondents, the substance of this was disjointed, which left them feeling deprived. In this respect, the respondents struggled through their life cycle, trying to adjust their identity; but the changing social environments they encountered triggered a host of frustrations that they were unable to resolve. Tariq, for example, could not alter his identity to fit into a distinct social grouping. If socialisation is not developed properly then it can foster negative feelings in adulthood. However, a prerequisite of radicalisation is not necessarily a violent childhood, because many children are exposed to violent acts, but this does not always turn them to a violent path in life. For this reason, I am not saying all instances of adverse

socialisation will result in radicalisation; rather, I contend that a turbulent socialisation may increase the potential for radicalisation in later life.

#### **4.4.2 Effects of Racism**

According to Abdul, 'racism was not a black and white thing...kids were picked on because of their religious beliefs; refugee kids were always singled out because they looked different and couldn't speak English' (Abdul; Interview 1, 05/11/2004). It is clear racism, in the form of violent physical attack and harassment, had a deep emotional effect on the respondents. As Miles and Brown (2003) point out, at the heart of racism is a process of making sense of the 'other', which distorts the social perspective into various forms of 'us' and 'them'. The distorted representation of others can validate discrimination, but how did the respondents perceive and interpret their social world? In general terms, the challenge for me lies in explaining how racism affected the respondents, and whether it provided some motivation for embracing a radical identity. During my initial interviews with Omar Bakri (the former leader of HT, Britain), he explained how the experiences of young Muslims of being racially attacked, in the cases he observed, caused them to be 'distrustful of [the] *Kuffar* [non-Muslims]' (Omar Bakri Muhammad, interview 26/03/2004). Consequently, these and other adverse social experiences were exploited by HT to cultivate a group of young Muslims who had been marginalised through racism. According to Fanon (1968), racism has a significant effect on an individual's psychology and raises issues of self-alienation.

The case histories that I have presented indicate that radicals were greatly affected by their interpersonal interactions with others, providing me with extensive insight into the causes of their eventual radicalisation. Clearly, radicalisation requires some form of emotional trauma in the recruit's life cycle, principally during early socialisation, which would make them more prone to radicalisation in adulthood. This is perpetuated by the inability to balance racial prejudice with one's own cultural distinctiveness. To some extent, this appears to be generally true of many of my respondents, as their external perception of others changed based on their negative interactions. Synder and Tilly (1974) asserted that individuals recall information about 'others' based on their stereotypes, which allows them to selectively interpret and draw upon subjective experiences. Consequently, the respondents perceived situations and processed information that was dependent on their prior stereotypic

experiences. These events have radically altered their cognitive outlook; many have internalised their feelings and developed a ‘negative identity’.

#### **4.4.3 Social Alienation**

At the heart of the respondents’ radicalisation lay a catalogue of grievances that had traceable markers to alienation. This would suggest alienation had a destructive effect on all the respondents. The concept of alienation, its meaning and ways in which it can be applied to this context, need to be understood. In its simplest form, alienation refers to estrangement, the separation of the self from society, leading to a gradual disengagement (Bealey, 1999). The concept of alienation has been a major source of debate and research, requiring one to extract, from the beginning, a coherent definition.<sup>148</sup> Keniston’s (1967) framing of the term, which he used to study the psychology of alienated students, is of crucial importance to my study. As Keniston (1967, pp. 189-190) notes, alienation means ‘an explicit rejection of what are seen as the dominant values of the surrounding society’.

It follows from the above definition of alienation that not all young Muslims are equally alienated from their society. Why did my respondents feel alienated, while other young Muslims do not? Clearly, the socio-psychological features of alienation are different for each alienated Muslim, and no composite account can deduce a single profile of an alienated young Muslim. According to Sageman (2005), Muslims who live abroad tend to become more isolated from their cultural origin, which makes them, feel ‘more royal than the king’. He found that second generation immigrant’s experienced similar feelings of disaffection from their cultural origins. My respondents experienced similar emotions, especially since they felt culturally separated from the dominant values and cultures around them. Abdul, for example, could not associate with his migrant culture, nor did he feel British. This clash of cultures had a destructive effect on Abdul, as he was not able to find a sense of identification with people of his own ethnicity, nor with the white majority, making him feel socially excluded (Lewin, 1948). By viewing alienation in accordance with other social factors, I can account for the causes of alienation among the respondents.

#### **4.4.4 Radicalisation in Context: Why Abdul and Tariq chose HT?**

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<sup>148</sup> ‘Alienation’ has been used to describe such varied conditions as the separation of spirit from nature (Hegel, 1931); man’s loss of relationship to his labour (Marx, 1844); the individual’s estrangement from some deep part of himself (Fromm, 1955); the loss of his own sanity (Kaplan, 1964); political apathy (Levin, 1960).

The radicalisation of both Abdul and Tariq into HT was explored from an environmental perspective, namely the social milieu in which they emerged from. This to some degree may undervalue other potential variables. For example, the innate connection an activist may have to HT ideology. Therefore, it is important to contextualise both men's radicalisation in a way that explores their social context and intellectual motivation for joining HT. Firstly, Abdul joined HT in 1999, while Tariq joined in 1998. This is somewhat symbolic from the perspective that their radicalisation pre-dates the terror attacks of 9/11. This would suggest the international context had little impact on their respective decision to join HT, as Abdul asserts: 'global events didn't influence me (joining the Hizb)...it was solely based on conviction'. This telling statement raises one significant question, does context matter?

The trajectory of Abdul and Tariq prior to joining HT revealed a deep social need for belonging, which made them seek out like-minded people at university. In fact, the vast majority of HT activists are recruited within the same social setting, namely amongst university peer groups. This would suggest that HT radicalisation is context-specific. In other words, HT activists emerge from similar social realities and backgrounds, making ideological motivation less salient. Hoffer (2002), utilising a social psychology approach to study why and how mass movements form, concluded that mass movements, irrespective of their religious or political disposition, attract similar personality types. However, if this is true, then why do similar types of Muslims select HT? Well, according to Hoffer (2002), groups like HT proliferate amongst certain social demographics because they promise fulfilment of particular deficit-needs, which the activist has been lacking in society. Therefore, whatever the motivation, whether political or religious, HT appeals to a specific group of frustrated young Muslims who struggle to identify with society and community. In other words, HT offer young middle class Muslims, who are seeking to escape a feeling of social exclusion, a way to gain a real sense of belonging. Therefore, the process of joining HT has very little to do with ideology. In actuality, acquiring social acceptance within a homogenous social peer group is a key feature of joining HT. This is why events like Bosnia or 9/11 played little role in the narratives of HT activists, instead the peer group offered the novices a sense of social belonging.<sup>149</sup> Therefore, leaving HT is considered extremely

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<sup>149</sup> The data I have accumulated clearly shows that the vast majority of recruits were not influenced by global events, such as 9/11 or 7/7. In particular, out of the 28 male members interviewed, 17 were recruited pre-2001 while 10 were recruited after the 2001 terror attacks. The narratives of the 10 members recruited after 9/11 talked little about such global events, and instead focused on the national context of their upbringing. In



difficult, as members become institutionalised within the social group and leaving would essentially mean returning to a state of social isolation.

However, the above does not totally explain why Abdul and Tariq opted for HT over other Islamic groups, like Young Muslims or JIMAS? There are a number of issues that provide an answer to this issue. Firstly, in respect to recruitment strategy, HT operates in an evangelical style at university, looking to actively recruit from a closed pool of Muslims predisposed to HT radicalism. In contrast, rival groups do not actively recruit members, as they are not structured as a religious-political organisation. As Abu Yusuf, a member from London, commented:

‘We [HT] were rampant at uni, literally unstoppable, the other groups couldn’t compete...they had no organisation and were not politically active. We [HT] literally took over campuses and groups like YMO watched on from the side lines to afraid to challenge us’.

The free reign HT seemingly possesses at university enables them to be the first point of contact for young Muslims arriving at university for the first time. This was supported by the evidence I collected from my fieldwork, which indicated that the first Muslims most members encountered at university were HT recruiters, who they befriended and within the peer group became radicalised. Secondly, rival Islamic groups struggle to relate to those young Muslims predisposed to HT, namely middle class Asians, because they are mainly populated with working class activists. Respondent I, who prior to joining HT was associated with YMO, suggested that he struggled to connect with YMO members, because they emerged from totally different social worlds.<sup>150</sup> As he mentions:

‘they [YMO] were full of uneducated idiots...I just couldn’t relate to a bunch of labourers and gang members...I grew up a million miles away from those people and what they felt were social problems were a million miles away from my reality and problems’.

This would further support my contention that personal contact and relationships underpin the joining process. In other words, social need may have predisposed Abdul and Tariq to

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actuality, none of the respondents cited 9/11 as a precipitating trigger to joining HT. For further information refer to Appendix III: synopsis of male members, p. 275

<sup>150</sup> Refer to Appendix III: Synopsis of male members, p. 278-79.

HT, but social connection to likeminded individuals pulled them to the movement. After the initial pull factor, Abdul and Tariq were able to fulfil secondary interests within HT. Abdul, for example, displayed more affinity to religiosity and thus devoted significant attention to religious learning. While Tariq remained solely interested in HT political activism, spending the majority of his time and energy immersed in reading the news and discussing HT politics.

On the surface, it may appear that Abdul and Tariq were drawn to HT by different motivations. For instance, Tariq seemed more inclined to the political aspect of HT activism, while Abdul was more orientated towards religious activism. In fact, the religious and political motivation of the men evolved after encountering HT recruiters. As Abdul and Tariq explain:

‘...before the Hizb [HT] I knew nothing about the Deen [Islam], I never cared about the political situation and I had a passing interest in religious matters...only after joining the Hizb did I realise the importance of the Deen [Islam], which as you know brother combines politics and religion...and that is the power of the Hizb, it brings politics and religion together making the Deen [Islam] come alive...so in answering your question, the Deen is both political and spiritual...so praying, fasting or pursuing the news are all acts of worship’ (Abdul).

‘I was never religious growing up, I actually learnt to pray properly after I joined the Hizb at university...Islam had no practical meaning before that. When I joined the Hizb I was amazed by its culture, after reading political concepts [HT book], my political world view changed, I never knew how the world ticked until I joined the party...I learnt about all aspects of the Deen [Islam], its spiritual parts and its political parts... (In particular) I started to develop a deep interest in the political culture and intellectual ideas of the Hizb’ (Tariq).

From the above two statements, it may be argued that ideology is somewhat marginal at the joining phase, but it begins to take shape after radicalisation. Once the old worldview of the novice is dismantled, and as radicalisation deepens, it gives an opening for a new worldview. In other words, exposure to HT ideology takes place within the Halaqah (culturing stage), which means the primary prerequisite for joining HT is social need and peer group socialisation. In addition, HT recruitment is context specific. This means specific personality-types, such as those matching the homogenous disposition of the HT fraternity,

are sort out at university. Therefore, the social need to join HT predisposed Abdul and Tariq towards HT, irrespective of their political and religious orientations.

#### **4.4.5 Relationships and Interactions: Peer Group Formation**

The process of becoming a radical is strongly dependent on the social settings in which the person lives. In this respect, understanding how the respondents reacted to ‘others’, often on the basis of stereotyped views, is of great significance. The accounts of my respondents showed me how they were adversely affected by other people’s perceptions and responses to them. As a result, many of the respondents experienced substantial difficulties in forging durable relationships during their early experiences, leading them to manifest a host of confusions concerning their race, ethnicity, culture, religion and class. All the respondents emerged from a distinct minority culture; because of this, they struggled to contend with rejection. This directly affected their identity development, creating an ‘attachment disorder’, and provoking a greater propensity towards disaffection and alienation (Prior and Glaser, 2006). As a consequence, they felt that they did not belong to a specific social classification or group, leading to their withdrawal from mainstream society. Tariq, for instance, emerged through multiple sub-cultures; first, the teenage gang, then, the Socialist Workers, until these are permanently replaced by HT. The respondents lacked a deep sense of attachment, which meant they could not establish a proper place in society. All individuals, especially adolescent children, must feel loved and feel that they can belong to a social group in order to feel comfortable within their surroundings (Argyle, 1992). When the respondents were denied security and belonging, they withdrew from those situations to seek safety and love elsewhere.

A common feature in all twenty-eight case studies was the university peer group, which had a considerable influence. In particular, the respondent’s self-identity was refashioned in accordance with their exposure to the value system of the peer group. Upon entering the peer group the respondents became conscious of alternatives to their own cultural and social voices, they began to question old ideals (e.g., family/minority traditions). Both Tariq and Abdul found the new world view extremely persuasive. These new-found concepts became entwined with feelings of belonging, as group participation brought positive rewards. As mentioned earlier, one of the difficulties encountered by the respondents during their childhood involved establishing relationships with others. A stable relationship requires the

interrelation of two distinct social worlds (Laing, 1972). According to Laursen (1993), individuals display greater happiness when engaged in active relationships. Individuals are most happy when they are with friends, followed by being with family, and they are least happy when alone (Argyle, 1992). Besides the peer group offering protection from alienation, it introduced the respondents to a group of individuals that had the same interests and goals.

#### **4.4.5 Empowerment – Collective Identity**

I am greatly interested in what happened to the respondents' identity and motivation when they became members of HT. Let us first explore this issue through the words of my respondents, which will allow me to gain a sense of collective identity from their perspective. According to Abdul: 'the [party] culture is a liberating force...it gives you supreme confidence and total conviction, because it's the truth'. Similarly, Tariq, on entering HT, described his experience as an 'overpowering feeling of absolute confidence, as you know you've found the truth'. These views are only a small glimpse from much longer discussions, but they can be used to make some important points about the nature of radical identities. Most importantly, the respondents' cognitive processes were radically transformed in HT. In other words, the basis for the respondents' self-definition changed in the group setting. The respondents' personal identity gave way to the '*Hizbi*' (collective) identity. Moreover, because they adopted the characteristics of the group, their perceptions of themselves changed.

I need to look at why HT affected the respondents so strongly and how the radical identity was formed. In order to examine these issues, one must consider the minimal group studies of Tajfel and Turner (1979), because they identified three key components that transform identity in a group setting; 'categorisation, identification and comparison' (Tajfel, 1981). Within the radical group, the novice will adjust their sense of identity, their ideas and their dispositions to harmonise with the collectively defined attributes of their group. In effect, the novice will take on the group characteristics, making them their own, which conditions the novice towards group conformity (Asch, 1952). Also, the novice's self-esteem becomes firmly attached to the fortunes of the group, seeking to achieve positive and negative value connotations, so as to differentiate their in-group from a comparison out-group (Tajfel, 1981). This search for 'positive distinctiveness' shapes the individual's sense of identity. In

the case of HT, this positive distinction also applies to other Muslims, who become less relevant sources, as they represent the out-group members – those who do not belong to HT. Turner (1982) links this to self-stereotyping, which involves radicals stereotyping themselves when they identify with their group. I witnessed a good example of this in practice, while visiting a respondent at his home. As I arrived, his neighbour had just returned an item that he had borrowed and they appeared to have a pleasant conversation; but, as soon as he had left, to my shock, The respondent furiously berated him: ‘dirty *Kuffar* [disbeliever], I should burn this [foot pump]’. He continued for much of the conversation with this theme; he later suggested that his other neighbour, a Muslim, would always return a borrowed item immediately. This situation demonstrates the process of ‘self-stereotyping’, in which a person may have very different responses to people at different times. For instance, the respondent responded to his neighbour in terms of his personal identity, but in my presence he switched to his collective identity.

The group appears to be a recurring feature in the radicalisation process, as it provides a sense of belonging, a feeling of self-importance, and a new cognitive system that fashions a fresh identity. The social setting within HT, for example, is strongly governed by the ‘*Hizbi*’ (collective) identity, which allows the member to adopt the characteristics of HT. The transition from personal identity to a ‘*Hizbi*’ (collective) identity is achieved, firstly, by building the ‘*aqliyah*’ (mentality)<sup>151</sup> on a specific idea that serves as the bond linking the individuals in the group together. Secondly, the ‘*nafsiyah*’ (disposition) must be changed in accordance with the work of the group: ‘This requires that the *shab* [novice] engage himself in studying the *Hizbi* [group/collective] culture, adopting it as his viewpoint in life, and interacting with it in such a manner that it shapes his course of actions as a Muslim’ (Anon., 1994, p. 1). The ‘*Hizbi*’ identity must acquire full domination over the individualistic aspect (ibid.). Once the members have attained this shared sense of collective identity, it becomes the basis for their wider identification (Sherif and Sherif, 1969). According to HT (Anon., 1994), for the novice to be considered part of the group, he or she must adopt all processes related to the group:

This means that he must forsake some of the individualistic aspects in order for him to be part of the Hizb...Even if the *shab* [novice] is a *Mujtahid Mutlaq* [highest grade of scholar],

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<sup>151</sup> Within HT literature ‘*aqliyah*’ has been translated in several ways, examples include: mentality, thought, concept and mindset. In the book *Shaksiyah Al-Islamiyah* (Islamic personality), for example, the most common translation is mentality.

he is to abandon his opinion for the opinion of the *Hizb*. (Anon 1994, p.1).

The radical identity that emerges from the group dynamic often gives rise to a deep feeling of empowerment, increasing a radical's sense of confidence and self-worth. On entering HT, for example, individuals are assimilated into the cultural norms of the group. Most importantly, the group exploits the need to belong within the novice, providing him or her with a feeling of self-importance by conveying a new belief structure that defines the individual identity. As the radicalisation process deepens, the novice is gradually conditioned to accept the moral supremacy of the group identity. Shaw (1986) makes a similar assessment of membership in a terrorist organisation, as the group often offers an answer to the pressing personal needs that is not achieved in the wider society. This provides the individual with a new identity and a role in society, albeit a negative one, which, in a passive sense, imposes conformity. Post (1990, p.159) goes further, as he suggests that radicals 'whose only sense of significance comes from being terrorists cannot be forced to give up terrorism, for to do so would be to lose their very reason for being'. This is equally true for members of HT, as they cannot envisage life outside of the group. The group provides a way to enhance social status, a quality greatly under-represented in a recruit's social life. For instance, a loner at school or work becomes a high-ranking figure, gratifying their ego.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

When I started my investigation, I found the prospect of constructing a radical's pathway based on their biographical experiences somewhat daunting. However, the task in practice was not as difficult as I first assumed, since HT members' identity processes have coherence even when dysfunction appears to be the norm. If I accept that a HT member's identity is structured in some manner, then my task is to ascertain the key features of that structure. One thing that emerged strongly in the accounts from Abdul and Tariq, for example, is a sense of continually evolving identity. In other words, the process of being made and remade, as we saw, heavily depended on their past experiences. In Abdul's case, his radicalisation can be tracked back to several stirring events. Firstly, racism and class left him alienated from his classmates, making it difficult to develop close relationships. Although these features were beyond his control, it still indicates that society has a lasting effect which cannot be easily washed away. Yet, on the other hand, it would be simplistic to suggest that society

determined his pathway towards radicalism. Therefore, it depends upon how social experiences, either negative or positive, become translated into everyday life. For example, Abdul argued that one thing which had a strong impact on him joining HT was university, as he affirmed: ‘If I never went to university, I probably would’ve never met the *Hizb*, and my life would’ve been totally different if I hadn’t’. Abdul acknowledges that university was a pivotal event. For example, he becomes religious, develops close relationships for the first time and joins HT, directly affecting the kind of person he becomes.

The features identified in my case studies could not encompass all of the intricate details of a HT member’s identity in totality. However, I was able to document the key features of Tariq’s and Abdul’s identity structure – in relation to their ethnicity, religion and social status. My research catalogued a host of recurring characteristics, patterns of common experiences and settings, which directly influenced the respondent’s identity formation. In this respect, I would suggest that a member profile can be crafted that defines the pathways into radicalism. However, in order to produce such a profile, I must expand my research to include a broad sociological study of the common trends among the social strata of HT fraternity.<sup>152</sup> Of particular interest is whether members of HT in Britain share sociological characteristics. This might be useful in profiling radicals, if profiling is at all feasible, and in understanding somewhat better the motivations of individuals who become radicalised.

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<sup>152</sup> Refer to chapter six, p. 191.

## **Chapter Five:**

### **Radical Pathways II - Profiles of Female HT Members**

The British media often depict Muslim women as victims of cultural and religious fundamentalism, in desperate need of western emancipation. I must confess, before starting this study, I had a very narrow and distorted image of Muslim women as relatively powerless. This image has been somewhat changed by my research into HT female activists. These women appeared very active and eager to enter the political landscape, albeit in a radical fashion. On the surface, however, HT seems to be a predominantly male-dominated space. What is less clear is how far HT makes room for female activists. If Muslim women are drawn to HT, then it is equally unclear what roles they take on within it. These issues caught my attention because there are considerable misunderstandings and ambiguities about the role of women in HT. As I tried to examine these broad topics, I discovered that most of the female activists I encountered had strong commonalities – in terms of age, education, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and background. This chapter therefore seeks to understand the paths taken by a group of Muslim women into HT radicalism. Painting a picture of this largely unknown subject requires insight into the influences within home, school and wider society.<sup>153</sup>

#### **5.1 Family Environment**

Past research on the migrant communities in England has revealed that they are overwhelmingly kinship-orientated (Joly, 1995; Ali, 1992; Lewis, 2002). I therefore expected to encounter examples of extended family networks and traditional family life. While I found that the idea of kinship remained relatively strong, the results from the focus group indicate, however, that it is a less significant feature. Moreover, many of the women challenged such assumptions, one member commented:

‘Our parents came over here [UK] from the subcontinent, bringing with them a host of corrupt traditions that were not compatible with the west and for that matter with Islam. They had a link to their ancestry, but we don’t...I personally struggled to accept their ways and traditions’.

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<sup>153</sup> As I explained in the introduction chapter the data was collected using focus group discussions, for further details on this refer to introduction chapter (pp. 33-34) and Appendix III.



The movement from one social world to another can be extremely problematic (Ghunman, 1991; Kim, 1988). As the above comment reveals, migration can expose a gap between the generations, as two distinct social and cultural worlds collide. Pearce and King (1987) describe this process as 'poly-cultural', since the features from both the native and host country become fused into a new identity. More significantly, it seems that the women chose to reject their parents' cultural indices in order to accommodate integration into the dominant culture. Given the women's membership of two diverse worlds, it seems necessary first to explore their family life and upbringing before investigating the above issues.

## **5.2 Family Life and Upbringing**

A number of studies on family life have highlighted the importance this social setting has on child development (Lareau, 2003). This makes it vital to paint a clear picture of the women's upbringing because a variety of influences within the home can affect identity formation. As Amina suggested: 'my parents tried to bring us up in a traditional way but my mum was very western and liberal...this meant I could pretty much do as I pleased'. Amina's family dynamic allowed her to develop a fairly independent and open world view. This is somewhat unusual since most Muslim families impose rigid controls on their children's behaviour. Nina's upbringing, for example, was stricter. As she explained; 'My parents are very traditional. I couldn't go out with my school friends and my movement was restricted...I lived a dual life though; at home I was a traditional Pakistani girl but at school I was western'. One of the most surprising aspects of the women's family life seems to be their constant endeavour to acquire freedom from parental authority. Although they could not fully achieve this in the home, their parents had no control over them beyond the family environment. As a result, the women clearly developed a dual identity, facing conflict at home and freedom in school (Anwar, 1981).

A cursory survey of the literature on family processes indicates subtle differences are to be expected in culture and ethnic background (Chibucos, 2005). Although family processes can be expected to vary, I observed several common features among the women's family structure. First, during their youth, the rules that governed the interaction between the girls and the outside world appeared imbalanced. In particular, it seems stricter boundaries were enforced because of their gender. As Nina commented: 'My brothers were given total freedom, they'd be able to visit their friends and go out till late, but I had really strict and

unfair curfews'. The majority of the women cited similar experiences, which resulted in acts of deception and rebellion. Deception, in the case of the girls, was needed in order to live within two conflicting social settings (Wade et al., 1992). This can have a considerable psychological effect on children, because they are constantly forced to act out different social roles. Second, as I see it, the girls underwent socialisation in their own South Asian culture as well as within the majority culture. As Nina explained:

'My mum wanted me to be traditional. She wanted me to learn to cook, look after my brothers and get married...I was never forced by my parents. This gave me freedom to go against Pakistani tradition, for example, I wore western clothes and I was able to pursue academia...I attribute this to my parent's openness because they were not from some village in Pakistan, they were educated, and they wanted the absolute best for me. So sometimes they'd try to pass off their cultural stuff on me, but if I refused, that was the end of it'.

Despite this freedom, the girls' identities were continually challenged both from within and without. As Nadia observed: '...When my grandma visited us from Pakistan, she had a go at my mum for allowing us to become western. While she was here I had to wear Pakistani clothes, which I hated, but it kept my family happy'. If one scrutinises the narratives of family life, as told by the women, then it is clear a number of confusions and contradictions exist. On the surface, for instance, the women all seem at odds with the ethno-religious traditions of their parents, yet there are instances when the girls conformed to the traditional value systems. As Nadia suggested: 'of course we had limits...I never had a boyfriend in school because it was deemed something strictly taboo in our culture'. Although it is not a salient issue here, the idea of *Izzet* [family honour] may have had an underlying role in the above extract. The majority of the women suggested, however, that such a concept had greatly diminished, owing to social changes and modernity. As Amina said: 'On the surface, my parents were traditional, but they knew the reality of living in Britain. We [the family] had to adapt to England and become integrated. That was their view twenty-odd years ago...and that's my parents' mentality today, unfortunately'.

### **5.3 Social Class and Lifestyle**

The women's families migrated to England during the 1960s and 1970s, in search of greater socioeconomic prosperity and stability (Lewis, 1982). The pull factors are the economic

forces – such as greater job opportunities and higher living standards – that motivate migration (Jackson and Hudman, 1986). As I observed from the discussion, the phenomenon of migration had a significant impact on the development of the girl's socioeconomic situation. In particular, after the families had established themselves permanently, they struggled to gain upward social mobility (Tajfel, 1978). It is not surprising to find that social status and class were seen as important social categories for the girls when they were growing up. As Nadia commented: 'My parents started at the bottom [after migration], and it took them a while to settle down, but after that our situation changed. My dad was a qualified doctor and he quickly started a practice'. The socioeconomic changes to the women's families were very similar: for example, their fathers are all well educated professionals.<sup>154</sup>

In most South Asian households, it is common for women to assume the role of homemaker and child carer, while husbands perform the function of economic provider (Joly, 1995). In contrast with this norm, the women's mothers entered the labour force and developed careers for themselves, while maintaining their household duties. As Sara explained: 'My mum was a biochemistry researcher for over thirty years...and even though she did most of the chores, like cleaning and cooking, my dad did a lot to ease the burden of housework'. This attitudinal shift reflects a somewhat modern approach to family structure and life, especially among South Asian families (Robinson, 1988). I mentioned earlier that the parents of the respondents seemed eager to raise their children in a traditional fashion, which seems at odds with their mothers' active career pursuits. Nadia provided greater insight on this issue, as she explained:

'Our [focus group] parents, I think, wanted us to be traditional, because they didn't want to abandon all their Pakistani traditions. So they tried to pass on these concepts to us, not by force, but by guidance or stories. But my mother, for example, is a consultant...she dresses in a western way because it is expected...it would be contradictory for her to tell me how to dress, even though she does. My parents started to lose their cultural identity when they started to work so how could they pass it on to us...this is a by-product of integration [loss of identity]'.

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<sup>154</sup> The women identified their parents' professions as accountants, doctors, teachers and engineers.

The cultural influences on the families appear to be underpinned by socioeconomic status.<sup>155</sup> In particular, the families seem prepared to discard parts of their cultural identity for upward social mobility.

#### **5.4 Ethnicity and Religion**

Ethnicity is a highly complex component of identity, because individuals are assigned and identified by labels, which they may not agree with.<sup>156</sup> Nadia, for example, did not like any type of racial or ethnic identifiers: ‘I thought of myself as British, everything else was just not relevant...I hated being referred to as Pakistani because I was born and raised here [UK]’. As Modood (1997) points out, ethnic labelling is an imposed identity created by the colonialist. An ethnic marker can be wrongly applied and stick, causing immense frustration for individuals who are trying to meld into the dominant culture (Sanchez-Hucles, 1998). As Sara explained: ‘Growing up here [England] can be difficult, because you have to live two lives... At school I was British but in family gatherings I was Pakistani’. The women would have preferred to use the label British, it seems, but social forces pushed them to emphasise their ethnic and racial identity. This artificial sense of identity is not healthy. Many social theorists have argued that a stable concept of self needs to be constructed both in terms of personal and group identity (Wetherell, 1987). The inability to replicate a sense of ethnic identity contributes to the feeling of ‘becoming like them [white people]’. In some respects, it could be argued that the parents of the girls were slightly responsible for not establishing an ethnic identity, which might have reflected cultural and religious distinctiveness (Modood, 1997). Although the respondents largely rejected ethnicity, they were unable to select a free and independent identity from the dominant culture, which continued to perceive them as Asian.

It became clear through the discussions about the girls’ upbringing that their attachment to ethnicity became attenuated. Trying to explore the factors undermining the importance of affiliation to ethnicity was not an easy task, as there were several possible causes. First, the distinctive attributes of ethnicity – such as cultural values, customs and traditions – were not properly transmitted to the girls. As Nadia said: ‘...I was given mixed messages about Islam,

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<sup>155</sup> Socioeconomic status refers to two key aspects: (1) the economic aspect which is represented by wealth and income, home ownership, and other financial assets; (2) the social aspect includes education, lifestyle and upbringing (Davis and Moore, 1945).

<sup>156</sup> The families of the women mainly originated from Pakistan, except Amina, who was of Malawi-Indian descent.

for example, not having a boyfriend. But my parents never cared about practising Islam, they were totally secular. It was pointless to use Islam because none of us practised'. A superficial glance at the girl's family life may lead one to believe religion was relatively insignificant. Nevertheless, I think the lack of religious identification helps explain why the women felt disconnected from their ethnic identity. Islam is often seen as a key identity marker for the Muslim South Asian community in Britain (Gardner and Shuker, 1994). Islam is also often connected to and reinforced by ethnicity (McLoughlin, 2002). Nonetheless, the discussion with the girls supported the view that they seldom felt like they belonged to a religious community: for example, they never attended the local Mosque or participated in communal gatherings.<sup>157</sup> Their families showed a lack of commitment to religion, which in effect perpetuated a sense of not belonging (Stark et al. 1980). Second, ethnic affiliations became weakened by migration and economic burdens, which directly undermined cultural values. More importantly, status became associated with socioeconomic achievement, giving the girls access to alternative cultures at school. As Sara explained: 'I never thought about religion or ethnicity growing up, because I felt totally integrated'. As Verma and Ashworth (1986, p.20) acknowledge, individuals can perceive themselves as more 'ethnic' in certain social settings, drawing upon their own cultural identity at varying levels.

## **5.5 Gender**

When I first talked to the women, I was somewhat taken aback by their active interest in ideological and religious perspectives regarding gender. It was therefore not surprising to find them participating in the political struggle to make their theological beliefs work for them and the wider society. At this stage, however, I wanted to understand the role of gender in relation to the girls' upbringing. As discussed earlier, the women felt freer in the school environment and enjoyed less freedom than their male siblings. Although the girls had limited independence, it seems that their boundaries were broadened after they reached the age of fifteen or so. As Nina said: 'My parents were less protective of me when I started my GCSEs, I visited my friends unaccompanied...and when I started driving I had pretty much the same freedom as my brother'. Similarly, the other girls talked about a more relaxed curfew at around this age.

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<sup>157</sup> This is quite a salient feature of HT middle-class radicalism, as most members rarely experienced traditional religious practices (e.g. Friday prayer). In contrast, working-class south Asians often are socialised into traditional religious practice at an early age (for more refer to Lewis 2007, pp. 33-60).

More importantly, the identities the girls created are clearly marked by gender influences at many varying levels. Within the family setting, broad power relations between father and mother have an impact (Wetherell, 1987). Nina described her mother as very ‘authoritative and controlling’ within the home environment. The other women perceived their mothers to be equally powerful within the domestic sphere, providing a positive gender archetype. This gave the girls the opportunity to craft an identity more in keeping with secular western tradition. As Sara acknowledged:

‘When I was little my mum wanted me to wear shalvar-kameez [traditional Pakistani clothing], even though she’d wear western clothing for work...I hated it and told my mum I wasn’t going to wear shalvar-kameez because it made me stand out. [What about your father?] He never cared. I think my mum felt she was betraying her culture [and] so she’d try and overcompensate with me’.

This is a rather interesting extract as it reveals to a certain extent that identities depend heavily on ideological beliefs, cultural and religious values, and social position (Haddad and Esposito, 1997). Owing to the lack of cultural influences, the girls’ adolescent identity is formed through a more open perspective, which has a significant effect on their ascribed gender roles. Notwithstanding their views on some gender inequality, the girls were prepared for productive work in adult life, in the same fashion as their brothers, and not as homemakers. As I will explore later, however, after radicalisation, this view was totally overturned. The women, for example, adopted a domesticated role, seeing this as the natural responsibility of women as constituted by their newfound HT ideology.

### **5.5.1 Internal Agency: Breaking Out of Tradition**

In the previous chapter I suggested that socialisation played a critical role in the radicalisation process. In the case of female activists, they were brought up within a predefined set of values and traditions, which became instilled into them during their early upbringing within the home environment. At school age, for example, the effects of this socialisation meant the women were aware of the ethno-cultural distinctions between themselves and their white classmates. Therefore, the more parents treat their children in ethnically differentiated ways, for instance over emphasising ethno-cultural norms, the more it is believed that a child will reflect such stereotypes. Through this process the women

became ‘socialised’ into culturally structured gender roles. This begs the question did the women join HT to break away from the traditional path mapped out for them?

The answer to this question is rather complicated, as it hinges on whether or not the women joined HT freely. In chapter one, I mentioned that participation within HT is a direct expression of human agency, albeit with structural influences. In the context of joining HT, agency was exercised by free choice, which counteracted the stereotypical characteristics of South Asian cultural expectations. As Sara explained:

‘Islam is a liberating ideology, it sweeps away the falsehood and guides people to the right path...growing up in an Asian family meant we [Sara and her family] adopted many corrupt practices and I never want[ed] to live a traditional lifestyle – were community defines the way you live – Islam is the reference point and with Allah’s guidance I found a way out’.

From this statement, there are several conclusions that can be forged. Firstly, despite the internalisation of Asian culture during childhood, the women sought to actively break away from the cultural mores of their parents. In this respect, HT was an important mechanism for making sense of the world, especially as they facilitated the creation of a new ideological viewpoint. For the women, as Sen (????) notes, internal agency represents the ability to act on behalf of goals that matter to them. In this respect, the women were actively involved in determining their own fate, and thus escaped becoming submissive heirs to their parent’s traditions. Secondly, for the women, agency was expressed as a form of ‘resistance to social and cultural norms’ perceived as backward and overbearing (Mahmood, 2005). Research has shown that immigrant families seek to transmit from one generation to the next a series of ethno-religious cultural markers (Lareau, 2003). The passing of traditional values and norms to offspring is seen as a way to reproduce and continue a connection with the land of origin. However, as the life-stories drawn from both male and female HT members have shown, activists struggled to reconcile the diverse nature of the two opposing cultural worlds they inhabited. As a result, consciously or unconsciously, the women’s choice to join HT was influenced by their deep desire to resist the traditional patriarchy of their home upbringing. Thirdly, from an outsider perspective, it would seem that the women replaced one form of subordination for another, as HT ideology is equally rooted in patriarchy. In actuality, as the women intimated endlessly, the choice to join HT was an expression of self-agency, while the cultural values and norms of their parents were enforced upon them. According to

Mahmood (2005, p. 172), women often gain a sense of ‘self-empowerment through the cultivation of self-esteem’. In other words, joining HT enabled the women to pursue ‘self-directed choices and actions’, giving them an opportunity to break away from traditional Asian constraints (Mahmood 2005, p. 172). In fact, the women felt voiceless and powerless within the constraints of Asian culture, and thus joining HT gave them a feeling of empowerment. So, even though the women’s agency is subsumed and side-lined in HT, it is still voluntarily discharged, and thus can be reclaimed at any juncture during their membership. In this respect, the women are free agents because they appear to construct their own desires, values and goals.

### **5.5.2 Intersections between Ethnicity, Class and Gender**

According to Crenshaw (1992, p. 1467), women from minority backgrounds are trapped between ‘the rocks and the hard places of racism and sexism’. In other words, minority women are subject to dual forms of social vulnerability, which intersect in their lives to form experiences that are often unique to them (Crenshaw 1992, p. 1467). Through the concept of intersectionality, I will hopefully be able to put the distinctive experiences of HT female activists into focus by looking at the intersection of class, ethnicity and gender. In particular, the women experienced discrimination in a totally different manner than white women. Firstly, they all experienced discrimination based on their membership of a particular ethnic group. As Nina mentions, ‘by virtue of skin-colour I was stereotyped as Asian...which meant I was seen as culturally backward and uneducated by English people’. This reflects how the women often experienced unique forms of stereotyping, placing social barriers upon them in relation to ethnicity and gender. As Kane (1992, p. 311) points out, ‘the intersection of racial and gender inequalities creates unique structural positions for black women, black men, white women, and white men’. Secondly, the women grew up within a middle class household, which left them disconnected from working class Muslim women. At university the women struggled to relate to Asian Muslims from working class backgrounds. As Sara explained, ‘they (working class Muslim women) had to fight to go to university while education was encouraged for us’. As the women reflected, being a member of the South Asian ethnic group and being female created unique experiences for them, which may ultimately have influenced their pathway into radical Islam? Therefore, it is clear from an intersectional perspective that HT women experienced multiple and overlapping forms of



discrimination, and thus they collectively felt socially excluded on the basis of race, ethnicity and gender.

## **5.6 Social Environment**

The process of immigration places natural demands on the host country, as it involves working with diverse cultures and preparing the local labour market to welcome a new source of supply. Unsurprisingly, this can be a highly complex and challenging process because it places considerable demands upon the migrants. In most cases, immigrants are expected to modify their behaviour to conform to the dominant culture, which devalues their sense of cultural identity (Hutnik, 1985). As I discovered in the previous section, the girls and their families had to make their own choices about which aspects of their native identity they wanted to preserve and which to discard. Through this process, the girls developed their own social and cultural milieu, which in turn enabled them to feel integrated into society. Consequently, the girls' identities were not constructed in a vacuum but within a variety of social settings, making it essential to examine these social domains.

### **5.6.1 Schooling and Friendship**

Some social theorists have argued that the family setting provides a powerful seed-bed for young people's educational success and professional ambition (Kellaghan, 1993). As Amina commented: 'My parents had university degrees and so I was expected to go to university...my parents wanted the best for me so I had extra tuition after school'. Although the girls acknowledge that their families assigned considerable importance to education, it is difficult to ascertain which family influences were the most significant. According to Lareau (2003), social status and family background provide children with greater access to educational resources, giving middle- and upper-class families a distinct advantage. Through social mobility, the girl's parents expressed high aspirations, providing motivation to pursue higher education. As Sara explained; '...they [parents] were involved in my education right up to university'. Thus, the motivation of the girls was strongly influenced by the social class to which they belonged and their family environment.

This helps explain some of the family influences on academic ambitions, but I want to explore the different social contexts that triggered the girls to think, feel and act on the basis of their social identities (Turner et al., 1987). As discussed earlier, the girls felt that the

Asian and Pakistani identity labels were imposed upon them by family networks and the dominant culture. Despite their dislike of labelling, most of the women insisted that they liked almost everything else pertaining to British culture and society. Hogg and Vaughan (2002) believe social identity is the individual's self-concept, which is extracted from perceived membership of social groups. I found it very interesting to hear about the social groups the girls belonged to when they attended secondary school. Amina, for example, attended a private girls' school and she talked about some of her experiences:

'I hated my first year of school because I was having silly squabbles with some girls who were gossiping about me – I think because I was the only Asian girl in the class – but things changed. I became really good friends with those girls and we stayed friends until university'.

The friendships between young girls can be very unstable (Bell and Coleman, 1999). Most of the girls described similar experiences of disruption of friendships, but after changing their allegiances they developed very strong bonds. Nina observed: 'It's nice to fit in, I hung out with my friends, who were all English [white]'.

In general, school friends tend to share the same interests and children tend to reject other children with dissimilar interests. This is very important, as Nadia explained:

'My friends were English as well... We had the same tastes in clothes, music and other stuff. My thoughts and concepts were very corrupt and westernised, so I was accepted by my friends. But there was an Indian girl in my class who was always bullied. She'd recently come over [from India] – so her dress and language really made her stand out – everyone would pick on her... when I was younger I thought she deserved it [bullying] because she never tried to integrate'.

Being part of a social group helped the girls to feel close to others. They might have moved in and out of different groups, but that is natural as children drift apart and make different friends (Allan, 1989). More importantly, the girls felt accepted in their social groups at school. The above extract, however, shows the darker side of exclusion, as social groups establish group norms and rules for self-categorisation in ways that favour the group members at the expense of the out-group (Turner and Tajfel, 1986). As soon as the girls started identifying themselves as belonging to a group, they took up an identity in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. However, this social pressure was embedded within an

undercurrent of racial inferiority. As Amina explained: 'in retrospect I was forced to hide my culture amongst my friends because it was seen as odd, and maybe even backward, because I was seen as different even though I fitted in'. This is a salient point, as it appears the girls' social acceptance came with a subtle precondition. In order to integrate within the white peer-group the girls were forced to hide aspects of their home identity, which facilitated the creation of a dual identity. Moreover, it underscores their deep feelings of being seen as socially 'different' from the white majority.

### **5.6.2 After-school Activity**

A common feature of the girls' narrative is their after-school activity, which indicated a very free and unrestricted social life. They talked, for example, about being allowed to visit friends without a chaperon.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, their accounts often depict their social lives as being active and spent in public areas: 'We'd [friends] go to the cinema, spend hours in shopping centres and just hang around' (Nina). This is surprisingly different from the perceived and often well-documented notion that Muslim girls are restricted to the home (Modood, 1992). Close friends often see each other during the school day and in after-school activity, spending considerable amounts of time together. This interaction can have a powerful effect, exerting considerable influence on a child. As Sara explained: 'I'd hide parts of my life so I'd fit in...I never really let my friends come over to my place because I didn't want them to see my Pakistani side – like food and stuff'. Despite having minimal presence, the girls chose actively to shun their ethnicity and cultural heritage. This perceived rejection of ethnicity was essential, as Nadia suggested: 'Even though I am Asian, I was accepted<sup>159</sup> by my white friends because I integrated. Integration literally means adopting their [Western] viewpoint. If you don't, then you'll get singled out, and that happened to a lot of Asian children at my school'. It would appear that the girls failed properly to experience dual socialisation, which allows two cultures to overlap (De Anda, 1984). The failure to retain an ethnic identity is in many ways, however, a natural response to the realities of being Asian in a white society.

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<sup>158</sup> This was after the ages of fourteen and fifteen.

<sup>159</sup> The perception of feeling 'accepted' seems somewhat contradictory, as it entailed hiding a key element of the girl's social identity, namely their ethno-religious identity. This in many ways appears connected to the image that their ethno-religious traditions are seen as wholly inferior to the majority culture. As Sara suggested: 'in a class discussion I remember feeling really sick...we were talking about ethnic minorities and racism, funnily enough, and everyone agreed that immigrants should give up their culture at the boarder and embrace British culture...they belittled Asian customs like arranged marriage and dress'. This would suggest acceptance was bestowed only to those who willingly accepted the white majority culture, which was seen as superior.

### 5.6.3 Racism

In the previous chapter, the male members described how racism was used to marginalise and exclude them on the basis of their skin colour and ethnicity. The physical manifestation of racism was more visible among the male members, and so was more readily understandable, whereas covert means were preferred by girls, making the behaviour of girls more difficult to predict and understand (Miles and Brown, 2003). Although the girls were not victims of any racially-motivated violence or intimidation, there was an undercurrent of racism which some of the girls experienced. Amina observed:

‘My friends were all white...we’d occasionally pick on other girls. On one occasion, two Asian girls were singled out and racially insulted for the way they acted and looked. I bumped into them on the bus later. They couldn’t understand why I hung around with racists...they referred to me as a coconut – brown on the outside and white on the inside...I hated Asian culture. But I never felt British either’.

This highly complex extract reveals several unsettling components of racism. First, a negative judgement was made of those seen as different, containing a positive valuation for those imposing it. Living in a social environment in which prejudice is reinforced towards a minority group has been shown to have deep psychological impact on the development of young people (Sanchez-Hucles, 1998). Second, as it was described to me by the women, racism emerged from within a social context, rather than the belief or ideology of having innate superiority. As Nadia said: ‘I suppose they [friends] were a little racist, but they were my friends...I tolerated it because I wanted to be a part of the clique’. This reveals some important issues; feeling socially accepted required hiding their ethno-religious culture in order to fit in. However, racism evoked deep confusions about identity, as it reinforced their sense of difference from the wider society. Third, the women questioned the validity of applying generalisations about social groups. They strongly believed that ethnicity could not provide knowledge about them as distinct individuals, especially since despite some contradictions they saw themselves as British. In other words, the girls did not want to be placed into, or represented by, a particular social group. As Nina commented: ‘Growing-up, I thought of myself as British, so I hated it when people would ask me where I was really from, implying that I’m not really British...that’s why I grew up confused about my identity, I felt British but I was not seen as British...it left me feeling like an alien’.

## 5.7 Radicalisation

The radicalisation of Muslim women receives considerable attention in the literature but it is still difficult to understand why growing numbers of women appear to be attracted to a wide range of activities within a radical, and sometimes violent, setting. The radicalisation of women, unlike men, is often thought to be stimulated by different social realities. These gender-based assumptions assert that female activists are less influenced by political involvement or ideology (MacDonald, 1992). Galvin (1983) tries to argue that family networks, namely husband and brother relationships, play a significant role in the recruitment of female activists. Similarly, MacDonald (1992) noted a large percentage of boyfriends recruited their girlfriends into Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)<sup>160</sup>. I am not disputing these claims, but it is unwise to apply male-derived assumptions regarding female behaviour. The notion women are less likely to become radicalised because they are inherently more passive has been widely discredited (Skocpol and Campbell, 1995).<sup>161</sup> My goal is therefore to examine why the women in my focus group became radicalised.

### 5.7.1 University

Ruth Kelly, the then Secretary of State for Education and Skills, in the aftermath of the London bombings on 7 July 2005, addressed a conference of university heads, in which she declared: ‘I believe that higher education institutions need to identify and confront unacceptable behaviour on their premises and within their communities’ (*Times Higher Education*, 16-09-2005). It is apparent from these remarks that the authorities recognise radicalisation as a real and dangerous threat to university students. University can be a very unsettling experience, as young people grapple with a sense of purpose, beliefs and future direction (Erikson, 1968). There is extensive literature on the general nature of the university experience and its impact on student behaviour, but this research tells us very little of the actual processes by which Muslim women adapt in different ways to their university environments (Newcomb and Feldman, 1994). I needed to identify how the four women

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<sup>160</sup> ETA is a militant-nationalist group seeking a free Basque homeland.

<sup>161</sup> Helene Deutsch, a psychologist, argues that female passivity in work or politics is greatly misunderstood, because ‘the ego can be active in both men and women’. She believes political passivity does not translate into ‘inactivity, emptiness or immobility’ (cited in *Times Magazine*, 20/03/1972, ‘Behaviour: Male and Female: Differences Between Them’)

became radicalised at university. The *how* was crucial because without knowing the processes of radicalisation, one cannot counter it.

### 5.7.2 Transition to a New Social Environment

The girls had very similar social backgrounds, emerging from, and belonging to, a homogeneous social group during their early upbringing. Most of the women were optimistic about moving away to university, as it would allow them to gain autonomy from their parents. As Nina said: ‘I wanted to live on campus because I felt sheltered at home. Moving to university gave me the opportunity to become independent and meet new people...so I was excited’. The reality of the first few months, however, brought many unforeseen complications, proving to be very disruptive to the girls’ adjustment. Research into student transition indicates that many find the early alteration to a new social milieu very difficult and challenging (Newcomb and Feldman, 1994). As Sara described it: ‘University was different. I’d never seen so many Asians in my life [and] I found it hard to develop friends, because my interests were western’. Amina experienced the reverse: ‘I hated it [university]. Everyone was white, but really stuck-up, and I felt excluded because I was Asian’.<sup>162</sup> Overall, each of the women struggled to integrate into the social environment of university life. As Levitz and Noel (1989, p. 66) acknowledge, the ‘first two to six weeks’ are a critical period for adjustment and integration. Although many students find the social aspect of university life enjoyable, the respondents found it difficult to establish meaningful relations with their university peers (Paul and Kelleher, 1995).

The women appeared quite deflated by their initial experiences, as summed up by Nina: ‘It [Student life] was like being surrounded by children: you’d have loud music playing all night, food was constantly stolen, [and] I even started to miss my parents’ nagging after a while’. This disconcerting introduction to student life made some of the women question the very purpose of university. As Amina explained:

‘It was hard leaving home. I’d never lived away from my parents for such a long period. My first term was really difficult. I felt out of place; it [university] was a daunting experience...I was going to transfer after the first year to a

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<sup>162</sup> Amina talked about her experiences among upper-class white people – she felt her accent, clothing and interests made her unable to integrate with her university peers.

university near to my home, because I really felt alone and I missed my family’.

Most of the women cited similar problems in adjusting to the university setting which involved a degree of social isolation and loneliness. Whenever an individual experiences a shift in behaviour - moving away from home to university - they can become unsettled (Feenstra et al., 2001). More significantly, a few of the women cited peer rejection as a salient cause for their loneliness, which is supported in the literature on student transition (Asher and Coie, 1990). They seemed deeply affected by their inability to find acceptance within a peer group, resulting in heightened anxiety when membership was denied to them.

Overall, I identified two distinct problem areas which the women encountered in making the transition to university life: forming peer relations and disconnection from family. First, the introduction to university life was blighted by feelings of loneliness brought about by peer rejection. These emotions varied in intensity. For Nadia, university ‘lacked warmth’, while Nina felt it was an ‘intimidating environment’. The feeling of isolation in the midst of dense collective activity – student union events – had a negative effect on their identity and self-esteem (Hymel and Williams, 1999). When the women had trouble forming peer relations they felt lonely because they had no emotional support or companionship. An underlying factor in the women’s peer rejection can be attributed to a failure to integrate because of class and ethnicity. For Sara, ethnic divisions became difficult to bridge: ‘I never wanted to be bound by my race and culture...so I felt like an outcast because I rejected my people’ [South Asian]. Second, the women struggled to adjust to being away from home, missing their family’s support and love. Although home-based students find it difficult to forge new peer relations, they benefit from continued family and friendship ties (Komarovsky, 2004).

### **5.7.3 Peer Group**

I intend in this section to focus predominantly on the role of the peer group, and on the nature and impact of relationships between my respondents and female HT members, within a university context. In selecting themes that have direct relevance to the radicalisation process, I have chosen the development of religiosity and peer socialisation, since out of the many available themes these appeared to me to be two key issues. In a general sense, a peer group often attracts a collection of people, roughly of the same social background and age, to

a shared sense of values (Hartup, 1983). Even in my brief glimpses into the personal experience afforded by the women, I saw the part played by peer groups.

#### **5.7.4 Encountering the Peer Group**

As I was writing this chapter, there were several stories which consistently featured in the media – Muslim women wearing the *Niqab* (face cover) and female suicide bombers in Iraq. These issues are reminders that the boundaries of the individual and the social context cannot easily be separated from each other. If social processes influence the formation of identities, then I needed to make sense of how the women’s social life changed after encountering the peer group. According to Howe (2010), peer groups have a psychology that overwhelms the individual. If this assumption is true of my respondents, then it is important to hear these experiences from the women’s perspective first. Nadia described her earliest encounter with HT peer group:

‘I was given a flyer outside the canteen, inviting Muslim students to the freshers’ dinner...so I decided to go along. I found the talks really interesting, because I thought Islam was just a religion. The talks presented Islam as a complete way of life and they exposed the fallacy of the western civilisation...the dinner gave me a chance to meet some of the sisters [HT recruiters] and we had a long discussion. After the dinner, the sisters would visit me at my halls regularly and we became friends. Initially, we’d chat about the fundamental question and I really started to think about my life and my purpose...I became interested in the *Deen* [Islam] and I spent a lot of time with the sisters. We became very close friends...they helped me to practise Islam. Without them I would not have discovered Islam, so I’m grateful to Allah. [How long did this process take?] Well, I started university in September and by the end of that semester I would say I was practising, so about four months’.

The extent to which Nadia felt negatively about herself influenced the social realities of her university experience and interactions. In previous extracts Nadia mentioned she struggled to form stable relationships within the social space of university. In many ways, her need for peer recognition might have been a defensive construction to provide a sense of continuity and belonging (Howe, 2010). First, throughout her life she had developed the belief that Islam was just another religion, as a result of her family interactions. The HT gathering challenged this self-definition of Islam, at a time when she was experiencing low self-esteem



and isolation. More significantly, after several personal visits her identity was gradually replaced. Religion became the focal point for change, as it provided answers to the meaning of life. As Shupe and Hadden (1988, p.133) assert, religion is the pursuit of ultimate truth and values. The religious aspect acted as a catalyst for the substantial change in Nadia's intellectual and behavioural outlook, resulting in a reassessment of her role in this life. This spiritual dimension was extremely powerful and important in the radicalisation process, so I intend to expand upon increased religiosity in the next section.

What strikes me about her experience is the rapid speed with which significant behavioural changes take place, especially those within a peer group context. From Nadia's perspective, encountering the peer group had a positive impact. For instance, Nadia talked about how her relationship with the 'sisters' changed from just friendship to 'close friends' when she became a member of the peer group. The need for acceptance and the desire to avoid peer rejection were important to Nadia. This is not surprising, because within a group setting individual identity often gives way to the collective identity (Tajfel, 1981).

What follows is the account given by Sara of how she encountered and developed relationships with HT female activists.

'I came across the sisters during *Ramadan*. I tried to fast and pray for the first time. I just wanted to know about Islam, so I went to the prayer room. There I met two sisters; they were living in my halls but I'd never really seen them...we started to hang out. I really liked them and we became close. They helped me a lot, they introduced me to the culture and it had a big impact on me...like the other sisters [focus group], I started to think about this life and the next. For me, accepting the *Deen* was an intellectual process, because you have to change concepts to change behaviour'.

Although her personal experiences are different from Nadia's, this short extract contains some common themes – such as peer group relations and religious transformation. In theory, peer relations may not be as vital to human survival as attachment relations, but they clearly provide social and developmental advantages (Hartup, 1983). After her encounter with the peer group, Sara grew dependent upon the supportive social relationships. She had to secure peer acceptance first, however, which she described as intellectual and behavioural change. In other words, she was expected to conform to the religious culture of the peer group; for example, she had to start practising Islam. According to Marcia (1993), this type of

behavioural transformation is marked by two distinct processes: exploration and commitment. Sara, for example, attended gatherings and encountered the peer group with an open mind, which allowed her to explore various identity alternatives. After a brief period of association with the peer group, she pledged commitment to their values and beliefs by adopting the identity offered by her HT female peers, to which she remained stubbornly faithful (Marcia, 1993).

Amina's account exemplifies a more interpersonal relationship, which served as the foundation for her identity change. She talked about how her friendship triggered a turning-point:

'In the second semester I opted to take a sociology module. There was a sister in my class who would wear the *hijaab* and *Khmer*. I thought badly of her, at first; perhaps she was oppressed or unintelligent. I had never seen anyone wear *hijaab* in my area, so I couldn't quite understand why someone living here [the west] would wear it. But she impressed me – she'd make these brilliant comments that challenged the lecturer on intellectual issues...so I became friends with her. We were the only Asians around. I never thought that I'd become practising or that I'd wear the *hijaab*...but that is the power of the truth. We became inseparable; we'd hang out, cook together and discuss the *Deen* [Islam]. A major turning-point for me was the conversion of a classmate to Islam. She was English, and when the sister gave her *dawah*, I'd be there and it affected me, especially when she converted. After that the sister would teach us both about the *Deen* [Islam] from the beginning. Eventually, she started giving us formal *Halaqahs* when we joined the party'.

Amina's account exemplifies a more interpersonal relationship that served as the foundation for her identity change. She describes the shift from an old identity structure, seemingly built upon western ideology, to her new Islamic identity. Mead (1934), the architect of social psychology, might view Amina's identity transformation as a reflection of her social experiences. More significantly, her identity is formed and contained within the relationships and the cultural context of the peer group. Clearly, the development of close ties with the female activist was central to Amina's radicalisation. From the earliest interactions between them, joint or shared activity was evident. A large part of Amina's time at university was spent doing things with the peer group – such as studying, engaging in recreation and learning about Islam. All these involved the development of joint activities wherein the peer

group had established shared patterns of action, shared understandings and feelings. In other words, by embracing these patterns of joint activity Amina acquired a sense of shared identity, which emerged from continued interactions and conversations with the peer group.

The final account is given by Nina. Her encounter with HT is more contingent upon social circumstances. As she explained:

‘I signed up to the Islamic society at the freshers’ fair. After about a few weeks two sisters visited me and I got to know them. I was struggling to fit in at university. I was living next to some loud and annoying students...I moved in with the sisters, they had a house near to campus. It was excellent living with the sisters and we became close friends. The house was *dawah* central; we’d bring contacts over and have talks. I became convinced so quickly, literally a week after moving in I was practising, it was a great atmosphere...it was a turning-point for me’.

In documenting the various paths the women took in joining the HT peer group, it is clear that they were harbouring deep feelings of isolation and loneliness. To overcome this, Nina turned to the peer group who were very sympathetic to her needs, and in due course Nina revealed her unpleasant experiences of university life to them. According to Bean (1985, p. 35), university students actively chose favoured ‘agents of socialisation’. He argued peer group influence can be an overriding factor in changing student behaviour (Bean, 1985). After Nina became acquainted with the peer group, she found they had similar backgrounds and interests. Not long after their friendship began Nina discovered that the women, whom she came to depend upon to lighten her despondency, were in fact members of HT. More significantly, she seemed unaware that the peer group had an agenda other than friendship, and were in the process of recruiting her into HT. Van Gennep (1960, p. 11) summed up this type of student transformation in three stages: ‘separation, transition, and incorporation’. This albeit simplistic representation rather accurately depicts the stages Nina, and the other women, went through in their encounter with the HT peer group.

### **5.7.5 Religious Transformation within the Peer Group**

It seemed fairly apparent HT targeted emotional weaknesses in their recruitment of the women. From the impression given by the respondents the peer groups were seen as spiritually complete, the female members appearing unaffected by the disappointments that

plagued the daily lives of the respondents. In particular, religion was used to help make sense of their social circumstances, giving them the vital inspiration and energy to overcome their perceived problems. As Hood et al., (2009, p. 24) point out, religion focuses on two basic human needs: unlocking mysteries and circumstances. This understanding offers an overview of the women's sudden religious change. First, all the women cited the need to answer the fundamental mysteries of existence. This was achieved, they all insisted, through Islam, which provided them with the correct answers to the fundamental questions regarding their existence. Islam, it was argued, addressed the issue of their purpose in life and integrated it into the grand scheme of existence, i.e. 'what came before this life and what will come after it?' (Nadia). Second, the women found themselves socially and culturally isolated at university. This situation gave rise to feelings of frustration, since their previous beliefs left them feeling unfulfilled. Consequently, these feelings made them susceptible to the peer group, which prompted them to become religious seekers.

In many ways, it is important to contain the religious transformation experienced by the women within the context of the peer group. Their religious experience never took place in a vacuum: rather it was directed, if not initiated, by the peer group. Some of the women suggested this was a rapid transformation, but breaking from one's previous beliefs is not a sudden process as it takes time to integrate a system of beliefs. As Sara suggested: 'Practising the *Deen* [Islam] is an ongoing struggle...I had to overcome many contributions from my corrupt secular viewpoint, like wearing the *hijab*, which was a huge step'. This statement puts the religious experience into some sort of perspective, as comprehensive identity reformation takes effect gradually. I have refrained from using the term 'conversion' to describe the women's experiences, because it is somewhat ambiguous and it does not quite match the realities of the women's circumstances. Peel (1977), for example, defines conversion as a shift in primary religious affiliation. The women were born into the Islamic faith, however, and thus never transferred their religious allegiance. Their experiences can consequently be described as a process of turning away from old lives towards not a new but rather a revitalised or idealised version of Islam.<sup>163</sup>

My discussions have revealed that the women's religious involvement was based in the first instance on friendship, and then on belief. I am not, however, trying to play down the role of

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<sup>163</sup> In some respects, this experience is analogous to feelings of being 'born-again', which in a Christian context refers to a spiritual rebirth and salvation. However, the term is firmly embedded within the Christian theological tradition and its usage would be confusing as a result.

belief, which is critical. The religious revitalisation was only completed when the women transcended beyond social relationships and fully accepted the beliefs of HT. This was quite apparent during my discussions with the women, as I found them very passionate, even arrogant, about their beliefs. The women encountered many challenges after their revitalisation: for example, they all cited family disputes. As Nina recalled:

‘When I returned home from university for the winter break my parents were in absolute shock. I was dressed in *hijaab* and *jilbaab*. They were really upset and concerned that I’d been brainwashed or something...I’ve slowly turned my mum around, but my dad still has a problem with it [Islamic dress]’.

This raises the issue of what behaviour or rituals had to be enacted by the women to be deemed as practising by the peer group. According to Nadia:

‘After I accepted Islam as my viewpoint in life, the sisters taught me the things that were *Fard* [duty] and the things that were *Haram* [forbidden] in Islam...so I learnt how to pray and I started wearing the *Jilbaab* and so on, really’.

When the women became religiously revitalised, the way in which they interpreted life was transformed. They adopted a ‘holistic’ viewpoint, which gave them guidelines and systems that applied to every aspect of their daily life. As Durkheim (1984) points out, the function of religion is to make us act and to aid us to live. In other words, revitalisation changed the women’s self-awareness, as their new religious beliefs took centre stage in their lives. Religious revitalisation is an on-going process, however, a struggle to refrain from sin and regression to past beliefs (Eliade, 1987). In sum, the women found themselves disconnected in a new social world, which made the peer fellowship very appealing. The peer group provided religious meaning and purpose to the women, and thus a strong bond was forged between them.

### **5.7.6 Indoctrination**

The issue of indoctrination proved a difficult topic, as the women refused to acknowledge the term. They felt it had a negative connotation and it implied that they had been forced to join HT. From the women’s accounts, it is difficult to assert Singer’s (1995) view that all religious change involves mind control. Their transformations did not include any form of physical confinement, coercive persuasion or bodily threat. Can I therefore still use the term

indoctrination to describe the women's experiences with HT? After consulting the literature, I discovered a more suitable definition. Some theorists have described indoctrination as 'milieu control' (Lifton, 1989). This entails the enforcement of 'unethical practices' to control intellectual thoughts within the group setting, manufacturing a deep sense of separation from society (Snook 1972, p. 12). This definition needs more clarification. Unethical practices may refer to the inculcation of concepts and beliefs into an individual in a closed environment, like the *Halaqah*. There is a noticeable problem with this definition: it is too general. According to this definition, teaching children in a classroom environment could be classified as a form of indoctrination.<sup>164</sup> Using the term in this way ignores the content of teaching, which determines whether or not teaching is indoctrination. As Flew (1972, p. 11) stated: 'No doctrine, no indoctrination'. By using the above definition (Snook, 1972), I will be in a position to see how the women became indoctrinated. It is important to divide indoctrination into two distinct stages: primary (the *Halaqah*) and secondary (peer group).

### **5.7.7 Primary Indoctrination: the Halaqah**

The content of the Halaqah was deliberately engineered and delivered in such a way as to generate collective indoctrination. As Sara explained:

'Before I joined [Halaqah], the sisters would discuss concepts, but it wasn't structured and I never felt connected to the party. But when I started H [Halaqah] things became clearer; I could understand the concepts and culture better...it really helped. I became connected; before I felt like an individual or an outsider'.

Unlike peer discussions, the Halaqah leader would convey the ideas in an authoritarian manner and the content was continually drilled into the women's psyche. As Nadia said: 'Halaqah is a building process...corrupt concepts are destroyed and the correct concepts built'. Clearly, the outcome of the Halaqah is an 'indoctrinated person' (Wilson 1972, p. 18). It is important, however, to emphasise that the women objected to my use of the term indoctrination, as they collectively felt it implied a lack of rationality. Some social theorists have assumed that indoctrination is arrived at through 'non-rational methods' (Wilson 1972,

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<sup>164</sup> Barbara Geerdes, a teacher in the United States, was accused of indoctrinating her students with progressive Marxism in the classroom (Lake Minnetonka Liberty Archives, 09/04/2010). The classroom can be seen as a control setting, but indoctrination often depends on the content being taught.

p. 19). In the context of the Halaqah, the discussions are controlled and restricted, which determines the outcome of the discourse. This means that rationality is contrived, making the Halaqah an ideal setting for indoctrination. As I concluded in the previous chapter, the aim of the Halaqah was to create a quite different world view. Unfortunately, the women were reluctant to enter into any detailed discussion regarding their experiences and development within the Halaqah system. As Nina explained: ‘The Halaqah is an administrative issue, and as members of Hizb ut-Tahrir we’re not at liberty to discuss these matters’. In spite of this, I know about the Halaqah from a variety of sources – such as my own personal experiences as a Mushrif [Halaqah teacher] and other biographical accounts.

### **5.7.8 Secondary Indoctrination: the Peer Group**

From the women’s accounts, it was quite evident that indoctrination occurred within the peer group setting. Although I believe that the women’s lives were greatly affected by their encounters with the peer group, it is not easy to describe these processes. First, it is clear that the peer group exerted significant influence over the women. As Nina said: ‘...practising was hard early on because you’d be told what to do and how to do it’. This interaction appears to be very one-sided, allowing the peer group to stimulate deliberate behavioural and mental changes. Second, the peer group developed close relationships with the women, making indoctrination easier. As Sara explained: ‘I really trusted the sisters; we became close and I revealed a lot to them about myself’. Close ties within peer groups enable weaker or newer members to be socialised into the group (Howe, 2010). Peer socialisation was an important developmental stage in the radicalisation process, as it gave the women definitions of acceptable ways to handle the social world. The women became submerged within the peer group, which developed an unquestioned attachment to the ‘sisters’, including automatic obedience and willingness to sacrifice for the group. As Amina observed: ‘I’d miss a lot of lectures because I’d be busy with the sisters carrying the dawah [Islamic message]’. As with all group dynamics, the peer group indoctrinated a deep sense of group identification among the women. In sum, the women sought identification with the peer group for the following reasons: (1) membership provided benefit; (2) it offered distinctiveness from other social groups (e.g. dress); (3) there was a sense of common experience (Triandis 1989, p. 96). These influences were undoubtedly present within the women’s accounts, and thus indoctrination played an important role in preparing the women to join HT.

### 5.7.9 Effects of Indoctrination on Identity

When the women joined HT, they acquired a new outlook, which from their perspective empowered them. I want to look at this issue by exploring the women's aspirations prior to joining the peer group, as this may reveal insight into the effects of indoctrination. Rather surprisingly, most of the women entered university not anticipating professional careers. As Sara explained, 'After graduation I expected to get married and have children'. Upon radicalisation, however, some of the respondents began to shift from a traditional women's role to a more career-orientated outlook (Komarovskiy, 2004). As Amina suggested, 'The culture [HT] gave me confidence...my interests began to grow in [the] social sciences and I ended up following that path after graduating'. This newfound career expectation was not just restricted to the social sciences. For example, after her degree in mathematics, Nina pursued a teaching career. Nadia, however, after graduating got married and settled into a traditional homemaker role. At this point, the discussion became slightly confrontational, as Nadia insisted that Islam does not advocate symmetrical role allocation in marriage. According to her, 'Women are responsible for child rearing and looking after the husband'. The female respondents all acknowledged that God sanctifies their role as different from that of men, owing to the biological differences between the sexes. According to the Quran (verse 4:34): 'Men are responsible for women because God has given the one more than the other, and because they support them from their means'.<sup>165</sup> This states woman alone can give birth and nurture, so men are required to provide material support. The women agreed unanimously, however, that this verse does not restrict women from providing material support. After some lengthy discussion, they concluded that a career combined with family life is the truest portrait of a Muslim woman.

This revealing discussion shows that indoctrination changed the women's social roles and perspectives. As Marcia (1993) acknowledges, social roles are highly important in understanding adult behaviour and development. In university, for instance, the women adopted new social roles that expanded their perceived opportunities for self-expression, giving structure to their identity. According to Talcott (1960), social roles connect individuals to social environments. If this is true, then the indoctrination process took place within a set environment, namely university. I want to find out, however, what happened to

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<sup>165</sup> Ali, A. (translation). *The Holy Quran*. (Published 1994: Dawah Academy, verse 4:34).



the women's identity once they returned to their family homes. As expected, the women maintained their newfound identities, even though their beliefs were not supported by family members. This would indicate that the women's old values and beliefs had been effectively altered by indoctrination. More significantly, after encountering HT, the women physically changed their outward appearances in accordance with their newfound ideals. As Amina confirmed:

‘Alhamdulillah [Thank God] I found the sisters, who brought me to Islam...I started praying, and then I adopted Islamic dress. Wearing the hijab and jilbaab was the biggest step...Naturally, my classmates and lecturers were shocked, but I was totally content, because I was pleasing my Rubb [God]’.

Apart from physical changes, the women's behaviour was reshaped in harmony with their new identity. For example, the peer group enforced segregation from the male student population within a social context. This behaviour came as a shock to some of the women's classmates, as Nadia explained: ‘When I stopped mixing freely, I experienced some negative reactions - one *Kuffar* student called me a nun’. The women's new identity was tested by a variety of social interactions, but they remained committed to their remodelled identity. From a social psychology perspective, they successfully resolved previous identity conflicts and developed an identity capable of moving on to other adult challenges like work and marriage (Erikson, 1950).<sup>166</sup>

## **5.8 Inside HT – a Female Perspective**

On the surface, HT appears to be largely male-dominated, making the role of female activists unclear. Some feminist commentators have suggested that if the social landscape becomes widely dominated by men, then women become suppressed and passive (Komarovsky, 2004). Before embarking on the study, I suspected that this gender imbalance would be visible in HT, but nothing could be further from the truth. The women I met – through their educational, political and social activism – appear to be setting their own agendas. To demonstrate this more effectively, I will look at the women's ideological beliefs and party activities.

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<sup>166</sup> *Identity conflict* refers to issues that affected the women's student life and interpersonal relationships, which seemed to bring on a crisis that forced them to redefine themselves (Jenkins, 2004).

### 5.8.1 Motivation and Ideology

On the question of ideology, I was not surprised by the women's responses. The party *mabda* (ideology) came to the forefront of the discussion, because it is viewed as a 'comprehensive way of life that organises every aspect of society' (Amina). Similarly, Nina stated: 'the ideology is the foundation of the party...it is the soul of its existence and without it the party would die'. Their idealistic rhetoric made it difficult to delve into deeper issues and motivations concerning ideology. Instead, my questions only seemed to gain a combative response and they did not elicit any credible information. I decided to gather more insight into the ideological mindset of the women. By asking questions about living in the west, I was able to understand their ideological commitment rather better. In particular, we discussed the proposed ban of the *niqab* (face veil). They questioned why a liberal state was interfering in the freedoms of its citizens, and the subsequent erosion of personal liberty. The women were agreed that the establishment of the Khilafah (Islamic society) would resolve this imbalance and other problems, because the Islamic State alone can reflect ideology through social relationships. These women believe in their adopted ideology and embrace its ideals in practice throughout their lives.

I have extrapolated a few key inferences concerning the women's perception of their adopted ideology. First, they believe their attachment to the ideology was inspired by intellectual enlightenment. As Nina observed, 'the Islamic ideology is built on the correct basis [divinity], which is established through rational thought'. Second, the women believe they have freed themselves from all social, political and moral forms of western ideology, completing their presumed emancipation from secular convention. Third, the women appear to be more vigorous than men in their adherence to ideology. Amina suggested: 'I think some of the brothers are more affected by secularism...we [women] have to wear the *hijaab*, which makes us much stronger'.

MacDonald (1992) also considered female activists to be stronger and more dedicated to extremist ideology. Although there is no clear way to determine the levels of ideological commitment between men and women, I have tried to look at ideological motivation. Galvin (1983) asserted that women appeared more idealistic than men. He also suggested that women join radical groups with different motivations (Galvin, 1983). My research has struggled to produce clear answers to these issues, but I did find that male members seemed

more drawn to the power of group membership. In contrast, the focus group discussion indicated that the women were attracted by promises of a better life. My research, however, has continually shown that an individual's personality, background and experiences are equally, if not more, important.

### **5.8.2 Structure and Activism**

Patriarchy is commonly defined as a male-dominated system in which women are subordinate to men. According to the women, patriarchy does not exist in HT, because men and women operate in separate spheres. The administrative rules of HT are not gender-biased in their configuration, and thus women are invited to perform party activity. As Nadia explained, 'the women's structure has its own Mutamad [national leader], its own committees...we carry the *dawah* in the same way as the brothers'. Historically, women were not governed according to the party structure, but as their participation grew, so did demands for equal representation. By the mid-1990s considerable effort had been made to encourage women to become autonomous. According to Nina:

'Before I joined the party, the sisters' structure was organised by the brothers, which was disastrous. There was little communication and the sisters became disconnected...afterwards the party addressed this issue. We [sisters] were given control of women's *dawah*'.

Female members had become a separate entity within HT, which allowed them to set up their own structural hierarchy. The equal participation of women must be understood in terms of the positions which they hold; they are the same as those of the men, but operate in two separate HT systems. So, for example, both Sara and Amina are *Mushrifis* (*Halaqah* teachers); they perform these roles in exactly the same fashion as their male counterparts.

### **5.9 Gender Equality:**

In terms of activism, female HT members secured their own political space. However, to what extent, if any, has HT empowered its female populace? I wanted to know, from the perspective of the women, whether HT ideology is a response to the patriarchal interpretation of divine text that is dominant among Muslim societies. According to one female activist: "Islam is the truth, it has been revealed to humankind by Allah and therefore

it is the most just system...it ensures true equality between the sexes unlike capitalism which exploits women". According to this, Islam and for that matter HT ideology derives its understanding and mandate from the Quran and Sunnah. In theory, this guarantees rights and justice for women, and for men, in the entirety of their life.

HT would claim that it has enabled its female members, through enlightenment, to acquire the ability to interpret the divine rights bestowed to her. This process has resulted in a complete rejection of ethnic cultural-tradition, which has subjected women to gender discrimination within many ethnic communities. Yet, I struggled to be convinced by these rather formulaic responses to my questions, so I sought to challenge the women's idealistic notion of equality.

Firstly, I asked about the concept and practice of '*Qiwama*'.<sup>167</sup> There was a lengthy discussion about the precise meaning of the term, Amina, for instance, suggested that it meant 'men having responsibility over women'. While, Nina explained that it just relates to men providing for women in a financial capacity. The women gave me the impression that they were all in agreement concerning gender equality in Islam, despite the fact that "men and women have differing roles and responsibilities" (Nina). The concept of superiority was hotly contested in relation to *Qiwama*, and it was clear the women were resolutely adamant about men having no everlasting superiority over them. This unified stance quickly dissolved when the discussion moved to the issue of 'beating'. In the same Quranic verse as *Qiwama*, God grants men the right to "banish them to their couches, and beat them" (Quran, 4:34). Surprisingly, the women seemed to be firmly split over this controversial piece of text. One group believed literally men have been granted legal mandate to control and police women, even to the extent of beating them. While the other group argued that this text has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. In other words, men do not have the right to beat women. This skewed division between the women goes somewhat deeper. In particular, the women who disagree with the text also argue that Islamic scholarship is excessively masculine, which enables men to define the role of women as subservient. Dwyer's (2000) study of Muslim women discovered a strong connection with men monopolising religious space and discourse in order to validate their influence.

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<sup>167</sup> *Qiwama*, as mentioned in the Quran, is a highly controversial notion. Taken literally it implies that God has given men guardianship over women because 'Allah has given one more than the other because they support them from their means' (4:34).

The women collectively attributed the cause of gender inequality to ethno-cultural practices and traditions. In essence, they all drew a clear division between religion and culture. In this regard, as Sara surmised: ‘our place is not the home... men and women are equal in Islam’. However, this rather programmed response underscores confusion between religious belief and practice. In theory, the women believe Islam grants them gender equality, but they manifest male prescribed practices (e.g. asking permission before leaving the home, wearing Islamic dress and child nurturing). Somewhat surprisingly the respondents fervently argued that they were more liberated than western women, because they had accepted to live within the moral boundaries established by God. Therefore, their Islamic identity provided them a means to repel the dominant non-Islamic culture (e.g. both Western and Eastern). Dwyer (2000) found similar responses amongst Muslim women, as they used Islam to assert rights and freedoms that are often denied to them by ethno-cultural practices. However, as Malik (The *Guardian*, 25-10-2006) suggests, religious and cultural practices are in a constant state of flux, because ‘they have a mixed and changing social meaning’. Therefore, HT female activists are equally equipped with male members, in terms of education and career opportunities, but they seem less forceful to interpret religious principles.

## **5.10 Conclusion**

Two key thoughts inspired my focus in this chapter. First, I sought to understand the experiences of four HT female members. Second, I wanted to find out what impact these experiences had on the women and whether they made a difference to their radicalisation. As my discussions have shown, the women emerged from very similar social backgrounds. During their early upbringing, namely at secondary school, the women did a lot of things to gain acceptance amongst their white peers. Importantly, in order to belong to the peer group, the women consciously concealed their ethno-religious identity, which allowed them to fit in. This caused deep identity confusion. The women evolved through their youth with an incomplete and fragmented sense of identity, as they constantly had to negotiate between conflicting social worlds and value systems. As Nadia explained: ‘I could never hide my Asian side totally, for example, my friends had boyfriends but I never did...this always made me feel like an outsider’. In many ways, these confusions in identity and sense-making reflect the intolerance of the majority culture.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, the women were fearful of

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<sup>168</sup> This raises important questions about diversity and acceptance. As Malik (2005, p. 182) explains, within the framework of ‘reasonable pluralism’ religious groups ‘must co-exist with conceptions of the good that are not based on faith’. She goes on to say, in some cases faith perspectives will have to co-exist with doctrines that are

showing fragments of their ethno-religious identity because they were essentially seen as backward and inferior. So, clearly at this stage of the women's trajectory they were struggling to find themselves in a society that on some levels rejected their presence, making them feel socially vulnerable.

In relation to social vulnerability, when the women went to university they encountered more complex problems and realities, which made them susceptible to radicalisation. To start with, living away from home increased feelings of loneliness, which made the peer group an attractive prospect. An obvious issue to consider at this point is how and why the respondents were drawn to HT activists at university? Based on the research accumulated during my fieldwork, it appears clear that both male and female HT respondents became radicalised within the closed boundaries of a peer group. It appears the young women gravitated towards relations with people that were alike to them, based on similar social experiences. In essence, the women sought refuge in the 'familiar', seeking out women with the same ethno-religious and social class backgrounds.<sup>169</sup> According to Burleson (1994), adult friendships are rooted in similarity, as this facilitates the sharing of beliefs, allowing for spiritual self-exploration. More interestingly, Murstein (1977) grounded friendship within a proximity paradigm, which he termed 'closed-field friendships'. In other words, the pathways to friendship are governed by closed social settings. The respondents at university, for example, were thrown into an unsettling social environment in which they found safety in the closed relations with HT activists.

The exposure to HT rhetoric which takes place in this setting has a powerful influence on the formation of a new cognitive perspective. Within this tightly-knit context, respondents fashion a radical identity by demarcating themselves in accordance to HT collective identity and membership. This creates a symbiotic connection with HT, as one female activist eerily put it: 'the Hizb (HT) does not need us, we need the Hizb'. The effects of this collective identity were more visibly seen when the respondents talked about non-Muslims. In

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generally sceptical about faith and religion' (cited in Ford et al., (2005) *Fields of Faith: Theology and Religious Studies for the Twenty-first Century*, Cambridge University Press)

<sup>169</sup> From a psycho-social perspective, there are two important components of friendship: proximity and similarity. The respondents would not have formed relationships with HT activists unless exposed to a geographically closed space (e.g. university), which gave them an opportunity to interact. More significantly, individuals are drawn to familiarity. This underlying disposition motivated the respondents to seek out women who were similar to them in terms of age, ethnicity, religion, social class and background. According to Duck (1992), young people naturally drift towards those who share their beliefs and values about the world, as this allows them to share experiences in an open and safe environment. Therefore, apart from seeking refuge in the familiar, the respondents gained a sense of empowerment and self-identity.

particular, the respondents saw their own collective HT identity in opposition to ‘others’, which in turn, enabled them to dehumanise non-Muslims as the enemy. This in essence merges the group with the individual, producing a powerful sense of belonging. It is clear HT radicalisation takes place within a peer group setting, and this is supported by other scholarly work. Della Porta (2006, p. 167) makes a similar conclusion, when she asserts that the choice to join a radical movement involves ‘cliques of friends’. This was further reinforced by Bakker’s (2006) research on radical Islamist movements in Europe. He discovered that peer group associations were a key variable in the radicalisation process: ‘a picture emerges of networks including friends or relatives... that radicalise with little outside interference’ (Bakker 2006, p. 56).

In the context of HT, the discovery of like minded women who shared the same economic and ethno-religious backgrounds made it easier to offset the negative effects of social isolation felt during early university life. Given the identity confusions surrounding their early socialisation, it is no surprise the women emerged from multiple social worlds, which reinforced feelings of social difference. At university within the HT peer group, the women formed and maintained a new identity construct that challenged Western and Eastern value systems. Although my findings are very insightful, they are limited in terms of their application to the wider HT population. The problem of having a small group of participants means I cannot make generalised statements. In the next chapter, however, I will conduct a larger survey of HT members in order to determine some wider social trends.

## **Chapter Six: A Sociological study of HT Membership in Britain**

The study of radicalisation has become an important research topic. Many articles and reports have been published, largely as a response to acts of terror. One such report, commissioned by the New York Police Department (NYPD) intelligence division, stated that the majority of Islamic radicals lived ‘unremarkable lives’ and had ‘unremarkable jobs’ (Silber and Bhatt, 2007). I regularly come across imprecise observations that tend to generalise radicalisation, ignoring the fact it is a highly complex and diverse phenomenon. In the previous chapters, I attempted to study the process of radicalisation by observing individual experiences, which allowed me to arrive at several important conclusions based on this examination. Now I need to determine whether these findings hold outside of my investigative sample. A great deal of what I know about HT, such as its social composition, the social status of its membership, the education and ethnicity of its members, has been obtained through surveys. Correlating this data would, in theory, allow me to determine whether a specific demographic is more susceptible to HT radicalisation. Of particular interest is whether HT members in Britain share sociological characteristics. This might be useful in profiling Islamic radicals, if profiling is at all feasible, and in understanding somewhat better the motivations of Muslims who become radicalised.

### **6.1 Background**

I have been interested in the phenomenon of radicalisation for several years, trying to understand it, and determine its possible causes. The research conducted in the previous two chapters has helped me develop a number of possible explanations, which I now seek to rigorously test. The group interviews explored radicalisation in some depth, providing a relaxed environment in which the respondents openly expressed their views and experiences. Nonetheless, the views that the women conveyed, for example, may not be representative of the wider HT population. Despite the meaningful data I collected from my interviews with male and female members, I realised the need to conduct surveys. These surveys allow me to extend my knowledge of the radical condition within HT, beyond the individual members. In particular, my research has indicated that the current identities of members strongly depend on their past and present social experiences and backgrounds.

Before determining the key sociological characteristics of HT radicalisation, it is useful to briefly summarise some of the key findings of Russell and Miller (1977). They conducted a



sociological study that involved investigating the likely settings of radicalisation amongst militant German groups. The distinctiveness of their work has been lasting primarily because it identifies a number of features of radical groups, and, subsequently, this has gone on to inform my own standpoint. They concluded that radical groups exhibit common sociological characteristics, such as age, social background, race and gender (Russell and Miller, 1977). More significantly, Russell and Miller (1977, p. 17-25) identify universities as the major recruiting ground for radical-terrorist organisations. This was certainly the case for HT members I interviewed, but while this sample was very revealing it is not sufficient in itself. This is because, unlike Russell and Miller, I am not trying to develop a generic profile of radical behaviour; instead my goal is to sketch out a common profile of HT membership. With this goal in mind, I needed to concentrate on class, age, gender, ethnicity and race, but other sociological features of organised social life, such as religion and peer groups, might also need to be examined.

## 6.2 Youth Radicalism: Age

After each survey, I would briefly reflect on the information given by members in order to pick out possible themes for further investigation. One very noticeable theme that emerged from my survey was the disproportionate number of young people involved within the group. For instance, 85 per cent of the members were below the age of thirty and 96.3 per cent were recruited before the age of twenty-five (see Figure 4.1). Therefore, age should not be taken for granted, because it has a powerful effect on the way members see themselves and others. Just as religion and ethnicity shaped member's identities, so does age.

Figure 4.1 Age of HT members

Age (Current)	Male	Female		Average
	Members	Members	Members	(%)
Under 20	9	6	15	8
20 – 25	35	37	72	39
25 – 30	32	39	71	38
30 – 35	14	8	22	11.8
35 – 40	5	1	6	3.2
Over 40	0	0	0	0

Total	95	91	186	100
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Figure 4.2 Age of recruitment

Age of recruitment	Male Members	Female Members	Members	Average (%)
Under 20	53	51	104	56
20 – 25	35	40	75	40.3
25 – 30	7	0	7	3.7
30 – 35	0	0	0	0
35 – 40	0	0	0	0
Over 40	0	0	0	0
Total	95	91	186	100

The radicalisation of the youth is not a new phenomenon; rather it has been the youth that have formed the foundation of countless popular movements. Iran, for example, experienced a significant ‘youth bulge’ that fostered the conditions for its revolution in 1979 (Slavin, 2007). So, why do young people appear more inclined towards HT in Britain? Some social theorists believe that identity is an unstable collection of perceptions in which age grapples with other social imperatives like ethnicity and class (James and James, 2004). In some respects, a member’s age is tied to their identity, which shifts over time. Trying to understand this process is extremely difficult. Cote (1996) formulated a theory, which ties identity shifts to historical cultural markers. Another more influential model was proposed by Van Gennep (1960). He identified three key stages of social development: ‘separation, transition and incorporation’ (Van Gennep 1960, p. 3). This process provides a way of looking at how the social transition to new age identities takes place. In the following sections, I seek to describe and explain how these stages help answer the question of youth involvement in HT.

### 6.2.1 Separation

Van Gennep (1960), a noted French ethnographer, developed his theory of rites of passage, which he suggested define a period when an individual reaches a new and significant change

in his or her life. More importantly, these rites of passage are designed to help people to understand their new roles in society. In the separation stage, members experience a feeling of detachment from the family environment, entering into a new role and social setting. This rite was mainly felt when members left the safety of the family home for university. In particular, the members I interviewed looked forward to their university experience, as they felt it would give them independence from their parents. The survey indicated that most members felt disconnected from their family's cultural mores (see Figure 4.4 and 4.5). Hutnik (1985) found that identities are often crafted to maintain distance from others. In the case of HT members, this is not surprising, as the older generation have found it difficult to impart the traditions of the subcontinent to the newer generation. From my discussions it was clear that members sought not to be represented by their parent's identities. This somewhat negative identity formation pointed to a more confused identity ambivalence, which was usually directed to their parents' culture and ethnicity. Although, the cause of radicalisation cannot be exclusively defined within the context of a generation gap, this has undoubtedly contributed to conflict with and separation from families.

The most notable difference between the two generations relates to mindset. The first generation arrived in the early 1950s to fill the labour shortage in Britain. As a result, they never envisaged permanent settlement, instead they believed in returning home (Anwar, 1979). This belief allowed the first generation to transfer the values of the homeland, which legitimised a separation from British culture. Therefore, this generation has been strongly influenced by a transitory or migrant mindset. As the prospect of returning home diminished, the first generation sought to establish a religious base that would transport their morals and values in opposition to those of the receiving culture. However, this mindset could not be passed on to the newer generation, as they have found it difficult to adopt the beliefs and lifestyles of their parents (see Figure 4.4). The second generation are born and educated here, giving them direct access to the majority culture. This has enabled them to experience two distinct social worlds, which have inspired some to challenge the conservative values of their parents; attitudes and behaviours that have been transplanted from the subcontinent. In particular, the rejection of these religious and cultural mores is evidence of a different mindset. The younger generation have adopted a different way of living in Britain, reflecting a symbolic separation from their parents, who were economic migrants.

## **6.2.2 Transition**

When young people are in the transitional stage, they are in a state of interruption, separated from their previous roles and not yet incorporated into the new one (Paul and Kelleher, 1995). The transition to new social settings can be extremely unsettling, especially for minorities who are more vulnerable to rejection. The transitional stage can be usefully applied to the experiences of HT members at varying points in their life cycle. Young people often struggle during adolescence, because this stage of development is perhaps the most disruptive. During this stage, young people are greatly concerned with the perception of others (Erikson, 1950). In the previous chapter, many of the respondents failed to understand how they ‘fitted-in’, which resulted in them developing a ‘dysfunctional’ identity. As a result many of the respondents suffered from role confusion, meaning they were uncertain about their position in the social world. The transition stage is a period when members ought to learn the appropriate behaviour for the new stage they are entering (Turner, 1990). However, identity problems are very common during adolescence, as young people naturally struggle to contend with the changes that take place. Therefore, the most important transition for members appears to be to university. Some social scientists believe that young people are more inclined towards getting involved with movements concerned with protest and rejection at university (Russell and Miller, 1977). This is because university is seen as a natural social space for young people to actively learn and grow, and prepare them to become independent actors.<sup>170</sup> Newcomb and Feldman (1994) conducted research into identity shifts during life transitions, focusing on students going to university. They concluded that young people become unsettled by leaving home and struggle to form new identities, which can often lead them to discover alternative identities.

### **6.2.3 Incorporation**

The ways in which members move between social locations are often age-related, for example, leaving home to go to university. This is a key rite of passage for young people, as it allows them to discover themselves. In the previous chapters, I discovered that members often emerge from childhood as incomplete social actors, which contributes to their perceived separation. This makes young people the most sensitive age group in society, especially when their aspirations and needs are not satisfied. Therefore, the final stage of

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<sup>170</sup> The data collected has clearly shown that the bulk of HT recruitment takes place at university, and thus I have discussed this issue in more detail in a separate section.

incorporation takes place when the members are formally admitted into the new role. Joining HT is the most visible example, as the member adopts a new and different identity, which has been stimulated by earlier transition and separation rites. Although, the rites of passages are important, there are more practical issues that relate to age. The British Muslim community, for example, has the youngest age profile of any other religious group (The Muslim Weekly, 15/10/2004). Therefore, radicalisation tends to be a condition associated with youth and 96.3 per cent of those surveyed were recruited during this highly formative period. Therefore, HT's fraternity is almost exclusively comprised of young people, making age a very important component.

### 6.3 Social Background: Social Class

Age has been suggested as a very important variable, but the rapid radicalisation of HT youth must be seen from a wider social perspective that includes social background. According to Warner (1949), social class should be isolated within a socio-economic framework that relates to fixed properties, such as income, education and wealth. In line with this analytical approach, the 2001 census, and a separate Labour Force Survey conducted in 2004, has indicated that British Muslims are one of the most deprived social groups in the UK (The Muslim Weekly, 15-10-2004). Huntington (1996) believes that large-scale unemployment among young people provides a likely source for radicalisation. However, in the context of HT, it was found that the majority of the population occupied a higher than average social status. For instance, 97.3 per cent of the sample classified themselves as middle class (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 Social Class of HT members

Class <sup>171</sup>	Male	Female	Average
	Members	Members	
Upper class	2	0	1
Upper middle	29	19	25.8
Lower middle	64	67	70.5
Working class	2	3	2.7
Lower class	0	0	0

<sup>171</sup> Taken from the five-class model developed by Thompson and Hickey (2005)

Total	95	91	186	100
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### 6.3.1 Are HT Members Middle Class?

Most HT members claimed middle-class status, even though they seemed somewhat unaware of its precise meaning and application. This has made it very difficult to pin down how much members overestimate their socio-economic status, making it unsuitable to let members assess themselves as middle class. Furthermore, individuals do not always evaluate themselves in exactly the same manner. I needed to find a way of classifying the socio-economic position of HT members, before trying to understand the role of class. After consulting the extensive literature on social class, I defined middle class using four key criteria: occupation, income, property and education (Davis and Moore, 1970; Parkin, 1979). Most social theorists tend to study class stratification through these distinct variables, which allowed me to fairly assess the class demographic of HT.

Firstly, questions related to occupation revealed a large grouping of highly qualified professionals who occupy relatively privileged positions (see Figure 4.4). There is a particularly strong focus on non-manual occupations among the members, giving them a natural advantage in the labour market. Nonetheless, some social theorists would argue that this mobility is artificial and short-ranged, due to a social and cultural ‘buffer zone’ between the middle and working classes (Parkin 1979, p. 56). This view assumes that movement from manual to non-manual occupations occurs superficially, and thus workers are employed at the lower levels of the work hierarchy (Goldthorpe et al., 1987). However, HT members do not occupy such positions, rather they have moved into professional posts, providing them with long-range mobility. Indeed, as Davis and Moore (1970) have suggested, Britain appears to have become a meritocracy, which means that emphasis is placed on achievement and this determines the position in the occupational hierarchy.

Figure 4.4 Occupational Activity of HT Members<sup>172</sup>

	Male	Female		Average
Occupation	Members	Members	Members	(%)
Professional	47	15	62	33.3
Intermediate	38	33	71	38.2

<sup>172</sup> Adapted from Reid (1977, p. 32).

Skilled (non- Manual)	2	0	2	1
Manual Partly Skilled	0	0	0	0
Unskilled	0	0	0	0
Unemployed	0	0	0	0
Homemaker	0	31	31	16.7
Student	8	12	20	10.8
Total	95	91	186	100

The occupation of female members falls into three key groupings. The most common is that of intermediate, but the proportion of female professionals is considerably lower than that of male members. The second largest categorisation is that of homemaker, which was indicated by 34 per cent of female respondents. In relation to some of these gender inequalities, it is worth noting that many female members suggested that they wanted to have children, and thus maintaining a professional career alongside this goal seemed far too challenging.

Secondly, a member's household income tends to be higher than the national average.<sup>173</sup> Private firms employ most members, which has widened their economic capital. This income differential between occupations is somewhat apparent between those employed in the public sector, compared with the members in the private field. The income distribution among the members shows that over 60 per cent are located in the highest income categories. Thirdly, I was somewhat surprised by the relatively large number of members who privately own property (see Figure 4.5). This is because many of the members are quite young, and thus I would have assumed were just entering the property ladder. This indicates that members have shown a strong tendency to acquire property assets as a means of social mobility. As Parkin (1968) acknowledges, property ownership provides access to economic power, and thus is a key feature of the division of labour. Moreover, from my discussions with members, I realised that their parents had placed significant importance on creating a successful property portfolio. This gave them a significant financial advantage when house prices surged in the late 1980s. According to Cannadine (1999), middle-class families have greater financial resources, placing them in a better position to assist their children in

<sup>173</sup> It was estimated that in 2007 the top fifth of households in the UK was £72,900 (after tax £52,400). Refer to [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk).

purchasing a home or passing on their property. Thus, inherited property accounted for 27.4 per cent of the sample. Furthermore, with the recent introduction of Islamic mortgages, many members have used this as a means to acquire larger properties and gain greater economic independence.

Figure 4.5 Property ownership

<b>Property Ownership</b>	<b>Male Members</b>	<b>Female Members</b>	<b>Total Members</b>	<b>Average (%)</b>
Free Hold	41	43	84	45.2
Inherited	29	22	51	27.4
Islamic Mortgage	19	23	42	22.6
Renting	6	3	9	4.8
Council	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>100</b>

Fourthly, higher education is clearly important for HT members, as it relates to their desire to gain employment advancement. As Cooper (1979) has discovered, most professionals are graduates, thereby allowing them to move into higher income categories. For example, evidence from the sample revealed that 87.6 per cent of members graduated from a higher education institution (see Figure 4.6). This is not surprising since members' parents have similar academic backgrounds, which helps to duplicate class status across generations (see Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.6 Education Level of HT Members

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Male Members</b>	<b>Female Members</b>	<b>Total Members</b>	<b>Average (%)</b>
Postgraduate	13	8	21	11.3
Graduate	73	69	142	76.3
College	1	2	3	1.6
School (GCSE)	0	0	0	0
No qualifications	0	0	0	0
Current Student	8	12	20	10.8



Total	95	91	186	100
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Figure 4.7 Parents' Education Level

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Father's Education</b>	<b>Mother's Education</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average (%)</b>
Postgraduate	8	11	19	10.3
Graduate	85	79	164	88.2
College	2	0	2	1
School (GCSE)	0	0	0	0
No qualifications	0	1	1	0.5
Current Student	0	0	0	0
Total	95	91	186	100

Relatively few members had limited education, indicating the propensity to acquire university admission and gain professional qualifications. More significantly, HT members have very little obstacles in going to university, as they have substantial financial support from their parents. Therefore, education is certainly a defining feature of HT's middle class disposition, which allows it to maintain itself as a class. It is worth noting, however, that social theorists have struggled to agree upon a precise and coherent understanding of the middle class. For example, some theorists believe that culture is a defining feature of the middle class (Cooper, 1979). Then again, as Roberts et al. (1977, p. 107) has insisted, it is no longer possible to define a core middle class culture because within the white-collar strata no coherent set of values exists. If one assumes, like Goldthorpe et al. (1987), that social classes are groups characterised by shared income, lifestyles and cultures, then HT members certainly comprise a homogenous grouping. Clearly, the data gathered from the sample indicate that social mobility has been achieved or maintained through occupation, education and wealth (property and income).

Throughout my research, I have used the generic term 'middle class' to define the social composition of HT. However, it is not entirely precise, as Parkin (1968, p. 175) points out, 'it lacks the analytical precision necessary for considering issues which cannot be posed in terms of class polarisation'. Parkin (1968, p. 176) is referring here to comparisons made

between ‘white-collar groups’. In relation to my study, I noticed very early on that HT activists seemed to be drawn from specific occupational fields (see Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8 The Occupational location(s) of HT Members

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Male Members</b>	<b>Female Members</b>	<b>Total Members</b>	<b>Average (%)</b>
Medical/Sciences	13	11	24	12.9
Engineering	8	1	9	4.8
Computing	38	10	48	25.8
Finance	14	8	22	11.8
Law	0	0	0	0
Arts	0	1	1	0.5
Social Sciences	1	2	3	1.5
Academia/teaching	12	15	27	14.6
Student	8	12	20	10.8
Other	1	31 <sup>174</sup>	32	17.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>100</b>

Although the above data does not conclusively support my initial observations, it does illustrate that HT membership is drawn from the ranks of the educated middle class. This identification is important as research has shown that the educated, namely university graduates, are more inclined to ‘left-wing politics than those of similar social status but less educated’ (Parkin 1968, p. 178). More interestingly, I found that disproportionately large numbers of HT members were drawn from non-social science fields. In terms of radical behaviour, this is significant, as it is largely believed that radicalism is usually equated to specific occupational categories (Glazer, 1961). Firstly, it is not surprising to see a high percentage of teachers and doctors in radical organisations, as these professions are constantly confronted with bleak social problems<sup>175</sup> (Talcott, 1960). Indeed, very few HT members have experience of social disadvantage, and thus when confronted with these social realities may trigger inclination towards radical or right-wing politics. Secondly, their

<sup>174</sup> This figure represents female members that are homemakers.

<sup>175</sup> In the above context, social problems are issues which affect people in society and are often deemed to be related to moral and socio-economic problems, such as: teenage pregnancy, alcoholism and drug use, racism and bullying, anti-social behaviour, prostitution and so on.

occupations are grounded within more technical or professionalised subjects, namely computing and science. This trend is harder to understand. When I started to give this greater thought, I remembered from my discussions that most HT members appear greatly fascinated by political concepts, like ideology. In fact, non-social science related students seemed unaware that HT appropriated these concepts from the Western political tradition, which is easily noticeable to those with a social science background.

### **6.3.2 The Role of Class**

There appears to be a disproportionate number of middle-class recruits in HT, but this is not reflective of wider socio-economic trends among the Muslim community in Britain. In fact, the Labour Force Survey (2004) found that British Muslims were most likely to be economically inactive and 31 per cent of Muslims in work had no formal qualifications (Labour Force Survey, 2004). These rather bleak figures are all the more surprising when compared to the socio-economic success of HT members. In order to understand this disparity, one must look more closely at the social position of HT members. In particular, why is the middle-class drawn towards HT? To start with, HT young people are the progeny of largely middle class immigrants, originating predominantly from South Asia. According to Parkin (1968), family plays a key role in positioning individuals at certain stages in the class structure. Moreover, HT members' families sought to ensure that their children gained considerable advantage through education. Their parents relied on their academic qualifications to gain upward mobility, which motivated them to impart to their offspring a similar ambition (see Figure 4.6). In contrast, most working class families assign greater value to employment (Lareau, 2003). Thus, the members inherited a strong middle class ethic that required the completion of higher education. This academic tradition provided members with greater options and access to better employment opportunities.

More significantly, two very different sets of value orientations exist among the middle and working classes (Cannadine, 1999). HT members have secured a stable economic lifestyle through their class position, enabling them to become more concerned with non-welfare related politics. In contrast, the working class place greater emphasis on material security. Thompson's (1988) study of working class Asians in Coventry indicated that children begin to contribute to family income at a very early age due to economic need. Therefore, the young Muslims who join HT tend to differ from other young Muslims. In fact, they seem to

have emerged from very different social conditions. The vast majority of young Muslims in Britain live under very poor social conditions, which is often a reflection of their social class and limited education. Conversely, most members of HT can be characterised as middle class. Despite these socio-economic differences, the experience of being socially marginalised is very real for both groups. So, why has HT been largely unsuccessful in recruiting working class Muslims? There are several possible explanations for this failure.

Firstly, it could be argued that a difference in 'post-materialist values' has skewed recruitment (Inglehart, 1977). This theory places individuals within a continuum of needs, with economic survival being a primary need while the pursuits of religious and political ideals are considered secondary in nature. Thus, as Lewis (1994) noted, South Asian Muslims constituted the underclass of the male working class.<sup>176</sup> The Labour Force Survey (2004), for instance, has estimated that South Asians have the highest rates of unemployment among any minority group. Therefore, it is fair to assume that the values placed on economic security are proportional to one's class position. Working class Muslims, for example, are more likely to suffer from economic deprivation. This has a tendency to influence their political activism, which is more geared towards material and economic gain (Parkin, 1968). On the contrary, HT members are not driven by economic need, nor do they seek exclusive rewards for their specific subgroup, unlike the working class. These two sets of value orientations provide both groups with divergent economic and cultural strategies, making it difficult for HT to recruit working class Muslims.

Secondly, one of the key traits of working class men is their dependence on local territory and their local community for a sense of identity (Thompson, 1978). It might seem to be too simple to say that the social position of working class Muslims limits their recruitment within HT, but the sociological data indicates a class divide. Let me explain this in a bit more detail. HT has failed to capture the support of the large Pakistani communities in the north of England. These dispersed communities are configured into introverted working class colonies. The Pakistani community is an amalgamation of different ethnic groupings, yet in the North of England Mirpuris form the majority. Mirpuris arrived as working class migrants, settling down in the industrialised North, and their children assumed the same patterns of stratification as their parents. This sub-ethnic group appears to be less responsive to HT, due to their inability to transcend their ethnic and class positions.

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<sup>176</sup> The underclass, as defined by Mann (1992, p. 2), describes a 'section of society that is seen to exist within and yet at the base of the working class'.

It is somewhat obvious that HT has failed to recruit across class boundaries, but I wanted to know what members thought about this issue. After surveying members' views, it was clear that no consensus existed. Most members denied a failure to recruit working class Muslims, but once the data was presented to them they were often unable to provide an explanation. Some members argued that Muslims are solely motivated by the pursuit of money, because they come from the most deprived regions of the world, at the expense of Islam. Another popular suggestion focused on the Asian working class tendency to follow the economic and cultural norms of their community, making it impossible for HT to break into these closed and isolated colonies. There is some truth to this argument, as Asian working class communities encourage their children to follow similar employment patterns, assigning greater emphasis to work. Consequently, those young Muslims inherit a working class tradition from their migrant parents, making them less likely to enter into higher education. Access to university gave middle class members the opportunity to interact with people of a similar social background; it was within this setting that radicalisation took place. As I have shown in previous chapters, new identities emerged during university. Such changes, therefore, clearly impacted the members' lives, leading to a new outlook, which was a significant transitional moment in their development. Although, I will address these points in more detail in the sections related to university and peer groups, it is important to note here that the members found belonging amongst their middle class peers. Characteristically, as the data shows, it is the middle classes who show greater inclination towards recruitment within HT.

In order to understand why the South Asian working classes show little propensity to join HT, I decided to talk to some working class activists in the East End of London.<sup>177</sup> The respondents, including some who consider themselves on the radical right of the Islamist spectrum, generally felt HT lack any appreciation, even downplaying, working class lives and backgrounds. As Trigg stated, 'HT don't exist here (East London) because this is a working class area – the struggles of our community involve poverty, housing, drugs and so on – HT members live sheltered lives away from real problems...so they (HT) can't relate'. Clearly, HT activists have emerged from different social worlds, making it difficult for them

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<sup>177</sup> Interviews held at East London Mosque, refer to Appendix V: Control group II, p. 259.

to identify with the struggles and histories of working class Muslims in Britain.<sup>178</sup> The inability to empathise with the economic realities of working class Muslims has meant low support for HT ideology, which was viewed as idealistic and abstract. As Imran explained, ‘their (HT) politics is about Khilafah...how is that going to solve the problems we (Muslims) are facing in Britain’. These issues reveal that class has shaped two distinct mindsets. The working class, for example, tend to have large families, which makes work an immediate priority. In contrast, the stability and resources of a middle class household provides greater support for education, intellectual reflection and other leisure pursuits.

#### 6.4 Ethnicity

Ethnicity provides a powerful source of attachment and solidarity, as it stems from a deep sense of ‘people-hood’ (Stack, 1986). More importantly, ethnicity offers an individual perspective, which differentiates members of the social group from non-members (Monroe and Kreidie, 1997). An ethnic group is a distinct group of people, racially or historically related, having a common culture that unites them (Oxford English Dictionary, 2002). In this respect, ethnicity is a key sociological attribute, especially within HT, because it provides a common source of identity. Not surprisingly, South Asians constitute the largest ethnic cluster, forming 98 per cent of the party body in the UK. Although this recruitment trend might appear disproportionate, it does correspond to the wider demographics of the Muslim community, since South Asians are the single largest ethnic group (Ansari, 2004).

Figure 4.7 Ethnicity of HT members

Ethnicity	Male	Female	Members	Average
	Members	Members		(%)
Pakistani	67	59	126	67.7
Bangladeshi	18	19	37	19.8
Indian	9	10	19	10.5
Arab	1	0	1	0.5
African	0	1	1	0.5
Other	0	2	2	1

<sup>178</sup> The Muslim working classes in Britain have endured a long history of fighting against exploitation and racism. This struggle goes back to Muslim seamen working in the docks during the Empire, proliferating with mass migration post World War Two (Ansari, 2004)

Total	95	91	186	100%
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While I was conducting the sample, several members insisted that, for them, ethnicity retains no significance, especially in terms of their identity. Yet, as shown in the above table, HT is ethnically homogenous. This does raise an important question: how does ethnicity affect a member's self-image and, perhaps more importantly, what role does it play in their lives? Before I can properly address this question, it is worth briefly reappraising our definition of ethnic identity. Tajfel (1981) frames ethnic identity within the confines of group membership. This assumes an individual draws their self-image – which encompasses thinking, feelings and behaviour – from their membership of a particular ethnic group (Phinney, 1996). Thus, individuals naturally seek to form a unified conception of themselves (Wetherell, 1987). For ethnic minorities the task of identity construction is far more complex, as they struggle to integrate diverse and conflicting social positions. Some members suggested that they had little control over their identity choices, particularly ethnicity, within the home environment. On the other hand, some members drew greater significance to skin colour and race, which they believed singled them out as different. The life histories of Abdul and Tariq, for example, showed how their ethnicity often emerged when they tried to reassert themselves in different social situations. When they felt victimised, for instance, they tried to renew their ethnic bounds. This would indicate that ethnicity is partly adopted by choice, as Banks (1996) asserts.

Beyond the restrictive measures of my survey, through ethnography, I was able to observe how ethnicity came to dominate members' self-perceptions in certain social environments. I witnessed members switching on these identities in family and religious gatherings, for example, in response to majority group expectation. In other words, members tend to modify their behaviour when faced with different ethnic identity options. For example, I observed some members who seemed to adopt and identify with the national culture, while others seemed to revert to their ethnic culture. In most cases, I witnessed a hybrid identity, which integrated facets of both cultures. Thus, it seemed apparent that members selected multiple identities, which allowed them to navigate through society. For example, members in their work environment clearly identified themselves as British – in terms of their language, dress and behaviour – while in community settings their ethnicity became more vocalised.

In spite of this, it was quite obvious that when I talked to members they seemed reluctant to accept that their ethnicity was a part of their overall identity make-up. Some social theorists think this is natural, since ethnic identity is endogenous, especially among second and third generation immigrants (Hutnik, 1985; Samad, 2004). This approach assumes that ethnicity develops from within, but after several discussions with members, I realised that a more complex picture of ethnicity was emerging. Firstly, it seemed their image of ethnicity had been distorted by the wider society. In particular, adverse experiences twisted the members' views of their surroundings, reinforcing a feeling of difference. I discovered that most members actively sought integration during their childhood, to the extent that the only visible difference would be skin colour. However, when this goal became disrupted, many members reverted to their cultural roots – in an effort to develop identification and meaning. Yet, most found it extremely difficult to derive meaning from their heritage, since they were also estranged from their culture. As one member aptly pointed out, 'I lived in the community [Pakistani], but I never felt part of it'. Secondly, within a family context, members did not develop an understanding of their ethnic identity. As one member commented, 'I never knew much about my culture growing up'. In general, a child's perception of ethnicity is usually stimulated within a family setting, which is dependent upon the connection a child has to their parents (Rumbaut, 1994). Rosenthal and Feldman (1992) discovered that parents' participation in the community openly influenced their children's ethnic self-identification. Thus, most members never visited their local mosque or had any involvement in an ethnic community, which left them feeling detached (see Fig 4.9).

In sum, though the vast majority of members preferred to identify themselves as Muslim, I would treat this self-imagining with a degree of caution. For a start, I have often seen members reasserting their ethnic identity in accordance with family custom. For instance, members tend to marry from within their own ethnic groupings. More importantly, it seems that ethnicity often emerges, and is identified with, during times of social difficulty and estrangement. For example, most members join HT at university, forming close ties with people of the same ethnicity and background (ref to section 4.7).

#### **6.4.1 Ethnicity across the Fraternity**

Before conducting the survey, I was fully aware that South Asians formed the vast majority of the fraternity, but offering an explanation for this phenomenon is very difficult. HT has



had little success in recruiting Somali, Arab, Turkish, Algerian and Moroccan Muslims. There are several possible reasons why HT has struggled to gain a foothold in these communities. Firstly, many of these are newly established communities, comprising working class immigrants. Somali Muslims, for example, have recently arrived in the UK as refugees and asylum seekers. They have sought low-paid manual work, as they have little education, which makes them less susceptible to encountering HT. Secondly, these communities are very introverted, having little contact with the values of the indigenous culture that occurs through the medium of education. These ethnic communities wish to retain a sense of their cultural heritage, maintaining a firm link to their language, religious beliefs and traditions.

On the other hand, the Yemeni community is one of the oldest migrant communities in Britain, so why are they not attracted to HT? I asked this question to some HT members, and I found their explanations quite insightful. One member suggested Yemeni's rarely formed ties with non-Arabs, especially at university, making it hard to develop a relationship with them. Similarly, another member argued Arabs in general have a tendency to look down upon non-Arabs, especially related to Islam because 'they believe Islam was revealed to them [Arabs]'. In spite of this, most of the members I spoke to were adamant that they rarely saw Arabs on university campuses, let alone Yemenis. There is some truth to this sentiment since the Yemeni community is very small, never exceeding fifteen thousand (1991; 2001, National Census). This is why Halliday (1994) describes them as the invisible Arabs. It is perhaps understandable that, given their extremely small population size, the Yemeni community is not widely represented within HT. Nonetheless, I do not think attraction to, or support for, HT can be reduced to just population size. For empirically, it has been shown that ethnicity seems to be an integral part of the overall scheme of radicalisation. In particular, as the above comments reveal, there are ethnic boundaries at work that inhibit relationships between Muslims of differing ethnicities. As Barth (1982) asserted, these boundaries dichotomise individuals into culturally separate groups. According to one member, segregation among ethnic groups is the norm at university. He suggested that students are drawn to their own ethnic heritage – of language, culture, food, music and so on.

Given the fiercely demarcated divisions between social worlds, it is not surprising to see a lack of representation among Yemeni Muslims within HT. As already mentioned, recruitment into HT tends to hinge upon ethnicity. In fact, the social base of membership for HT is drawn from South Asians who have very similar social backgrounds. In short, it is not

ethnicity itself that is of major concern so much as the issues it helps to shed light on. For example, working class South Asians are not widely represented, making class and family status equally important. Thus, a better profile of those involved with HT would suggest that they are middle class South Asians.

## 6.5 Language and Culture

In the previous chapters, my respondents seemed very disconnected from their cultural roots, making it crucial to explore this issue in the survey. The process of migration makes it very difficult to maintain a sense of cultural identity. In particular, many cultural traits and customs are often lost in order to gain acceptance in the new social setting. According to Waters (1995), language usually fades away, as it becomes harder to transfer over the generations. In Britain, most working class Asian families teach their language of origin to their offspring, because it is considered a primary means of transmitting culture from one generation to another (Geaves 1996, p. 68). Mosques often reinforce vernacular languages, creating a link between religion and ethnic origins. Thus, it is very common to find young people being taught Urdu or Bengali in local mosques. However, the sample data indicates that the vast majority of HT members failed to receive knowledge of their ethnic language (see Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8 Language Fluency

Language	Male	Female		Average
	Members	Members	Members	(%)
Urdu	3	3	6	3.2
Hindi	1	2	3	1.6
Bengali	5	7	12	6.6
Arabic	1	0	1	0.5
Other	0	1	1	0.5
Mixed <sup>179</sup>	23	20	43	23.1
None	62	58	120	64.5
Total	95	91	186	100

<sup>179</sup> Mixed refers to English and broken vernacular language

In general, the inability to speak one's native tongue is often perceived by the first generation as a symbolic rejection of their social group and culture (Kramsch and Widdowson, 1998). The sample indicated that 64.5 per cent of the members claimed no understanding or ability to speak a vernacular language. This was not surprising since I discovered, through my fieldwork observations and interviews, that members seemed completely disconnected from their ethnic culture. The loss of culture was somewhat inevitable, as the members were not taught about their culture during childhood. After I spoke to some of the parents of HT members, I gained a clearer picture. Some parents felt when they arrived in the United Kingdom they had no duty to maintain a foreign language and culture, because they came here with the goal to become British, which meant adopting the values of the dominant culture. In contrast, working class immigrants believed in the myth of return, and thus viewed their culture as a symbol of their social identity. The parents of members left their inner city dwellings in search for middle class status. Although, this departure was economically motivated, it did indicate a rejection of the ethnic community. Thus, most HT members grew up with little or no ties with, or experience of, ethnic communities.

It should be somewhat clearer from all this, then, that culture is viewed slightly differently by the middle classes. One possible reason for this steady erosion of cultural values among the members relates to family socialisation. In general, culture and language are formed at a relatively early age, through childhood exposure to parental influences (Kramsch and Widdowson, 1998). It is assumed that these processes shape an individual's cultural outlook throughout his or her life cycle. Among working class immigrants, for example, there was greater desire to re-establish their cultural identities in the receiving country. As Anwar (1976) notes, working class Pakistanis have used the institution of *Biradari* (kinship ties) to maintain traditional and cultural structures. Consequently, working class Muslims seem more successful in transmitting cultural values to their children. In comparison, my findings have shown that none of the HT members sampled were sent to Islamic schools or mosques to learn about religious or cultural matters during their upbringing. From this, it is noticeable that members' parents were less inclined towards transferring cultural mores to their offspring, which may have contributed to a steady erosion of cultural values among HT members.

## **6.6 Religiosity**

Trying to better understand HT members is a very challenging endeavour. One aspect of their lives that remains difficult to document is their religious and spiritual lives. The survey indicated that members' religious beliefs and practices are important components in their daily lives, providing them with guidance and tranquillity. For the purposes of my study, I needed to find out when members became involved, or committed, to their religion. Before I present my findings, it is imperative to first explain the meaning of 'religious commitment' (Roof 1979, p. 17). As Stark and Glock (1968) have pointed out, this can be very difficult because religiosity has a plurality of meanings. In other words, individuals perceive religion in different and conflicting ways. Despite this plurality, Stark and Glock (1968, p. 62) developed a five dimensional approach to understand religious commitment.<sup>180</sup> This classification principally relates to religious seekers, and not to wider sociological aspects of religion (Furseth and Repstad, 2006).

In the context of HT members, the belief dimension would entail 'Iman [belief] in Allah, his angels, his books, his messengers, the last day and al-Qada wal Qadar [divine fate]', which must be built on 'attasdiq al-jazim [decisive assent]'.<sup>181</sup> Second, the ritualistic dimension involves performing and adhering to a set of structured religious practices (e.g. five daily prayers). Thirdly, the experience dimension refers to subjective religious experiences and emotions. A member told me, for instance, after he prayed for the first time that he became overwhelmed by feelings of joy and tranquillity. Fourthly, the intellectual dimension involves acquiring knowledge about the fundamental tenets of the Islamic faith. For example, the basis of a member's actions is restricted to the Hukm Shariah (divine ruling) and therefore no action is performed until its ruling is known. Finally, the consequential dimension relates to the interaction with other people, and the effect religious beliefs and attitudes have on everyday life. Clearly, no comprehensive list can be crafted that correctly documents religiosity, as religious experiences are unique and complex. However, I have used these generic markers to identify a general pattern, which will help me analyze the commitment and development of members' religious beliefs and practices.

### **6.6.1 Tracking Religiosity among HT Members**

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<sup>180</sup> The five dimensions of religiosity include: the belief dimension, religious practice dimension, experience dimension, the intellectual dimension, and the consequential dimension.

<sup>181</sup> For a complete overview of HT beliefs, see Anon, Hizb ut-Tahrir (manifesto), pp. 30-37.

Trying to locate a period in time when members became religious is central to my investigation. I wanted to gather data on the importance of religion during childhood: whether the members were religious, and, if so, what role it played in their family and social lives.

Figure 4.9 Location of Religiosity

<b>Influence(s) for religiosity?</b>	<b>Male Members</b>	<b>Female Members</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Average (%)</b>
Parents	0	1	1	0.5
Siblings	17	11	28	15.1
School/College	6	3	9	4.8
University	72	76	148	79.6
Work	0	0	0	0
Private experience	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 4.10 Prayer

<b>How old were you when you learnt to pray?</b>	<b>Male Members</b>	<b>Female Members</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Average (%)</b>
Under 10	3	4	7	3.8
10 – 15	2	1	3	1.6
15 - 18	19	24	43	23.1
18 – 21	64	59	123	66.1
Above 21	7	3	10	5.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>100</b>

The overwhelming majority of members became involved with, and committed to, religious beliefs at university. What is greatly striking about the religious experiences of members is the lack of parental influence, which appears non-existent. If this is true, then how did a lack of religious background affect their conception of themselves? Firstly, it is relatively clear that parents played a marginal role in religious transference. For example, most parents failed to teach their children how to pray. However, trying to understand this phenomenon is

not easy, especially since research on working class Muslims has shown that family members are primary influencing agents for religious matters (Modood and Werbner, 1997; Kucukcan, 1999). Most theorists acknowledge young people's beliefs and practices are principally determined by parental religiosity (Hood et al., 2009). Moreover, beliefs and practices are usually transmitted through modelling of parents' behaviours (Cornwall, 1988). Therefore, if parents are not religious, then it is fair to assume that their children's religious values, or lack of, will resemble their parents' non-religious dispositions (Dudley and Dudley, 1986).

Focusing on the effects of non-religious parents is of course highly complex and not easy for a survey of this kind to elicit information on. So, I tried to ask several members questions about these matters. Most members suggested that during their upbringing they never gave much thought to religion, as their parents were very secular and Western orientated. As a result, religion was not considered important to their identity. Thus, it is important for my study to focus on the context or situation in which the members became religious. It is clear that the role of parents in the transmission of religious beliefs and practices was extremely limited. This means religious socialisation took place outside the family setting, in most cases at university through peer influence. In contrast, working class Muslims tend to acquire their religious values from family socialisation, usually in the early formative years (Erickson, 1992).<sup>182</sup> This allows them to categorise and identify themselves with the wider Muslim community. As McGown (1999, p.98) points out about working class Somali Muslims in London:

It [Islam] provided an oasis of tranquillity amid the dislocation of refugee straits and the turmoil of adjusting to a new culture, trying to learn a new language, and attempting to find jobs. What was valuable about it was the very ritual of stepping outside the daily struggle, five times over the course of the day, to concentrate on the prayers that never alter, in rhythmic language that linked them to a community of believers that was theirs no matter where in the world they were.

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<sup>182</sup> The religious socialisation of young working class Muslims gained media notoriety after a secret undercover report by Dispatches (Lessons in hate and violence in Muslim schools, 14/02/2011), which showed broad and systematic abuse of young Muslims. The exposure to abusive religious practices often creates feelings of religious disaffection amongst working class practitioners. Also, the religious socialisation received in British Mosques is embedded within the *Barelwi* and *Deobandi* traditions. Therefore, HT middle class recruits experience a different type of religious socialisation within HT. Importantly, HT provide middle-class recruits with a means to engage in intellectual reflection and exploration, which is closer to what they received during their middle-class socialisation.

The results of the survey strongly suggest that members’ religious growth and change occurred mainly at university.

**6.7 Social Triggers**

This section will look at the main ways in which experiences have, over the years, affected members’ expectations and understandings of other people. As Abdul pointed out, ‘I might have a British passport, but that means nothing when people judge you by your skin colour’. The problem this poses, which was noted in passing in previous chapters, is that if social triggers have an effect on identity formation, then can these be identified and do other HT members experience them? There are many social conditions and triggers that could account for changes in a member’s behaviour. For instance, family breakdown can have a deep psychological impact (Minuchin, 1974). Tracking all the possible triggers across a large population is extremely difficult, and thus I needed to isolate the most common triggers among the members. After several discussions, I noticed that members cited racism as a major childhood experience. Therefore, I quickly realised that despite minor differences in content and emphasis, racism could be singled out as a key social trigger. Although, racism was widely experienced, it mainly occurred during childhood (see Fig 4.11). In accord with the current social situation, it was not surprising to discover that religious discrimination, or Islamophobia, became a central issue for most members in adulthood. This would indicate that when members construct their identities, they are trying to connect their present experiences to what has gone before, rendering past experiences with meaning. Therefore, in this section, I want to focus on the effects of racial and religious prejudice.

Figure 4.11 Social Triggers during Childhood

<b>Types of Triggers (Childhood)</b>	<b>Male Members</b>	<b>Female Members</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Average (%)</b>
<b>Racism</b>				
Victim	93	68	161	86.6
Non-victim	2	23	25	13.4
<b>Islamophobia</b>				
Victim	0	3	3	1.6

Non-victim	95	88	183	98.4
Total	95	91	186	100

Figure 4.11 Social Triggers during Adulthood

Types of Triggers (Adulthood)	Male Members	Female Members	Members	Average (%)
<b>Racism</b>				
Victim	28	19	47	25.3
Non-victim	67	72	139	74.7
<b>Islamophobia</b>				
Victim	53	71	124	66.7
Non-victim	42	20	62	33.3
Total	95	91	186	100

### 6.7.1 The effects of Racism

It is extremely difficult to document the many ways in which racism impacted the lives of members, because it is a highly personal experience. In the course of my interviews, most members cited experiencing direct forms of racism – like verbal and physical abuse – principally during their upbringing. Other more subtle forms of racism were cited in adulthood, often in relation to employment opportunities and accessing social resources (housing, health care etc.). These experiences took place during the most formative periods of the members’ lives, which had a decisive effect on their development. As Sanchez-Hucles (1998) points out, young people who are exposed to adverse experiences, like racism, tend to carry the effects into adulthood. In chapter two, I realised victims of racism had a tendency to internalise the distorted images that racism promotes. Consequently, the impulse to join radical movements often grows from losing one’s ‘sense of social belonging’ (Parkin 1968, p. 4). The weakening of social ties is usually triggered by events that cannot be controlled, like racism. This inability to influence events can stimulate the growth of isolation from the wider society, making some more susceptible to HT. I am not alone in this view. One of the key issues to be drawn from the literature on mass movements was the recurrence of



alienation and the lack of integration as significant features for recruitment into such organisations (Hoffer, 1982; Parkin, 1968).

The empirical data collected from my own research has shown that most members felt victimised by racism. Consequently, this experience damaged their ties with wider society, leaving most of them feeling socially isolated. Parkin (1968, p. 11) describes such individuals as ‘socially unanchored and adrift in the world’. Therefore, it is assumed this isolation and lack of integration made these young Muslims more receptive to HT. Racial victimisation, for example, has a negative effect as it triggers a host of frustrations. HT deliberately uses this agitation to direct young Muslim anger towards the dominant culture while promoting its own subculture, which participants begin to identify with and gain acceptance from. This subculture is built on similar identities, drawing individuals to a single collective organisation that brings together like-minded people. This specific subculture formed when the larger culture failed to meet the social needs of a particular group of people, i.e. young middle class Asians. Thus, HT provides socially detached individuals access to new social ties and a meaningful way to gain self-identity. As Kornhauser (1959, p. 33) argues, the alienated are more inclined towards fringe movements, ‘because they provide occasions for expressing resentment against what is, as well as promises of a totally different world’.

### **6.7.2 The Effects of Islamophobia**

It is somewhat unusual to see a discrepancy between racial and religious discrimination. Although both variables have high representation, racial discrimination is seen as a more vivid form of discrimination, especially during childhood. On the other hand, Islamophobia is much harder to describe. Some social theorists, namely Poynting and Mason (2007, p. 61), argue Islamophobia is a form of ‘anti-Muslim racism’. In France, for example, a Muslim cemetery was desecrated. This act was described as Islamophobic. The Runnymede Trust (1997, p. 1) defined Islamophobia as acts of exclusion and discrimination based on an irrational ‘dislike of Muslims’.<sup>183</sup> For many HT members, this is undoubtedly a persuasive argument. For example, many members argue banning the *hijab* is an example of Islamophobia. So, it is not surprising to see such a high percentage of alleged Islamophobic incidents. Consequently, I would treat these claims with a degree of caution since HT

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<sup>183</sup> Islamophobia tends to be expressed through a physical dislike of Islamic practice and symbolise (e.g. headscarf, building of new Mosques and so on).

exploits a skewed definition of Islamophobia. I was somewhat surprised by the relatively low number of instances of Islamophobia cited during childhood. This might suggest that Islamophobia emerged more vividly in the wake of the 2001 terror attacks (Benn and Jawad, 2004). More significantly, Islamophobia cannot be singled out or attributed to HT radicalisation, because the vast majority of members only cited incidents post-radicalisation.

**6.8 Sources of Recruitment**

Recruitment into HT occurs through a multitude of sources: family and friendship networks, peer groups, universities and mosques are some of the most common examples. Although recruitment sources can be highly diverse, it still entails a process of locating, screening and selecting people to join HT. Despite widespread interest in HT, there is limited empirical data that explains why certain social spaces are more productive in recruitment. Since my research has two interconnected goals, namely to figure out the causes of radicalisation within HT from both an individual and a group perspective, I need to look at recruitment from this dual perspective as well.

Figure 4.12 Sources of Recruitment

<b>Location(s) of Recruitment</b>	<b>Male Members</b>	<b>Female Members</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Average (%)</b>
University	81	65	146	78.5
College	5	4	9	4.9
School	0	0	0	0
Mosque	0	0	0	0
Work	1	0	1	0.5
Community (clubs/centres)	2	0	2	1
Home (family relations)	6	22	28	15.1
Other	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>100</b>

It is clear that one unchangeable characteristic of HT success has been its ability to mobilise and recruit students behind its radical mission, a fact often singled out by many social commentators (Taji-Farouki, 1996). During the early 1990s, the party gained notoriety for

attracting young Muslims to its cause, which was something of a new phenomenon on university campuses. Given this picture of youth activism, I need to try and identify why a sub-section of the Muslim student population became inclined to HT. One of the most obvious explanations for the emergence of HT radicalism among a homogenous group of Muslim students is social isolation. Recent studies have shown that once in higher education, ethnic minorities tend to find themselves more alienated and excluded (University of Leeds, 1992). Several case studies, for instance, in the previous chapter, showed that alienation and exposure to unsettling social environments at university made the respondents more susceptible to form peer friendships with HT activists. Thus, it is important to ask, who participates in these peer groups and why?

### **6.8.1 University Peer Group and Deviant Subculture Formation**

To begin, it is worth first trying to tackle one key question: Why are middle class Asian students more inclined to join HT at university? Some social theorists attribute deviant group formation to an absence of social alternatives. As Lemert (1967, p.336) suggested, these groups usually form 'because there is nothing else to do'. Although this may be the case for many working class gangs, it is harder to apply this reasoning to HT. This is because, as the data has shown, recruitment mainly takes place within a university setting. Most universities provide open access to countless social activities and clubs, giving students an opportunity to find a place for themselves. Yet, as I learned from my interviews and case studies, in the previous chapters, most members failed to adjust to the social realities of university life. It was quite apparent members were unable to come to terms with feeling socially isolated. Thus, soon after arriving at university, most members began to seek out peers that matched their social backgrounds – young middle class Asians. They started spending much of their spare time with the peer group, constituting a major outlet for social activity.

There is, then, a fairly strong argument to suggest joining HT occurs in part as a psychological response to loneliness and social alienation. As a result, the participant's desire for companionship allowed HT peers to socialise them into their deviant subculture (Ferracuti and Wolfgang, 1982). Members cannot be thought of as being unwilling participants within HT subculture, because psychological need appears to be a key social trigger. I was, therefore, greatly interested to discover the emerging features of HT's subculture. In its simplest form, subculture is the creation of a separate social space in which

a group of individuals establish their own system of values (Ferracuti and Wolfgang, 1982). HT subculture formed when the larger culture fell short in meeting the needs of some young middle class Asians. In addition, this homogenous group failed to develop a proper connection with their own communities. They were unable to expressively relate themselves to their families, leading to their withdrawal from society. As a result of this lack of social integration, they became highly susceptible to the radical values of HT, which differed strongly from the prevailing set of social and political norms. As Brake (1985, p. 10) explains, subcultures are ‘meaning systems, modes of expression or life styles developed by groups’ in order to distinguish themselves from the population at large.

In the case of HT, these meaning systems are believed to emerge through resistance, providing structured solutions to the perceived contradictions rising from the wider societal context. In this respect, a subculture inevitably involves membership of a class culture, and the subculture may be an extension of, or in opposition to, the class culture. Juvenile gangs, for instance, provide working class youths with an alternative source of self-esteem (Cohen, 1980). Miller (1958) discovered the values of youth subculture merely reiterated, in a distorted fashion, the focal concerns of the adult working class population.

Trying to understand why middle class Asians are the most receptive demographic to HT’s radical message is very tricky. To start, I need to locate the features of HT middle class radicalism that serve to distinguish it from the radicalism of the working class. Many social theorists argue that working class radicalism is firmly based upon their perception of, and place within, the social structure (Parkin, 1968). In other words, it is assumed the hub of working class activism is orientated around economic and material change, while middle class radicalism is believed to be influenced by more moralistic features. After speaking to several working class Muslims, non-HT affiliated, I was able to gain a better picture of the class divide. One activist asserted that HT is too idealistic, as he explained: ‘the Muslim community is the most deprived, we have huge unemployment and there is a big drug problem with the youth...HT doesn’t address these issues’. Most working class Muslim activists engage in interest-group politics – such as lobbying for equal rights, better working conditions and equal employment opportunities – that is fundamentally designed to provide benefits to the working classes. By contrast to this, HT, with its middle class roots, is not orientated to achieve material gain for its members. They are more typically concerned with issues of an ideological or spiritual nature, which offers no particular benefit to those

involved. As one member insisted, 'we [HT] are doing Allah's [God's] work'. Abdul (HT, member) described the feelings of performing actions for HT as a 'spiritual buzz'.

During my interview with Omar Bakri, former leader of the UK branch, I made it a point to ask him why so many young middle class Asians were attracted to HT. He attributes this phenomenon to a 'clash between cultures and values' (Omar Bakri, Interview 26/03/2004). In some respect, this is true since a subculture tends to develop in response to the prevailing culture, acting in opposition, as it seeks to differentiate itself from the mainstream. In this context, the term culture is perceived as a separate entity within the larger society, and one with which the larger society must contend (Cote, 1996). Theorists who purport subcultures form through resistance often state that members are always striving against dominant classes and the older generations. They seek to find ways to disrupt the social position of the dominant actors, so as to create spaces for themselves. In this respect, HT members are counterpoised against the first generation, opposing their culture, language and ideals. This loathing was directed towards the first generation for importing sectarian and ethnic characteristics from their previous domiciles. In contrast, working class young people tend to have closer interaction with their parents, demonstrating less intent on being different (Cohen, 1980). In comparison, middle-class young people display greater tendencies to associate with a subculture group so as to reinforce their independence. These young people are also given more disposable income with which they form their subcultures around themselves, engaging in a greater diversity of pursuits.

The sociological data collected from HT has found that the membership is disproportionately represented. This unbalanced stratification allowed HT members to group together in accordance with their social status, facilitating a subculture that was determined by class, ethnicity and age. At university, for example, most members experienced social isolation. This, Bakri believes, facilitated the rise of an 'identity crisis', pushing them to interact with people similar to them (Omar Bakri, Interview 26/03/2004).

Brake (1985) points out youth subculture are formed from more than one particular identity, moving from different types and even mixing identities. Exposure to HT subculture, initially through peer groups, opened up a new social world, comprised of Muslims who emerged from similar family, class and ethnic backgrounds. HT offered disaffected middle class Asians a homogenous social space to gain acceptance and belonging. The rise of an

oppositional subculture among the Muslim middle class, inspired by common experiences, became personified by the life-cycle identity change. In this respect, age played a central factor, because the types of individuals who became radicalised within HT were those who were young, well-educated and had been raised in a middle class household. Many disaffected middle class Asian youths found comfort and belonging within HT's subculture because it gave them a sense of purpose. This middle class radicalism offered its participants access to identity options outside of the constrained family and community structures.

## **6.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have searched for common characteristics and trends in HT member behaviour, in order to better understand why some young Muslims join the group. However, many concepts that are relevant to this question cannot be measured readily by single variables. In fact, I have discovered that the relationships between members and their environments are 'mutually shaping' (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 22). In other words, I had to look at social interactions across connected systems - namely family, university and peer friendships. Increased religiosity, for example, did not take place in a family setting, rather in most cases it originated from peer interactions at university. Peer group relations are a very important, and recurring, feature of the data collected. This social space allowed members to find solidarity with other Asian students who emerged from similar experiences and social backgrounds. Every HT member is marked by the stages of social life, each providing a set of experiences that get internalised into psychological expectations. Firstly, during early socialisation, it was observed that most members endured some form of racial discrimination. These negative encounters reflect not only the development of frustrations but also the influence of shared disaffection and anger towards the larger culture. This enabled HT to bombard the novice with ideas about how to deal with these perceived problems, providing a sense of belonging.

Let me return to the main themes of the chapter to summarise what my analysis has revealed about the common characteristics of a typical HT member in Britain. Firstly, the most instantly recognisable trait of HT radicalism is its success in mobilising young people. Thus, it was not surprising to find that most members were recruited at a similar age. Secondly, recruitment generally takes place within the same social space, namely university campuses. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, I discovered that HT membership is firmly rooted

within the ranks of the educated middle classes. There are deep cultural and socio-political divisions amongst the working and middle classes within the Muslim community, to such an extent that lifestyle and orientation has created two very different sub-groups. Consequently, HT has struggled to gain support among the fairly large and heterogeneous working class population, forcing it to narrow its recruitment pool to middle class students. Fourthly, early childhood experiences left members feeling isolated and disconnected, which in most cases created a predilection to become involved with HT, and that these experiences were rooted in racial discrimination. Some theorists argue that exposure to social instability during one's childhood can dramatically increase the chances of exhibiting deviant behaviour in adulthood (Chansky, 2001; Howe, 2010). Therefore, HT members exist within a small homogenous group, which may be narrowed down and defined as young middle class Asians.

## **Chapter Seven:**

### **Is HT Radicalism a Conveyor Belt for Terrorism?**

The call to proscribe HT has received significant attention in the aftermath of the 7 July London bombings. The British media has portrayed the group as dangerous and uncompromising, making it worthy of proscription. David Cameron, the leader of the Conservative Party, added his voice to the growing body demanding to ban HT, prompting greater scrutiny of its subversive activities and extremist ideology (*BBC*, 4/7/2007). Despite this wave of condemnation, HT remains a legal organisation. More significantly, it has been described in a leaked home office report as a ‘radical, but to date non-violent Islamist group’ (*The Guardian*, 22/07/2005). If this assessment is accurate, then the study of violence in HT requires an approach that focuses on the relationship between radical speech and physical violence. Trying to equate HT with radical violence is extremely problematic. This is because radicalisation is often thought consequential for violence, or at least a natural precursor of violence. The outcome, however, is not necessarily towards more violence. In fact, religious initiatives may either support or help undermine violence, and there is no clear-cut cause and effect to be seen. During my interview with Omar Bakri, he emphatically declared that he was a force for good in British society, as he advocated non-violent activism, which helped young Muslims channel their frustrations away from violence. Although one might question such an assertion, it is crucial to reiterate how HT evolved into one of the most dominant radical youth movements, and whether it has stimulated violence in Britain.

#### **7.1 Defining Violence and Radical Speech**

In the course of my research, I had countless discussions with HT members regarding the nature of its alleged non-violent ideology. The prevailing opinion within the fraternity indicates acts of physical violence are non-existent. HT violence, if in fact such a thing truly exists, cannot be understood independently from the concept of radical speech. In other words, a more fruitful debate would be to understand the synthesis between radical speech and violence. In order to understand the relationship between these two concepts, I must first try to define each term. Although, several attempts have been made to define violence, it still remains a highly ambiguous and divisive term. Steger (2003, p. 12), for example, believes that violence has countless meanings: including ‘to force, to injure and to violate’.



Honderich (2003, p. 91) narrows his definition of violence to the ‘use of physical force’ that violates and destroys people or things. Interestingly, both accounts make reference to violence as an act that violates. However, I would caution against restricting a definition of violence to physical force, because a violation can occur without physical force.

Relating violence to ‘extreme speech’<sup>184</sup> is an exceedingly difficult exercise, since it raises the question of what type of speech should be made unlawful. From a legal standpoint, speech is rarely considered a crime, unless an overt act is committed (Weinstein and Hare, 2010). In Britain, ‘public order’ proclamations are used to counteract hate speech in public, but these laws have created a great deal of uncertainty because they are ‘unworkable in practice’ (Hare and Weinstein 2010, p. 60). As Hare and Weinstein (2010, p. 60) point out, British courts struggle to differentiate between words that ‘insult’ from those that ‘offend, shock or disturb’. Traditionally, the United States requires clear and present danger of an overt act following a speech, before a prosecution can be sought (McWhirter, 1994). In other words, a clear line of distinction is usually made between speech and actions. However, an individual who, by speech, provokes an action is then equally culpable with the individual who perpetrates it (McWhirter, 1994). More recently, in Sweden a religious minister was prosecuted for a speech he gave to his congregation in which he referred to homosexuality as a perversion. He had violated Sweden’s Anti-Hate statute, an act that gives broad protection to individuals and groups from ‘verbal violence’ (The *Local* (29/11/2005)).

In the UK such a law does not exist, the introduction of anti-terror laws has ignited debate about acceptable speech. In particular, in the aftermath of 7/7, there was a concerted effort to criminalise speech under the Terrorism Act 2006 (Malik 2010, p. 96). This Act gave extensive powers to detain and charge individuals who glorify acts of terror and incite others to carry out such attacks. Tony Blair, the former Prime Minister, insisted the law was passed to take stronger measures against those who ‘don’t just directly engage in terrorism but indirectly incite it’ (The *Guardian*, 10/11/2005). The glorification laws were brought into immediate effect in the aftermath of the London terror attacks to clamp down on radical speech. However, the newly introduced measures were widely condemned for their ambiguity. Dominic Grieve, the Conservative legal affairs spokesman, pointed out that the laws would not be properly understood by juries when prosecutions were eventually brought (House of Commons research paper, 16/06/2005). His concerns were realised in the trial of

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<sup>184</sup> As Malik (2010, pp. 96-98) suggests, defining speech as extremist can be a difficult task, but if one adopts liberal democracy as the yardstick, then a criteria can be formulated.

the first person to be prosecuted under the act, Samina Malik, the self-dubbed lyrical terrorist (The *Guardian*, 06/12/2007). The jury struggled to understand what crime they were prosecuting, i.e. her poetry or downloading terrorist material.

Despite the many shortcomings of the terrorism legislation, it does offer legal insight into the relationship between radical speech and violence. The courts have upheld convictions even for remote tendencies to violence as proper grounds for punishing mere speech. Omar Brooks, a member of Al-Ghurabaa, and several others were prosecuted for speeches they gave at Regents Park Mosque in which they allegedly incited young followers to commit acts of violence (BBC, 17/04/2008). The reformatted statutes identify acts not deemed punishable a decade ago as worthy of prosecution today, mere utterances of beliefs and even membership in groups holding radical opinions are potential for incarceration. It may be argued that any such discussion of where to draw the line for criminalisation of radical speech is not relevant to my research, since no cases directly involving violence have been brought against any UK HT member. Despite this truth, the proscription of HT is still under review by the Home Office, making it essential to track its activism in the light of their willingness to advocate violence against others.

## **7.2 Campus Wars**

By the start of the 1990s, HT had shifted its emphasis to public activism, with the intent to bring about social and political change. Although freedom of speech allows individuals to oppose the state, it could be argued that HT's aim to overthrow the government cannot be accomplished without force. However, as one member pointed out:

Our goal is not to establish an Islamic State in Britain...it was never our intention to do so. The party is being deliberately targeted and victimised for policies that were not sanctioned by the central leadership, the misunderstandings of former members (Omar Bakri) should not be used to judge the party...to do so would be a deliberate attempt to distort our true aims.

This may be the case of HT today, but I am trying to track the development of HT. According to Omar Bakri, the type of activism enacted by the group during the 1990s was designed to subvert the system. More interestingly, the above member does not deny this fact. Instead he tries to equate their radical past to Omar Bakri, singling him out as the

person responsible for their extremist and combative tendencies. These tendencies towards confrontation earned HT a reputation for being overaggressive and confrontational, particularly when dealing with Muslim and non-Muslim students, which set it on a collision course with university authorities. HT entered university campuses during the placid period of the 1980s, allowing Farid and Bakri to lay the interior platform for activism. Farid Kassim, when asked about the rapid success of HT at universities, candidly proclaimed:

‘I think the reason why Islam is so attractive and stimulated so much debate and discussion is precisely that it is an ideology. And it’s an ideology that is coming to a society that is devoid of intellectual debate and discussion, a society not interested in intellectual issues’ (Public Eye BBC 2, 25/07/1995).

This zealous declaration by Kassim stands as confident testimony to the ascendance of HT activism. They surfaced rapidly as a new phenomenon pioneering Islam in the form of intellectual ideas that became the main focal point of discussion across university campuses.

HT gained media notoriety during the 1990s for their overt activity in more than fifty universities across the country. The rise to national prominence, in part, was achieved due to their sheer determination to take full control over university campuses, ‘taking over from the beleaguered and defeated socialists’ (Kassim, 26/05/2004). The growing rise of HT was closely monitored by the National Union of Students (NUS) for some years, especially as party members infiltrated university clubs and societies, disseminating political and intellectual ideals that were deemed to be anti-Semitic and homophobic. As a result, the NUS sanctioned a generic ban that prevented HT from assembling any kind of organised activity on university campuses. Kassim, in the wake of the NUS proclamation, emphasised his complete indignation at their unjust position, when he stated: ‘...there is an intellectual storm taking place...it’s time for the NUS to acknowledge that and try to construct an appropriate intellectual response to that, instead of banning and censorship’ (*Public Eye* BBC 2, 25/07/1995). However, the imposed sanctions forced HT to operate clandestinely under the semblance of duplicate societies. The process of operating under the guise of these surreptitious clubs allowed the party to manoeuvre around broad restrictions, despite campus-wide bans for alleged anti-Semitic rhetoric.

### **7.2.1 Promoting Anti-Semitism on Campus**

No sooner had HT emerged than speculation began about its subversive campus activism. From a British Muslim perspective, student radicalism was somewhat unprecedented. Although HT advocated a non-violent approach, it propagated an extremely radical ideology. In particular, outrage rapidly grew against HT for creating an upsurge of hostility towards Jewish students. The question I wish to pose here is whether HT's radical message promoted violence against Jewish students. It is important to emphasize that radical speech and violence are not synonymous. Clearly, not all radical speech promotes violence. For instance, I have surveyed most of HT campus activism and, despite the hysteria; very few violent incidents could be associated to HT directly. In fact, HT activism mainly involved organising public events and debates, most of which passed without incident. However, there were several talks convened by HT under the guise of discreet clubs that are worthy of discussion. To start, a meeting arranged by the Culture Society, at King's College, had to be dispersed by the police, in order to escort Jewish students away from a meeting of the Jewish Society that was taking place in a nearby room.

This incident was eclipsed by the unfolding problems at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), where the 1924 Committee was operating as a front for HT members. The 1924 committee held a talk, entitled: 'Israel, the Apartheid State'. Faisal Muhammad, a British born Malaysian, was an active member of HT and was the chairman for the meeting. Police were again called in to escort the opposing factions away from the college after the talk. Unsurprisingly, the 1924 committee was found guilty of its association to HT. On 31 October, SOAS issued a statement saying, 'the 1924 Committee had by its action shown itself to be closely aligned to an Islamic fundamentalist group, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir' (*The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 04/11/1994). As a result, SOAS banned speakers representing the views of HT from speaking at future meetings of the 1924 Committee. HT members, aggrieved at the decision, felt victimised by the college authorities, and thus quickly adopted a proactive response that sought to expose the fallacy of this incident. The members launched a poster campaign that read:

SOAS bans Islam. SOAS has finally exposed its long-standing, hidden agenda of deep hatred for Islam by banning speakers invited who present Islam as an ideological alternative. The West and universities such as SOAS espouse ideas such as freedom of speech, but these become redundant when Muslims want to express their views. (*The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 04/11/1994)

The proceeding clampdown on HT continued throughout London campuses, and it was not restricted to meetings. Numerous party leaflets and flyers were generating condemnation for promoting anti-Semitic extremism. In particular, a leaflet advertising a meeting at which Farid spoke was entitled: ‘Peace with Israel – a crime against Islam’. Outrage was directed at an inflammatory quote in the leaflet, which read: ‘The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them, until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree, and a stone or a tree would say: Muslim, or the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him’. Even though this provocative extract was a direct reference to a Hadith, it did not safeguard the group from criticism.<sup>185</sup> Kassim definitely rejected these claims, when he stated: ‘The vast majority of our leaflets are political and intellectual, that’s the main focus of our activity...if we put a gun on a poster then we’re immediately called extremists, but Sinn Féin for example, at the University of North London have been doing it for some time’ (*Public Eye*, BBC 2).

However, this did not prevent the suspension of the Islamic Society of Brunel University for three months after holding a meeting judged to be illegal by the university authorities. A debate entitled, ‘*Hands off Muslim Land or Jihad*’, had resulted in the cancellation of the event, as the university authorities believed it did not promote respect and tolerance for opposing views. Firdaus Miah, a British born Bangladeshi, was the president of the society and a member of HT. As a result of the incident, Firdaus Miah was subjected to disciplinary action for alleged activities that were deemed to be in breach of the university’s disciplinary code. Universities became the central battleground between Jewish students and HT. It was necessary for HT to contest the continuing claims of their alleged anti-Semitism. The party felt a deliberate campaign of misinformation was being spearheaded by vociferous elements, designed to prevent debate about the legality of Israel. HT elaborated their statement of innocence in a six-point declaration that defined the position of HT. It stated:

1. Jews are to be accorded the protected status of *dhimmi* provided that the trust placed in them is not betrayed.
2. The Muslims of Palestine are entitled to fight in self-defence of their lands which are under occupation. This disposition does not extend outside of Muslim lands and thus does not include any ‘battlefield’ in Britain.

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<sup>185</sup> Hadith are sayings of the Prophet Mohammed.

3. Muslims living in non-Muslim countries are to live according to the commands of God and to refrain from harming, betraying or cheating non-Muslims. They are to seek to invite non-Muslims to embrace Islam.
4. The killing of innocent people, including hijacking aeroplanes, is forbidden in Islam.
5. The Qur'anic verses referring to adultery, fornication, stealing and homosexuality are clear but the punishments prescribed apply only to an Islamic State.
6. There is a concerted effort by the media to limit the effectiveness of Islamic proclamation on university campuses.  
(Extracted from *Daily Awaz*, 07/03/1994)

The situation did not change, even though HT published their opinions, which sought to clarify the misunderstandings. However, articles in the national press continued to vilify HT activity at universities in an attempt to prevent the party expansion. The *Daily Mirror* described HT as a 'fanatical group of Muslim extremists... stirring up hatred in Britain against Jews' (The *Daily Mirror*, 04/03/1994). A similar article to those noted appeared in *The Observer*, under the provocative headline: 'Hitler's Heirs Incite Islamic Students' (*The Observer*, 13/03/1994).

As a result of the frenzied assault on HT by the national press, the NUS, at their annual conference in Blackpool, singled HT out for its alleged anti-Semitic and racist pronouncements. Kassim dismissed these allegations, as he expressed his outrage at the NUS, claiming:

The great crime is that the National Union of Students has been taken over by people that are involved in a conspiracy, if you will, an anti-Islam conspiracy to mute the voices of Muslim students at university campuses... We are well aware that the NUS is controlled by forces that have their own hidden political agenda, and Islam is a convenient way in which they can enact their agenda. (*Public Eye*, BBC 2)

This emotional statement illustrated the frustration Kassim and party officials felt at the imbalance of the NUS rules and regulations that were intended to limit HT activity. Therefore, HT utilised this attack to condemn the concept of free speech as a 'Western

myth'. It became evident that anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism were being quantified as the same thing, and as a result Muslim students who protested against Zionism and the activities of the State of Israel were branded as anti-Semitic and thus condemned by the policies of the NUS (Kassim, 26/05/2004). The decision to publicly condemn HT was seen as a calculated act of provocation. Kassim responded by saying, 'It doesn't deter us because we believe all the prophets were vilified by their own people...We believe intellectual thought changes human beings and we must discuss things in order to change society' (*Public Eye*, BBC 2). This rather polemical rant was overshadowed by an address made by Kassim in which he said, 'it will be better for the Jews to become Muslims if they want to live in peace in the land of Muslims' (*The Guardian*, 07/02/1994). Inevitably, this provoked many sections of the Jewish population into action, and was widely condemned for its anti-Semitic rhetoric.

I have presented a small selection of examples of HT anti-Semitic rhetoric and activity. On the basis of available evidence it is difficult to equate HT activism with increased violence towards Jewish students. Although the rhetoric of HT is unpalatable to most, it does not warrant proscribing. Many contemporary theorists and law makers have struggled to correctly identify radical speech in terms of violence, and this makes it problematic when studying HT. There are at least two distinct ways of conceptualizing HT's radical speech related to Jews. Firstly, on a personal level, no case has to date been presented against any HT member concerning speeches deemed unlawful. Despite objections to the anti-Semitic speeches and leaflets attributed to HT, no legal action has been taken. However, with the widening of terror laws, its inflammatory material if replicated today would surely warrant greater sanction. Secondly, the organisation, as I will show in latter sections, has undergone significant change. In particular, its speech towards Jews has been toned down, especially after the departure of Omar Bakri. According to Home Office documents, released to the party under the Freedom of Information Act, 'HT's activities centre on intellectual reasoning, logical arguments and political lobbying' (HT Britain website, 01/06/2005). With respect to anti-Semitic speech, HT denied stirring up hostility towards British Jews. In fact, they believe a deliberate campaign of misinformation was waged against them in an attempt to subvert the group from propagating the Islamic ruling about the state of Israel (*The Daily Awaz*, 07/03/1994). Even though this may be partially correct, HT's attempts to undermine the legitimacy of the Jewish state created a combative environment in which many Jewish students felt intimidated.

From a historical perspective, university authorities were totally unprepared to deal with the rise of HT on university campuses. As a result, the NUS set up a twenty-four-hour hotline for students to ring in with fears of intimidation on university campuses because of continued HT activity. HT was particularly identified as a source of concern by the NUS president, as he attested: 'It is the single biggest extremist threat in the UK at the moment' (*The Times*, 31/10/1995). The results of calls in 1995 were published in an NUS report entitled 'Campuswatch'. This revealed that threats and harassment were twice more likely to be blamed on extreme Islamic groups than on ultra-right-wing organisations (*The Times*, 31/10/1995). Furthermore, 'there were more than 100 reports of distribution of offensive material by Islamic extremists, primarily Hizb ut-Tahrir, and 50 reports of offensive meetings, 47 threats of violence and 31 acts of physical intimidation or harassment' (*The Guardian*, 31/11/1995). In all, there were 271 complaints about Islamic extremists as opposed to ninety-one against the British National Party (BNP). The report boldly proclaimed that freedom of speech, though fundamental to campus life, did 'not include the right to make propaganda which incites violence' (*The Times Higher Education*, 16/08/1996). The question that needs to be posed here is did HT speeches intimidate, or incite violence against, Jewish students? From a legal perspective, intimidation and violence can be classified differently, as intimidation does not necessarily entail the use of physical force (Lumpkin, 1999). Verbal intimidation, for example, is often used without inflicting physical injury. More significantly, intimidation is a subjective act (Shields, 1999). Radical HT speeches that reject the legitimacy of Israel, for example, need to be seen from two sides. HT activists believe equating violence to their speeches ignores the intellectual nature of their talks and message. In contrast, Jewish students perceive such speeches as intimidating, as they contribute to a feeling of fear. Thus, there is no evidence to suggest that radical speeches attributed to HT resulted in acts of violence. After a relatively lengthy search, I was able to catalogue most of the campus speeches given by HT related to Jewish themes. Although, some of the speeches had anti-Semitic undertones, no violence could be attributed in the aftermath of such events to HT members. Even the charge of anti-Semitism is not definitively provable. Apart from a few leaflets, no radical speech was directly equated to anti-Semitism.

### **7.2.2 Promoting Militancy**



During the 1990s, it became common to describe HT campus activism as militant. BBC 2, for example, broadcasted a documentary about HT entitled: 'Islam's Militant Tendency'. Although militancy is often used to depict violent activism, it can refer to a person who engages in non-violent confrontation. In order to understand the relationship between HT radical speech and violence, I need to focus on more overt instances of violence attributed to HT. An article in *The Guardian*, for example, alleged HT had written an inflammatory leaflet sanctioning violent terrorism: 'Do something to prove that on your shoulders there stands a head not a piece of cheese. Throw a stone, trigger a bomb, plant a mine, hijack a plane, and do not ask how' (*The Guardian*, 07/02/1994). Kassim mentioned his absolute disgust at such articles, as purporting false allegations from questionable sources; he strongly condemned the media for its partial coverage, which was unwilling to engage HT intellectually. The alleged HT leaflet was distributed outside Regents Park Mosque. More significantly, the printed allegations were not accredited to any published HT articles, diminishing the integrity of the accusations.

HT militancy was placed under greater scrutiny after the fatal stabbing of Tundi Obanubi, an African student at Newham College. It was alleged that Bakri's speech, given days earlier, had stirred up militancy among the largely Muslim student population. Ed Hussain (2007) felt the incident was a direct result of HT infiltration into the college. Relating HT activism to this intentional act of violence is appealing to some, but there appears to be an underlying problem with any attempt to equate violence to an HT radical speech. Firstly, as Bakri suggested, the culprit responsible for this unlawful killing had no affiliation to HT. 'I propagate Islam peacefully...so it is untrue. My members cannot do such a thing' (Bakri, interview). Indeed, Saeed Nur, the man charged with the murder, had a longstanding relationship with Jihadist organisations (*Q News*, 24/03/1995). His radicalisation into militancy had taken place over several years, and thus his act cannot be attributed to HT speech. Secondly, as mentioned Omar Bakri strongly denied these allegations, he even demanded that HT members cooperate with the authorities. As he said: 'I have asked my people to help the police to find the killers because this was pure murder. In Islam this behaviour is really disgraceful' (*Q News*, 10/03/95).

This incident once again underscores the need to work out the connection between violence and radical speech. The media has condemned HT for radicalizing Muslim youth, forcing the authorities to protect young people from radical influences. The key question that needs to

be considered here is how much influence does a speech have on an individual? The tragic death of Tundi Obanubi has been used to charge HT with culpability for actions committed by Saeed Nur (Hussain, 2007). Does this constitute a case for incited violence that HT is responsible for? In fact, it is usual for criminal courts to accept diminished responsibility for imitative violence caused by radical speech, because it is nearly impossible to establish in a court of law the existence of a provable link between speech and violence. Obviously, if the speech demands violence against a stated party, then a credible link can be drawn. Indeed, no HT member has been charged with inciting violence. Let us look at another example, at West Thames College.

HT activity was not restricted to university campuses, as a race riot occurred at the West Thames Further Education College in Isleworth, which saw mass fighting between Sikh and Muslim students. The disturbances erupted after a Muslim student was attacked by a group of Sikh men. The following day saw around one hundred HT affiliates gather at the college to hold a demonstration. However, the police were warned of a pending disturbance, and fighting broke out between the respective sides, leading to twenty arrests. HT mobilised a further hundred affiliates to hold a protest outside Chiswick police station where some of the demonstrators were being held. Fifteen of the young HT affiliates who were arrested were brought before magistrates in Feltham on 10 January 1995 and charged with public order offences. They were remanded on bail until 24 January. However, the charges against the men were formally dropped due to a lack of evidence.

This incident is actually very complex. HT had infiltrated the college, over a sustained period, taking over the Islamic society. This gave them a strong presence on campus. It was alleged HT had stimulated a renewed sense of religious association among Muslim students. This greatly undermined existing identity affiliations. For example, a sustained campaign was launched against 'Asianism'. Before HT gained access to college grounds, most Asian students coexisted together. Indeed, Asian students shared similar values, which united them culturally. However, religious violence was inevitable. HT instigated the revival of religious identities across the campus, which in effect led other religious groups to renew their identities. Thus, the rise of Sikh and Hindu fundamentalism were firmly rooted in reactionary trends against the emergence of radical Islam, as pioneered by HT. Clearly, HT activism increased the appeal of religion among Muslim students, but is this sufficient ground to claim they were responsible for a full-scale riot at West Thames College? In short,

it is difficult to equate this episode to HT, because they did not instigate the out break of violence. The root of the riot was attributed to a group of Sikh men who attacked a Muslim student.

### **7.3 Departure of Omar Bakri (1996): *Decline in HT radicalism?***

The mid-90s were a golden period in which HT grew beyond any predictable parameters. They were dubbed ‘Europe’s fastest-growing Muslim group’ by the national press (*The Observer*, 13/08/1995). This popularity allowed HT to enjoy a period of unrivalled success in the recruitment of young Muslims. According to Bakri (Ibid., 02/06/2004), the group was attracting a growing following among students across the country. This golden era came to a resounding end, however, after the departure of Omar Bakri. Very little is known about the rapid decline HT underwent during this rocky period. In particular, I was greatly surprised by the negative standpoint most HT members have towards Bakri. One member suggested he was responsible for infusing HT with militancy and extremist rhetoric. This raises a variety of very important questions: Did Bakri influence HT’s militant disposition? If so, how did he contribute to it? What effect did his departure have on HT’s radical disposition? In order to answer these key questions I will need to look at the followings issues: (1) the type of activism sanctioned by Bakri as the UK leader of HT; (2) the change in radical orientation HT underwent after he departed and formed Al-Muhajiroun; (3) the reforms HT mandated after Bakri left.

#### **7.3.1 Bakri’s HT**

Omar Bakri, even in exile, remains a highly controversial figure. He has caused countless media storms with his radical rhetoric and activism. In the aftermath of the London terror attacks, he boldly declared that the only people he blamed for the bombings were the British government and public. Naturally, he was seen as a preacher of hate by the media, and widely condemned by the Muslim community. Before his notoriety, he led the UK branch of HT for over a decade to unrivalled success. Trying to understand his legacy as UK leader is not an easy task, because HT has openly condemned his affiliation with the group. In reality, this negative backlash is politically orientated towards undermining his role as one of the groups most popular and influential leaders. So, to what degree did he influence HT? The best sources for assessing the role that Bakri played in turning ordinary students to activism

are the members themselves. In order to avoid the skewed views of current members who tend to condemn Bakri's involvement with HT, I interviewed several ex-HT members to discuss the roots of their activism and Bakri's influence. Firstly, the predominant opinion among the members suggested that he did not play a significant role in their joining HT. However, they all agreed Bakri was a key figure in reconstituting HT activism in the UK.<sup>186</sup> Bakri, as an experienced radical activist, changed the focus of party activism to local settings and realities. His goal was to engage in a radical, albeit non-violent, struggle with the state and to bring about an Islamic revolution. As Ferdous asserted, this agenda was at odds with traditional HT ideology. The aim of HT is to revive the Islamic way of life, and thus its primary focus is to re-establish the Islamic state somewhere in the Muslim world. More importantly, as Khalid explained, Bakri operated independently from HT's central leadership. This gave him free rein to carry out activism as he saw fit.

Unlike the indigenous recruits, Bakri had a firm grounding in Islamic teachings, specialising in Islamic Jurisprudence. This enabled him to interpret the need for greater Islamic awareness, focusing on political Islam. Notably, he drew upon the experiences of the Muslims who migrated from Mecca to Abyssinia, which provided a source of guidance to Muslim activity in Britain. Bakri stated: 'Muslims went to Abyssinia, and their focus of discussion was with society and the Abyssinian King' (Bakri, 02/06/2004). In contrast, British Muslims upon migration had become politically and culturally isolated, concerned only with economic survival. Yet, in Abyssinia Bakri proclaimed Muslims 'started to talk about what is Islam' and they rejected those practices that contradicted Islam, as they 'had their own personality and way of life' (Bakri, 02/06/2004). The comparison with Abyssinia was important for Omar Bakri because it provided a standard for organising activity in a non-Muslim country. As Bakri explained:

...the Prophet consented to live in non-Muslim society, to speak out and to speak the truth wherever you are, and not to fear the consequences, commanding the good and forbidding the evil, wherever they are... so the message of Hizb ut-Tahrir is political, therefore when people accept Islam, intellectually and politically, then they start to know more and more about Islam and change their own personalities. (Bakri, 02/06/2004)

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<sup>186</sup> I interviewed 34 ex-HT members about a range of issues related to their radicalisation and why they left HT. 88.2 per cent of ex-members suggested that Omar Bakri had little influence in them joining the group, but 94.1 per cent believed Bakri was a key figure in HT success and expansion during the 1990s.

As a result, Bakri immediately enacted a plan to culture British Muslims. One important issue emerges from this discussion. As Kahlid pointed out, ‘OBM (Omar Bakri) is a scholar, and as such he was our reference point’. Bakri gave the indigenous members a way to integrate a wider array of Islamic principles into their daily lives. One ex-member looked back upon this introduction to Islamic ideas as a liberating experience, as he stated: ‘Bakri turned on the light’. Thus, as the UK leader, Bakri certainly facilitated the militant disposition of HT in the UK.

#### **7.4 Omar Bakri post HT**

When the shocking announcement of Bakri’s removal filtered down to the fraternity, it caused widespread dissention and discord. Most members struggled to digest the news of their leader’s departure. Publicly Bakri declared that his resignation was influenced by HT’s new policy, which was ‘very heavy in terms of administrative do’s and don’t do’s’, putting restrictions on dawah (*Muslim News*, 16/02/1996).<sup>187</sup> Although, his resignation sent shockwaves across the UK fraternity, it only had small repercussions. Those loyal to Bakri left HT and joined him, as he established Al-Muhajiroun (ALM). The majority of members, however, remained faithful to HT ideology and denounced Bakri. The division caused deep resentment between the two ranks that became further inflamed when ALM became active. Highly agitated Jewish groups were concerned that HT’s change of tactics, which coincided with the departure of Bakri, could herald a new wave of anti-Semitic activity on Britain’s university campuses (*The Observer*, 02/02/1996). This hysteria was not found to be justified, as HT was simply attempting to recover from this shock and the reason for its departure from public activity was to implement wide-ranging reforms to its structure.

##### **7.4.1 New Wave of Public Activism**

Bakri, now leader of ALM, launched a new wave of bold public activity. Bakri intended to replicate university activity with his new group, using similar styles to those he had pioneered with HT. As he stated: ‘They will not be able to ban peace and human societies...If they do, it will only backfire...We will use other people’ (*The Guardian*, 23/08/1996). ALM was starting to gain significant ground on HT, who was still abstaining

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<sup>187</sup> Bakri’s departure was grounded in the introduction of new HT policy, which ended political struggle outside of the Muslim world. Bakri, however, refused to implement these demands, as they went against everything he believed and subsequently his membership was terminated.

from public activity, and thus Bakri felt it was time to hold a large public rally. Bakri was, however, totally unprepared for the media and government backlash that soon followed. The Algerian Foreign Ministry in particular urged the UK government to ban the rally, believing it would be ‘attended by the paymasters, the ideologists, the financiers and the zealots of international terrorism’ (*Weekly Telegraph*, 04/09/1996). In a similar move, the Egyptian government threatened to break off diplomatic relations if the rally were to go ahead. Bakri was under growing pressure to cancel the rally because adverse publicity meant increased security costs at the London Arena, placing the venue outside the scope of his planned budget (Omar Bakri Mohammed., 02/06/2004). Although the rally was cancelled, Bakri claimed the event was a ‘success because of the publicity boosting the Islamic cause’ (Ibid., 02/06/2004). It is difficult to accept this view; for example, the capacity of the venue was 14,000 but only 3,000 tickets had been sold, and the video messages from Islamic leaders worldwide had not turned up. The cancellation of the event actually averted a disaster in terms of finance and publicity.

There was significant media focus on Bakri and ALM, which he used to condemn what he described as a deliberate attempt by the British government to ‘demonise Muslims’ (*Asian Age*, 09/09/1996). In the aftermath of such controversy, it was somewhat surprising that ALM was given permission to hold a rally in Trafalgar Square a year later. Bakri decided to invite a host of Islamic scholars, jurists and activists to give evidence against Muslim governments that he deemed guilty of oppression against Islam (Ibid., 02/06/2004). The ‘*Rally against Oppression*’, as it was entitled by Bakri, was held without any major incident on 3 August 1997. ALM was, however, struggling to hold events as local councils continued to ban their activities. ALM, for example, acting under the guise ‘The Society of Converts to Islam’, booked the Southall Community Centre to hold a rally against Israel. The event was subsequently cancelled as it breached rules regarding the incitement of religious and racial hatred. According to Suleiman Keeler, ALM member and organiser of the rally:

If some people misinterpret our intentions as violent then that is not our fault. We want people to boycott Jewish businesses, not talk to Jews, but we do not instruct followers to physically attack Jews. Just because the subject matter is a little bit hot it does not mean this event is not going to be a fun day. It is for all the family and there will be book and clothes stalls and a series of lectures. If it is banned I will be annoyed but we will find somewhere else to stage it. (Southall Gazette, 17/10/1997)

Following the banning of the meeting, ALM staged a highly controversial protest outside Ealing Town Hall. The protesters displayed banners and slogans such as: ‘The hour will never come until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them’ (*Ealing and Acton Gazette*, 24/10/1997). Unperturbed, ALM continued to hold a variety of events and activities across the country, such as: ‘*Drink and Drugs, Public Enemy No. 1*’. As a result, the focus on public activity allowed ALM to increase their national profile.

#### **7.4.2 Tottenham Ayatollah**

Bakri was gaining noticeable media coverage, and, as a result, he agreed to participate in a Channel 4 documentary (1997). The ‘Tottenham Ayatollah’ was a documentary about a year in the life of Omar Bakri. When Bakri discovered the nature of the programme, he immediately contacted the press to lodge a complaint about the content of the broadcast. He was particularly disgruntled about the way in which the research was conducted and, in a letter to the producers, he threatened to sue the filmmakers and Channel 4 (*Ibid.*, 02/06/2004). According to Abdul Haq (ALM member), ‘the programme was a vicious attack on Islam and the Sheikh...it distorted the truth, but what do you expect from the *Kufr* [non-Muslims]?’ Similarly, Makbool Javaid (ALM member) suggested ‘the general thrust of the programme was the demonisation of Omar Bakri, and not the representation of his Islamic principles and ideology, as he was led to believe’ (*Asian Age*, 10/04/1997). The broadcast had raised a number of real concerns regarding Bakri’s rhetoric and activities. In particular, his views concerning women, homosexuality and Western society were brought under scrutiny. Homosexuality, for instance, was publicly condemned by Bakri as a perversion and immoral act. Despite grounding these speeches within the framework of religious scripture, they still appear to be motivated by hate and dislike. Moreover, these public declarations created a ‘threatening’ and ‘intimidating’ atmosphere in which homophobia was encouraged and endorsed (Leigh 2010, p. 377).

#### **7.4.3 Support of Terrorism and Jihad**

After Bakri was able to distance himself from HT, he promptly sought to propagate more extremist views. Jihad, for example, was reinterpreted as ‘*Fard al-Kafiyah* [individual duty]’ (*Ibid.*, 02/06/2004). Using this somewhat literal interpretation he advocated that Muslims should seek military training and fight jihad in those areas under occupation. The fallout of

his views, as broadcasted on the television documentary, 'Tottenham Ayatollah,' resulted in the Crawley Council cancelling the lease on a hut rented by ALM. It was alleged that it was being used as a 'training camp to mould militants into Islamic warriors' (*Crawley Observer*, 16/04/1997). Although Bakri denied any involvement in organising jihad training camps in Britain, it was clear that some volunteers from ALM were leaving to fight in Chechnya. As Bakri confirmed:

The military wing of the IIF is run by Osama bin Laden. Volunteers from Britain are travelling abroad to join camps run by the IIF and other organisations. Once they are there they receive military training or take part in Jihad. Last week we sent 38 people to Chechnya. Our volunteers are not terrorists. They are not targeting civilians and they do not target people in Britain. (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 07/11/1999)

Further concerns were raised regarding fundraising for terrorist activities. Bakri insisted that money raised by ALM to support militants in the Middle East was intended for humanitarian relief and not intended to purchase weapons. He was unwilling, however, to guarantee said money would not end up in the hands of terrorists (*Enfield Advertiser*, 03/12/1997). It was reported, however, that Bakri was a member of a committee that regularly held meetings to consider appeals for money. Bakri admitted that the committee channelled funds for jihad and often received requests from groups linked to Bin Laden (*Ibid.*, 02/06/2004).

In early 2000 Bakri became embroiled in a local incident that soon escalated to national prominence. A distraught Muslim family from Crawley contacted the local authorities as it emerged that their son, Omar Kyam, had absconded to Pakistan to become a 'holy warrior' after being recruited by members of ALM. The family of Omar Kyam demanded ALM provide information on the disappearance of their son, placing mounting pressure on the organisation. Consequently, Bakri was forced to make a statement to the national press, in which he stated:

I share the worry of these families, but if my child wanted to go and fight for a noble jihad then I would encourage them. I have received many complaints from families in Crawley and other places but I tell them it is a Muslim's duty to have military training when they reach puberty. These boys go not because of what I tell them to do, or what their mother and fathers say, but as an obligation to God. (*The Times*, 22/01/00).



Although ALM tried to deny their involvement with Omar Kyam's disappearance, it was apparent he spent time with the organisation. More importantly, it was revealed ALM had been concentrating on university campuses in an effort to encourage young students to engage in jihad in countries abroad like Kosovo, Kashmir and Chechnya. This was not a surprising revelation, as Bakri explained: 'Islam demand[s] you struggle...I form Al-Muhajiroun for this, so I make two networks. There was [the] Dawah network and [the] Jihad network' (Ibid., 02/06/2004). The Dawah network, as Bakri described it, would attract young students to ALM from Britain's university campuses, and from there students would be enticed into jihad.

Bakri (Ibid., 02/06/2004) proudly proclaimed that his group had successfully sent 'several hundred British Muslims' abroad to receive training and to fight jihad. In the aftermath of the 11 September terror attacks, however, ALM adjusted their combative style. In order to appease increasing governmental concerns about the link between terrorism and ALM, Bakri maintained Muslims were restricted by 'a covenant of security' (Ibid., 02/06/2004). In spite of this, growing pressure forced Bakri to leave the UK in 2005 in an effort to avoid arrest under obscure treason laws. While in exile, Bakri retracted the covenant of security. He cited two key reasons: Firstly, Bakri declared that the banning of Islamic groups and the unwarranted detention of Muslims under newly-formed anti-terror legislation violated the covenant. Secondly, he believed that the MCB had been recruited to spy on the Muslim community, which would bring harm to Muslims (Jay, ALM member, 2007). After he was contacted by UK members, however, he claimed the 'covenant was back on', as his judgments concerning the activities of the British government did not come to fruition.

## **7.5 HT Post-9/11**

The 11 September 2001 terror attacks redefined the approach of HT in Britain. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, the government increased political pressure on radical Islamist groups it accused of having links to terrorist organisations. More significantly, the government introduced stringent anti-terrorism legislation. As a result, HT suspended all public activity and the leadership held several meetings to discuss events post 9/11. According to Fahim (member), 'the events of 9/11 caught us by surprise, that's why we suspended activity...it was a difficult period and we didn't know how the government would react'. In contrast to the Muslim community, whose response to the attacks was mixed, the

great majority of HT members condemned the attacks. According to Ameer (member, 2001), ‘killing innocent civilians is not jihad’. Similarly, Aminur (member, 2001) stated: ‘As a Muslim, and as a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, I totally condemn the attacks...9/11 was *haram* [forbidden]’. Also, I personally recall several meetings in which senior members explained how such attacks were ‘un-Islamic’ and ‘totally condemned’. I was somewhat surprised that even beyond the shadow of the leadership, rank and file members still denounced the attacks. Not surprisingly, some members alleged that the event was staged: a ‘US conspiracy’, but they were a very small minority.

Despite the great majority of its members condemning the 11 September attacks, some political commentators have described the group as ‘soft Jihadists’ (Crandall 2008, p. 256). The events of 9/11 precipitated a focus on Islamist groups who preached and engaged in violence. In response, Imran Waheed stated: ‘The party considers violence or armed struggle against the regime a violation of the Islamic Sharia’ (*World Press*, 12/09/2005). This is supported by a restricted Home Office document that was released to HT under the Freedom of Information Act: ‘Hizb ut-Tahrir is an independent political party that is active in many countries across the world...It considers violence or armed struggle against the regime, as a method to re-establish the Islamic State, a violation of the Islamic Shariah’ (HT website, extracted 03/10/2005). It is clear HT does not advocate violence; instead it seeks to create social and political change through peaceful activism.

### **7.5.1 Proscribing HT: Global Crackdown**

Since the start of the War on Terror, HT has been forced to counter allegations of supporting terrorism. Imran Waheed, HT media spokesman in the UK, declared that the movement had been engaged in non-violent political activity and since its inception had ‘never accepted any form of armed struggle or killing of civilians’ despite the killing of party members. In recent years, HT has faced growing calls for its prohibition, making it essential to provide an overview of this debate from various perspectives.<sup>188</sup>

In February 2003, the Russian Supreme Court put HT on a list of banned terrorist organisations. A month before, HT was outlawed in Germany, under newly-formed legislation, for going ‘against the concept of international understanding’ (Radio Free

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<sup>188</sup> In order to provide greater contextual perspective, I have looked at various media reports, the views of politicians and governments, internal HT sources and the views of ordinary HT members.

Europe, 26/10/2004). HT gained notoriety in Germany, after organising a conference against the pending war in Iraq at Berlin's Technical University. The conference was also attended by several members of the extreme right-wing National German Party (NPD). The meeting provoked outrage in the press against 'Islamists and neo-Nazis' uniting to deliver anti-Semitic propaganda (Reuters, 15/01/2003). HT's representative in Germany, Shaker Aasim, rejected these accusations:

We, the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, are not anti-Semitic... We consequently reject that [accusation]. We do not call to kill Jews. Our call is addressed to the Muslim people to defend themselves against the Zionist aggression in Palestine. And they have the right to do so. (Taken from [www.islamic-state.org/leaflets/november0402.htm](http://www.islamic-state.org/leaflets/november0402.htm), 04/11/2002)

Interestingly, upon being arrested, on 15 January 2003, Aasim asked the police chief 'why we (HT) were banned in Germany, although in other European countries, like Great Britain, where we are much more active and stronger, no one gives us a second thought' (Radio Free Europe, 26/10/2004). The German official responded by saying, 'we banned you in Germany so that what is happening in England doesn't happen here' (Radio Free Europe, 26/10/2004). Uwe Halbach suggested that 'in Great Britain, Hizb ut-Tahrir is still not banned and has a surprisingly strong field of action – a lot stronger agenda than in Germany...in fact, in Germany, it all came as a surprise' (Radio Free Europe, 26/10/2004). Subsequently, in a similar move, the Danish and Dutch governments also authorised the prohibition of HT. This has not perturbed the group, as they remain active across Europe. In the United States, conservative politicians have been calling for increased pressure on members of HT. A report by the conservative Heritage Foundation think-tank called HT 'an emerging threat to American interests in Central and South Asia and the Middle East' (*Radio Free Europe*, 26/10/2004). President Karimov of Uzbekistan echoed a similar view, when he criticised what he described as the paradox that 'Hizb-ut-Tahrir is banned in Germany but is free to run its international headquarters in London' (*Radio Free Europe*, 26/08/2004). Without any credible evidence of violent intent, however, it is questionable why HT has been subject to such harsh treatment, especially since their presence in these European countries is limited. The bans in Europe therefore appear to be a pre-emptive measure to prevent the progress of HT.

### **7.5.2 The Proposal to Ban HT in Britain**

The horrific terror attacks on London's public transport system placed immense pressure on HT. After 9/11, however, HT's leadership appeared to be undergoing a genuine transition towards a more moderate and mainstream approach. The UK leadership, led by Jalaudin Patel, made a concerted effort to modernise the party ideology, which they saw as outmoded. Imran Waheed, for example, tried to re-conceptualise the goal of HT within a Western ideological framework. As he commented: 'Our aim is to re-establish the Islamic Caliphate in the Muslim world. Our vision of the Islamic Caliphate is one of an independent state with an elected and accountable leader, an independent judiciary, political parties, the rule of law and equal rights for minority groups' (Parajpan 2005, interview with Imran Waheed). The move towards a more moderate position has been met with stern resistance from some members, who believe the new party image is a clear sign of its cultural and ideological decline. According to one member, 'The Hizb has lost its identity and message...it's been watered down by JP [Jalaudin Patel], Imran Waheed and Abdul Wahid to make it palatable to the *Kufr*, so they don't ban us'.<sup>189</sup> This was somewhat evident in HT's response to the Danish cartoon controversy in which they called for a peaceful demonstration and better education initiatives. More surprisingly, they publicly condemned the acts of Islamist groups, like ALM, for inciting hatred and violent behaviour. The leadership felt it was crucial to gain some distance from Omar Bakri, as his extreme rhetoric post 9/11 was being attributed to the party even though his affiliation ended in 1996.

In the aftermath of the London terror attacks, HT issued a public denunciation of the bombings and reiterated its commitment to peaceful activism. The entire fraternity was noticeably outraged at the atrocity, and it was clear they condemned the killing of innocent civilians under any circumstances. Following the attacks, the party sought to calm the situation, believing ordinary Muslims might be targeted for retribution. Imran Waheed, for example, explained in the wake of the 7 July London bombings that it is irresponsible 'to hold the Muslim community entirely responsible for the actions of a few...will do little for community relations' (BBC website, 19/07/2005). He explained that mosques were not succeeding in channelling the frustration of young Muslims and urged greater dialogue between opposing viewpoints. In the media, however, HT were being linked to Omar Bakri and his militant fringe group Al-Muhajiroun. HT was portrayed as a militant organisation because of its perceived links to ALM. The historical connection with Bakri was proving to

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<sup>189</sup> The member did not want his name mentioned for fear of the HT leadership.

be very destructive, as his inflammatory rhetoric was being linked in the press to HT. Omar Brookes, a spokesman of the newly-formed Al-Ghurabaa, refused to condemn the July 7 attacks. As he explained: ‘What I would say about those who do suicide operations or martyrdom operations is they’re completely praiseworthy...I have no allegiance to the Queen whatsoever or to British society; in fact if I see mujahideen attack the UK I am always standing with the Muslims, never against the Muslims’ (*The Guardian*, 06/08/2005).

Within this context, it is difficult to understand the proposal to place HT on the Home Office’s list of proscribed groups. According to one member, ‘the Muslim rulers have placed considerable pressure on Western governments to have the organisation banned’, because of its demands for political change in their countries. This view is supported by reports that Pervez Musharraf, the former president of Pakistan, urged Tony Blair to ban HT on the grounds that it ‘brainwashes people, and that leads to violent acts’ (*The Guardian*, 06/08/2005). More recently, David Cameron, the Conservative Party leader, tried to gain political mileage from this issue by asking newly-appointed Prime Minister Gordon Brown, in his first question-time, why HT had not been banned. Cameron insisted HT were indoctrinating young Muslims with an ideology of hatred but John Reid, former home secretary, stated that his department had examined the case of HT on two separate occasions and there was not sufficient evidence to proscribe the party under British law. Clearly, HT is not involved in committing acts of violence, nor does it provide support for and make statements that glorify violence. Craig Murray, the former British ambassador to Uzbekistan, declared that HT ‘is a completely non-violent organisation’ (Hizb ut-Tahrir Media Information Pack, p. 5). One might disagree with the views of HT, but unless they espouse violence it is unlikely a ban will occur. Thus, on the basis of available evidence and despite HT being banned in other countries, there appears no clear justification yet for a ban in the UK.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

To date, as my research verifies, I do not know of a single prosecution or case brought against any member of HT for incitement to violence. Not a single act of violence has been proved against a member of HT in this country. However, this has nothing to do with radical propaganda. HT has been denounced for its radical speech, but again it is difficult to equate this speech to violence. HT strongly argues that it does not adopt or advocate violence. Its

history of activism in the UK in many ways attests to this claim. According to International Crisis Group, HT advocates: ‘the restoration of the Islamic caliphate. It differs from jihadi groups that share this objective in abstaining from violent activity (International Crisis Group, 02/03/2005). In fact, I have not encountered any convincing evidence that HT advocates violence. Apart from HT activism, I looked at key events in the organisation’s history. In particular, at the height of their success, they imploded in catastrophic fashion. HT suffered two significant splits that saw Omar Bakri and Farid Kassim, the founding members of the UK branch, leave the group. Consequently, HT re-emerged after its self-imposed isolation with a wave of activism and recruitment in an attempt to rebuild the organisation.

It might be relatively clear that HT does not participate in overt violence, but they have been accused of being a ‘gateway’ organisation to violence. This concern was highlighted in a recent speech by David Cameron, at the Munich Security Conference (2011). The Prime Minister talked at length about extremist ideology, he identified Islamic radicals who ‘may reject violence’ (*number10.gov.uk* 5/02/2011). As he explained:

As evidence emerges about the backgrounds of those convicted of terrorist offences, it is clear that many of them were initially influenced by what some have called ‘non-violent extremists’, and they then took those radical beliefs to the next level by embracing violence...So first, instead of ignoring this extremist ideology, we – as governments and as societies – have got to confront it, in all its forms. And second, instead of encouraging people to live apart, we need a clear sense of shared national identity that is open to everyone (*number10.gov.uk* 5/02/2011).

In other words, HT might not be openly implicated in the quest for Jihad, but they may facilitate and expedite the trajectory of young Muslims into Islamic militancy. This claim of ‘conveyor belt’ radicalisation appears to be somewhat merited. A by-product of HT activism has been increased radicalism. It is common for young Muslims to start with HT, becoming indoctrinated and radicalised, but often some young Muslims feel HT is not doing enough. As one ex-HT activist stated: ‘HT talks a good game but they don’t do anything...Muslims are being killed and sisters are being raped and HT say wait for the Kilahah, this is rubbish...the answer is simple, its jihad’. This feeling is quite common, but it does illustrate that most young Muslims who are inclined to more militant ideology see HT as a non-violent and passive organisation. However, the culturing process within HT offers young Muslims

access to radical ideology, which is very similar to the religious and political principles of Jihadist groups. The HT construction of radical identities and frameworks of political Islam produce carbon copies of radicalised personalities. Also, HT introduces young Muslims to diverse networks with more militant actors and groups, exposing them to the ideology of jihadists. However, further research is required to verify this claim, and my research has not been focused towards ex-members and militant groups.<sup>190</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising to see the group still under the spotlight, despite the fact HT emerged from Bakri's departure as a more moderate entity. However, the UK branch openly and publicly denounces terrorism and condemns the actions of Osama Bin Laden. Yet, its role and impact in radicalising young Muslims is still not clear. In the final chapter, I try to explain this issue in greater detail, bringing all my findings together.

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<sup>190</sup> For more information refer to Wali, F. (forthcoming) 'Post-radicalisation Pathways: What happens when young Muslims leave Militant Islam?'

## **Chapter Eight:**

### **Conclusion – Demystifying the Schemata of HT Radicalisation**

Recent debates concerning young people and radicalisation have generated some interesting insights, but there is considerable disagreement over the exact nature of radicalisation. Speaking broadly, a scholarly consensus on radicalisation is unlikely since it is a highly complex phenomenon that has a wide range of causal factors (Borum, 2004; Silber and Bhatt, 2007). Moreover, radicalisation is constantly moving forward into new areas of discussion and debate. The coalition invasion of Iraq, for example, instigated widespread debate about Britain's foreign policy. In particular, military occupation of Muslim countries and real or perceived collaboration with despotic Muslim regimes tend to be treated as causal factors for radicalisation by many British Muslims (Pape, 2006). The alleged relationship or overlap between foreign policy and radicalisation is often cited in testimonies of violent radicals. Mohammed Bouyeri, the murderer of Theo van Gogh, for example, expressed his deep anger with Western foreign policies in a note which he stabbed with a knife to the body of van Gogh (Jansen, 2005). Although the government explicitly rejects any connection, HT claims Muslim anger towards the West is born out of its illegal war in Muslim lands. As Imran Waheed, spokesman for HT, stated:

‘When Westerners get killed, the world cries. But if Muslims get killed in Iraq or Afghanistan, it's the smallest of news. I will condemn what happened in London only after there is the promise from Western leaders to condemn what they have done in Fallujah and other parts of Iraq and in Afghanistan’  
(*New York Times*, 10/07/2005).

In the course of my research, I have spoken to several young Muslims who voiced similar concerns regarding British and US foreign policy, which they claimed acted as a trigger for violent and extremist behaviour. The government has a tendency to divorce foreign policy from extremism, which is rather naïve, but the issues or contexts that lie behind HT radicalisation cannot be reduced solely to foreign policy. In fact, foreign policy did not feature in any of the HT narratives I encountered. So, if foreign policy was not identified as a contributing factor, then what attracts some young people to HT? In the foregoing chapters, I have taken a glimpse into the radicalisation process, but now these diverse strands need to be tied together to produce a relatively complete picture of HT radicalism. This means trying to highlight my findings and integrate them into the wider debates about radicalisation.



In order to go beyond abstract theory, I will need to use my empirical findings to provide an answer to why some British Muslims join HT. I have used many diverse strategies to gather the required data—such as interviews, surveys, focus groups, participant observations, and so on—to ensure that my theories are based on empirical findings. In my introduction, I noted the lack of attention paid to HT members and their backgrounds; a more recent review has seen markedly more focus on HT (Abbas et al., 2007; Husain, 2007; Lewis, 2008). Even though these noteworthy texts emphasise some interesting developmental issues, they do not claim to provide a clear picture of HT radicalisation. Indeed, as I discovered through the course of my study, any scrutiny of HT radicalisation based on single variables—such as ethnicity, class, or religion—fails to fully explain the causes of radicalisation. The members I observed experienced considerable disorder throughout their life-cycle experiences, making it vital to identify the specific social contextual factors they were exposed to and embedded within. Thus, radicalisation must be measured within a particular social reality, because the relationship between members’ experiences and their environments are mutually shaping. Before I sketch out the distinctive features of HT radicalisation, it is first essential to explore the relationship between the social bases of HT membership and radicalisation. A key reason for looking at the social base first, I believe, is that it will allow me to identify and interpret commonalities between HT members, thereby providing a backdrop to radicalisation. HT radicalisation, therefore, has to be placed within a social and cultural context, because this will allow me to single out the types of Muslims who are most susceptible to joining the organisation.

### **8.1 Profiling HT Membership: Young Middle-class Asians**

Through undertaking my study, I have gained considerable insight into the inner realities of HT, therefore it seems logical to first identify the social makeup of the fraternity. As I will show, the UK branch of HT is mainly composed of a homogenous group of young middle-class Asians. A number of theories have surfaced about HT in recent years, most of which are restricted by a failure to address adequately the group’s social base. This is particularly significant, since HT radicalisation discourses that neglect social structures are unable to provide a picture of the phenomenon. Some social theorists, for example, believe the movement’s growth among young people is rooted in frustration at “the inaction of traditional authority in their communities” (Abbas et al., 2007, p. 157). This claim cannot be

properly substantiated, as my findings indicate, because HT members do not emerge from traditional Muslim communities nor are they aligned economically to them. The debate about HT radicalisation has been primarily confined to “causes,” revealing a significant gap in such an approach, since it ignores the analytical importance of the social base. The social structure of HT membership has emerged from similar social experiences and backgrounds, facilitating behaviour and identity changes. In other words, social structures shape members’ everyday lives, making it a fundamental aspect of HT radicalisation. Structural forces like religion, class, and ethnicity have been treated as explanatory factors. However, simplifying the concept of identity-formation into these restrictive parameters does not necessarily explain the emergence of generic HT member profiles.

In Chapter Six, I looked at the social structure of HT membership. A generally surprising characteristic and trait of HT membership, which I singled out in my research, was its success in mobilising young middle-class South Asian Muslims behind a political ideology and cause.<sup>191</sup> In fact, a recurring feature of HT recruitment is the group’s ability to attract homogenous clusters of young people from parallel social worlds. As far as the study was concerned, it seemed apparent at an early stage in my research that HT members were typically drawn from a specific section of the Muslim community: young middle-class Asians. This identity framework provides a ‘category of social significance,’ for belonging to a specific social class and ethnic group enables the members to define their distinctiveness in terms of comparisons with other Muslim sub-groups (Hitch, 1983, p. 118). While these social structures overlap, in a general sense, it becomes necessary to emphasise the homogenous properties of HT membership.

Contemporary theorists are excessively preoccupied with the social conditions of working-class Muslims, creating a tendency to over-exaggerate a link with radicalisation. Traditionally, the political affiliation of the working classes in Britain was often equated with economic disadvantage (Cannadine, 1999). Undoubtedly, the social reality of the Muslim working classes is bound to be affected by unemployment and poverty, as the statistical data verifies (Abbas 2005, p. 9). Beyond the economic dimension, however, there

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<sup>191</sup> HT’s capacity to attract this demographic to its ranks was something novel, especially during the 1990s and in a British context. This is because most young people are seen to be politically inactive and apathetic (Parkin 1968, p. 140). As Abrams and Little (1963, p. 77) discovered, most young people in Britain ‘leave school ignorant of the workings of the political system...90 per cent find politics a bore...Sixty per cent believe it will make little or no difference to their lives which party is in power’. Although, these findings are somewhat dated, more recent reports suggest little has changed. In the 2010 General election more than half of 18- to 24-year-olds were not registered to vote (UK Electoral Commission, 20/05/2010).

are wider issues directly impacting working-class Muslims. They are firmly embedded, for example, within ethnic and religious cleavages which have been exported from their countries of origin. Significant attention has been paid to these subgroups. In contrast, little focus has been directed to the relatively small minority of middle-class Muslims. In relation to HT, social class is often ignored as membership is characteristically portrayed within a working-class paradigm or equated with ‘low social class position’ (Abbas et al., 2007, p. 151). In spite of that, once I was able to sketch out a general profile of HT membership, it became clear its recruits were predominately drawn from the ranks of the middle class. Therefore, within an HT context, equating radicalisation to economic deprivation is misplaced.

On the whole, as mentioned, the overwhelming majority of studies dedicated to a better understanding of Muslims in Britain have focused primarily on working-class Muslims. This void in the research meant I could not readily draw upon studies about the Muslim community in Britain, since these are orientated towards working-class communities. As a result, I had to rely heavily upon my own findings in order to identify the differences between the two disparate classes. Identifying these differences became important, as it would provide insight into why middle-class Muslims appear more inclined toward HT. To start with, a large number of HT members were born into middle-class status. This clearly indicates HT members grew up within a social world qualitatively different from that of working-class Muslims. The parents of HT members, for example, did not come to this country in response to the manual labour shortage. Instead, the vast majority of HT parents arrived in this country as professionals—such as doctors, engineers, accountants and so on—giving their progeny an array of advantages. Social class, therefore, was an important factor in the way members narrated their life experiences and made sense of their identities. The importance of the social base means that I have to understand social class in the context of time and place; for instance, how a member’s upbringing gave them a sense of who they were and where they came from. So, it was not surprising to hear members talk about where their parents were located in the social hierarchy, making class a very important feature of HT identity.

Unfortunately, most academic research today tends to pigeonhole “Muslim youth” into a single generic category, shaped strictly by their shared religious traditions. Drawing parallels between working-class and middle-class Muslims ignores the gap in perceptions of social

identities that have emerged from these two very diverse social worlds. In previous chapters, I suggested that membership in HT could be interpreted as a partial response to its subculture status. Young (1999, p. 89) believes subcultures tend to provide disconnected youths with joint solutions ‘to collectively experienced problems’. Working-class Asians, for example, emerge from sharply contrasting experiences, which can prompt involvement with gangs (Van Gemert, 2008). Cutting through the bleak social and economic realities of working-class Muslims reveals a unique culture. Firstly, within middle-class HT households, education was seen as an essential commodity. As one member explained, ‘the wages of graduates (university) have skyrocketed since the 70s and 80s...this means education guarantees economic success’. Meanwhile, a high percentage of working-class Muslims have no formal qualifications, restricting their social status and mobility to the bottom of the economic hierarchy.<sup>192</sup> A common problem among working-class Muslims is the prioritisation of employment at the expense of education, reflecting negative economic conditions and realities. As Lareau (2003) noted, working-class parents tend to navigate through parenting by adopting dysfunctional child-rearing procedures, as they are usually forced to contend with adverse social and economic hardships. In contrast, she argued that middle-class parents engage in ‘concerted cultivation’ (Lareau 2003, p. 2). HT parents, for instance, intensely supervised their children’s academic work and pushed them towards after-school leisure activities.<sup>193</sup>

This brings us back to the primary issue: the culture gap between working- and middle-class Muslims. The early generations of working-class Muslims found it difficult to build class solidarity with their white counterparts, which led many to retreat into their ethnic cultures (Abbas, 2004). As a result, working-class Muslim communities emerged across the country, forming in economically deprived urban centres. In contrast, HT families consciously shunned these communities in favour of more suburbanised settings, which meant living among the majority white populace. These distinct settings, or social worlds, meant HT members grew up disconnected from their ethnicity and community. Indeed, most members cited encountering Muslims and Asians for the first time at university. Consequently, HT

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<sup>192</sup> It has been estimated one-third of Muslims have no formal qualifications in the UK (Choudhury, 2004).

<sup>193</sup> Despite these middle class family socialisation techniques, the respondents developed susceptibility to radicalisation. A recurring theme that constantly emerged in the narratives of HT activists concerned ‘relative deprivation’. It was clear that significant social problems were encountered during adolescents, especially when navigating through different social settings. As Parkin (198, p. 141) states, ‘certain experiences during the most formative period of life tend to be of decisive effect on the development of the individual’s political attitudes’. Given this social reality, it seems that most of my respondent’s became radicalised in response to the acute experiences of being deprived social acceptance. In fact, the respondent’s I spoke to all echoed similar experiences of feeling rejected and excluded from community and society, creating a deep sense of discontent.

members never developed a proclivity towards their ethnic culture; instead they seemed more inclined towards the majority host culture. This symbolic disassociation with their ethnic origins was partly directed by their parents' own attitudes towards their culture. In fact, most HT parents themselves became wrapped up by the host culture. Given this secular orientation, it is not surprising that minimal space was carved out for their children's religious heritage and development. In some respects, the first generation of working-class Muslims embodied a traditionalist view towards their ethnicity and religion, which they tried to transmit to their offspring. Ironically, both working- and middle-class parents have struggled to transmit their ethnic values to their children. However, in the early stages of development, middle-class parents found it easier to pass on secular attitudes to their children. Thus, HT members emerged from non-ethnically orientated social worlds, while most working-class Muslims are brought up within ethnically centred communities.

Despite emerging from two diverse social worlds, there are still some commonalities between these two groups. In particular, both sets of Muslim youths experienced racism. As Abdul quite rightly pointed out, 'racism is not restricted by class'. However, the racism directed towards HT members during their early childhood is slightly more pronounced. Second-generation working-class Muslims, for example, grew up in segregated communities. This to a degree restricted their interaction with white people, and thus reduced adverse experiences of racism. As several social theorists point out, racism towards minorities usually takes place within a certain space or setting wherein the white majority is more prominent (Miles and Brown, 2003). HT members, for instance, found themselves exposed to social settings in which they were often the only Asian students. By locating these marginalised spaces, it is easier to visualise the consequences of class differences between the two different classes. In other words, HT pathologies were constructed within fixed spaces. In their home lives, members were socialised within a middle-class tradition, which developed identities that correlated with social status. Also, members generally benefited from better and prolonged schooling, allowing them to either maintain their class status or gain more upward mobility. Therefore, I noticed through my interviews and ethnographic observations that HT members carved out a middle-class identity in contrast to the dominant working-class identity of most British Muslims. This created a natural class boundary, which to some extent explains why the HT struggles to recruit working-class Asians.

Many academics within contemporary British society have suggested that class boundaries play a limited role in society (Cannadine, 1999). This may be the case for society itself, but class identification amongst HT members is quite visible and very important. This was rather aptly pointed out by a working-class opponent of HT, whom I met in East London: ‘They [HT] can’t appreciate the reality of being working class because they’re on the other side of the economic spectrum’ (Mohammed Khan, 28). Thus, HT membership, which is not exceptionally large, is largely based on individuals with a common middle-class background. This means they are largely unaware of the socio-economic realities of working-class Muslims. Even though HT has managed to recruit a small segment of working-class Muslims, they are still considered outsiders or looked down upon. As Yusuf, an ex-HT activist, explained: ‘A postman, like myself, would never be given the chance to do talks because that would distort the image of HT’. This provides some insight into the middle-class culture at play within HT. In bringing into play the issue of class, I found markedly different cultural patterns between HT members and their working-class counterparts. These different strains, at least partly, relate to personal experiences, and thus account for negative HT attitudes towards working-class Muslims. In other words, HT members are generally unable to recruit from the ranks of the working classes, because they are not conscious of the social contexts from which young working-class Muslims emerge and are embedded within.

In the description of a typical HT member, age seems to be a powerful component. The trajectory of HT members, as depicted in Chapter Four, has shown that age underpins their identity choices. My data revealed most HT activists were recruited during their youth (between the ages of 16 and 21), which is not surprising since young people are more receptive and susceptible to radical ideas. Youth, consequently, is a period in the life-cycle that is greatly affected by recurring and unsettling changes, which impact physical makeup and social position. The female activists, for example, talked about challenging the boundaries of family culture and expectation as they approached adulthood. In order to better understand HT radical identities, the ages that fall broadly within the classification of youth offer the most crucial insight into radicalisation—not least because HT seems to exclusively target and recruit young people. Navigating between childhood and adulthood forms a unique period in a person’s life history. Most youth identity is stimulated through participation within a shared social setting, such as a specific youth subculture, which distinguishes it from other age identity experiences. One way of looking at youth subcultures within a British Muslim context is in terms of class identification. Social lives develop at

specific times and manifest in certain locales. Working-class Muslims, for instance, spend a lot more time in mosques (Abbas, 2004). In contrast, HT middle-class activists spent little time in their youth in mosques, and thus experienced a secular upbringing and social world.<sup>194</sup>

Ethnicity is another prominent feature of HT's social composition; from the early 1980s a large number of Asian students were attracted to the group. The ethno-religious experiences of working-class Muslims are somewhat removed from the social life of middle-class HT members. In general, the ethno-religious identity of most young Muslims is often shaped by personal and social interactions during childhood. In other words, the members' disassociation from ethno-religious markers relied heavily upon their secular middle-class upbringing and experiences. In this respect, unlike most working-class Muslims, HT members did not inherit a religious tradition from their parents. Therefore, the social realities of HT members differ strongly from working-class Muslims, creating a culturally distinct group that emerged out of the experiences of a middle-class status. Unfortunately, within the bulk of the literature I surveyed, little focus has been given to this homogenous sub-group, making a comparative study between working-class and middle-class Muslims vital. Jacobson (1998), in her study of British Muslim youth in the London borough of Waltham Forest, for example, fails to account for class differences between her subjects. However, if one assumes that the majority of her respondents emerged from working-class households, then her study provides some significant insights. For instance, she argues that young working-class Muslims in Waltham Forest displayed high levels of religious commitment (Jacobson, 1998, p. 126). Furthermore, working-class parents are able to transfer to and maintain religious traditions among their offspring more easily, because their children grow up in very 'close-knit' religious communities (Jacobson 1998, p. 63). In contrast, as my findings have shown in Chapter four, HT members tend to grow up detached from their ethno-religious roots. This, naturally, affects how HT members relate to, and interact with, working-class Asians. Consequently, middle-class HT activists do not share an ethno-religious bond with working-class Muslim youth, providing both groups with distinct and separate frames of reference. Therefore, HT middle-class identity is influenced by the social

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<sup>194</sup> The transmission of religious belief and practice amongst traditional working-class South Asian Muslims is usually inherited from family socialisation, which often entails sending young children after school to the mosque. The manner and form of religious teaching in these institutions is very abusive (Dispatches, lessons in hate and violence in Muslim schools, 14/02/2011). Consequently, HT middle-class recruits became socialised into religious practice through HT (e.g. learning to pray and reading the Quran). This allowed HT activists to escape closed and backward working class orthodox approaches to religiosity, enabling them to develop an intellectual attachment to a politicalised brand of Islam.

context from which a member emerges, making it unreliable to look at Muslim youth as a single and unified group.

## **8.2 Causes of HT Radicalisation (why do some young Muslims join HT?)**

Before I began my study several years ago, I was invited by scholars within the field to talk about my involvement with HT, in an effort to bring about greater insight into radicalisation processes. Although I was not surprised by the overwhelming lack of understanding concerning HT, I became more troubled by the great volume of disjointed theories put forward to provide an explanation for radicalisation. The literature on radicalisation is equally incoherent. However, among the theorists who reflect on radicalisation, there is agreement that more needs to be done to understand the phenomenon. Furthermore, the literature on radicalisation is littered with grand theories that try to unify Muslim behaviour and activism on a general level. This approach is extremely problematic, because, as I have discovered, Muslims emerge from diverse backgrounds and experiences. So, how do I go about understanding why some young Muslims join HT? One approach relied on asking HT members why they joined the group. I listened in earnest to what they said, but what I heard was a torrent of idealistic rhetoric about Islam, which gave me no real insight or answer into why they joined HT. In order to better understand HT membership, I quickly realised, I had to be able to see through the twisted rhetoric to find out what really motivated members.

Another difficulty in dissecting HT radicalisation is merging my somewhat broad findings, in Chapter six, with an understanding of the life trajectory of HT members in chapters four and five. However, as I will show, there are general patterns and contexts at play from which members emerge, and are embedded within, making them more susceptible to HT radicalism.

A common facet of a member's experience is his or her upbringing. As I commented earlier, a member's early identity is greatly shaped by structural factors like class, ethnicity, and age. However, these identifications usually manifest into boundaries of separation. Unlike working-class Muslims, who generally are more 'physically segregated from the white population', HT members grew up in white middle-class areas (Ansari, 2004, p. 391). This brought them into direct contact with white people and their secular culture, which in most cases was perceived as unwilling to accommodate ethnic and racial differences. Therefore,



HT members emerged from their predominantly white surroundings as victims of racism. This rather hazardous exposure to perceived British culture and sensibilities left most members with a variety of challenges. Firstly, they could not revert to their ethnic or religious identity, since they did not inherit an attachment to their families' Asian-Muslim origins. In fact, most HT parents encouraged their children to pursue a distinctly secular path, seeing that a religious heritage was perceived in the Western society as an entirely backward and irrelevant phenomenon. Alongside this religious void, members could not enhance their own sense of ethnicity as they felt culturally British or white. These perceived contradictions helped sustain a feeling of uncertainty among the members, who had grown up in white middle-class suburbia as outsiders. In large part the attraction of HT, especially for its activists, lies in the fact that it gives young Muslims a way of disentangling themselves from the insecurity and quandary of living in contemporary Britain.

The adverse experiences of living, and interacting, with white people drew the members away from British society. The members I spoke to talked about how they started to believe the negative distortions about their race and ethnicity, which left a lasting impression on the way they viewed their place in British society. As they matured, most members could not develop a unified understanding about all the diverse aspects of their life. Religion and ethnicity were disconnected from their social identity, preventing them from establishing a unified identity. Consequently, the members found themselves in a social limbo, rejected by the dominant white culture and unwilling to embrace an ethno-hybrid identity like their working-class Muslim counterparts. The lack of stable and coherent ties linking the members to their ethnic and non-ethnic communities resulted in their being psychologically and socially divorced from the wider society. According to Parkin (1968, p. 11), individuals that fail to integrate or find a place in society are 'highly susceptible to the appeals' of radical and fringe movements. Although the social encounters the members experienced played a significant part in their upbringing, they cannot be attributed as causal features of HT radicalisation. This is because I encountered a small number of HT members who insisted they felt socially connected to their white middle-class communities; they had strong ties with friends and did not differentiate according to ethnicity or race. Despite coming across only a handful of members that claimed to be well adjusted, I had to accommodate their experiences and insights into my theory of HT radicalisation. Consequently, it is very difficult to maintain with absolute certainty a generic set of causes for radicalisation that fit into the life pathologies of every HT member. Therefore, it is better to conceptualise

radicalisation in terms of ‘social agents and settings’. This allows me to consider the major features of radicalisation that commonly exist across HT’s fraternity; in particular, locations of radicalisation, experiences, and group radicalisation have been treated as explanatory factors.

Throughout the course of my study, it became apparent that despite minor differences in location and experiences the primary trigger in the radicalisation process is HT. The group is the central agent in radicalising young people. During the ethnographic stage, for example, I was able to study the ways in which members seemed to lose parts of their individuality when they encountered HT. In fact, I noticed several key themes were present during the “contact” stage of the recruitment process—new social settings, dysfunctional transitions, and peer group associations—appeared frequently in the case histories of HT members. It is therefore argued that recruitment is an integral part of the radicalisation process, because the contact is moving towards joining the group. To start with, recruitment into HT is likely to occur at university or college, as I identified in Chapter Four. When the members left their homes for the first time they struggled to deal with the transition to a new social and cultural environment. Talcott (1960, p. 293) quite aptly points out that radical movements ‘which exploit the generalities and ambiguities’ of social situations are able to naturally recruit troubled or alienated individuals. This tendency was set off by perceived social barriers, namely ethnicity and religion, which inhibited the formation of close ties with others. Consequently, this turbulent transition into university life forced members to seek out people who shared the same socially constructed identities as themselves (i.e., middle-class Asian-Muslims).

Even though the peer group brought together Muslims who emerged from similar social realities, the one feature that overrides everything else is religiosity. The peer group, made up of HT recruiters, provided a sense of purpose and significance to members’ lives by infusing them with religion. This involved rapid socialisation into very intensive religious practices. It seems clear that the advent of a ‘religious awakening’ was triggered by the formation of powerful religious bonds between members and peer group participants.<sup>195</sup> Religion gave the peer group an opportunity to recruit non-religious students into HT. Most members revealed that they had never considered themselves spiritually connected to a global ummah (community) and thus never felt emotionally moved by the plight of Muslims.

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<sup>195</sup> Refer to chapter four, p. 112.

However, this changed when members were exposed to HT rhetoric, and began to embrace party ideology and belief.

It can be fairly assumed that peer group ties are critical, because new ideas are transmitted through these friendship bonds, allowing new recruits to enter the group setting in familiar surroundings. However, joining HT is not purely a free choice; significant coercion is applied in order to manipulate a potential member into joining. Although there is no physical pressure, the coercion is clear in that if you do not join HT, you will be deemed to be sinful and God will condemn you to the pits of hell for eternity. By virtue of ignorance, one is placed in a state of guilt for not working for the Party's aims, and thus feels compelled to join. Thus, I was not greatly surprised by one member's suggestion that the 'Hizb (group) does not need you, rather you need the Hizb (group)'. What strikes me about this statement is that it underscores the negative impact of group membership. The conditions and experiences of the members are of particular interest to me, since the success of HT is dependent on their ability to isolate identities that display a need for the group. One of the key subjects I will need to consider in this chapter, as I think about group influence and group processes, is what happens to members in the group. When members start to act collectively, for example, does this erode their sense of individual identity?

Joining HT as a novice requires attending a weekly Halaqah (study group); this deepens and cements the radicalisation process. It is considered a key stage and an instrumental part of group radicalisation. During this period, intellectual pressure is applied, forcing the novice to bend towards the group's expectations. In particular, the Mushrif (teacher) is very keen to establish a joint construction of reality in order to create a new cognitive viewpoint. Developing a new cognitive framework entails changing the way a novice views his or her social surroundings, often by making sense of their past and present experiences. In other words, the reinterpretation of the world around them takes place in the Halaqah, eventually leading to the internalisation and manifestation of a radical HT identity. To remove extreme individual differences and independent thought the Mushrif forces novices to agree with and accept as their own the ideas presented in Halaqah. The novice is seen as intellectually inferior, especially if they display independent thinking. Although this alignment of ideas is consciously arrived at, it does denote the acceptance of influence.

Beyond the setting of the Halaqah, I was able to witness group practices that overpowered the member. The norms, roles, and patterns of communication engineered by HT constrain behaviour. As one member explained, ‘when the *shab* [novice] is new his *nafsiyya* [behaviour] is in conflict with his concepts so you need to draw him closer to the *Hizb* [group] in order to purify and cleanse his *nafsiyya* [behaviour]’. Indeed, Milgram (1974) makes an important distinction between conformity and obedience that has relevance. He conceptualised conformity as following one’s peers in a group setting, while obedience relates to a chain of command (Milgram, 1974). Conformity, if defined as following one’s peers, best describes the Halaqah. This is because novices are placed amongst their peers within a controlled setting, forcing them to conform. However, obedience is the psychological apparatus that connects a member’s action to the collective work of HT. The party rhetoric, as cited in countless publications, has stated that the *Mabda* (ideology) itself to the exclusion of anything else is the basis of organising and mobilising the fraternity. In reality, this is not true. The Party imposes the ideology onto the members, demanding they obey the commands of the party hierarchy.

When the novice begins to convey the thoughts of HT effectively, as if they were his or her own, then he or she is considered for membership. Even though radicalisation has no definable end point, membership signals the alignment of beliefs between the novice and the group. At this point, members have fully adjusted their sense of identity, their thoughts and behaviours, to match the collectively defined attributes of HT. By developing a sense of ‘we-ness’, a member is made aware that beyond HT there is a ‘they’ that constitutes the dominant culture (James, 1996). This distinction from the larger society allows HT to shape members’ identities permanently. Consequently, when a novice becomes a member, they essentially belong to HT, deriving their sense of identity, at least in part, from it. This creates a collective mindset. Thus, when a novice has been sufficiently assimilated, membership is offered. According to one ex-member, ‘membership is the final stage of radicalisation, because you feel you can’t live without them [HT]’. Therefore, those that are attracted to the homogeneity of the group are those individuals that display a predisposition for belonging. Thus departure is unthinkable as re-socialisation into society cannot occur; this is analogous to criminals who spend a lifetime incarcerated.

In the course of this study, I have sought to dissect HT membership, which I have argued embodies a brand of Islamist radicalism that is characteristically South Asian and middle

class in nature. In order to gain a deeper sense of HT membership, I decided to hold focus group discussions with ex-members, as I felt this would provide a useful picture of HT appeal through a less idealistic narrative.<sup>196</sup> After speaking to these ex-members, I noticed a common perception of HT radicalism emerge. As Dawud explained, ‘they (HT) are a cult’. If this was so, then I wanted to know how HT operated like a cult.<sup>197</sup> Hassan (1988) suggests that ‘thought-stopping tactics’ and installing an ‘us-versus-them’ mindset help to coerce people into joining cults. In a similar way, HT use coercive influences to psychologically control their members (e.g. like the *Halaqah*). However, Zimbardo (1997, p. 14) believes cult methods of recruiting, indoctrinating and influencing their members are not ‘exotic forms of mind control’. Rather, they are more intensely applied tactics of social influence, which are practiced daily by all societal agents of influence. In other words, certain environmental conditions can make people more vulnerable to cult recruitment, such as social alienation, depression and frustration. Within this context, cults often provide a set of life-altering solutions, which are more importantly accompanied by structure, authority, and close social contacts.

From a general perspective, HT clearly exhibits a host of similar characteristics to those found in cults. I have located five comparable features between cults and HT. Firstly, strict adherence to a set of shared beliefs is mandated and, in turn, provides a sense of meaning and purpose to their members. Secondly, group members are intensely motivated by the group-mind, succumbing to group pressure. According to Bion (1980), when individuals function in a group context, their individual judgement and behaviour are strongly influenced by the powerful forces of group dynamics. Thirdly, the group facilitates the psychological need to be part of a group, making the member feel significant, which provides a sense of belonging and security. According to Post (1998), ‘belonging’ to the group may be the first time they truly belonged, the first time they felt truly ‘significant’, the first time they felt that what they did ‘counted’. Fourthly, recruitment techniques often rely on intense social influence, using coercion and guilt, to force the recruit to agree with the group. Finally, in most cases, it is often extremely difficult to leave the group. These obstacles can come in the form of group pressure, where loyal members will intervene in the

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<sup>196</sup> Refer to appendix IV: Focus group II – Ex-HT members, p. 257.

<sup>197</sup> Interestingly, the study of cults has a lot in common with approaches to radicalisation. According to Schefflin (2000), there is a great need to investigate cults and their impact, because the ‘psychological factors that lead to terrorism might lie in understanding cults’. Similarly, Hassan (1988) argues that ‘destructive mind-control cults’ must be understood in relation to the war on terror.

case of a member who has doubts about the group and longs for his or her old life, or the obstacles may be psychological.

### **8.3 Recruitment Grounds: The University Link**

Another important variable in the radicalisation schemata of HT is location of recruitment. Clearly, as my research has outlined, university campuses are primary recruiting grounds for HT activists. Universities provide a magnet for HT activism and recruitment, as they attract a wide spectrum of young British Muslims from diverse geographical locations and backgrounds. In keeping with the middle-class dimension of HT's social base, universities offer the group access to a large pool of middle class Muslims, who have often moved away from their homes for the first time. This creates a deep feeling of social displacement, making them gravitate towards HT activists who exploit the social commonalities that often exist and the deficit for companionship. As a result, apart from the socio-economic similarities, potential recruits find themselves in vulnerable settings, rendering them more receptive to the allure of HT. Notwithstanding the importance of universities, the peer group associations that are created within this social space are primary factors in the radicalisation process. What is subsequently striking about the location of HT radicalisation is the minimal influence Mosques appear to play in recruitment activity. This is consistent, though, with my research of Muslim middle-class lifestyle and activity. The background and upbringing of the respondents shared the notable lack of religiosity during their youth, manifesting in complete disconnection from religious institutions.

In the mind-set of HT activists, Mosques have become increasingly synonymous with working-class Muslims, and thus offer slim recruitment opportunities (Kepel 1997, p. 105). This also reflects the overly secularised nature of the respondent's upbringing. In particular, religious activity played no real role in their daily activity, which meant the mosque lacked any instrumental significance. Therefore, seeing that Mosques have little centrality in the makeup of young middle class Muslims, it is reasonable for HT to target universities at the expense of Mosques. As the early HT pioneers suggested, there is no overtly better location than university campuses in which to encounter young middle class Muslims, especially since they display a heightened receptivity to the radical message of HT. Historically, HT invested significant focus and attention to universities, creating hubs of activity across the country in which large scale recruitment took place. Therefore, the HT infiltration of British

university campuses marked a key stage in HT recruitment, and thus the success of the UK branch rests and falls in this critical social space.

#### **8.4 De-radicalisation**

In recent years, critical questions have been asked about how radicalisation can be tackled or countered. In the UK, in the wake of the London bombings, considerable effort and resources have been assigned to building greater community cohesion. The PREVENT strand of the government's CONTEST strategy is being used, not least, to challenge the ideology of violent extremism.<sup>198</sup> More recently, the government is working to revise its counter-terrorism strategy to widen its definition of extremist behaviour. The draft proposal, dubbed CONTEST 2, intends to broaden the radical net to include activists who: advocate a caliphate (Islamic State), promote Sharia law, argue that Islam bans homosexuality, believe in jihad, and fail to condemn the killing of British soldiers in Iraq or Afghanistan (*The Guardian*, 17/02/2009). There are obvious problems with such an overreaching strategy that will inevitably trigger issues of free speech and opinion. Muslims must feel confident in their ability to enjoy and express views in an open environment. Thus, it seems clear this redraft aims to control Muslim thought, forcing them to embrace the Western political system and its core values. Moreover, those who advocate this strategy 'say hardline Islamist interpretation of the Qur'an leads to views that are the root cause of the terrorism threat Britain faces' (*The Guardian*, 17/02/2009). I have already suggested that radicalisation has no single definable cause. Instead, radicalisation needs to be regarded as a multi-layered phenomenon that has multiple triggers. This would suggest that de-radicalisation strategies need to be case-specific, as generic plans fail to acknowledge the distinct realities of group members. Despite the importance of de-radicalisation, I only have time to analyse the effectiveness of current UK policy, and thus hope in the future to formulate a more precise strategy based upon my findings.

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<sup>198</sup> On 26 January 2011, the newly elected coalition government announced a review of the counter-terrorism strategy, in which six key powers were considered: '(1) The detention of terrorist suspects before charge, including how we can reduce the period of detention below 28 days; (2) Section 44 stop and search powers and the use of terrorism legislation in relation to photography; (3) The use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) by local authorities and access to communications data more generally; (4) Measures to deal with organisations that promote hatred or violence; (5) Extending the use of deportation with assurances in a manner that is consistent with our legal and human rights obligations; (6) Control orders (including alternatives)' (Home Office Report, January 2011, p. 4)

The first, and perhaps most common, strategy concerns proscribing HT. Reworking the legal boundaries to tackle HT radicalisation is very complex and counter-productive. To start with, UK counter-terrorism legislation does not include groups like HT, because they employ a non-violent ideology.<sup>199</sup> This is all very well but HT radicalisation, if deemed a threat, needs to be tackled by formulating a distinct plan that treats the underlying factors of HT radicalism. As Faz, an ex-member from East London, explained: ‘the government is incapable of tackling HT radicalisation because they don’t understand the ethos of the party...HT is a middle class entity and so you need to tackle middle class radicalism amongst British Muslims’. Also, a generic ban will only drive the group underground, and thus may strengthen its appeal amongst disaffected Muslim youths. Anecdotal evidence suggests that banning radical organisations, like Al-Muhajiroun, tends to have a limited effect, as they still continue to recruit new activists and engage in public events. Therefore, a de-radicalisation strategy cannot rely wholly on legal intervention; rather it needs to tackle the causes of HT radicalisation through social, political and educational strategies.<sup>200</sup>

There is little doubt that bringing young Muslims of different social backgrounds together is an important first step in tackling the problem of radicalisation on a national level, but it seems government strategy fails to understand the nature and complexity of Muslim identities. For instance, assessing young British Muslims as a single homogenous group ignores class and cultural differences. As Ansari (2004, p. 3) points out, ‘a Sylheti from Bangladesh, apart from some tenets of faith, is likely to have little in connection with a Mirpuri from Pakistan, let alone a Somali or a Bosnian Muslim’. Such variation means a de-radicalisation strategy, such as CONTEST, is not suitable because its functionality is structured around a set of fixed rules and guidelines. Instead, a more malleable approach is

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<sup>199</sup> Immediately after the 7/7 London bombings, it became clear that HT actively sought to modify its public message in the UK in order to prevent legal sanction against it. This change of policy was imposed by the central leadership in Jordan, as they feared a ban in the UK would seriously jeopardise UK operations. However, internal opinion concerning the downgrading of its radical ideology was split. As Respondent B argued, ‘the Hizb does not engage in pragmatic activities because our ideology sets the agenda’. In contrast, Respondent I insisted the policy was a necessity, as ‘the rules of the game changed after 7/7’. In reality, the downgrading of ideology was embraced at the leadership level, while on the ground, rank and file members struggled to align their radical beliefs with a watered-down version of HT ideology.

<sup>200</sup> In the wake of 7/7, the government sought to fund Islamic groups, such as the Radical Middle Way and the Quilliam Foundation, across university campuses in an effort to counter the extremist ideology of groups like HT. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the proliferation of these groups on university campuses has had an effect. In particular, the Quilliam Foundation has no physical access to grassroots activism, which in effect means they cannot counteract radicalisation because this phenomenon is taking place at the grass roots. During the final stages of my fieldwork investigations, I was swamped by views from ordinary Muslims, not affiliated to any radical organisation, about the disingenuousness nature of the Quilliam Foundation. Most Muslims felt they were actively trying to distort the message of Islam in order to make it acceptable to western audiences, and thus had no real desire or know how to counter-radicalisation. In this respect, as most HT activists explained, the Quilliam Foundation poses little threat as it is detached from the grassroots.



required that can be adapted to fit the various social realities of British Muslims. Rouleau (2001) further elaborates upon this when he writes, ‘Islamist parties are quite dissimilar: often they have nothing in common but their references to the Prophet and Islam, which they interpret in a number of conflicting or contradictory ways, and they span the political spectrum from left to far right’. According to Dawud (ex-member), ‘a policy that pigeonholes Muslims into a single cluster is doomed to fail...Look at HT and ALM, on the surface they seem the same, but you and I know that’s not the case’. Therefore, a de-radicalisation strategy cannot be homogenous; rather separate initiatives need to be tailored to each form of Islamic group radicalism. Historically, Al-Muhajiroun and HT had very similar aims and ideologies, but their influence and impact was very different.<sup>201</sup> ALM tends to exclusively recruit working-class Muslims, while the vast majority of HT members emerge from middle-class backgrounds (Wiktorowicz, 2005). Even though ALM and HT operate from within very similar radical frameworks, the social contexts their influences are poles apart. With this in mind, a more group specific strategy is required.<sup>202</sup>

It would seem HT is only able to recruit from the ranks of middle-class Asians, making it in theory possible to formulate a generic de-radicalisation strategy for HT. The evidence I have accumulated in my study shows that HT radicalisation requires a human interface. This is partly due to the context in which radicalisation takes place. First and foremost, HT members often emerge from a homogenous socio-demographic background, which signifies attraction to peers of similar identity and trajectory. This means HT radicalisation initially takes place within a specific social context, usually amongst a group of friends at university. Even though similarity amongst the members breeds connection, it also limits their social interactions with the wider society. As a result, they enter a distinct social world in which the culture they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience take place within a closed group environment. The radicalisation process reinforces this state of homogeneity, as it cements social ties between group members, while simultaneously cutting off relations with non-members. Despite the acknowledgment that a range of factors contribute to radicalisation, government strategy continues to hinge on broad policy

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<sup>201</sup> ALM in 1996 adopted the same ideological aim as HT (e.g. establish the Khilafah system), but with one principle methodological difference concerning the area of work (e.g. ALM advocate the work for establishing Khilafah can be done anywhere, including the UK, while HT restrict their domain of work to the Muslim world). However, in 2003 Omar Bakri adopted a Wahhabist ideology, which resulted in a radical realignment to Wahhabism, making the separation between HT and ALM much more pronounced on a doctrinal level.

<sup>202</sup> The social space in which HT radicalisation takes place cannot be easily divorced from the group setting. This is because radicalisation often takes place amongst a closed peer group of friends and the social influence that develops here is a key element in the radicalisation process as a whole. For further information on group dynamics refer to Della Porta and Diani (2006, p. 157-9).

initiatives such as ‘PREVENT’ and ‘CONTEST’. These broad measures are fairly ineffective against HT as they are designed to counter violent extremism. Moreover, government strategy over-emphasises an approach of criminalisation to radicalisation, which generally allows HT to continue its activism, as they operate legally. Finally, I would suggest that if the government wants to tackle HT radicalisation then it needs to confront the following three issues: (1) Muslim middle-class identity formation (disaffection and cultural exclusion); (2) peer group radicalisation at university; and (3) HT radicalisation practices (tackling HT ideology and indoctrination strategies). These points illustrate HT’s social influence over a distinct group of British Muslims, namely young middle-class Asians. By dealing with these issues a more robust and distinct challenge can be mounted against HT.

Throughout the course of this study, I have been interested in understanding why some young Muslims join HT, and in doing so provide greater insight into the causal factors of radicalisation. In order to bring this study to a close, one key question remains: what impact has HT radicalisation had on British Muslim identity? If we first consider the British Muslim population as a whole, then HT has had a limited impact. There are several clear reasons for this lack of broad appeal. Firstly, first-generation Muslims tend to interpret and practice their religious beliefs within a rigid framework that sustains the values and traditions of their countries of origin. As a result, HT activists have been unable to dislodge the deep-rooted beliefs of the first generation, making it difficult to gain any support or base amongst this demographic. Secondly, as I have already explained, HT is generally unsuccessful amongst working-class Asians; however, middle-class Asians tend to live and think differently allowing HT to establish a strong foothold in the midst of this social group.<sup>203</sup> Consequently, it would be important in any HT de-radicalisation strategy to categorise this demographic as potentially vulnerable to HT radicalisation.

HT may not have been successful in recruiting across the wider Muslim community, but recruitment is only one facet of impact. From a historical perspective, HT has been operating in the UK for over three decades, and thus it would be unfair and somewhat simplistic, to argue the group has had no real impact on British Muslim identity. HT introduced its radical

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<sup>203</sup> The middle class relate more easily to HT because their radicalism is centred on social and ideological change which is political in content. Therefore, because of the background of its recruits, HT is able to communicate its ideas and engage this demographic providing them a meaningful political and social outlet to their lack of acceptance and belonging. Given the identity politics surrounding being a British Muslim in modern Britain, HT recruits are bestowed with a way to counter the dominant culture (Refer to chapter Six: Sociological breakdown, pp. 185-188).

message into a fresh social environment, like university campuses, which in turn heightened religious identity amongst the placid Muslim populace. During this period, British-born and raised Muslims started to assert their own distinct forms of identity. As mentioned in earlier chapters, charismatic figures like Omar Bakri Mohammed set about formulating an Islamic response to the challenges of living in modern Britain. In this context, HT exploited a gap amongst some young British Muslims, who were stuck between the world their parents migrated from and the world they were living within. Before HT overwhelmed university campuses, the vast majority of Muslim students were drawn to Asianism. This identity united students of South Asian origin together under the banner of their common culture and ethnicity. HT quickly erected ethnic boundaries between British Asians, pointing to a single Muslim identity that excluded other diasporic religious faiths. This redefining of student identity created a platform for HT to promote its political radicalism. By introducing ‘*Khilafah*’ to a politically inactive Muslim student body, HT was able to engage with British society and state in a new and radical fashion. The appeal of HT grew rapidly across universities principally amongst the Asian middle class, who felt socially excluded from their ethnic community and the wider society. In this respect, HT gave some young British Muslims a way to break free from the shackles ‘of the Islam of their forefathers’ (Ansari, 2004, p. 393). The radical interpretations of HT offered them a way to rediscover their religious identity, which became the sole determinant of their public and cultural life. Thus, HT gave some young Muslims a way to come to terms with their identity.

All this begs the question: does HT have a positive or negative effect on British Muslims? I spoke to several HT members regarding this issue, and to some extent I was surprised by some of their responses. One member argued that HT works within the Muslim community to build better understanding between the West and Islam, which he suggested, would ‘help counter terrorism’. Similarly, another member insisted HT was a force for good, as it directed Muslim grievances towards peaceful political activism. Despite its radical rhetoric, HT repeatedly and unequivocally has said the killing of civilians is forbidden. This is not a recent or opportunistic shift in policy since party methodology rejected the use of violence as a means for achieving its ideological goals over fifty years ago. Since the 9/11 terror attacks, HT has tried to counter the growth of Islamic militancy in the Muslim community by articulating a non-violent channel for Muslim anger. According to HT its work is peaceful and positive, as they have stated:

In the UK our work with the Muslim community is focused on directing Muslims to make a positive contribution to society whilst preserving their Islamic identity... Many of our members have senior roles in IT, economics, medicine, teaching, engineering, and some of our members were involved in treating the victims of the 7th July bombings in London's hospitals (HT media Pack 2008, p. 4).

HT believes they are working towards the betterment of the Muslim community by offering alternative solutions to the dilemmas of British life. Yet, this seemingly noble goal does not quite extend to integrating Muslims within the social fabric of British society, making it harder to see the group as a symbol for good. However, British Muslims in growing numbers are beginning to question their association with the state. In the newly proposed counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST 2, the government is seeking to establish 'a British version of Islam' in which Muslims must adhere to British values (Ruth Kelly, *New Statesman* 09/04/2007). This extremely disjointed proposal demands Muslims must adopt shared British values, even though, despite the inescapable undermining of freedom of opinion, these values remain highly ambiguous and undefined. It seems the government is trying to intervene in theological issues, which is surely a matter for the Muslim community to debate and resolve themselves. These somewhat drastic proposals if targeted towards HT will not pacify their radical activism, and thus seem counter-productive.

## **8.5 Conclusion:**

The research presented in this thesis has concentrated on one of the most controversial Islamist groups in Britain. Although the British media seem fascinated by HT, the academic community has failed to quantify its emergence within a British context. This is partly why I chose to carry out the study. I have discovered HT radicalisation to be a narrow and distinct process with identifiable patterns related to those who are attracted to the organisation. One of the main sets of issues raised for discussion throughout this study has been the phenomenon of HT middle-class radicalism. In recent times, broad strategies have been formulated to counter radicalisation, which assumes radicals do not match a specified demographic or profile. In contrast, not only are the underlying features of HT radicalisation identifiable, but more significantly it is rooted within a homogenous context. Amongst political commentators there is a growing tendency to work out and apply generic causal

features of radicalisation to highly diverse Islamic groups and peoples.<sup>204</sup> This ignores the features present in middle-class HT radicalism that serve to distinguish it from the radicalism of working-class Muslims.<sup>205</sup> Clearly, there is a need for more sustained study on this social group, as this demographic has shown strong identification with HT.

The HT members I studied were not ‘abnormal’.<sup>206</sup> They were young middle-class Asian professionals who turned their backs on western society and embraced a radical version of Islam. I set out, therefore, to discover why these young men and women had joined HT. In part, HT radicalisation was conceived as a response to the frustrations experienced during the early life cycle. These included issues of racism, social deprivation and alienation, cultural marginalisation, identity crisis and psychological unsettlement. HT radicalisation became a means to express their reaction against these frustrations, and the white majority’s alleged failure to live up to certain professed ideals, such as social egalitarianism. Despite their high educational and professional success, HT members were characterised by their social vulnerability, which facilitated a propensity for the radical politics of HT. This is perhaps a measure to the extent adverse social experiences can have upon the identity construction of some young British Muslims. Those who joined the ranks of HT felt a deep sense of social and political displacement within society. Accordingly, HT provided a safe social space to reconstruct identity, which gave the recruits a sense of belonging and acceptance. Based on the foregoing discussion on HT, a clear picture has been sketched out that provides a comprehensive investigation of the roots – political, social, cultural and psychological – of HT radicalisation in Britain. By identifying the context in which HT radicalisation takes place, and through penetrating the clandestine veil of the organisation, an important step forward has been made in ‘demystifying’ HT radical behaviour and ideology.

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<sup>204</sup> Refer to chapter one, pp. 10-12 and chapter two, pp. 59-69.

<sup>205</sup> In the light of my research, it is clear that a rethink of how the government tackles HT radicalisation is needed. The British government has been greatly preoccupied in recent years with the problem of working-class radicalisation. I have constantly stressed that little if any attention has been directed to the small minority of middle-class Muslims who endorse radical Islamic views and activism.

<sup>206</sup> ‘Abnormal’ in this context refers to mental disorder as defined in psychology (Gill, 2007).

## Appendix I:

### List of Interview Questions with Founding Members of UK Branch of HT

My research has involved conducting extensive interviews with a wide-spectrum of HT activists and members. The first phase of interviews sought to gather a definitive source of data on the formative period of HT in Britain. This required the acquisition of new historical sources, which could only be extrapolated from the founding members of the UK branch. After identifying Farid Kassim and Omar Bakri Mohammed as the main protagonists, I sought to organise interviews with them, as they were the only individuals that could yield insight into the historical growth of HT in Britain. Consequently, I constructed a list of standardised questions, namely through semi-structured interviews. The following is a breakdown of the questions I used to elicit information from the two respondents:

**Figure 1.1 Interview One: Farid Kassim**

No.	Type of Question(s)	Description and Outcome
1	Before we discuss your involvement in HT, can you tell me a little about your upbringing and background?	Question(s) 1 to 4: These questions sought to find out about the social reality and context of the respondents background, which would help me better understand the social influences on the respondents life experiences as well as their beliefs, identity and social position.
2	What is your ethnicity?	
3	What class do you think best represents your social status and why?	
4	Did you have a religious upbringing, where you a practicing Muslims before you joined HT?	
5	How did HT form in the UK and where did this formation take place?	Question(s) 5 to 9: These questions tried to find out about the circumstances of the respondents recruitment. It was also important to discover the location of the first encounters between transient HT members and native activists.
6	Where/when did you encounter HT and what can you remember about this experience?	
7	Were you the first native member of HT?	
8	Why did you join HT? What attracted you to the group?	
9	Do you think location played a role in your recruitment?	
10	When/how did you meet Omar Bakri Mohammed?	
11	What was the composition of the early recruits? Class background, ethnicity and nationality?	Question(s) 11 to 14: Sought to discover the social composition of the earliest recruits.
12	Do you think the commonality between the early recruits (e.g. class and ethnicity) played a part in their recruitment?	
13	What do you think the appeal of HT was during the early 1990s?	
14	What was the composition of the early recruits? Class background, ethnicity and nationality?	

15	How did public activity begin?	Question(s) 15 to 20: elicited information about the growth of public activism in the UK, and the strategies employed by the leadership.
16	How important was Omar Bakri? In the culturing process and public activity?	
17	Why do you think HT activity was successful on university campuses?	
18	If HT ideology is ethno-religiously broad, then why did HT struggle to recruit: (1) working class Asians; (2) First generation Muslims; and (3) non-South Asians?	
19	What impact did the Rushdie Affair and the Gulf War have on recruitment and activism?	
20	What about public events like the International Khilafah Conference and The Rally for Islam? How much impact did these events have and why were they organised?	
21	Why was Omar Bakri's membership terminated? Did you agree with this decision? What impact did his departure have?	Question(s) 21 to 23: Asked a range of questions about post-HT.
22	Why did you join HT2? <sup>207</sup>	
23	What do you think about HT1's recent shift towards more mainstream politics? What are your views of HT1	

A key issue that the researcher sought to extract from the respondents related to the personal and professional experiences they had of the legal system in Syria, and their specific views of the state of emergency. This allowed me to gain a wider understanding of the lawyers shared experiences of everyday legal practice and the influences of the government enforced state of emergency. The focus group provided a rich source of data, which allowed me to find out what issues were perceived as salient. I did encounter some problems with this research method, however, when talking about politically sensitive matters related to government policy. The responses of some participants were not independent and felt very guarded due to fear of governmental reprisals or sanctions.

### Figure 1.2 Interview Two: Omar Bakri Mohammed

No.	Type of Question(s)	Description and Outcome
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<sup>207</sup> In 1997, a small band of members, led by Abu Rami, within the highest levels of the party hierarchy staged an organised mutiny, announcing the removal of the Amir Abdul Qadeem Zalluom. They cited that the leadership was guilty of gross incompetence; denouncing Zalluom for allowing the publication of an adopted book 'Hamla-dawah' that allegedly contained violations against the adopted thoughts of the Party (Shahid, member, 1997). The articulated logic behind the mutineers' contention was vague and incoherent, especially as the book was only printed in Arabic. When news of the insurrection reached the shores of the UK, it caused a popular division. Many fringe members who had grown discontented with their own lack of internal power endorsed the removal of the Amir.

1	Can you please explain you background? Place of birth, religious affiliations and scholarship?	Question(s) 1 and 4: Sought to provide a historical pretext to Omar Bakri's arrival in the UK. Also, I wanted to find out about his upbringing and radicalisation in Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.
2	When did you join HT (which country / context / reason)?	
3	You spent several years in Saudi Arabia; can you briefly explain your activity and reason for leaving?	
4	Why did you seek political asylum in Britain?	
5	When did you arrive in the UK? What were your early views of Britain (e.g. culture and society)?	Question(s) 5 to 10: Sought to discover the context in which UK activism began and evolved.
6	What contact did you have with the British Muslim Community and what were your initial perceptions of the Muslim community?	
7	How did HT public activism begin?	
8	How/when did you meet Fraid Kassim?	
9	When did you become UK leader?	
10	What strategies did you employ to recruit British Muslims? Why do you think young middle class Asians were attracted to HT?	
11	Why did you target university campuses?	
12	What issues did you identify for dawah purposes (e.g. international or local issues) and why?	
13	How did you culture young recruits?	
14	How did you organise HT activity?	
15	Why did you organise national events (e.g. like the Khilafah Conference)?	
16	How much autonomy did you have as UK leader? What was your connection with the Central HT leadership in Jordan?	
15	Why did you leave HT?	Question(s) 15 to 20: These questions tried to find out about the historical narrative of Omar Bakri post-HT. In particular, focusing on his views and ALM.
16	Why did you form ALM? What was its aims and methodology	
17	Why did you disband ALM?	
18	Why did ALM only recruit working class Muslims?	
19	What are your views of 9/11 and 7/7?	
20	Do you think ALM acts as a gateway organisation for terrorism?	



## **Appendix II:**

### **Breakdown and Interview questions with Male HT members**

The following is a list of the standardised questions that were employed in the data collection stage, namely through semi-structured interviews. The open-ended questions sought to elicit responses from my respondents regarding why they joined HT. This entailed formulating a range of questions about: (1) their upbringing and background, (2) Social status and identity, (3) religiosity, (4) and the context in which they joined HT. From a technical standpoint, I did not ask any closed ended or forced choice questions (e.g. like multiple choice questions), as I wanted to hear the experiences and views of the respondents. Before administering the interviews, a detailed explanation was given regarding the researcher's motives and purpose of the study, and full assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were conferred.

**Figure 1.3 Interview(s): Male HT members**

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<b>No.</b>	<b>Type of Question(s)</b>
1	Can you tell me about your upbringing? Where you grew up / family life / schooling.
2	Can you tell me about your parents? Their country of origin / occupation / religious commitment etc.
3	What social class do you think best represents your parents / your upbringing / yourself? And why?
4	What was school like? Racism / friends
5	How connected are you to your parent's country of origin? Is your ethnicity an important aspect of your identity as a child / teenager / adult?
6	What about religion? Was this an important part of your identity as a child / teenager / adult? Why?
7	Did you think of yourself as British? If yes or no why? Childhood / teenage experiences?
8	Where/how did you encounter HT?
9	Why did you join HT?
10	Did your early childhood experiences play a role in your joining HT?
11	Tell me about your university experiences? Did it play a role in joining HT? If so how?
12	What about your peer group associations? At university?
13	Why do you think HT attracts a large group of young middle class Asians?
14	What were your views of 9/11 and 7/7? Does it match HT's views?
15	Do you think you have been radicalised by HT? Explain?

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The tables below are a breakdown of the respondents, which documents their age, ethnicity, religion and profession. This gives some contextual insight into the respondent's background

and identity. After each discussion, I would briefly reflect on the information given by the respondents in order to pick out possible themes for further investigation.

**Figure 1.4 Interviews: General breakdown**

No.	Age(s)	Ethnicity	Profession / Occupation	Location of Respondent(s)	Interview Duration	Year of Recruitment
1	32	Pakistani	Software Engineer	West London	1hrs 15mins	1993
2	27	Indian	Doctor	London	57mins	1998
3	-	Pakistani	Teacher	Bradford	1hr 5mins	1993
4	22	Pakistani	Student	West London	2hrs	2002
5	-	Indian	-	West London	20mins	-
6	-	Pakistani	IT Consultant	Birmingham	40mins	2003
7	20	Pakistani	Student	Birmingham	1hr 35mins	2002
8	29	Bangladeshi	Consultant	East London	35mins	1995
9	22	Bangladeshi	Student	East London	2hrs 5mins	2002
10	25	Indian	Dentist	London	38mins	1999
11	19	Pakistani	Student	Manchester	1hr 28mins	2004
12	25	Pakistani	IT consultant	Manchester	1hr 10mins	2000
13	26	Pakistani	Pharmacologist	West London	42mins	1998
14	32	Pakistani	Self-employed	West London	1hr 20mins	1994
15	20	Indian	Student	West London	35mins	2003
16	31	Pakistani	Self-employed	West London	40mins	1994
17	30	English	Consultant	East London	1hr	1995
18	25	Pakistani	Doctor	South London	1hr 12mins	1998
19	-	Indian	Accountant	South London	28mins	2004
20	19	Pakistani	Student	South London	-	2004
21	24	Bangladeshi	Student	South London	-	2000
22	36	Pakistani	Doctor	West London	2hrs	1994
23	22	Pakistani	Student	West London	50mins	2002
24	28	Pakistani	Teacher	East London	-	1996
25	29	Pakistani	Teacher	West London	1hr	1996
26	25	Indian	Accountant	Central London	1hr	2001
27	26	Pakistani- English	Computer Analyst	Berkshire	2hrs 35mins	1998
28	27	Pakistani	IT Consultant	London	2hr 46mins	1999

**Appendix III**  
**Synopsis of Male Respondents**

The following is a short synopsis of each personal interview, which I conducted with male HT members. The goal of collecting these personal narratives was to understand the changing experiences of HT activists. Although, large portions of the interviews centred on the life histories of the members, significant attention was also given to topical and thematic questions related the respondents opinions (e.g. their views on the 9/11 terror attacks). Overall, the narratives I collected provided a rich source of information, which provided me insight into the HT social world and the radicalisation process

**Interview 1: Respondent A**

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
32	Pakistani	Software Engineer	West London

Respondent A is a 32 year old British born Pakistani. He joined HT at university in 1993 after encountering HT recruiters in the canteen. He revealed gravitating towards Asians at college and university, because he felt excluded by white people throughout his youth, forcing him to construct an identity orientated around ‘British Asianism’, which he cited was popular during his time at university. He described this association as a ‘social security blanket’, in which he gained a sense of security by socialising with people belonging to the same racial group as him. However, this did not provide a stable identity outlet, as Respondent A mentioned: ‘they (Asians) were all lower class...coming from uneducated families that arrived off the banana boat from the *pind* (rural villages)...so I struggled to connect with them’. His encounter with HT introduced him to individuals that shared a similar social background and experiences, which provided him a real and safe space to construct a new identity. Thus, radicalisation took place within a peer group setting.

**Interview 2: Mohammed**

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
27	Indian	Doctor	London

Mohammed is a 27 year old British born Indian; he joined HT in 1998 at university. Initially, he alleged his childhood did not impact his decision to join HT. However, during the course of the interview, he revealed that he became dislocated from British society. He cited racism and prejudice as key social triggers for his disassociation with British society, despite these experiences Mohammed insisted when he joined HT it was purely motivated by ‘ideology’. As he explained: ‘I was convinced by the way the Hizb packaged the deen (Islam) as a rational doctrine...this was important because I always thought of myself as a rational person’. Ideology may have played a part in the radicalisation process, but it is problematic to de-contextualise his upbringing and experiences.

**Interview 3: Respondent B**

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
-	Pakistani	Teacher	Bradford

Respondent B Joined HT in 1993. He grew up near to Bradford, in a lower-middle class white suburb. His father was a doctor, and thus he had a comfortable upbringing. However, Respondent B felt disconnected from his ethnic and cultural roots, as he described: ‘I grew up cut off from everything Asian...I wanted Asian friends because the people around me always made me feel like an outsider’. This sense of dislocation from society and community pushed him to seek out the familiar in adulthood. At university he saw a flyer advertising a talk entitled: ‘Bosnia Today Bradford Tomorrow’. According to Respondent B,

‘Bosnia meant absolutely nothing to me, who were the Serbs? But *Ghoreea* [white English people] I knew, and they were fully capable of cleansing Britain of us [Asians/Muslims]’. From his narrative, it was clear Respondent B felt deeply affected by racism and alienation, which greatly fuelled his trajectory towards radical Islam. The motivation to join HT was somewhat associated to providing Respondent B with a sense of belonging. As he stated: ‘I felt connected to them [HT members] because they made me feel welcome and we shared similar backgrounds’. The radicalisation of Respondent B takes place within a closed setting, namely within the HT peer group at university. The peer group was composed of individuals that shared the same sense of social dislocation from British society, making it easier to relate to his social needs.

#### **Interview 4: Respondent C**

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
22	Pakistani	Student	West London

Respondent C joined HT in 2002 at university. The events of 9/11 reinforced a sense of social estrangement from British society. As he mentioned: ‘they [non-Muslims] hated us [Muslims] before 9/11, the only thing that changed after 9/11 was their open declaration of hatred towards us’. Despite being influenced by the events of 9/11, the pretext of Respondent C’s radicalisation goes back further. His childhood was littered with racially motivated violence and discrimination, which skewed his sense of belonging and acceptance. He felt like an ‘outsider’ from an early age. In addition, according to his own testimony, he felt equally estranged from his ethnic and religious community, expediting his withdraw from British society. Initially, in the wake of 9/11, Respondent C felt inspired by militant Islam. As he described: ‘I was inspired by Jihad after the 9/11 attacks...America had waged a war against Islam and Muslims and for the first time in my lifetime I’d seen America with a bloody nose’. However, this sense of Jihadism evaporated at university, when he encountered Jihadists. According to Respondent C, ‘they were phonies’. He struggled to connect to them within a social context. As he described: ‘they always wanted to take me to the Mosque...I’d never stepped foot in a Mosque in my life’. Furthermore, they had emerged from dissimilar social realities and backgrounds, the jihadists had grown up in working class Muslim communities, and thus religious practice was embedded within them since early childhood. After moving away from his jihadist friends, he encountered a HT recruiter in the university canteen. After this he started attending HT events and rapidly became an active participant in HT dawah activities. Interestingly, the HT peer group provided him a sense of belonging, which could not be replicated by jihadist recruiters.

#### **Interview 5: Respondent D**

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
-	Indian	-	London

Very limited biographical data was supplied by Respondent D. He did talk in brief about joining HT at university, but very little can be inferred from his experiences as he was reluctant to provide more information about himself.

#### **Interview 6: Respondent E**

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
-	Pakistani	IT Consultant	Birmingham

Respondent E joined HT after he attended the nationally arranged conference entitled: ‘British or Muslim’, which was held by HT on 24 August 2003. According to Respondent E, he struggled to negotiate his identity throughout his upbringing and constantly felt out of place in, what he referred to as, ‘white Britain’. The event helped Respondent E reevaluate his

position in British society, and thus pushed him to reject the notion of ‘Britishness’. After the conference, he was contacted by local HT recruiters and subsequently joined the group a few weeks later. Beyond the Islamic duty rhetoric, he suggested HT provided him solutions to his confusions about life and gave him a deep sense of purpose.

#### **Interview 7: Ali**

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
20	Pakistani	Student	Birmingham

Ali joined HT in early 2002, what is striking about his narrative is the limited impact 9/11 had upon his radicalisation. As he mentioned: ‘I hated Britain well before 9/11 exposed the hatred they (non-Muslims) have for us (Muslims)’. His trajectory into the group is interesting, as he grew up in Birmingham, yet his experiences are very similar to those members in London. He felt socially isolated from both White and Asian communities. He cited multiple examples of racism that made him feel like an outsider, while at the same time he struggled to relate to his ethnic culture and people.

#### **Interview 8: Abu Yusuf**

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
29	Bangladeshi	Consultant	East London

Abu Yusuf joined HT in 1995 at college. He described his upbringing in the East End of London as extremely difficult and complicated. Despite his father being a doctor, he struggled to cope with his social and economic environment. In particular, they lived within a working class community (albeit owning a large town house), which meant he had to navigate between his middle class affluence and the poverty of his working class friends. He described a community sharply divided on racial grounds, and thus his friends seemed exclusively drawn from the same ethnic grouping. According to Abu Yusuf, he deliberately sought out friendships with ‘Asians’, because he was distrustful of white people. More significantly, university gave him the chance to encounter middle class South Asian Muslims, which allowed him to be himself. As he stated: ‘being amongst the brothers (HT members) at university allowed me to open up my personality, I felt safe, and we (HT members) shared a lot in terms of our backgrounds and stuff’.

#### **Interview 9: Respondent F**

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
22	Bangladeshi	Student	East London

Respondent F joined HT in 2002 at the age of 20. He candidly talked about his childhood and upbringing in a racially divided community. He found it particularly difficult to negotiate between different social settings, as he felt torn between his white and Asian school friends. Consequently, he felt like an outsider from both community and society, making more susceptible to joining HT in adulthood. Interestingly, the events of 9/11 do not feature in his narrative, as he explained: ‘9/11 never changed my day to day life’. Respondent F joined HT in his second year of university, after indulging in what he described as ‘jahlyiah’ [non-Islamic practice]. More significantly, he suggested that religiosity never appealed to him, as he was raised in a secular household. Therefore, his attraction to HT was influenced by political activism and ideology, as these facets of HT deeply interested him. This begs the question, why did his interest in political ideology not take a more mainstream path? Piecing together an answer to this question was somewhat difficult, as Respondent F only provided small glimpses into his narrative. However, he did acknowledge, HT offered him a sense of social belonging and acceptance.

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**Interview 10: Respondent G**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
25	Indian	Dentist	London

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Respondent G was not prepared to talk at length about his upbringing, nor would he elaborate about his experiences within HT. In sum, he suggested that he found it difficult to integrate as he was the only Asian in his school, which constantly reinforced the feeling of being socially different. At university he was able to gain a sense of belonging when he joined HT in 1999. He revealed that his motivation to join HT was purely intellectual and had nothing to do with the plight of Muslims. In fact, he insisted that he only felt Muslim once he joined the group, and thus developed a communal attachment to Muslim people across the world.

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**Interview 11: Respondent H**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
19	Pakistani	Student	Manchester

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Respondent H is a young British born Muslim from Manchester. He joined HT in 2004 at the age of 18. His older brother joined the group and subsequently recruited Respondent H into the organisation. He was reluctant to expand upon this further and was unprepared to talk about the context of his radicalisation.

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**Interview 12: AQ**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
25	Pakistani	IT Consultant	Manchester

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AQ joined HT in 2000 at university. His personal narrative began with a detailed description of his early experiences during his school years. In particular, a sense of social dislocation began to develop when he was placed in a predominately white private school. He struggled to gain belonging and acceptance. After three years of pleading to change schools, his parents removed him and placed him within a state school. However, the social composition of the school was predominately Asian. Despite being surrounded by people of the same ethnic makeup, AQ struggled to build relationships with his classmates. As he stated: 'I was seen as white, I spoke with a private school boy accent and by some cruel twist of fate I was surrounded by working class Asians, a group of people whom I had nothing in common expect the same skin pigmentation'. The inability to form stable relationships drew AQ to HT at university, as they offered him friendship amongst individuals who could identify with his struggles.

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**Interview 13: Adam**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
26	Pakistani	Pharmacologist	London

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Adam is a 26 year old British born Pakistani, who joined HT at the age of 18 (1998). He initially came across HT recruiters at secondary school. He quickly gained acceptance and within the peer setting started to take an interest in 'Islamic politics' and for the first time became religious. However, despite his friendship with activists and agreement with the party cause he was extremely reluctant to join the group, as he feared parental chastisement. At university, however, Adam sought out HT activists. He insisted it was a duty to 'carry dawah' and thus he befriended a small group of HT activists at the fresher's fair. His radicalisation from this point was greatly expedited. He became involved in organising activities and was placed in Halaqah.

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**Interview 14: Respondent I**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
32	Pakistani	Self-employed	West London

Respondent I joined HT in 1994, after attending the first international *Khilafah* conference, held at Wembley Arena. The conference sought to raise national awareness for the call to re-establish the *Khilafah* (Islamic State). According to Respondent I, the idea and notion of a 'global khilafah', which could politically unite Muslims, interested him. After attending the conference he sought out HT activists in his local area, believing it an obligation to work to re-establish the global khilafah. Respondent I explained he was not religiously inclined in his youth and his attraction to HT took a political trajectory. As he stated: 'Hizb ut-Tahrir is a political party, and its ideology is Islam'. More significantly, before joining HT, he actively attended talks and events organised by a variety of different Islamic organisations (e.g. YMO, JIMAS, FOSIS). However, he felt none of these groups tackled the vital issues affecting Muslims. Respondent I also suggested that he struggled to connect to the members from these organisations. As he explained: 'they were totally out of touch, especially from my world and experiences...so how could they solve the problems of the ummah'. Eventually, he joined HT and found what he described as a 'real sense of purpose and direction'.

#### Interview 15: Respondent J

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
20	Indian	Student	London

Respondent J was unprepared to talk in details about his radicalisation, insisting it was inspired by religious reaffirmation. He joined the group in 2003 and insisted global events, namely 9/11 had little impact on his desire to join HT. As he stated: 'I joined because it is Fard, once I was convinced it was a Fard then my response was simple...A believer hears and obeys simple'.

#### Interview 16: Respondent K

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
31	Pakistani	Self-Employed	London

Respondent K joined HT in 1994 at university. He was not prepared to talk about any aspect of his childhood, as he felt this would skew perception away from the real motivation behind joining HT, which he described as an intellectual awakening. According to Respondent K, 'the Hizb connected my thoughts and emotions to Islam, not in a spiritual sense but in a political and intellectual sense'. However, after much discussion, he accepted that his early experiences may have played a role in him seeking out greater identity solutions in adulthood. Nevertheless, despite feeling socially aggrieved by British society, Respondent K insisted his radicalisation centred on a narrow political and ideological paradigm.

#### Interview 17: Respondent L

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
30	English	Consultant	East London

Respondent L converted to Islam after attending the 'Rally for Islam' at Trafalgar Square in 1995. According to Respondent L, his conversion to Islam was greatly inspired by his early childhood experiences. In particular, he grew up in a predominately South Asian area and felt accepted amongst Asians. Consequently, in adulthood he felt drawn to Asian people, and thus his radicalisation was crafted in this context. As he stated: 'I grew up with Muslims...so my inclinations were always for Islam, joining the Hizb and embracing Islam was something inevitable...the brothers are my family'.

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**Interview 18: Abdul-Haq**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
25	Pakistani	Doctor	South London

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Abdul-Haq joined HT in 1998 at university. Despite growing up in a predominantly Asian area, he found it extremely difficult to relate to this community. As he stated: ‘my family are affluent while they [Asians] are working class villagers...they are backward and uneducated’. Abdul-Haq conceptualised his experiences within an ethno-class paradigm, in essence, creating class boundaries between himself and other Asians. These boundaries translated into cultural divisions, in which the two opposing groups had little commonality. At university, however, Abdul-Haq encountered HT recruiters who belonged to the same Asian middle-class tradition as himself.

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**Interview 19: Respondent M**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
-	Indian	Accountant	South London

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Respondent M joined HT in 2004. He was unprepared to talk about his upbringing and social background. He insisted joining HT was a rational and autonomous choice, and trying to pigeonhole his motives into a generic set of theories and cause greatly understated his ‘true motivation to carry Islam to the world’. Without any deep insight into his personal narrative it was difficult to build a picture of his radicalisation.

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**Interview 20: Respondent N**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
19	Pakistani	Student	South London

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Respondent N joined HT in 2004. It seemed clear from his personal narrative that his childhood experiences played a key role in his radicalisation in adulthood. Firstly, he was victimised by white youths throughout his teenage years. This unsettling period left him feeling detached from British society. Secondly, he developed deep resentment and anger towards white people. This skewed his perception of non-Muslims. Consequently, at university he sought out friendships with Asian people, as a result he came across HT recruiters. He developed close friendships with these activists and they taught him about Islam and HT ideology. Within this setting, he began to pray for the first time, and joined HT. By his own admission, despite his radicalisation taking place after 9/11, his trajectory into radical Islam was rather personalised and based on his contextual experiences.

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**Interview 21: Respondent O**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
24	Bangladeshi	Student	South London

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Respondent O joined HT in 2000 at university. It became clear, in Respondent O’s case, he struggled to merge his ethnic identity with the social setting in which he was embedded within. At school, for example, he cited instances of hiding his ethno-religious identity in order to fit into the dominant white culture. In order to gain acceptance he would change his name and pretend to be half English. Yet, despite these actions, he was still perceived as different. This difference centred on his racial identity and makeup, something he could not physically erase. Although, he had white friends, he never felt completely accepted. At university, however, he gained acceptance amongst the HT peer group, which gave him a sense of comfort within the familiar (e.g. South Asian Middle Class Muslims that shared similar social experiences and backgrounds).

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**Interview 22: Respondent P**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
36	Pakistani	Doctor	West London

Respondent P has been a member for over ten years, joining the group in early 1994. Firstly, he experienced a relatively settled childhood, but at college he encountered considerable displacement. In particular, the college was divided along ethno-religious lines, pushing Respondent P to befriend Asian Muslims. However, he struggled to connect culturally to these individuals, as they emerged from an Asian working class tradition, something rather foreign to Respondent P. These differences made it difficult to gain a sense of acceptance and belonging. However, after moving away from Asian groups, he encountered HT activists. Despite gaining friendship amongst the peer group, he was reluctant to join the organisation, as he was not religiously or politically inclined. Eventually, after a year, he joined HT. As he explained: ‘at the start I just viewed the hizb as one big social club...it was nice hanging around the brothers, but after a month or two in *Halaqah* the ideas started to gain real meaning and I started to carry the dawah’. This rather insightful passage illustrates two important elements in Respondent P’s radicalisation. Firstly, he is indoctrinated within the closed setting of the halaqah, in which his world view is reformatted. Secondly, he is attracted to the social element of the HT peer group, as these activists share similar backgrounds and experiences.

#### Interview 23: Respondent Q

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
22	Pakistani	Student	West London

Respondent Q joined HT in 2002, after a close childhood friend had become recruited into the group. He found this rather shocking, as both were not politically or religiously orientated. His friend had joined the group at his university, and invited Respondent Q to attend HT talks and events. Within this friendship dynamic Respondent Q felt obligated to join HT.

#### Interview 24: D

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
28	Pakistani	Teacher	East London

D joined HT in 1996. He grew up with a strong ambition to become a professional football player; however, he failed to secure a contract. He had several football trials with various clubs, during one trial he recalled being singled out for being Asian, and was asked by coaching staff about his diet. As he reflected: ‘they asked if I ate curry everyday...it was disgusting’. After this incident he began to think of himself as an outsider, alienated from British society due to his ethno-racial identity. He equated his failure to become a professional footballer to racism and discrimination, as he mentioned: ‘I know if I was white I would’ve got a contract easy’. His negative experiences helped him develop a susceptibility to HT radicalisation. At university he joined HT, but clearly his early experiences triggered his eventual recruitment. As he stated: ‘in some ways if I had become a footballer I’d probably never have joined the hizb’.

#### Interview 25: Respondent R

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
29	Pakistani	Teacher	West London

Respondent R joined HT in 1996, after his older brother had become a member. As he explained: ‘I joined the hizb because of my older brother...he came back from university and was with the hizb. He took me along to circles and the rest was history’. For respondent R, HT gave him access to a new social world. In particular, for the first time he encountered

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Muslims that shared similar experiences and backgrounds as himself, which he found appealing.

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**Interview 26: Respondent S**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
25	Indian	Accountant	Central London

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Respondent S joined HT in 2001. Although, he joined the group before 9/11, he was adamant that 9/11 had little effect on HT recruitment. He asked: ‘how could 9/11 motivate young Muslims to join HT, it’s not possible’. Respondent S explained that he never felt British growing up, and he could not connect to his Asian identity. Consequently, he felt excluded from all elements of society, and thus HT offered him a means to reconstruct his identity around the familiar.

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**Interview 27: Tariq**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
26	Pakistani-English	Computer Analyst	Berkshire

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Refer to chapter four for a full description of his case.

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**Interview 28: Abdul**

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Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Location
27	Pakistani	Software Engineer	London

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Refer to chapter four for a full description of his case.

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**Appendix IV:**  
**Focus Group I - Female HT members**

I was not able to arrange any individual interviews with female activists, due to strict segregation rules between men and women. Therefore, I opted to organise focus group discussions, the following is a breakdown of the standardised questions asked:

**Figure 1.5 Focus Group (I): Questions**

No.	Type of Question(s)
1	Can you briefly tell me about your upbringing? Where you grew up / family life / schooling / country of origin etc.
2	Growing up did you feel socially integrated or alienated? Describe your experiences?
3	Did you ever experience racism or Islamphobia?
4	Was your upbringing religiously inclined?
5	When\Where did you encounter HT? Describe your initial experience of the HT recruiters you met?
6	Why did you join HT?
7	Do you think HT ideology has emancipated? Do you think HT ideology is patriarchal and orientated against women?
8	Are you equally treated in HT? Activism and leadership?
9	Does Islam liberate women? If so why?
10	What processes are involved in joining HT? Culturing process?
11	Did your university experiences influence your decision to join HT?
12	What about your peer group associations? At university?
13	Why do you think HT attracts a large group of young middle class Asians?
14	What were your views of 9/11 and 7/7? Does it match HT's views?
15	Do you think you have been radicalised by HT? Explain?

**Figure 1.6 Focus Group I: Breakdown of Respondents**

No.	Age(s)	Name	Ethnicity	Profession / Occupation	Location of respondent(s)	Interview Duration
1	28	Amina	Indian	Researcher	London	2hrs
2	-	Sara	Pakistani	Teacher	-	
3	-	Nadia	Pakistani	History Graduate / Homemaker	London	
4	27	Nina	Pakistani	Teacher	London	

**Appendix V:**  
**Focus Group II - Ex-HT members**

The following is a list of the standardised questions that were employed in the data collection stage, namely through focus group discussions. The open-ended questions sought to elicit responses from my respondents regarding diverse and broad issues related to why they decided to leave HT.

**Figure 1.7 Focus Group (II): Questions**

No.	Type of Question(s)
1	Can you tell me about your upbringing? Where you grew up / family life / schooling.
2	Can you tell me about your parents? Their country of origin / occupation / religious commitment etc.
3	What social class do you think best represents your parents / your upbringing / yourself? And why?
4	What was school like? Racism / friends
5	How connected are you to your parent's country of origin? Is your ethnicity an important aspect of your identity as a child / teenager / adult?
6	What about religion? Was this an important part of your identity as a child / teenager / adult? Why?
7	Did you think of yourself as British? If yes or no why? Childhood / teenage experiences?
8	Where/how did you encounter HT?
9	Why did you join HT?
10	Did your early childhood experiences play a role in your joining HT?
11	Tell me about your university experiences? Did it play a role in joining HT? If so how?
12	What about your peer group associations? At university?
13	Why do you think HT attracts a large group of young middle class Asians?
14	What were your views of 9/11 and 7/7? Does it match HT's views?
15	Do you think you were radicalised by HT? Explain?
16	Why did you leave HT?
17	Have you become less or more radical after leaving HT?
18	Do you still agree with aspects of HT ideology?

**Figure 1.8 Focus Group II: Breakdown of Respondents**

No.	Age(s)	Name	Ethnicity	Profession / Occupation	Location of respondent(s)	Interview Duration
1	32	Dawud	Indian	Politics graduate	West London	2hrs 38mins
2	30	Ash	Bangladeshi	Student	South London	
3	29	Aminur	Bangladeshi	Accountant	South London	
4	27	AQ	Pakistani	IT Consultant	East London	

## Appendix VI: Control Group

### Control Group Discussion with non-HT activists

I organised two separate control group discussions with non-HT activists. This was a very important methodological process, as it allowed me to determine the possible distinction between HT members and non-members. Therefore, after I located 10 viable non-HT activists, I administered a focus group discussion to determine why these young Muslims were not inclined to joining HT.

**Figure 1.9 Control Group: Questions**

No.	Type of Question(s)
1	Can you tell me about your upbringing? Where you grew up / family life / schooling.
2	Can you tell me about your parents? Their country of origin / occupation / religious commitment etc.
3	What social class do you think best represents your parents / your upbringing / yourself? And why?
4	What was school like? Racism / friends
5	How connected are you to your parent's country of origin? Is your ethnicity an important aspect of your identity as a child / teenager / adult?
6	What about religion? Was this an important part of your identity as a child / teenager / adult? Why?
7	Did you think of yourself as British? If yes or no why? Childhood / teenage experiences?
8	Why did you not join HT after they contacted you?
9	Why do you think some young Muslims are attracted to HT?
10	Did you think your childhood experiences played a role in you not joining HT?
11	Tell me about your university experiences? Did you encounter HT at university? What were your views of HT?
12	Do you think HT has changed after 9/11 or 7/7? Have they become more moderate?
13	Do you think HT should be banned?
14	What were your views of 9/11 and 7/7? Does it match HT's views?

**Figure 1.10 Control Group I:**

#### **Breakdown of Respondents and Control group**

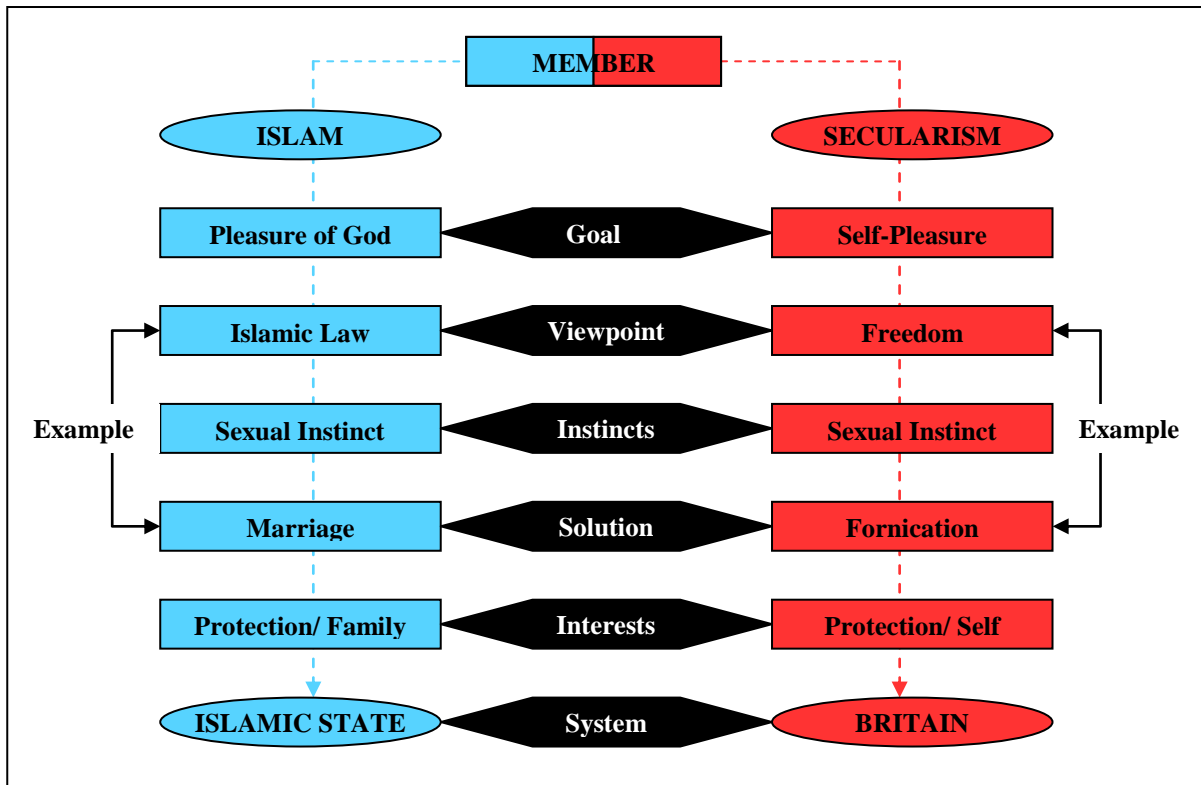
No.	Age(s)	Ethnicity	Profession / Occupation	Location of Interview	Interview Duration
1	34	Pakistani	Computer Engineer	West London	2hrs and 30mins
2	33	Pakistani	Accountant	West London	
3	28	Pakistani	Consultant	West London	
4	28	Pakistani	Consultant	West London	
5	35	Pakistani	-	West London	

**Figure 1.11 Control Group II:  
Breakdown of Respondents and Control group**

No.	Age(s)	Ethnicity	Profession / Occupation	Location of Interview	Interview Duration
1	25	Bangladeshi	Unemployed	East London Mosque	
2	-	Bangladeshi	-	East London Mosque	
3	24	Pakistani	Catering	East London Mosque	3hrs and 20mins
4	26	Bangladeshi	Construction	East London Mosque	
5	20	Pakistani	Unemployed	East London Mosque	

## Appendix VII: Dual Ideological Framework

According to several members, internal conflicts and deficiencies are the direct result of the “*dual ideological framework*” (cited by various members). This explanation provides insight, according to HT culture, into why the deficiencies within members are formed. In theory, a hybrid of ideological ideals is created that become assimilated into the identities of members, while living in a secular environment. The following diagram explains how the members can maintain two conflicting ideals:



The above diagram illustrates that before embracing HT ideology the novices adhered to secularism. Although they were Muslim by belief, their goal and viewpoint reflected a secular identity. Ideologically they sought to satisfy their basic instinctual needs by adopting solutions based on their own self-benefit, and thus the mind derived the solutions to problems. This process was forged in the mind, when activated by an external problem, which was rectified by referring to freedom as a viewpoint. The members underwent a holistic change, by first rationally detaching themselves from the inherent imperfections of western ideology. The member operates from within this identity framework, until the transformation process is completed. The identity that is forged from this framework is opposed to any foreign ideal, either from western or Asian culture, and this leads to the Hizbi identity. However, in actuality this rarely occurs, because members cannot completely extract the secular identity from their personalities.

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