Why join ISIS? The causes of terrorism from the Muslim
youth perspective

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Contents

Abstract

The study explores the causes of Islamic terrorism from a Muslim youth perspective. To gain a better understanding of why a growing number of young Muslims from Britain are joining ISIS, the study utilised interviews with a sample of young Muslims from West Yorkshire – a geographical location that has previous links with terrorism. Using thematic analysis, the study revealed a wide range of factors that contribute to Islamic terrorism. The research suggests that young Muslims who join ISIS have a poor grasp of the Islamic faith and are limited in their understanding of religious concepts such as martyrdom and jihad. The research also suggests that that social networks such as family, peers, mosques, schools and social media play a significant role in terrorism and the recruitment of young Muslims by ISIS. The study also questions the effectiveness of UK's approach to combatting terrorism as participants felt that counter-terrorism strategies have the potential to stigmatise and alienate young Muslims, thereby pushing vulnerable individuals towards terrorism.

An Introduction to the thesis

The growing number of young Western Muslims abandoning their homes and joining terrorist groups in the Middle East has caused great concern among communities in the West. Radicalisation of Muslims has become one of the biggest threats facing Europe as Muslims as young as fourteen have fled Britain to join militants in the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Statistics reveal that over 27, 000 foreign fighters have joined ISIS, with more than a fifth of these fighters travelling from Europe and an estimated 600 believed to be British (Kirk, 2016; Sharma, 2015). Up to 5000 of these foreign fighters are believed to have returned to Europe after training in ISIS terror camps abroad (Qatja, 2016). Among the different types of terrorism motivated by religion, Islamist terrorism poses the biggest threat to Western societies (Franz, 2015). Following recent terror attacks in the US and Europe, the UK faces a severe threat from being targeted by ISIS and other terrorist organisations alike. This threat is evident from The Europol Report (2016) which revealed that from the 211 terror attacks in Europe during 2015, more than half of these were carried out in the UK. Furthermore, a report from the Home Office (2011) revealed that the UK had the highest number of terrorism related arrests (612) compared to any other country in the European Union between 2009 and 2010. These reports also warn of the threats the UK faces from Brits who return home after fighting for terrorist groups like ISIS in Syria and Iraq, stating that a significantly high number of these Brits are young Muslim men and women.

Despite receiving global attention in the media, the answer to why British Muslims are joining ISIS still remains inconclusive. Following the aftermath of 9/11 and 7/7 terror attacks, there has been a surge in interest among researchers to study the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism. Much of the existing literature on what motivates British Muslims to join ISIS focuses on "jihadism" (the ideology that the West is to blame for the oppression against Muslims around the world) and feelings of alienation and discrimination as common drivers of terrorism, particularly in second or third generation Muslims in Europe (Tibi, 2007; Khosrokhavar, 2009; Stroink, 2007). While there is accumulating research documenting the causes of terrorism among Muslim youth living in the West, there is a gap in the research for studies strictly dedicated to a specific community that has previous links with terrorism. West Yorkshire is a community that has a deep-rooted problem with Islamic terrorism, particularly its town of Dewsbury (Gillman, 2015). Britain's youngest suicide bomber, 17-year-old Talha Asmal, who was killed whilst fighting for ISIS in Syria was from Dewsbury. The small town

is also home to two of Britain's 7/7 bombers including Mohammad Siddique Khan who organised the attacks. By exploring the views of young Muslims living within a particular community that has previous links with terrorism, this may help identify underlying issues that are relevant to the study of Islamic extremism among Muslim youth.

While studies on terrorism provide an insight into the process of radicalisation, the answer to why so many young Muslims are joining ISIS remains inconclusive. Currently, there are a limited number of studies that explore young British Muslims' views of other young Muslims who have joined terrorist organisations such as ISIS. While studies on radicalisation may provide a useful insight into why several British Muslims have joined ISIS, they have often been challenged for lacking solid theoretical foundations and depth (Monoghan & Molnar, 2016). In order to combat ISIS and Islam-inspired terrorism, it is necessary to fully understand the underlying factors that make British Muslims more susceptible to terrorism. This study attempts to further investigate attitudes towards young British Muslims who travel abroad and join terrorist groups. It is expected that this study will provide opportunities for further research and practise by developing treatment rationales for terrorism. By identifying the drivers of Islamic terrorism from the viewpoint of Muslim youth, this will help policy makers better understand the root causes of terrorism and fight radicalisation. The aim of the current research study is to explore the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism from a Muslim youth perspective to gain a better understanding of why more and more young Muslims are joining ISIS. The research questions for this study are:

- What are young British Muslims' views on other Muslims who join Islamic extremist groups and what is ISIS' appeal for young Muslims?
- How are Muslims being targeted by terrorist groups and what role does social media play in the recruitment of young Muslims?
- How do counter terrorism strategies affect Muslim youth and what proposals to tackle radicalisation should be implemented in Britain?

Literature review

This section will review the existing theory and research literature on the causes of terrorism in Muslim youth. After examining the ideologies of terrorist groups like ISIS, this section will go on to evaluate the relevant research and theory which helps explains why some young Muslims are drawn to terrorism.

Radicalisation and its causes

While researchers have shed some light on the underlying processes of radicalisation, communities are still in debate as to what ISIS' appeal for young westerners is and why hundreds of Muslims have left their homes in Britain to join a callous group of terrorists. Over the last decade, the term radicalisation has more frequently appeared in media reports and political debates about terrorism among Muslim youth, particularly young men. Radicalisation seems to be a word that many use without stopping to consider its true meaning. In the literature on terrorism, r*adicalisation* is defined as process rather than an event which causes individuals to adopt extremist beliefs and support terrorism, and may ultimately lead to participation in terrorist activity (McCaulay and Moskalenko 2008). However, radicalisation, although useful in providing a framework for both underlying causes and motivating factors of terrorism, is weak in defining concepts and the stages in which radicalisation occurs (Silke, 2008). The term itself is open to different interpretations and therefore is a concept that is essentially contestable at many levels. Explanations vary from radicalisation being a cause of terrorist behaviour to loosely defining it as process which makes Muslims more susceptible to engage in terrorist activity, to a more rigid process of shifting from pacifism towards terrorism (Mandel, 2009). While some see radicalisation as the series of events which take place prior to a terrorist attack, others describe it as the movement towards extremist attitudes that may or may not lead to the occurrence of a terrorist attack.

The draw to radicalisation and terrorist behaviour among Muslim youth is described as a developmental process which is driven by alienation and resentment and has little to do with religion itself (Bizina & Gray, 2014). Young Muslims who are drawn to radicalisation wish to accomplish something momentous but simultaneously seek to associate themselves with a

religious cause. Conversely, some young Muslims adopt radical ideas in a bid to shift the blame for their inner suffering onto the society and others around them (Reitman, 2013). For example, teenage brothers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev who were responsible for the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013 claimed to be motivated by extremist Islamic ideology. However, Reitman (2013) suggests that the marriage breakdown of the Tsarneav brothers' parents which left the brothers abandoned in Boston without any social support contributed to their terrorist behaviour. As such, the extremist Islamic ideology provided an exit for their resentment towards the society that failed them and triggered a series of events which ultimately led to the Boston bombings. This proposition is further supported by Sageman (2004) who found that young Muslim men living in foreign countries felt estranged and were unable to secure profitable employment, and joining terrorist groups provided them with an escape from the anger and humiliation they felt.

A similar cause for radicalisation can be seen in British Muslims who are seeking an identity in the West but feel that they are not accepted by society. In the wake of the 7/7 attacks, British leaders began to place more emphasis on Islamic terrorism being a threat to the British culture and stressed the need for Muslims living in Britain to adopt British values. Consequently, the causes for radicalisation were considered to be a result of British Muslim youth growing up in segregated communities. Kepel (2004) found that several multicultural communities in England did not integrate with other ethnic or religious communities. As a result, some Muslim youth may feel marginalised as they fail to mix with fellow Brits and this may cause them to turn to Islam in an identity crisis and subsequently become radicalised by other extremists (Archick, 2007). As the terms extremism, radicalisation and terrorism have become more commonly associated with Islam, this affiliation may fuel feelings of embarrassment and alienation among Muslims, making it more difficult to be a Muslim youth in the West. Moreover, British Muslims who have been involved in terrorism are often referred to as "home-grown terrorists" as they held a British nationality. In the public domain, young Muslim terrorists from the UK were being described as "the enemy within" (Lynch, 2013). In a bid to detach these terrorists from the rest of the British community, the media placed more focus on which country these terrorists were originally from and their ethnic origin as opposed to labelling them as just British (Mandaville, 2009). The ethnic background and foreign otherness of these terrorists then became crucial to understanding the causes of radicalisation. The loyalty of Muslim youth to the British culture was being questioned because of their ethnic background and Muslims were being asked to give priority to their

British identity. While the arguments on the failure of British Muslims to integrate may be accurate to an extent, they are challenged for being overly-simplistic. The profiles of young Muslims involved in terrorism are rather diverse and therefore more study is required on the personal and social circumstances of these young Muslims in order to understand what led them to become terrorists.

ISIS explained: Who are ISIS and what do they want?

ISIS can trace its origins back to 2002 when it was founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian who was responsible for a series of terror attacks in Iraq. Although Zarqawi did not agree with al-Qaeda's tactic of fighting the West as opposed to leaders in the Islamic world, he joined forces with al-Qaeda following the US-led invasion of Iraq and formed al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). The alliance between these two terrorist groups provided Zarqawi's group with the necessary resources and global recognition that they required to became a major force in the Iraqi Insurgency. AQI had an obvious tactic of fuelling sectarian violence between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims and its main aim was to unite the Sunni community under Sunni jihadist groups, a tactic that is currently employed by ISIS (Lister, 2016). The ruthlessness and brutalities shown by AQI led al-Qaeda members to disavow AQI in the fear that such brutality would lose them supporters. Following the death of Zarqawi in 2006, AQI established another organisation called the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). As the Syrian war intensified, US troops took over and councils were created by Sunni tribesman in Iraq who rejected the group's atrocities. This caused ISI to progressively weaken and the death of ISI leaders in US-led airstrikes significantly reduced the group's competency to commit terror attacks. However, the group was restored in 2010 when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became leader and started launching terror attacks again in Iraq. In 2013, Baghdadi joined the civil war against President Assad in Syria and merged his forces in Iraq and Syria which led to the birth of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). While Baghdadi's fighters continued to grow in Syria, ISIS began massacring its rivals and cleansing ethnic and religious minorities. After seizing and holding large parts of territory including towns and cities, ISIS formally declared itself as the caliphate (an Islamic nation run by a caliph – a successor of the Prophet Mohammed), changing its name to Islamic State (IS) in 2014.

While the caliph may not hold the same status the Prophet Mohammed held as an Islamic leader, ISIS militants want the world to recognise the caliphate as the only legitimate state that Muslims must obey (Spencer, 2015). As with most jihadist groups, the ultimate goal for

ISIS is to establish an effective state and eradicate competing jihadist groups in order to survive and grow. ISIS seeks to eliminate anything or anyone that goes against the teachings of Islam and believe they are uniting the Muslim ummah (community). After declaring itself as the caliphate, ISIS want to create a state governed by their interpretation of Islamic Sharia law. Unlike Western legal systems which are derived from human legislation, Sharia law is the Islamic law governed by teachings from the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad and covers how Muslims should lead all aspects of their lives in accordance to God's law (Ahmed, 2013). Sharia law provides rulings on matters including crime, marriage, finances and government policies as well as personal issues such as health, sexual intercourse and acts of worship. The Sharia has been highly controversial in the UK as well as other countries in the West. Rashid (2014) addressed some of the stigmas associated with Sharia and argues that ISIS impose Islamic law on people against their will which goes against the teachings of the Quran. In fact, Sharia law orders Muslims to abide by the law of the country in which they reside and cannot be forced upon someone through government implementation (Rashid, 2014). While many Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq implement Sharia law, ISIS consider Sharia law to be greater than any other government law and have imposed it on many cities and towns it has captured. Even leaders of Muslim countries are on the radar for ISIS as they have placed legal systems of the world above Sharia law (Goodstein, 2016). Refusal to obey the laws set by the caliphate has led ISIS to commit several terror attacks across the world including cities in the Middle East as well as Europe. ISIS has claimed responsibility for the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels which have left hundreds dead and many others injured. These attacks are a clear statement of intent which reflects ISIS' terror threat to Europe. This leaves many perplexed by the same question: is the Islamic State truly Islamic or merely the result of misinterpreted Sharia law?

The ideology of ISIS: Is the Islamic State Islamic?
Sharia law is not the only aspect of Islamic texts that appears to have been misinterpreted by ISIS. There has been much debate about the Quran and ahadith (sayings of the Prophet Mohammed) as justification for the violence and brutalities against non-Muslims and Muslims who oppose ISIS. Tasgin & Cam (2016) state that ISIS seek to establish a society which mimics the era of the Prophet Mohammed by misinterpreting the Quran and ahadith. The most worrying thing for Muslims across the world is not the inhumanness of ISIS but rather its claim to be an Islamic group, when in fact its tactics significantly contradict true Islamic beliefs. Using passages from the Quran to justify their barbaric acts, ISIS have

executed over 10,000 Iraqis and Syrians including civilians (Kemble, 2015). The beheading of British aid worker Alan Henning who was delivering aid to Syria in 2014 is one of many beheadings of Westerners carried out by ISIS, claiming to be doing God's work. The Quranic verse "So when you meet those who disbelieve [in battle], strike [their] necks." (Quran Chapter 47, Verse 4) is an example of how religious texts are taken out of context by ISIS. The following verse reads "Take them as captives when they are defeated. Then you may set them free as a favour to them, with or without a ransom, when the battle is over." (Quran Chapter 47, Verse 4). It is clear from these verses that beheading innocents is not justified in the Quran, reinforcing the argument that ISIS take certain Quranic verses out of context and know very little about the fundamental aspects of Islam. There is strong evidence to suggest that religion is not the key trigger for joining ISIS and the most violent extremists are religious novices and reverts (Butler, 2015; Wiktorowicz, 2005). This rudimentary level of Islamic knowledge is apparent in many cases of ISIS extremists and terrorists. For example, the case of two young British terrorists who purchased books "Islam for dummies" and "the Koran for Dummies" before leaving to fight in Syria. It was also reported by Khosrokhavar (2009) that most European Muslims involved in terrorism in the West had almost no Islamic culture, were unable to perform compulsory prayers, and knew very little about Islamic rulings on alcohol, premarital sex and eating haram (unlawful) food. This reinforces the notion that terrorism is not motivated by religion and that most European terrorists in the West have very limited Islamic knowledge.

The term *Jihad* is another Islamic concept which has been misinterpreted by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is derived from the word *Juhd* which means making an effort which is accompanied with some form of suffering (Al-Saidat & Al-Khawalda, 2012). In Islamic terminology, the meaning of jihad is primarily defensive as emphasis is placed on how Muslims should only fight in self-defence and not transgress their limits. It also means to struggle for the cause of Allah and refers to the personal struggles and hardships an individual may face. The term did not previously hold any negative connotations and was often used during wars in Islamic history. However, since the 9/11 terror attacks, the meaning of the word jihad has significantly deteriorated. The media played a significant role in the negative representation of Islam and its attribution to violence and terrorism. Through political literature and journalism, the word jihad became wrongly translated in the West as a 'holy war' and terrorist Muslims were referred to as jihadis (McCabe, 2009). ISIS militants may have adopted the term jihadi but this is merely to make Jihad seem "cool" in order to

recruit globally. ISIS refuses to acknowledge the historical context of jihad and manipulate religious texts regarding jihad for their own political means (Ekici, Akdoğan, Ragab, Ekici, & Warnes, 2016).

While Islam may help legitimise ISIS' cause, the motivation for ISIS' recruits is attributed to other social and political factors. For example, Khosrokhavar (2009) found that almost all terrorists from European countries were first and second-generation immigrants who described feeling isolated, marginalised and stigmatised. Research has also found that marginalisation and discrimination leads to greater support for radicalisation among Muslim immigrants in the US (Lyons-Padilla, Gelfand, Mirahmadi, Farooq, & van Egmond, 2015). This has provided ISIS and affiliates with a platform to reach out to potential recruits by inciting feelings of suffering and humiliation. According to Lyons-Padilla, Gelfand, Mirahmadi, Farooq & van Egmond (2015), ISIS intentionally target first and second-generation Muslims living in the West in a bid for them to return to the Muslim world and pursue jihad against the "enemy". Thus, it is vital for researchers to focus on how immigrants manage their social, cultural and religious identities. Moreover, ISIS propaganda invoking the suffering and perceived maltreatment of the Muslim community can make Muslims feel like they have no self-worth, thereby attracting Muslims to violent extremist groups which give them a sense of meaning and purpose. By committing to ISIS' extreme definition of Jihad, Muslims in the West see this as a way of regaining status and a sense of belonging (Kruglanski, Gelfand, Bélanger, Sheveland, Hettiarachchi & Gunaratna, 2014). Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, (2007) found that those who joined a group with a clear ideology were more likely to remain in the group as the divide between "us" and "them" gives people a clear understanding of what to believe and what to expect from those who do not belong to their group. As terrorist organisations may offer a clear sense of identity, this may explain why terrorist organisations like ISIS appeal to some Muslim immigrants. This poses serious implications for researchers and police who are looking for ways to reduce this risks of Islamic terrorism and highlights the need to examine who may potentially face an identity crisis and hence be at greater risk of supporting extremism.

Is there a difference between the motives of ISIS foreign male and female recruits?
Much of the research on ISIS' Western fighters has predominantly focused on the motivating factors of Muslim men. However, ISIS has attracted the highest number of Western women than any other extremist group. Despite publicly committing atrocities such as beheadings,

sexual slavery against disbelieving women and acid attacks on women who do not wear the veil, the number of ISIS' female fighters is rapidly growing. While the exact figure is unknown, over 550 Muslim women from European countries have travelled to Syria to join ISIS (Perešin, 2015). In the media, such women have been labelled "jihadi brides" - a term that implies young Western Muslim women are being lured by ISIS fighters to support a cause that they do not fully comprehend. There is a great deal of variation in the ethnic, educational, and religious backgrounds of ISIS' Western female fighters, making it difficult to profile which women are at a greater risk of becoming radicalised via ISIS. The majority of these women are aged between 16 and 24, classed as second or third generation Muslim immigrants, and maintain high academic performance (Perešin, 2015). For example, the three teenage girls from East London who joined ISIS in 2015 were straight-A students (Shackle, 2016), and 20-year-old Aqsa Mahmood from Scotland who married an ISIS fighter in Syria was a privately educated radiography student (Cowood, 2014). As many Muslim women are being trained to return to their Western country and facilitate terrorist attacks, it is vital to understand what factors motivate Western Muslim women to join ISIS in the first place.

Much of the literature on what motivates Muslim men to join ISIS focuses on "jihadism" – the ideology that the West is to blame for the injustices and oppression being carried out against Muslims around the world (Tibi, 2007; Winter, 2015; Weenink, 2015). Similarly, many Western women feel a religious duty towards the self-proclaimed caliphate. Although many women report religion as being the key motivator (Perešin, 2015; Barrett; 2014), there are also political motives present. Some women are angered by images of civilians suffering because of the Syrian war and feel that they must help relieve the crisis. For example, 20-year-old Aqsa Mahmood from Scotland who married an ISIS fighter in Syria told her parents that she wanted to help those affected by the Syrian war. Some observers argue that ISIS' online propaganda is an intentional tactic to brainwash young women and turn them into religious extremists. This political motivator is supported by Horgan (2008) who found that young Muslims were more likely to engage in violent extremism if they identified with the Muslims that are suffering across the world and disapproved of their own county's foreign relations toward Muslim countries. Moreover, restrictions on freedom of religion have led many Muslim women to believe that they are being attacked by the West. For example, the veil ban in France restricts Muslim women from practicing their faith, making them feel unaccepted in Western society. Consequently, ISIS recruiters exploit the anger felt by

Western Muslims and offer them a life of equality and religious freedom under the Islamic State.

Driven by more personal factors, many young Muslim girls whose families originate from conservative countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan struggle to find a balance with the modern values of the West. ISIS take advantage of their identity struggle by offering them a sense of belonging to the sisterhood that is going through the same struggle (Kneip, 2016). For example, Hoda, a Muslim girl from America who left her family and joined ISIS came from a family where the father was stricter with his daughters than sons and the women were not allowed to access social media. After secretly setting up social media accounts, Hoda became attracted to ISIS propaganda and later married an ISIS fighter in Syria (Buner, 2016). By joining ISIS and choosing her own husband, this may have been a way for Hoda to find her own identity and independence. Some also suggest that like young men, young women too are attracted to the idea of being involved in this exciting and adventurous movement that will be recorded in history (Hoyle, Bradford, & Frenett, 2015; Perešin, 2015). However, others still believe that the driving motivator for young women is their desire to marry a courageous Islamic fighter and raise future jihadists (Saltman & Winter, 2014; Khaleeli, 2014). Driscoll (2015) found that many impressionable young girls hold a very romantic view of jihadism as one radical teenager told in an interview "you think with your head, we think with our hearts". Some may argue that a motivation based solely on the desire to marry an ISIS fighter is weak; it requires strong willpower for young women to leave their friends and families and migrate to a war zone. Thus, such strong motivation must be accompanied with other factors.

Other motives cited by young women include isolation, discontentment, poor family relations, and rebelling against cultural values (Perešin, 2015; Perisin & Cervone, 2015; Schmid, 2014). Although religion is central to their participation in violent jihad, it is a combination of these personal, political and religious factors that motivate young western Muslims to join ISIS. While some Western women are leaving their countries for a better life under Islamic law, others are seeking an identity and acceptance. This makes it difficult to establish which is the most significant motivator for young women joining ISIS. Perešin (2015) suggests that ISIS recruiters deliberately employ a propaganda strategy that appeals to the diverse motives of young Western women, offering something to almost everyone. The individual motives of young women may gradually change with their experiences whilst

living in Syria. Women who wished to participate in suicide bombings and gain martyrdom by fighting "enemies" of religion later adopted more traditional gender roles such as cooking, cleaning and home-making (Saltman & Winter, 2014). By leaving their Western homes to marry ISIS fighters and giving birth to future jihadists, Muslim women believe that not only have they fulfilled their religious duty towards the caliphate, they have also secured their rewards in the eternal afterlife.

Theories of terrorism

Psychological theorists have proposed two main frameworks to help explain terrorist behaviour: top-down theories and bottom-up theories. Top-down theories explore the root causes of terrorism in political, social and economic contexts whereas bottom-up theories focus on the characteristics of an individual or group. The oppression theory is an example of a top-down theory as it posits that oppressive authoritarianism carried out by the government incites political violence which may facilitate terrorist activity (Schmid, 1983). Post, Sprinzak &Denny (2003) found that in sectarian and ethnic violence related terrorism, terrorist organisations often held the government responsible for taking way their sense of identity, self-respect and freedom. The counter-terrorism legislations imposed by the British government also appear to have detrimental effects on the Muslim community. Choudhry & Fenwick (2011) found that counter-terrorism legislations which allowed authorities to stop and question passengers at airports without a requirement of reasonable suspicion had the most negative impact on Muslim communities. Muslims reported being questioned about their views on jihad, polygamy and how often they prayed. This made Muslims feel like they were suspected targets and that the police would use this information to profile them and the Muslim community. While oppression is a common theme in terrorism literature and regarded to be a motivating factor, there are currently no valid measures of perceived oppression or any empirical evidence to support the assumption that oppressive authoritarianism is a motivator of terrorism (Vicktoroff, 2005). Oppression is a concept that is subjective and therefore difficult to assess; thus, it is necessary to examine perceived oppression as a factor contributing to the rise of terrorism. Moreover, it is highly unlikely for terrorist organisations to succeed under oppressive governments. Since only a small minority of "oppressed" individuals become terrorists, this raises the question of why other "oppressed" individuals living in repressive regimes do not become terrorists. Thus, more study and development is required in order to understand the relationship between oppression and terrorism.

Psychoanalytical explanations of terrorism demonstrate a bottom-up approach. According to the psychoanalytic theory first proposed by Freud (1923), behaviour is a result of the interactions between the three components of the mind: the id, ego and superego. Personality develops during childhood through psychosexual stages of development and sexual fantasies are the main driver of personality development (Gabbard, 2000). Psychological distress is rooted in the unconscious mind and occurs as a result of unconscious conflict regarding those sexual fantasies. There are two themes from this theory that are central to understanding terrorist behaviour: (1) hostility towards one's parents is an unconscious motivator for terrorism and (2) terrorism is a result of childhood abuse and trauma (Borum, 2004). The assumption that terrorism is motivated by childhood abuse was first proposed by Feuer (1969) who construed terrorism in males as being rivalry with their fathers; a concept central to the Oedipus complex. However, as with most variants of the psychoanalytic theory, this theory is underpinned by non-scientific concepts such as the unconscious mind which are difficult to assess.

An alternative theory of terrorism proposes that partakers of terrorism tend to be young individuals who lack self- esteem and are struggling to establish an identity (Fischer, Haslam & Smith, 2010). The social identity theory first developed by Erikson (1959) suggests that social groups influence cognitive processes and perceptions of events, thereby influencing identity formation. Unlike the social learning theory which focuses on the environment of an individual or group, the social identity theory places more emphasis on the individual's sense of personal identity and joins the gap between the individual and the environment. Social identities represent the different social categories to which people belong such as religion, ethnicity and gender. According to Fischer, Haslam & Smith (2010) behaviour is driven by the beliefs and values held by these social categories and when a social identity is salient, the perception of threat to that identity is more likely to cause reactive violence.

A fundamental view in terrorism literature is that identity crises among young Muslims are caused by the perceived threat to Islam. Ysseldyk, Matheson & Anisman (2011) provide empirical support for the assumption that when a social identity such as religiosity is more powerful, responses to perceived threats are more likely to be retaliatory. Catholic, Protestant and Muslims participants were exposed to a fictious article in which the majority of Canadians felt coldly towards the participants' religion. The article also intended to threaten

participants' religious group by stating that the regional government would use data from the study to reduce financial support for their religious group. Participants were appraised on their coping responses to the threat, negative emotions and action intentions. Findings revealed that participants who considered religion essential to their identity exhibited higher levels of anger and were more supportive of confrontational action. Ysseldyk, Matheson & Anisman (2011) concluded that cognitive appraisals play a vital part in demonstrating how perceived threats to one's religious identity can trigger negative emotions and increase intentions for aggressive responses. These findings provide a useful insight into how young Muslims may turn to terrorist violence in the search for an identity. For example, a young Egyptian Muslim, Sayyid Qutb, who travelled to America to study was shocked by American values such as gender-mixed dancing and women wearing revealing clothing which went against the traditional Islamic laws he was accustomed to. Qutb started to display radical views upon his return to Egypt, and began to see these American values in Egypt which incited further radicalisation, leading him to join a terrorist organisation (Wright, 2007). One explanation for this change in behaviour is that American values had shaken Qutb's identity and so he began to express these role confusions in the extremist group that offered him with an instant sense of identity (O' Brien, 2010). Similarly, many young British Muslims of Asian and Eastern backgrounds are faced with the predicament of adopting Western values which are conflicting with the values of Islam. As such, the dynamics of social identities and the pressure for young Muslims to belong is essential to the study of terrorism. While the social identity theory has been applicable to the biographies of many terrorists, there are currently no empirical studies which have tested the validity of this theory to young terrorists. Thus, further research is required to fully understand the relationship between identity crises and Islamically-inspired terrorism among Muslim youth.

There are, however, conceptual overlaps between top-down and bottom-up theories as some take into consideration the interaction between environmental contexts and the individual who engages in terrorism. For example, the rational choice theory assumes that terrorist behaviour stems from a rational and deliberately planned decision to engage in terrorist activity as a means of achieving a socio-political objective (Wilson, 2000). Unlike other psychological theories which explain why individuals may be predisposed to a type of behaviour, the rational choice theory assumes that terrorism may not necessarily reflect psychopathological or irrational behaviour, but instead represents the best strategy to obtain a particular goal. According to the theory, changes to the rules of the "game" played between

terrorists and targeted governments may help predict and subsequently change behaviour. As concepts of the theory focus on both circumstantial changes and behavioural responses to these changes, this demonstrates a combination of the top-down and bottom-up approach. Game theory, derived from the rational choice theory, has been used to predict how effective pro-active defence measures which reduce the likelihood of a terrorist attack being successful are (Sandler & Siqueira, 2009). There has been much empirical support for the game theory, particularly from the prisoner's dilemma game in which participants play against opponents to maximise goals subject to constraints (see Tucker, 2001). The relevance of this to terrorism is that similar techniques can be applied to understand the interdependent relationship between terrorists and their targets; it helps reveal any implications when both "players" execute actions based on their judgment of what their opponent is thinking. If game theory is applied in terrorism research, it can help predict the utility of anti-terrorism policies and determine whether a terrorist act is likely to maximise goals for the perpetrator (Sandler & Arce, 2003). Support for this theory is offered by Wiktorowicz (2005) who studied members of an extremist group in Britain promoting the use of violence to create an Islamic state and claimed that the young men involved were informed and their behaviour seemed rational if seen from their point of view. The notion that terrorist behaviour is "rational" is reinforced by several studies which have found that terrorists do not usually display any sign of mental disorders (see Post, Sprinzak, & Denny 2003; Post & Gold, 2002; Horgan, 2003).

While the rational choice theory provides a useful insight into the factors underlying the actions of terrorists and targeted governments, the approach is not without its limitations. Some of the actions of terrorists challenge the assumption that terrorist activity represents the best strategy to obtain a socio-political goal. Brannan, Eslerm, & Anders Strindberg (2001) argue that terrorists' goals are not always plausible and terrorist acts do not always guarantee that desired goals will be attained and therefore cannot be considered a rational approach for pursuing these goals. Another limitation of the theory is that it fails to explain why only a small proportion of British Muslims become terrorists. Instead, the theory focuses on what terrorists are likely to do in different circumstances. It does not take into consideration how individual emotions, experiences and circumstances may influence rationality (Victoroff, 2005). Thus, only these individual experiences can explain why only a small minority of Muslims among many others living in similar conditions leave the UK to engage in terrorism. Moreover, if terrorism was indeed rational, it should be expected that terrorist organisations will disperse once they have accomplished their goals. However, research suggests that

terrorists often deliberately obstruct their own victory just moments before reaching an agreement with the other party. This allows terrorists to uphold their existence as part of a group and continue to engage in violence to satisfy other individual needs. Thus, the game theory requires further development in terms of understanding the impact of individual differences and how these may contribute to terrorist behaviour.

Much research has focused on the social, political and psychological factors contributing to terrorism and little has been studied on how cultural factors may influence terrorist activity. According to Weinberg and Eubank (1994), there are cross-cultural differences in the behaviour of terrorists. Collectivistic cultures such as Pakistan, for example, stress the importance of giving priority to group goals over individual goals and value cohesion within social systems. Conversely, in individualistic cultures such as the US, society is centred around the self and personal goals. Weinberg & Eubank (1994) compared psychological rankings of participants from different countries such as Pakistan, Israel and the US to a terrorist activity report database. They suggest that individuals from collectivistic cultures are more likely to attack innocent out-group members whereas those from individualistic cultures are more likely to attack members of other individualist cultures than innocents. However, their study is flawed in that participants may not fully represent the culture to which they belong and therefore cannot be accurately classified into individualistic or collectivistic cultures. There are also subgroups within cultures that differentiate from the larger culture and the study fails to acknowledge that terrorists may originate from such subgroups. Moreover, the theory fails to explain why those from individualistic cultures carry out terrorist attacks on out-group members. Nevertheless, the notion that cultural differences exist in the expression of terrorism is supported by more recent studies. Cultures which hold a strictly traditional view of gender roles and believe their life and destiny is preordained tend to display higher rates of terrorism (Aycan et al. 2000; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). Research has also found that terrorism rates are higher for cultures in which deviation from the norms, beliefs and values leads to punishment (Gelfand et al 2011). As an increasingly large number of British Muslims have left the UK to fight for ISIS are originally from nations higher on collectivism (e.g. South Asia and the Middle East), it is essential to examine the cultural factors influencing extremism in order to understand, predict and combat the prevalence of terrorist attacks.

The Social media strategy of ISIS

Social media has played a crucial role in the rise of ISIS and its Western recruits. The launch of this social media campaign which started with an execution video of James Foley, a British journalist, has redefined ISIS propaganda. ISIS is not the first terrorist group to use social media to achieve its goal. Militants from terrorist group Al-Shabaab used Twitter to intimidate opponents by live-tweeting the shooting of civilians in a mall and Lashkar-e-Taiba use intelligence gathered from Google Earth and mobile phones to aid its attack on Mumbai (Farwell, 2014). But what makes ISIS stand apart is the group's carefully-calculated strategies and selectivity with what content is posted online. The main aim of ISIS' propaganda is to expand its war beyond Iraq and Syria and attract potential recruits in the West. Ignoring the reality that ISIS is a brutal terrorist group responsible for the killing of innocent men, women and children, ISIS uses social media to portray life under ISIS as better than life in the West. As the group floods the internet with propaganda and encourages supporters to share content online, this is what provides ISIS with a platform to reach out to the world, particularly to young Muslims.

Through various social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Ask.Fm, Tumblr, WhatsApp and YouTube, this campaign is being promoted in several different languages. ISIS promoters have even released videos in English and French which include testimonials from foreign fighters about their journeys (Farwell, 2014). Consequently, supporters from across the world have been inspired to participate in the production and distribution of ISIS' narrative, including those from the UK, US and Europe. Testimonials from jihadi brides posted on blogs such as tumblr have also proven to be a very effective strategy in attracting young Western women (Blaker, 2015). By communicating the high living standards of women married to ISIS fighters, online recruiters are conveying a life of happiness under the rule of ISIS. Discussion boards such as ask.fm give potential applicants the opportunity to ask fighters and jihadi brides questions about their daily routines. Supporters who have already joined the group in Syria are able to offer tips to westerners planning to travel such as advice on what type of clothing to bring, what vaccinations are required before travelling, and how to contact their families back home once they reach their destination (which is of course very important for teenagers). After "educating" vulnerable recruits and reassuring them that this is right thing to do, ISIS militants advise those seriously interested in travelling to Syria to use encrypted messaging services such as WhatsApp to get

more detailed information. In cases where it is difficult to travel, recruits are encouraged to carry out terrorist attacks in their home country.

Execution videos and images gone viral via Facebook and YouTube serve as a means of spreading fear among opposing parties and mobilising support from prospective recruits (Weiman, 2015). On the other hand, ISIS have posted images of its fighters eating foods from familiar brands such as Nutella. This is believed to be a modern marketing technique to appeal to potential recruits and assure them that they will lead a life of luxury if they join ISIS (Vergani & Bliuc, 2015). More friendly images have also been released of ISIS fighters playing with cats, a reference to the Prophet Mohammed who was very fond of cats (Farwell, 2014). Again, this is considered a well-planned strategy to convey the message that as well as having its roots in Islam, ISIS believes in promoting the wellbeing of its followers, not in harming them. Although the release of such images may seem like a good tactic, the emotional impact of propaganda endorsing the killing of innocents will most likely backfire according to Farwell (2014). The extreme brutalities of ISIS led even the quite radical al-Qaeda members to disavow the group in the fear that such brutality would lose them supporters. However, ISIS militants have responded to such backlash by utilising social media to promote a more positive image of the group. For instance, ISIS have used social media to announce that they have opened English-language schools for foreign fighters' children in the Islamic State. Not only do these schools offer education for both boys and girls, there are also job opportunities for English-speaking teachers at the schools too (Blaker, 2015).

Twitter, however, remains ISIS' main weapon in this war of social media. Not only is it easy for online recruiters to hide their true identities, users are able to share content with a large number of people and twitter accounts can be easily recreated if they are closed down (Klausen, 2015). The twitter app, 'The Dawn of Glad Tidings' also known as 'Dawn', released by ISIS is a more sophisticated social media strategy enabling users to keep up with the group's latest news (Farwell, 2014). Once signed up, the app posts tweets including links, images and hashtags which have been composed by ISIS to every users account so that they trend on twitter. Consequently, ISIS is able to magnify its message and intimidate opponents. For example, 'Dawn' app users posted over 40, 000 tweets in one day during an offensive which saw ISIS march into a city in Iraq, including an image of an armed ISIS fighter captioned "We are coming, Baghdad". The high volume of these tweets caused this

particular image to show up first in search results for Baghdad, which was undoubtedly a method of instilling fear in the city's residents (Vitale & Keagle, 2014). Furthermore, twitter has empowered ISIS fighters to spread images and videos of brutalities such as beheadings to youth, particularly to young men, who are fascinated by the excitement and adventure associated with war. Captivated by the idea of fighting for Allah to attain paradise and an eternal afterlife, ISIS fighters glorify jihad to make fighting in Syria seem more exciting than being "bored" in their home countries (Perisin, 2015).

There is, however, a drawback to this social media strategy. While ISIS may boast about its violent atrocities through images and videos shared online, such propaganda can be used by opponents to combat the group's extremist narrative and dissuade prospective western recruits. For example, the US State Department mocked ISIS by releasing a graphic video on YouTube which contained footage originally posted by the group itself of a mosque being blown up and a body with a severed head, ending with a sarcastic note for prospective recruits: 'Travel is inexpensive, because you won't need a return ticket!' (McShane, 2014). Another example is the BBC's comedy drama mocking British jihadi brides in an attempt to highlight the risks Western women face of being groomed online to become ISIS suicide bombers. However, this does not mean that the journey to combat ISIS will be easy for opposing parties. ISIS militants appear to understand that social media can have both favourable and unfavourable consequences. As counter-terrorism agencies have hit back at ISIS by identifying and closing down their social media accounts and websites, the group aims to guard its identity and location by reducing the use of cyber-technology among members and sending operational messages by hand (Farwell, 2014). Essentially, social media is retained for carefully-planned propaganda. Nevertheless, this does not mean that ISIS' social media operations are immune to online attacks as technological advances and hackers pose threats even for government agencies. Ultimately, it is necessary for authorities to focus energies on discrediting ISIS and withdrawing its association with Islam in order to destroy the brutal terror group.

The UK's counter-terrorism strategy
Following recent terror attacks in the US and Europe, the UK faces a severe threat from being targeted by ISIS and other terrorist organisations alike. The UK has launched international strategies which involve troops being sent to the Middle-East to fight ISIS, and the US and other nations continue to launch air strikes in Iraq and Syria. However, many questions have

been raised about how effective these strategies will be in defeating ISIS and its allies in the long run. Although recent military campaigns have proved to be effective in weakening ISIS and its control over Iraqi and Syrian territories, they are not addressing the factors that uphold the group: its appeal to foreign recruits. Thus, it is crucial for both national and international governments to develop domestic strategies that fight the root causes of home-grown terrorism and ISIS on the whole.

In order to tackle the ongoing threat from terrorism, the UK government has developed a domestic counter-terrorism strategy called CONTEST to protect its citizens. The aim of CONTEST is to identify British citizens who are at risk of being radicalised and stop them from becoming terrorists. The strategy is centred around four objectives: PURSUE (to stop terrorist attacks), PREVENT (to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism), PROTECT (to strengthen protection against a terrorist attack) and PREPARE (to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack) (Home office, 2011b). According to Rowley, a counter-terrorism police officer in the UK, nearly 50 deadly terror attacks have been stopped since the 7/7 bombings in London (Beake, 2015). The Europol Report (2016) providing statistics on foiled, failed and successful terrorist attacks in the EU during 2015 revealed that there although the number of terror attacks in the UK was that year was relatively high (103), the majority of these attacks did not result in any deaths and were attributed to national terrorism in Ireland. In light of these statistics, it appears that CONTEST is proving to be successful in mitigating home-grown Islamist terrorism in the UK. However, critics argue that although CONTEST has been highly commended because of the very few deadly terror attacks attributed to Islamist terrorism since 2005, the success of the strategy is questionable. As with any other counter-terrorism strategy, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of CONTEST since its success is determined by the absence of completed terror attacks (Gearson & Rosemont, 2015). While successful terror attacks are easy to quantify and media outlets are quick to circulate statistics regarding the number of causalities, fatalities, and terrorist ideologies, foiled attacks are more difficult to assess. Brady (2016) suggests that when examining data on foiled terrorist plots, it is important to consider other factors that may potentially skew data. For example, the motives of the person providing the data, their definition of a plot or an attack, or their criteria for what a foiled attack constitutes. As these factors are subjective, the reliability of the data being used for statistics on foiled attacks comes under scrutiny, making it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies. In essence,

until these measures are evaluated, it is difficult to accurately assess whether counter-terrorism strategies are indeed effective.

The most controversial part of the CONTEST strategy is the PREVENT component which seeks to identify radicalised individuals and challenge violent extremism. Working alongside a wide range of sectors including schools, mosques and other institutions where there are risks of radicalisation, the strategy is largely aimed at Muslim communities in Britain. Although the PREVENT strategy does not intend to discriminate, many argue that there is the danger that it has the potential to stigmatise Muslims communities, widening the divide between British Muslims and non-Muslims (Thomas, 2009; Spalek & Mcdonald, 2009; Birt, 2009). In response to public backlash, the government revised the PREVENT document in 2011 by addressing theoretical and practical implications of the strategy's previous version. The revised version, which openly admits previous weaknesses and areas for improvement, changed the focus of its strategy to challenge the ideologies of terrorists, ensure that the appropriate advice and support is given to individuals at risk of being drawn to terrorism and support institutions such as schools and mosques. Critics argue that even with the revised version, the strategy still treats Muslims as a 'suspect community' and targets institutions which have strong relations with Muslim communities such as mosques, for example (Awan, 2012; Bonino, 2013). Muslim councils argued that the teaching materials offered by authorities to imams as part of a citizenship program for teenagers insinuated that terrorists were working in almost every mosque in Britain (Casciani, 2014). Consequently, this made imams feel as though they were being closely watched and led members of the Muslim community to lose trust in security services and disengage with the counter-terrorism measures they were trying to put in place.

Universities, as institutions where youth grow as individuals and form their sense of identity and belonging, have also attracted the attention of security services. Given the fact that 22-year-old student, Waheed Zaman, found guilty of plotting to blow up a British airline was the president of the Islamic Society at London University, Islamic societies at universities have been highly scrutinised. Among growing concerns that university students are being targeted for recruitment by extremist organisations, some members of Islamic Student societies feel that they are being unfairly targeted by counter-terrorism policies (Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011). Brown & Saeed (2014) report that British universities have even encouraged staff

members to closely watch students who look Muslim and Asian to prevent them from becoming extremists. While some British Muslims have responded by engaging with policy-makers and challenging any misunderstandings that people may have about Islam, many more Muslims expressed feeling alienated and isolated, and displayed increased levels of anxiety and vulnerability (Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011). Critics of the strategy may argue that on one hand, PREVENT seeks to address the argument that it marginalises British Muslims, yet on the other hand policymakers refuse to work with members of the Muslim community who may be crucial to the strategy's success. Although some revisions to PREVENT are favourable, policymakers are still failing to successfully connect with Muslim communities without being discriminatory, and thereby run the risk of developing strategies that are counterproductive.

The UK's counter terrorism strategy consists of many flaws but it should not be disregarded as entirely problematic either. The criticisms thrown at the PREVENT component of CONTEST have weight but the government has displayed serious efforts to revise its previous versions so as to weaken associations with marginalisation and measure how effective the strategy is. With the growing number of young British Muslims travelling to Syria and joining ISIS, the motives for their actions needs to be addressed and dealt with. Until policy-makers can accurately assess how and why people become radicalised, what inspires them to leave their homes to fight for a cause abroad and potentially bring terrorism back to the UK, it is not possible to successfully counter the radicalisation process. The police and security services also run the risk of undermining trust and cooperation from Muslim communities. Therefore, policy-makers need to focus efforts on regaining the trust of Muslim in Britain as well as evaluating counter-terrorism measures in order to determine which is the most effective approach to counterterrorism.

Summary
The research literature and theories explored above suggest that there are a wide range of social, political and personal factors contributing to the involvement of young British Muslims in Islamic terrorism. There is a growing consensus in the research literature that the draw to radicalisation among young Muslims is a developmental process driven by alienation and has little to do with religion itself. Researchers have used exploratory studies in order to understand what leads Muslims to become terrorists. While some young Muslims turn to extremism because they are seeking an identity and acceptance in the West, others are

leaving Britain for a better life under Sharia law. ISIS' social media strategy has proven to be very effective in recruiting young British Muslims. As the group floods the internet with propaganda and encourages supporters to share content online, this is what provides ISIS with a platform to reach out to the world, particularly to young Muslims. Although policy makers have tried to combat terrorism by introducing counter-terrorism strategies such as CONTEST, there is the danger that such strategies have the potential to stigmatise British Muslims. Furthermore, the profiles of young Muslims involved in terrorism are very diverse; there is no universal profile of Muslim terrorists. Thus, more exploratory study is required on the individual circumstances of young British Muslims in order to better understand the process of radicalisation and why young Muslims travel to Syria and join ISIS.

Methodology

Research Design

A cross-sectional qualitative research design was used as this is considered a more suitable approach for providing rich in-depth data. It enables researchers to understand the why and how through methods which generate words in contrast to the quantitative approach which describes numerical data (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 2000). As the study aimed to examine young Muslims' perceptions on the causes of Islamic terrorism among British youth, it used an empirical design which was more suited to this type of research. In light of the literature review, it was clear that the research topic of terrorism was complex and sensitive; therefore, a qualitative research method was more appropriate than a quantitative method which limits understanding of views, opinions and motivations that underlie behaviour (Creswell, 2013). When a phenomenon such as terrorism is not well defined or understood, a qualitative research design is more useful. For example, a qualitative method can explore the problems young British Muslims encounter, the needs they have but can't communicate, or any misunderstandings they have about Islam. Although quantitative methods have been widely used in terrorism related research, there are many theoretical and conceptual implications with this type of method. These implications include the varying definitions of terrorism that lack empirical tests, the failure to distinguish between different types of terrorism, and the use of incorrect data analyses when designing research (Young & Findley, 2011). When trying to understand the process of radicalisation and how people become terrorists, a qualitative approach can break down the complexity of the topic being studied into more manageable parts. Rich and detailed data is not collected in a controlled laboratory setting but rather from observation and face to face interviews (Monfared & Derakhshan, 2015). Thus, studying young Muslims in the context and environment they are living in enables the researcher to better understand the causes of terrorism. Moreover, when trying to explain the reasoning or motivations behind certain behaviour, a qualitative approach is helpful. For example, when trying to establish what causes young Muslims to leave Britain and become terrorists, listening to young Muslims voice their opinions can help form theories and establish testable hypotheses.

According to David & Sutton (2004), it is crucial to identify an ontology and an epistemology prior to carrying out research as it determines what research design is to be used. Ontology is the study of the nature of being and a belief system whereby individuals interpret social

realities as either objective or subjective (Blaikie, 2010). Consequently, objectivism (or positivism) is an ontological position that is external, objective and independent of social entities whereas subjectivism (or interpretivism) is socially constructed, subjective and may change (Bryman, 2012). Epistemology (the study of knowledge and justified belief) is also crucial to qualitative research and informs the choice of methodology. According to Hallebone & Priest (2009), epistemology is concerned with natural sources and limitations of knowledge when carrying out research. When carrying out a research study, the research process may combine knowledge from various sources. For example, knowledge based on intuition can be used to identify an area of research and authoritative knowledge is acquired through reading research literature. Additionally, logical knowledge is created when analysing data, and findings from the study can be seen as empirical knowledge (Hallebone & Priest (2009). As with ontology, epistemology also offers positivist and interpretivist research philosophies. Since positivism relies heavily on natural science, it has come under intense scrutiny for disregarding beliefs, morality and values (Dieronitou, 2014). Unlike quantitative research which is objective and follows a fixed process of data collection and analysis, qualitative research is subjective and the research process changes as the researcher learns more about the topic being studied. Consequently, the current study adopted an interpretivist ontological and epistemological position as this stance enables the researcher to seek the truth in people's lived experiences through comprehensive interpretation (Byrne-Armstrong, Higgs & Horsfall, 2001).

Method

The study used individual semi-structured interviews (see appendix 1). According to (Whiting, 2008), in-depth semi-structured interviews allow the interviewees to express their opinions, interests and feelings. The responses generated from structured interviews lack detail as they rely on the use of closed-end questions which produces quantitative data, thereby limiting our understanding of why individuals act in a certain way. In contrast, a semi-structured interview enables the conversation to flow and gives the interviewer liberty to explore views and opinions in more detail than a questionnaire or structured interview (Bryman, 2008). Interviewing is a form of ethnographic methodology which focuses on learning about people and their culture (Berkwits & Inui, 1998). This ethnographic approach to qualitative research allows the researcher to become immersed in the environment of the group being studied in order to understand the behaviour, thought processes and any other topics of interest pertinent to that particular group. However, it is important to be objective

and not look at the group of study in the same way one would looks at members of their own group/culture. As Qu & Dumay (2011) argue, one limitation of conducting an ethnographic study is that researchers may inadvertently steer participants in a certain direction if they have already decided what results they want to achieve from their research. Thus, it was crucial to put aside personal views and opinions so that participants did not become aware of the nature of the study and subsequently change their behaviour to fit the research aims. Nevertheless, it has been widely agreed by researchers that semi-structured interviews are the most suitable method when trying to gain a deeper understanding of participant' views, opinions and experiences (Denscombe, 2007). They also possess increased validity as interviewees have the freedom to elaborate on their responses, clarify any uncertainties and steer the direction of the interview (Mcleod, 2014).

According to Denscombe (2007), a limitation of interviews is that they are not reliable as the sample tends to be small and so the researcher has limited access to the amount of views and opinions. This was overcome by increasing the sample size to ten participants. While group interviews (i.e. focus groups) are more appropriate for a higher number of participants and less time consuming than individual interviews, this was not considered a suitable method of data collection in this study. The interviewer has greater control over the data produced in an individual interview than in a focus group where participants may take the lead (Gibbs, 1997). Since focus groups encourage participants to interact with one another and express their views and opinions, the researcher has limited control over the discussion other than ensuring participants remain focused on the topic. It can also be very difficult to obtain a representative sample and dominant speakers may discourage others who are less confident from participating (Smithson, 2000). The topic of terrorism is sensitive and political and therefore participants in a focus group may be inclined to remain silent and feel more comfortable discussing the issue in individual interviews. Focus groups may also inhibit participants from sharing personal information with other participants. Thus, due to the nature of the topic being studied, the use of individual interviews was considered a more suitable approach in this research study.

The interview consisted of a series of questions relating to various topics of interest identified within the research literature including views on men and women who join ISIS, the meaning of jihad, ISIS' appeal for young British Muslims, the influence of social media on terrorism and counter-terrorism strategies. While the interview questions were prepared prior to the

interview, the interviewer was still able to follow topical issues in the discussion that diverted away from the original set of questions when considered appropriate by the interviewer. Consequently, some questions were created during the interview as new ideas emerged, enabling the interviewer and interviewee to go into further detail on an emerging topic. As stated by Miller & Dingwall (1997), interviews are intentional opportunities to facilitate the interviewee to express their views about a subject that they may be hesitant to speak about. Thus, it was necessary to ask interviewees direct questions that had been pre-planned to enable the interview to remain focused on terrorism among British Muslims.

Sampling

Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. The research study selected young British Muslims from West Yorkshire according to the aims of the study which wanted to focus on young Muslims who live in a community which has previous links with Islamist terrorism. The sample consisted of 10 Muslims (five males and five females) who were aged between 18 and 24. Participants were of either Indian or Pakistani ethnic background and lived in one of the following districts in West Yorkshire: Dewsbury, Batley, Leeds or Bradford. Snowball sampling was also utilised as participants helped identify and recruit other participants who were willing to take part in the study. As purposive and snowball samples mean that the sample is not randomly selected, these sampling methods are open to selection bias and may lead to a sample that is not representative of the target population. Nevertheless, these methods are appropriate when random sampling is not suitable for the study, when the research is focused on a small population, or when the study is exploratory (Schutt, 2009). Furthermore, snowball sampling is time-effective and facilitates quick recruitment of participants. Purposive sampling makes it easier to generalise the findings of the study to the wider population compared to random sampling where every participant may not possess characteristics that are imperative to the study. Moreover, not being able to generalise the research findings of a qualitative study is not usually a cause for concern; generalisability is not a prerequisite when the aims of the research are to understand a phenomenon in a specific population or ethnic group (Leung, 2015).

Many researchers agree that sampling becomes more difficult when the research topic is sensitive as potential participants will have more reason to hide their actions (Lee, 1993; McCosker Barnard & Gerber, 2001; Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). As the topic of terrorism was

sensitive and controversial, it was necessary to address any issues regarding psychological safety that may arise when discussing this particular topic. Some members of the sample had personally known a Muslim student from Dewsbury who was killed whilst fighting for ISIS in Syria. McCosker, Barnard & Gerber (2001) suggests that when conducting an interview on a sensitive subject, the interviewer may be required to adopt the role of a counsellor. Failure to acknowledge any emotional or psychological distress shown by the interviewee may lead to a loss of trust, and subsequently alter the significance and meaning of the data (McCosker, Barnard & Gerber, 2001). As some of the participants were the interviewer's friends, this helped to build a good relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, allowing participants to feel more comfortable to disclose information related to a sensitive topic. Furthermore, as the interviewer shared the same ethnic and religious background (Asian and Muslim) as participants, interviewees may feel more safe to discuss their views on terrorism than they would with somebody from a different background. While using an interviewer who is from a similar ethnic/religious background as the participants may have its advantages, it is not without its limitations. Confirmation bias may occur as the researcher interprets the raw data based on their own individual beliefs and culture (Stenbacka, 2001). The researcher may only pay attention to certain responses that they deem relevant to their research hypotheses, disregarding any information that does not confirm their hypotheses. In order to minimise confirmation bias, it was necessary for the researcher to consciously assess and evaluate the raw data and challenge any pre-existing beliefs and hypotheses.

Procedure

A pilot study consisting of two participants was carried out which revealed that some of the interview questions were similar and therefore the interview was revised and questions were modified in order to prevent the same responses from being generated. The pilot study also found that writing notes down on paper during the interview resulted in inadequate data for analysis and hindered the interviewer from building a rapport with the interviewee. Cohen & Crabtree (2006) suggest tape recording interviews as semi-structured interviews contains open-ended questions which may result in new questions emerging during the interview. As development of rapport is essential in interviews, it was decided that the most appropriate method to record the data was to use a dictaphone and transcribe the data afterwards for analysis.

Permission was taken from the president of the Islamic society (ISOC) at the University of Huddersfield to hand out information sheets which gave a brief description of the study to potential participants (see appendix 2). The same information sheet was sent out via emails to other potential participants. If participants agreed to take part in the study, they were invited to attend an interview in a meeting room at either the university or in a friend's business in Batley. Prior to the interview, the participant was asked to signed a consent form (see appendix 3). Interviews lasted between 16-45 minutes. Once the interview was complete, the participants were given a debrief form (see appendix 4). The interviews were recorded on a dictaphone and stored on a password protected computer file. The audio recordings were deleted once the interviews had been transcribed.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the research data collected in the current study. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method that all qualitative researchers should learn first as the skillset acquired can be utilised in other qualitative methods of analysis such as grounded theory and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Although thematic analysis is used to identify, analyse, and report recurring themes in a given data set, the method goes beyond simply describing words or phrases and provides a detailed interpretation of certain codes/themes identified within the data. One strength of thematic analysis is that it has more theoretical flexibility than other qualitative methods of data analysis. While IPA and grounded theory take the same concept of examining themes within the data, both methods are theoretically restricted. IPA is rooted in phenomenological epistemology and grounded theory requires the researcher to select an existing theoretical framework first and then collect data to show how the theory is relevant to the research topic (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Other methods such as discourse analysis and conversation analysis are underpinned by a specific theory of language when looking for patterns in a data set. Thematic analysis, on the other hand, is suitable for a wide range of theoretical frameworks and epistemologies including both essentialist and constructionist research paradigms. This theoretical independence means that thematic analysis may be an easier method to learn, especially for those who are new to qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Consequently, thematic analysis was considered the best method for analysis in this study as not only does it serve as a flexible research tool which is independent of theoretical knowledge, it is a more accessible form of analysis for students. It can be applied to research

questions that focus on the experiences and understandings of people in regard to a particular subject, making it suitable for studying people's views on terrorism. As thematic analysis is suitable for large data sets and can be used to generate analyses that are underpinned by data or theory, this method was deemed the most appropriate for this study.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was approved by the School of Human and Health Sciences Research Ethics Panel (SREP) at the University of Huddersfield. In order to address any ethical concerns in the current study, ethical guidelines set by the British Psychological Society were followed. Informed consent to participate in the study was obtained from participants after they were provided with an information sheet on the study and given the opportunity to ask questions. Participants were given the right to withdraw at any point prior during the study without giving a reason. By giving each participant a false name rather than their real name, this enabled their identity to remain anonymous. Participants were informed that the information disclosed within the interview will be kept confidential, unless they indicated that they or anyone else was at risk of serious harm, in which case this information would be reported to the authorities in accordance with counter terrorism legislations. The research topic of terrorism was sensitive so it was necessary to protect participants from psychological harm. This issue was addressed by providing participants with a debrief sheet with contact details for helplines which would offer support to participants if they experienced any psychological distress or discomfort whilst undertaking part in the study. The debrief explained that the aim of the research was to explore young Muslims' views of other Muslims who have been linked with terrorist organisations to gain a better understanding of why Muslim youth may be drawn to Islamic terrorism. There was no deception involved as the true research aims were presented to participants in the information sheet prior to taking part in the study. The debrief document informed participants that if they wished to have their data retracted and destroyed, they would need to contact the researcher before a certain date.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings and key themes identified from participant interviews using thematic analysis. The four themes identified in this study are explored and discussed in detail with reference to existing theory and research literature. The themes identified in the analysis explore the views of young Muslims regarding the phenomenon of Islamic terrorism. These include views on religion and how interpretation of Islam may influence the decision to participate in extremist violence. The role of social networks and how parents, peers and other social interactions can contribute to terrorism is explored as well as psychological vulnerabilities that may influence young Muslims to join ISIS. Lastly, the ways in which perceived injustices and discrimination against the Muslim community may impact the lives of Muslim youth in Britain are also discussed.

Theme 1- Poor grasp of Islamic faith

Lack of religious knowledge

One of the underlying themes that emerged from the data was lack of religious knowledge. Many participants believed that Muslim youth who join Islamic terrorist groups like ISIS do not fully understand certain concepts within Islam: "*They think they're going into a place that Allah thinks is right for them. So they think they're going towards Islam but they're going a completely wrong way.*" (Interview 9), "*They think it's Islamic but it's not and because they're young and naïve, they're easily influenced.*" (Interview 4). In line with the research discussed in the literature review, the current study supported previous findings which confirm that while the ideology of ISIS may be underpinned by the group's misinterpretation of Islam (Neuman, 2013), most young Muslims who join ISIS have little or no Islamic knowledge (Butler, 2015; Wiktorowicz, 2005). This view was expressed throughout the interviews as participants described how young Muslims have a lack of knowledge on Islam, ISIS and the war crisis in Syria: "*They are easily impressionable people who don't have an accurate representation of Islam maybe or what ISIS even stands for.*" (Interview 8), "*I think they're very misguided. Those that join the war in Syria don't really know what's going on*

there." (Interview 7), "*They have a warped perception of Islam…they've got the wrong idea of it basically.*" *(*Interview 8). One participant even refused to accept these young people as Muslims: "*If they knew Islam, they'd know it's not about violence. They're not Muslims.*" (Interview 7).

Khosrokhavar (2009) provides further support for the assumption that many extremists and terrorists have a rudimentary level of Islamic knowledge. He found that most European Muslims involved in terrorism in the West had almost no Islamic culture, were unable to perform compulsory prayers, and knew very little about Islamic law. Furthermore, an analysis of over three thousand leaked ISIS recruitment documents revealed that although many Western recruits were well-educated and several had even attained university degrees, their knowledge of Islamic law was very basic (Batrawy, Dodds & Hinnant, 2016). These findings challenge the misconception that religion is the key motivator for joining a terrorist group. Many researchers conclude that religiosity is a poor predictor of whether someone will join ISIS (Yu & Hoque, 2016; Mousseau, 2011). Several Islamic leaders and institutions have expressed disapproval of ISIS and its ideologies; the majority of Western Muslims do not join terrorist groups; and even though some Muslims may hold extremist Islamic beliefs, only a minority of those will act on their beliefs and join a terrorist group (Yu & Hoque, 2016). This reinforces the notion that terrorism is not motivated solely by religion and most terrorists from the West have very limited Islamic knowledge.

Spiritual reward, Heaven and the afterlife

There was a strong agreement among participants that young Muslims who join ISIS thought that they were fighting for a good cause: "*They think they're doing a good thing, almost like a charity and they'll be rewarded for it by God.*" (Interview 9), "*[they] believe that they're doing something good but these young people don't do their own research.*" (Interview 7), "*They think they're doing something good.*" (Interview 5), "*They think they're pleasing God.*" (Interview 6). Previous research has found that young Muslims who joined ISIS reported feeling a religious duty towards the self-proclaimed caliphate (Perisin, 2015; Hoyle, Bradford, & Frenett, 2015). This is consistent with the findings in the current study as many participants felt that those who join ISIS are seeking spiritual reward. When asked whether men and women have different motives for travelling to Syria, participants felt that men and women play different roles under the rule of ISIS but they are motivated by the desire to help the Muslim ummah: *It boils down to the same motive of helping ISIS and trying to fight*

against non-Muslims. The same motive is there but they do it in different ways. 6. I think they both want to help other Muslims around the world that they believe are oppressed or suffering.8. This finding is supported by Esposito (2015) who states that young Muslims who are drawn to radicalisation wish to accomplish a political goal but simultaneously seek to associate themselves with a religious cause. Much of the literature on what motivates Muslim youth to join ISIS supports that Muslims feel a religious duty towards other Muslims that are suffering (Tibi, 2007; Winter, 2015; Weenink, 2015). However, the current findings also support the view that while religious reward may be a motivator of terrorism, it is usually accompanied by other political factors (Horgan, 2008). This is evident in the current study as participants felt that "*young men would be attracted to this whole idea of fighting because it's masculine.*" (Interview 5) and *"These girls are nurturing children so they can grow them into soldiers for ISIS. Because women can't physically fight, by marrying ISIS fighters, they feel like they're contributing."* (Interview 6). Moreover, it was suggested that women may be driven more by personal factors: *"For women, it's different. Depends on their background and what they're running from. I think they're unhappy with their own lives and that's why they go."* (Interview 3). These findings reinforce that although religion is often cited as a key motivator for joining terrorist groups, there will always be social, political and personal motives present (Peresin, 2015).

The notion of being rewarded in Jannah (heaven) and the afterlife by fighting for ISIS was a common theme across the dataset. Participants felt that one of the key motives for young Muslims to join ISIS was the belief that they were securing their place in Heaven and their rewards in the afterlife: *"They get promised that they're gonna go to heaven if they go there and fight but when they go there they get forced to do things that they don't necessarily want to do.. they want a fast ticket to heaven"* (Interview 2), *"[ISIS] tell them that they'll go to Jannah if they go fight."* (Interview 5), *"Maybe he [Asmal] thought he would be benefitting his religion or his afterlife. Or maybe he would get rewarded for it in some way."* (Interview 8). This is supported by previous research which has found that the desire to participate in suicide bombings and gain martyrdom by fighting "enemies" of Islam is common amongst young Muslims and some have even taken to social media to express this desire (Saltman & Winter, 2014). Martyrdom was found to be a key concept across the dataset: *"They think if they die, they die a martyr and go straight to heaven."* (Interview 7), *"They think they're gonna get rewarded for what they're doing in that they'll go to Jannah. They think they're going to be martyrs."* (Interview 10). Dawoody (2016) suggests that youth are easily

attracted to and motivated by ideologies such as martyrdom, fighting against disbelievers, helping the Muslim ummah and being cleansed of previous sins. The major strength of terrorist organisations is the misinterpretation of Islam which is reflected in their ideologies. As demonstrated by ISIS leaders, male recruits are often paid a salary and rewarded with sexual slaves (Dawoody, 2016). The incentive of being rewarded in both this life and the afterlife makes it problematic for policy makers trying to tackle radicalisation. Not only are ISIS recruiters presenting a distorted and contradictory version of Islam through religious ideologies such as martyrdom, they also offer worldly pleasures such as women and money to attract further support among young Muslims.

Misinterpretation of Jihad and the Quran

There was a strong sense that Jihad was perceived as an "*internal struggle for the sake of God*" (Interview 8) and participants associated it with the personal hardships an individual may face: "*to me as a Muslim, it's defeating your inner demons.*" (Interview 9), *"It's striving for God."* (Interview 1), *"Fighting with your inner self."* (Interview 4) *and "Fighting one's desires."* (Interview 6). Despite one of the most common definitions of jihad being the inner struggle against oneself, this interpretation is not widely recognised by non-Muslims (Hathout, 2002). Another issue highlighted by Hathout (2002) is that Muslims feel that Islam and Jihad is being defined by everyone but them. This was reflected in the current study as one participant suggested that the media was to blame for the negative connotation of the word Jihad and its incorrect translation: "*Now even my brain thinks of it in a negative way.. It's not a negative thing but it's wrongly translated in the climate we're in and through the media and films.*" (Interview 7). Many participants felt that the term jihad had lost its historic meaning was being misused and misinterpreted by ISIS: *"The meaning has completely changed. It means to struggle and fight but not for the wrong reasons or for murdering innocent people."* (Interview 7), *"Now it's associated with violence but that isn't the real meaning."* (Interview 4), *"Terrorists only look at the literal meaning and think they need to go out and physically fight."* (Interview 6), *"I think extremists use it as a justification for committing terror attacks."* (Interview 1). However, many Islamic scholars conclude that jihad does not mean 'holy war' as it is often wrongly translated in the West but instead the refers to the fight against the inner self (Khadduri, 2006). While most participants defined jihad as an inner and personal struggle for the sake of God, there was, however, some discrepancy in the understanding of the term. A minority of participants associated jihad with "*battle, wars, fighting*" (Interview 5), *"fighting for your beliefs"* (Interview 10) and

"giving your life for religious reasons" (Interview 3). The variations in the definition of the term jihad may be problematic for not only Muslims themselves, but also other around them. Thus, as suggested by Hathout (2002), some Muslims, particularly those who may be drawn to extremism, may need to educate themselves more about Islamic concepts such as Jihad to prevent any misunderstandings of their own religion.

The consensus of participants was that certain texts from the Quran are misinterpreted by extremists and terrorists: *"People make their own meanings and its misinterpreted."* (Interview 4), *"I think they're going too deep into it and taking the meaning literally."* (Interview 1), "*Someone with bad intentions can take something and go to someone who's vulnerable or impressionable and say look this is why you need to fight. It's people with wrong intentions who misinterpret."* (Interview 7). Several researchers support the argument that texts from the Quran are often misinterpreted by extremists for their own political means (El-Saeed, 1996; Hafez, 2003; Loza, 2007). Participants believed that specific teachings from the Quran were being taken out of context by ISIS to manipulate young Muslims: "*It's clear cut but people may manipulate others into believing this is what the Quran says."* (Interview 2), *"People pick and choose which parts of the Quran they want to follow and take them out of context."* (Interview 8). Yilmaz & Ekici (2009) argue that the reason Islam has become so commonly associated with words such as 'terrorism', 'radicalism' and 'extremism' is because terrorist groups cherry pick certain texts from the Quran to fit their purpose. Referring to a particular verse from the Quran, two participants reinforced the view that Islam does not promote violence: *"There are verses in the Quran that talk about fighting enemies but for every verse like that, there's another verse that will negate it. Like there's a verse in the Quran that says if you were to kill one innocent person, it's like you killed all of mankind."* (Interview 8), *"They ignore the ayahs (verses) that say if you kill one innocent person, then it is like you have killed the whole of mankind."* (Interview 7). Although participants agreed that ISIS is not representative of true slam, there was the notion that some Muslims, particularly young people, are still inclined to ISIS' ideologies that are backed with distorted Quranic texts. Thus, it is important for researchers to move beyond the idea that ISIS are misinterpreting verses from the Quran and investigate how ISIS are misusing them to identify and stop those who are treading towards violent extremism.

The was a considerable amount of agreement among participants that texts used by terrorists to justify acts of terror were written in a historic period that has little or no relevance to

Muslims in the West today: *"The literal words of the Quran were written in a time where it was completed different to our life today."* (Interview 9), *"Back in those days when there were wars, it was understandable because non-Muslims were killing Muslims but right now, it's not relevant."* (Interview 5), *"There's stories in the past during the Prophet's time when there were wars going on but there's nothing in the Quran that can justify what ISIS and these terrorists are doing."* (Interview 2). According to Yilmaz & Akici (2009), ISIS leaders exercise the *Salafi* interpretation of the Quran which prescribes that Muslims must practice Islam in the exact same manner as the first three generations of Muslims since the Prophet Mohammed. Muslims who follow Salafism believe that humans do not have the capacity to understand the hidden meanings of Quranic verses and should therefore rely on literal interpretation of the Quran. Consequently, it can be argued that followers of the Salafi branch of Islam interpret the Quran incorrectly because the socio-political pressures surroundings Muslims today differ to those during the time of the Prophet Mohammed. Nevertheless, Yilmaz & Akici (2009) argue that it is important to distinguish between traditional Salafis who interpret the Quran in its literal meaning to minimise the risk of misinterpretation and Jihadi-Salafis who are biased in their interpretation of the Quran for political motives.

Theme 2 - The influence of social networks on terrorism

Family

It has been widely reported that religious beliefs are transmitted directly and indirectly to children through family practices (Smither & Corsandi, 2009). One noteworthy issue here is that conformity and obedience to parents and other family members may prove harmful in some cases; family members with extremist Islamic views may pass these views on to future generations. This assumption was reflected in the current study as one participant suggested that Asmal "might have had some family members who shared the same views" (Interview 4). According to Petrosino, Derzon, Lavenber (2009), parental attitudes toward violence play a critical role in determining juvenile delinquency and subsequent criminal behaviour in adulthood. Another participant revealed that Asmal's friend, Hassan Munshi, who accompanied him on his journey to Syria was the brother of Hammad Munshi – Britain's youngest convicted terrorist. The notion that crime runs in families is supported by Farrington, Barnes & Lambert, (1996) who found that having a convicted family member was a predictor of a boy's own convictions. Moreover, if the convicted family member was

of the same sex or an older sibling, this significantly increased the likelihood of a male becoming a juvenile delinquent (Farrington, Barnes & Lambert, 1996).

Many participants thought that Muslim youth who become radicalised and join ISIS were likely to have experienced a poor upbringing and unstable family relationships: *"A lot of it comes down to upbringing."* (Interview 6), *"I think it's how you're brought up and the values you're brought up with. If you have an unstable environment and upbringing, that triggers it."* (Interview 3). Research has shown that the type of parenting style employed by parents can have a dramatic impact on a child's psychological and social development (Bornstein, 2002). Parents who use an authoritarian approach place emphasis on the need for children to be obedient and follow rules without questioning or challenging them). As authoritarian parents often use harsh discipline and in some cases, physical abuse, this may result in hostile and aggressive behaviour in children which can ultimately lead to criminal behaviour in adulthood (Ingram, 2011). On the other hand, parents who adopt a permissive parenting approach do not offer discipline to children but instead are psychological controlling through behaviours such as emotional neglect, guilt inducing and withdrawal of love (Botha, 2009). Consequently, children who grow up with permissive parents are more likely to be disobedient towards authority. The notion that parenting styles can contribute to criminal behaviour was supported by a study of the al-Shabaab Islamist terrorist group which found that 71% of al-Shabaab respondents indicated that they were physically punished by an authoritative family member and 14% were emotionally punished (Botha, 2009).

Another study found that students who expressed a lack of closeness with parents were more likely rebel against the political viewpoints of their parents than those who reported being emotionally close with parents (Middleton & Putney, 1963). Highlighting an issue with the Asian Muslim community, one participant felt that parents needed to build stronger relationships with their children: "*I think in Asian communities, I don't think they have strong relationships. So parents need to be close to their kids so they could never feel like they want to leave you."* (Interview 7). This view was echoed by other participants who stressed the need for parents to communicate with their children and offer them the necessary support: "*So parents need to speak about it and teach their kids about how bad it is."* (Interview 6), *"You can't tell parents what to do and how to raise kids but they're an important a factor. If parents give you the right guidance, they can go the right way."* (Interview 10). According to Malik (2010), Asian families tend to be very large and therefore communication between

parents and children can be problematic. A study found that children from Pakistani families with a higher number of children were more likely to suffer psychological abuse and neglect than families with a smaller number of children (Malik, 2010). As a result, parental rejection may bear negative consequences on the psychological development of children. Such findings highlight the need for parents, particularly those from Asian backgrounds, to build good relationships with children as they are more likely to be obedient and better adjusted if they have a strong emotional attachment (Laible, Carlo & Raffaelli, 2000).

Theories of desistance from crime propose that changes in circumstances that strengthen the bond between an individual and society such as marriage, having children and gaining employment play a significant role in abstaining from criminal behaviour (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Laub, Nagin & Sampson, 1998). This view was supported by a participant in the current study who felt that for young Muslims who did not have any strong attachments with their families or other commitments, the decisions to join ISIS behind would become easier: *"They don't see themselves tied to anything here where they've got a good job or their family is close which makes it easier for them to go. If they were close to their families, maybe they wouldn't do that."* (Interview 7). However, competing theories of crime argue that such life changes make very little difference to desistance from crime as criminality is shaped by early childhood experiences (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Furthermore, it is argued that criminal behaviour remains fairly stable throughout one's life but the opportunities to engage in crime reduce (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Peers

When asked about Asmal and the three school girls from London who joined ISIS in Syria, participants felt that peers had a strong influence on terrorism among Muslim youth. It was believed that those who had left the UK to join ISIS may not have initially had bad intentions but got involved in the wrong crowd:

"Siblings and friends are a big influence too." (Interview 3), *"It might be due to peer pressure like those three school girls left together and the two boys from Batley were friends. I think men also get influenced and wrapped up in it especially if their friends are doing it."* (Interview 7), *"I think it's more to do with the people you're surrounded by. A lot of my friends have travelled to Syria to deliver human aid but there's also a small minority of people who want to do good but end up meeting the wrong people."* (Interview 2), *"They go

out seeking answers themselves and get caught up in the wrong crowd of people." (Interview 9).

In terrorism literature, the social learning theory of terrorism suggests that terrorist behaviour is learned in the same way any other form of criminal behaviour is learned (Akers & Silverman, 2004). By applying the social learning theory to terrorism, it is necessary to understand that terrorism is not a result of mental disorders or innate aggressive tendencies, but rather a consequence of social and individual learning experiences (Schmid, 2005). As more and more young people are witnessing their friends leaving their homes in Britain to commit terror attacks in Syria, this may lead some individuals to imitate terrorist behaviour, or even learn such behaviour from the glorification of terrorism through the media. For example, ISIS recruiters often use propaganda to glorify martyrdom and the role of females in ISIS (Peresin, 2015; Majeed, 2016). The belief that that ISIS glorify martyrdom to attract young men was reflected in the current study*: "I could see how they might make it seem attractive, kind of like how young men are encouraged to join the army and fight for their country. In the same way, ISIS may be glorifying fighting."* (Interview 7), *"They must think that there's so many men out there fighting for Islam and dying, they need to go out there and play their part."* (Interview 9). Similarly, participants felt that the glorification of jihadi brides was attracting young women to travel to Syria. Participants considered social media a very effective tool in attracting young Muslims because it is more commonly used by young people and they are also easily influenced and more impressionable than older people. While ISIS' social media strategy and propaganda has played a significant role in the recruitment of foreign fighters, peer pressure and real-life social networks are understood to play a greater role in the radicalisation of young Muslims (McVeigh, 2014).

Older Muslims
Older Muslims were believed to have an influence on young Muslims who become radicalised. Many participants thought that it was not just Muslims from Syria who were influencing younger Muslims to join ISIS but there were older Muslims from Britain involved too*:*

"They're are definitely older Muslims that are cowards. They can't go themselves so they use these young people and send them over." (Interview 3), *"I think there are older Muslims involved whether it be here or in Syria and they're just looking for an extra pair of hands to*

be used." (Interview 2), *"There's people in this country that are targeting Muslims and not just doing it from Syria."* (Interview 7).

The assumption that younger Muslims are being recruited by older Muslims is supported by an undercover investigation which found that four British mothers in London were recruiting young girls for ISIS (Whitehead, 2015). The female Muslim TV reporter who went undercover for a year, wearing the face veil to conceal her identity, revealed that a secret Islamist group run by these four British women was encouraging support for terrorism and telling young women that ISIS is the new caliphate. Quoting verses from the Quran and hadith, the older women encouraged younger women to travel to Syria, stating that Britain was at war against Muslims (Whitehead, 2015). The current findings reinforce the idea that older Muslims play a role in the recruitment of young Muslims as participants believed that it was difficult for younger Muslims to make the move to Syria without any assistance: *"You have to go through a lot of obstacles to get there which I don't think these young people can overcome by themselves. Maybe they had an older influencer."* (Interview 8), *"How would a young person even go to ISIS? Obviously someone is telling them to come to this place and where to meet."* (Interview 5). One participant thought that young Muslims were more likely to listen to older Muslims who are respected in society: *"If it comes from an older man, who is respected, you're more likely to believe. So they must have older Muslims that are recruiting and they're the leaders."* (Interview 1). As posited by the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), behaviour is more likely to be learned and imitated if the behaviour is rewarded and carried out by a respected figure. As older Muslims are more likely to be perceived as respected figures, particularly religious leaders, younger Muslims are more likely to acquire and imitate their behaviour. Thus, policymakers need to further investigate the role older Muslims with extremist views play in the recruitment of younger Muslims as this area is lacking in research.

Social media

There was a strong view that young Muslims were being groomed on the internet by ISIS recruits. Social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp were considered some of the major platforms used to manipulate young Muslims: *"ISIS have tweets and they see people and message them in a manipulative way."* (Interview 6), *"They're talking to people on Facebook and maybe it does start off with a genuine religious conversation and as the person gets to know more about you, it all switches and they take advantage."* (Interview

2), *"I've heard that there's a lot of stuff online like encrypted messages where others can't pick up on what they're saying and apps like whatsapp."* (Interview 7). As discussed in the literature review, there is a plethora of research which supports the notion that the internet serves as a useful tool for grooming young people for terror (Weiman, 2015; Farwell, 2014; Vergani & Bliuc, 2015). Twitter, in particular, has been ISIS' main weapon in this war of social media (Klausen, 2015). This is reflected in the present study as participants believed that ISIS recruiters were using twitter to portray a false image of what life in Syria is really like. One participant reported that he came across a video on twitter in which foreign fighters in Syria were answering questions for potential recruits: *"They make videos of people from ISIS talking and promotional videos. I've actually seen one myself on twitter. I saw a video a few years ago of live chats where people from ISIS were answering questions for people. I don't think it's the beheading videos that attract people, it's the videos that promote the good things about living in Syria is what attracts them and the lifestyle."* (Interview 9). According to Blaker (2015), online testimonies of foreign fighters have proven to be a very effective strategy in attracting Muslim youth to Syria, particularly young women. As ISIS recruiters flood the internet with propaganda and portray life under ISIS as better than life in the West, this poses serious problems for those trying to tackle radicalisation among Muslim youth in Britain.

The findings from the present study were consistent with previous research which has found that propaganda promoted by terrorist groups appeals mainly to young, lonely and marginalised people who are seeking an identity and belonging (Lamberg, 2001, Blazak, 2001). One participant felt that ISIS recruiters were posting content that invokes feelings of anger and make Muslims feel like they are hated by the West: " [ISIS] *might post something that a Muslim can relate to and make them think that it's about us and look what the West is doing to us and make them think that Islam is hated."* (Interview 6). As Weimann (2006) suggests, ISIS propaganda which invokes the oppression and mistreatment of Muslims can make some Muslims angry, and this may ultimately draw them to terrorist groups that offer them a sense of purpose and belonging. Conway (2006) illustrates an example of how some people may be "groomed" online through emotional arousal. He suggests that posting graphic images to prompt sympathy from young people is a tactic often employed by terrorists. For example, ISIS recruiters often post graphic pictures of young children and women massacred in the Syrian war as part of their social media strategy to invoke feelings of anger and gain support from other Muslims.

While participants believed that social media was the easiest way for ISIS to attract younger people, the consensus among participants was that young people must show some interest in ISIS and its cause first for them to be targeted. Participants felt that ISIS seek Muslims out based on the type of content they search and what they post online:

"Young kids must be initiating it themselves. How would a radical get in touch with them? People get in touch with you if you're posting or tweeting the same views as them.4. If they're searching for certain things online relating to ISIS, then they're bound to come under the attention of ISIS. Those kids aren't going to get a random message from ISIS unless they're on a platform which allows ISIS to seek them." (Interview 1), *"Like I don't see how someone could come up to me and be like do you want to go to Syria. I would have to contact them."* (Interview 7), *"I think these people must show interest to these groups first for ISIS to track them down. But I don't think it's difficult for ISIS to seek vulnerable people out either."* (Interview 8), *"If someone doesn't show any interest, they're not going to get influenced. It's when people start looking into it, they become victim to ISIS."* (Interview 9), *"People who have strong opinions about something may posts their opinions online and ISIS use that as a gateway for people to reach them."* (Interview 10), *"They know who to target because of what people search on the net."* (Interview 9), *"Like I said, normal people will express their views say there's a major terror attack and they tweet about it, they might be sympathetic towards why someone did what they did and ISIS could message them and say I agree with you."* (Interview 10).

Conway (2006) provides an example of how some Muslims may become involved with terrorists online based on the type of websites they visit. The Islamist terror group Jemaah Islamiyah posted a link to an Islamic charity on their website to make followers believe that their cause was legitimate. This illustrates how online activity and social networking of young Muslims may put them at risk of being identified and targeted by ISIS. Similarly, participants felt Asmal was misled via social media and perhaps his interest in Islam and the desire to help Syrians was what caused him to come under the attention of ISIS: *"He got talking to someone on social media and that person led him to believe he was gonna fight for a good cause and when he went there, they explained to him what was gonna happen and it wasn't what he went for."* (Interview 2), *"I knew that Talha was Islamic and wanted to help the Syrians so maybe that's why he was targeted because he expressed those views."*

(Interview 5). While social media may serve as way of attracting support from potential recruits, critics argue that it is difficult to establish the extent to which social media influences users to become radicalised. Some argue that social media is not increasing terrorism and exposure to terrorist propaganda does not mean that people will become terrorists (Awan, 2007; Benson, 2014). Instead, it is argued that use of the internet by terrorist organisations is more likely to reinforce pre-existing views in young Muslims rather than radicalise them (Awan, 2014). As suggested by Awan (2014), many terrorists that post extremist views online usually have a small number of followers and many do not aspire to reach a wider audience, thereby indicating that terrorists may simply be preaching to those that already have extremist views. It is easier to place the entire blame on the internet and social media for the growth of terrorism; however, Jihadist propaganda has been distributed in the past through other forms of media such as books and publications. Moreover, it is argued that although social media has facilitated the distribution of ISIS' extremist narrative, there are also some unfavourable consequences for the group. Not only is it easier for the government to monitor online extremist activity and subsequently stop terror attacks, advances in technology mean that ISIS' social media operations are exposed to the threat of online hacking.

Mosques

Mosques and institutions where young Muslims develop and learn about their religion, were considered to play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards Islamic extremism. While participants felt that most Muslims in Britain are disciplined and receive a good education in mosque, many expressed the need for mosques to teach more to young Muslims about the dangers of radicalisation:

"I *think mosques have a responsibility. They shouldn't just be there to learn the basics. Mosques should be the place where you do talk about religion and all forms of it."* (Interview 8), "*They've changed a bit now because before we just used to go pray Quran and come straight home. But I think now they've started teaching more stories about Islam and what it says about violence. They need to do it more. Islam isn't just about praying Quran; it's more than that."* (Interview 1).

Unlike mosques in Muslim countries, there is no universal governing body for mosques in Britain to supervise imams. Consequently, mosques are regulated by several different

organisations and there are no official standards for who can become an imam or religious teachers and what type of material should to be taught to students. While some see multiple governing bodies as a more useful approach when trying to understand Islamic rulings on a particular subject, this may potentially increase the proliferation of extremist beliefs. Social learning of extremist views may occur in religious institutions such as mosques and Islamic schools. Although mosques and Islamic schools have been around since the time of Prophet Mohammed, the number of religious institutions have dramatically increased over the years since the rise of radical Islam, potentially increasing the proliferation of extremist attitudes to Muslims worldwide (Armstrong 2000). This is evident in some cases of well-known international terrorists where they were taught extreme jihadist views as young boys in religious institutions (Sageman, 2004; Victoroff, 2005). Findings from the current study are consistent with previous research as some participants felt that mosque leaders may even be involved in the radicalisation of young Muslims: *"There will be certain people at mosque that are teaching younger people and if they have extreme views, they'll pass them onto young people."* (Interview 9), *"There could be an ISIS member running a mosque so I think it would be difficult to stop people from being radicalised.*" (Interview 10). In light of these findings, it is important for mosques and Islamic institutions to be regulated by the British government to stop the spread of Islamic extremism, thereby reducing the threat of terror attacks.

The current study found that Talha Asmal, a suicide bomber from Dewsbury was a "Quran Hafiz" (a person who has memorised the Quran). Although no empirical evidence has confirmed a direct link between those who memorise the Quran and extremist behaviour, some researchers, however, have suggested that having experienced harsh and physically abusive punishment in mosque may result in the development of maladaptive personality disorders (Khan, 2012). Moreover, a leaked ISIS documents revealed that a small minority of young recruits had also memorised the Quran (Batrawy, Dodds, & Hinnant, 2016). Evidence suggests that children in mosques are often made to read the Quran for several hours a day and many are subjected to physical disciplining if they underperform (Sodiq, 2011). A study investigating the recruitment strategies of Boko Haram, a terrorist group in Nigeria, found that the country's religious learning system was limited to memorising the Quran (Omilusi, 2015). Young Muslims who are subjected to harsh disciplining may build resentment towards authority, experience identity foreclosure and develop low self-esteem (Khan, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the circumstances of Muslim youth, particularly in the

context of religious institutions, that enable terrorist groups to exploit the anger felt by vulnerable Muslims and ultimately lead some to commit terror attacks.

While some argue that Islamic leaders who use harsh discipline or promote extremist views in mosques may influence some Muslims to join terrorist groups, others suggest that terrorism is a consequence of interacting and building unintentional friendships with people who hold extremist religious views (Sageman, 2004). In the current study, one participant suggested that ISIS are more likely to target Muslims in areas such as "*Bradford, Dewsbury, Birmingham because there's a high population of Muslims.*" (Interview 2). Another participant who also lived in Dewsbury felt that Asmal may have been targeted by ISIS because "*he's from a Muslim area. There's a big famous mosque there – Markaz. So he's in a situation where it's really easy to meet the wrong people.*" (Interview 6). These findings suggest that social interactions may influence young Muslims to become extremists which is supported by previous research which found that 68% of 168 Muslims who joined al-Qaeda reported that friendship was the biggest factor influencing their decision to join the terrorist group (Sageman, 2004). While terrorist behaviour may be learned from observation and imitation of family members, friends, religious leaders and other social relationships, critics of the social learning theory argue that it does not explain why only a small minority of the 1.6 billion Muslims become terrorists. As stated by Sageman (2004), not every Muslims who has been exposed to the same extremist Islamic teachings or were friends with people who later joined ISIS become terrorists themselves. While the social learning theory of terrorism gives an insight into the profile of those who may predisposed to terrorist behaviour, it fails to account for why some people become terrorists. Thus, it is necessary to seek other contributing factors that explain the causes of terrorism.

Schools

While some participants expressed their concern for mosques being target spots for ISIS recruitment, others disapproved of the way religious education was being taught in schools and felt that non-Muslims did not have enough knowledge about Islam and its views on violence and terrorism:

"*Schools don't do enough. We only learn the basics.*" (Interview 7), "*They're should be more youth clubs, more teaching in schools. If children are getting this information from a young age, maybe it would reduce terrorism.*" (Interview 6), "*I think in schools they need to*

teach religious education in a better way. They need to teach Islam to non-Muslims too and what it's really about. They need to know because they don't really know much. I don't think schools teach the right thing." (Interview 1), "*Kids are unaware and don't even know the real meaning of terrorism so yeah more needs to be taught at school.*" (Interview 4), "*I don't think you should say don't do this and don't go to Syria and join ISIS. But you need to teach them more about what Islam really says about violence.*" (Interview 9).

The way in which religious education is taught in British schools has come under scrutiny for misrepresenting the nature of religion and for being incapable of challenging racism and religious intolerance (Barnes, 2006). While most children will usually have some knowledge about different religions prior to studying religious educations at schools, they are likely to be more acquainted with Islam due to the widespread coverage of Islamist terrorism in the media and through other factors such as families (Berkson, 2005). Consequently, teachers may find it challenging to teach Islam to students who are misinformed about Islam. Revell (2010) interviewed 116 predominantly white primary school children in year 4 to explore their understanding of Islam and found that many children viewed Islam as 'foreign' and 'alien'. Many children felt that Muslims were fighting against the British army and associated Islam with terrorism and war. Moreover, some children expressed racist views and several believed that Muslim women were forced to wear the veil and hijab. These findings hold implications for teachers as what children learn about Islam outside of school influences the way they respond to teachings of Islam in schools. Revell (2010) suggests that if schools wish to enhance the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, then teachers need to address any preconceptions children may have learned about Islam outside of school. This, however, does not mean that teachers should advocate an inaccurate or idealised version of Islam and ignore the negative side of Islam shown in the media as this would lead to further misunderstandings and misrepresentations. Instead, schools should challenge any misunderstandings as failure to do so may result in children internalising the view that Muslims are socially and culturally 'different'.

Theme 3 – Psychological vulnerabilities of Muslim youth

Psychopathology

There was some degree of variation regarding views on the mental health of terrorists. Some participants felt that there must be underlying psychopathological issues that contribute to the involvement of terrorism among Muslim youth: *"It must be combination of factors like upbringing and also your mental health. You've got to be deluded. I think it's a psychological thing and you've got to be a very special kind of person to go over there and do this."* (Interview 7), *"I think there's a mental breakdown somewhere for someone to have courage to do that, your mind can't be in the right place."* (Interview 3), "*Anybody in their right mind wouldn't do it."* (Interview 4), "*I think they're not very smart."* (Interview 9). On the other hand, some felt that Muslim youth who travel to Syria are intelligent and making a well-informed decision: "*Some make very intelligible choices and do it on purpose but others get caught in the hype, but I think that a lot of them are making a well informed decision."* (Interview 8), *"Talha was very clever. He didn't let anyone that he was speaking to someone and he was using code language so that the police couldn't track them. He looked into it and did his research. He was a Quran hafiz so he wasn't thick."* (Interview 3).

According to the mental disorder perspective of terrorism, terrorists carry out extremely violent acts which suggests that their behaviour is motivated by psychopathological factors as opposed to socio-political factors (Cooper, 1978). This explanation of terrorism proposes that terrorists are psychopaths who use political violence to release their aggressive impulses. The mental disorder explanation also proposes that many terrorists are driven by the desire to die because they wish to overcome the trauma that they may have experienced as a child and this is made possible through thrill-seeking and taking control over their lives. However, critics of this perspective argue that while some terrorists may indeed have personality disorders and psychopathic traits, the mental disorder perspective is only applicable to a small minority of terrorists (Corrado, 1981); therefore, it cannot be generalised to the wider population of terrorists. While it appears that terrorists are commonly perceived to be psychotic and insane, very rarely do they meet the psychiatric criteria for insanity (Victoroff, 2005). This is supported by a plethora of research studies which have found that terrorists do not usually display any sign of mental disorders (Post, Sprinzak, & Denny 2003; Post & Gold, 2002; Horgan, 2003), rather they are rational individuals motivated by a socio-political goal

(Corrado, 1981; Ruby, 2002). Unlike other psychological theories which explain why individuals may be predisposed to a type of behaviour, the rational choice theory assumes that terrorism may not necessarily reflect psychopathological or irrational behaviour, but instead represents the best strategy to obtain a particular goal. Moreover, the rational choice theory has been used to predict how effective anti-terrorism policies are and in determining whether a terrorist act is likely to maximise goals for the perpetrator (Sandler & Arce, 2003). While the rational choice theory provides a useful insight into what motivates some Muslims to join ISIS, the theory fails to explain why only a small proportion of British Muslims become terrorists. Instead, the theory focuses on what terrorists are likely to do in different circumstances. It does not take into consideration how individual emotions, experiences and circumstances may influence rationality (Victoroff, 2005). By viewing terrorists as either completely rational or mentally disordered, this may get in the way of finding the correct approach to combatting terrorism. Therefore, it is necessarily to examine other psychological factors and individual differences that influence young Muslims to become terrorists.

Brainwashed

Participants felt that young Muslims were being brainwashed by ISIS due to their vulnerability and naivety:

"I think they go because they're at that point in their life where they're the most vulnerable. So it's probably vulnerability and their age and the lack of the external world really." (Interview 8), *"I think they're vulnerable people that actually want to do the right thing but they're misled by extremists."* (Interview 9), "Y*oung people are naïve and easily manipulated and easily convinced to do stupid things*." (Interview 2), "*They're lost and naïve. They're led astray because of their naive minds and they're vulnerable."* (Interview 1), "*They're more naïve and gullible. Living in this generation, there's a lot of hate against Islam and ISIS might use that to their advantage and say that this world isn't for us.6 It's brainwashing. They're taking advantage of young, vulnerable people. They're confused."* (Interview 3), *"I do believe its brainwashing because if you knew Islam, you'd know that it's not about violence."* (Interview 7), *"These extremist groups target young and naïve people and brainwash them into thinking that there's a greater good in the hereafter when that's not the case."* (Interview 6), *"I think they're brainwashed."* (Interview 5).

In several cases of Islamist terrorism, families of Muslims who have travelled to Syria use the term 'brainwashed' when trying to understand and explain why these young people join ISIS. Examples include the mother of 20-year-old Reyaad Khan who claimed that her son had been brainwashed by ISIS into thinking that he was going to Syria to help people, and the parents of 19-year-old Mohammed Hamzah Khan who claimed that social media was responsible for brainwashing their son into supporting ISIS. While it is understandable that grieving families might find comfort by using brainwashing as a justification for the terrible actions of their loved ones, misperceiving radicalisation as brainwashing will only interfere with tackling terrorism (Baggini, 2014). Brainwashing (nowadays often referred to as psychological manipulation or thought reform in social psychology) is forcing someone to change their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours against their own will (Dawson, 2003). The concept of brainwashing drew much attention during the Korean war when American soldiers were reportedly "brainwashed" by captors into converting to Communism and refused to return to the US upon their release. While such an explanation may seem plausible, critics question the reliability of brainwashing and whether it is possible to force someone to change their beliefs without their consent. Baggini (2014) argues that the circumstances of these American soldiers are not comparable to those of most British Muslims that lead them to fight in Syria. For example, parents of some Muslim youth claim that their children joined ISIS of their own will and did not discuss their plans with anyone among fears that they would be stopped from going. Moreover, by saying that young Muslims are being brainwashed implies that they are victims and play a passive role in their acts of terrorism. This argument is supported by findings from the current study which revealed that while most participants agreed that ISIS were preying on the vulnerabilities of young Muslims and leading them astray, some felt that it was wrong to completely remove all responsibility for their actions: "*I think they must already have some extremist views to get brainwashed because if someone was trying to brainwash me on Facebook, I'd block them.*" (Interview 5), *"I don't think it's purely young Muslims being targeted. These young Muslims must be showing some interest in ISIS for them to be picked out."* (Interview 1). As suggested by Zablocki & Robbins (2001), a more suitable approach to understanding "brainwashing" in religious cults would be to view it as a form of social influence that incorporates elements of social psychology including compliance, conformity and persuasion. If researchers are to understand why young Muslims are drawn to violence, it is important for them to properly define concepts such as brainwashing and radicalisation. Failure to properly understand the context of these terms and

what is meant by them will result in an inadequate explanation of how and why some young Muslims might become terrorists.

Sense of identity and belonging

Participants thought that Muslim youth living in the West may join terrorist groups because they feel lost and want a sense of belonging. There was a strong view that young Muslims struggle to manage their Western and religious identities. Feelings of alienation, isolation and confusion were also cited as common factors influencing Muslim youth to join ISIS:

"I think he [Talha] might have wanted a sense of belonging8. I think they're lost and they're trying to find some sort of comfort and belonging. I think they feel that they don't belong here and they're led astray.1He might have been seeking his own place in religion and a sense of belonging but he got caught in the wrong group." (Interview 4), *"They feel like they don't fit in the western world. Maybe they want to go to a place that they feel like they belong to for a sense of identity. I think a lot of people that join ISIS feel alienation."* (Interview 8), *"So if young people feel lonely or isolated, they're more likely to join ISIS."* (Interview 7), *"I think they're really confused because I don't understand the logic behind it."* (Interview 8), *"I think they're trying to look for answers. Like in the case of my friend, he was looking for answers from knowledgeable people and they couldn't give him a response."* (Interview 3).

Previous research supports that that British Muslim youth who join ISIS are not psychopaths, but rather, vulnerable young people going through an identity crisis (Ysseldyk, Matheson & Anisman, 2011). The findings from this study are consistent with the social identity theory of terrorism which suggests that terrorists tend to be young individuals who are struggling to establish an identity (Fischer, Haslam & Smith, 2010). According to this theory, when one's religious identity is more powerful than other social identities, responses to perceived threats are more likely to be aggressive. Empirical support for this theory was provided Ysseldyk, Matheson & Anisman (2011) who found that participants who considered religion essential to their identity displayed higher levels of anger and were more supportive of aggressive confrontation when their religion was perceived to be in danger than those who did not consider religion as their most powerful social identity. These findings provide a useful insight into how young Muslims may turn to terrorist violence in the search for an identity. Many young British Muslims of Asian backgrounds are faced with the predicament of adopting Western values which are conflicting with the values of Islam. Similarly,

participants in the current study felt that British Muslims may resort to terrorist violence because they struggle to manage their Muslim and Western identities. While the social identity theory has been applicable to the profiles of many terrorists, there are currently no empirical studies which have tested the validity of this theory to young terrorists. Thus, further research is required to fully understand the relationship between identity crises and terrorism among Muslim youth.

Research suggests that ISIS intentionally target first and second-generation Muslims living in the West in a bid for them to return to the Muslim world and pursue jihad against the "enemy" (Lyons-Padilla, Gelfand, Mirahmadi, Farooq & van Egmond, 2015). This is supported by Khosrokhavar (2009) who found that almost all terrorists from European countries were first and second-generation immigrants who described feeling isolated and marginalised. Moreover, British Muslims who have been involved in terrorism are often described as "home-grown terrorists" and the "the enemy within", and the media tends to place more focus on their ethnicity to separate them from the British community (Mandaville, 2009). As terrorist organisations may offer a clearer sense of identity, this may explain why ISIS appeals to some Muslim immigrants. By committing to ISIS' extreme definition of Jihad, Muslims in the West see this as a way of regaining status and a sense of belonging (Kruglanski, Gelfand, Bélanger, Sheveland, Hettiarachchi & Gunaratna, 2014). Moreover, research has found that those who join a group with a clear ideology are more likely to remain in the group as the divide between "us" and "them" gives people a clear understanding of what to believe and what to expect from those who do not belong to their group (Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, 2007). This poses serious implications for researchers and police who are looking for ways to reduce this risks of Islamic terrorism and highlights the need to examine who may potentially face an identity crisis and hence be at greater risk of supporting extremism. Given that the majority of Muslims living in Britain are first or second-generation South Asian immigrants, it is vital for researchers to focus on how such individuals manage their social, cultural and religious identities.

Sympathy

Many participants expressed some degree of sympathy for young Muslims who had travelled to Syria and felt that they were not entirely to blame because they are young and misguided. Participants who personally knew Asmal were more sympathetic because they believed that

he was not fully aware of the consequences of his action and only those who have bad intentions should be punished:

"They're kids, I see my sister as a kid. My sister is 16 and if she was to do something like that, she wouldn't but if she was, I would argue that she is too young to understand and be held responsible." (Interview 7), *"Because I knew Talha, I had sympathy for him because I thought that's not him and maybe he got brainwashed. But people that have extreme views and know what they're doing, I don't have any sympathy for them. People that go and change their mind, I do have sympathy for them."* (Interview 5), *"Talha might have gone there and committed a terror attack but I know he wasn't like that. I've met him and he was a good kid with good intentions. I don't think he had a choice to escape once he got there."* (Interview 2), *"I feel sorry for them because they don't know that they're being fooled and tricked into it."* (Interview 6).

There has been much controversy in the media surrounding the issue of British Muslims sympathising with Jihadists. Following the Paris attacks, the Sun newspaper headline sparked anger among British Muslims after it reported that one in five 'British Muslims sympathise with Jihadis'. However, Melley (2015) points out that the term "jihadis" was not used in the question during the survey; instead, Muslims were asked whether they had "a lot, "some" or "no" sympathy for young Muslims who left the UK to fight in Syria. This is a valid point as not all Muslims who travel to Syria are going to join ISIS; some may be going to do humanitarian work or even fight against ISIS (Melley, 2015). Thus, it is important to look at the context in which the word "sympathy" is used and what British Muslims mean by it. For example, the survey found that while some Muslims stated that they felt sympathy towards young Muslims who go to Syria, this did not indicate that they support jihadists or terrorism, rather they thought young Muslims were being brainwashed and felt sorry for them; hence, respondents described feeling "some" or "a lot" of sympathy" for these individuals. Similarly, participants in the current study did not support the actions of young Muslims going to Syria but they were forgiving and sympathetic. When asked whether Muslims should be allowed to return to the UK if they were remorseful, the majority of participants felt that they should be given another chance. Participants believed that punishing those who had travelled to Syria and preventing them from coming back to their homes would not only be detrimental to Muslim youth themselves but also to other people:

"I don't have as harsh of a viewpoint as the majority of Britain would where in that case of the three girls, people were saying don't let them come back and that isn't going to solve the problem." (Interview 7), *"I think that they should be allowed back because if they have gone and seen the wrong message and they regret it and want to come back, they should be allowed back instead of pushing them away which could have a more negative impact on them and others. It could lead to another terror attack so we could essentially be saving lives."* (Interveiw 1), *"They should be allowed to come back. The longer the stay there, the more chance of something bad happening to them. At the end of the day, they're only human and everyone deserves a second chance."* (Interview 2).

There are several issues highlighted here. Firstly, the question that arises here is why is the media so quick to portray British Muslims in a negative light and as supporters of Islamist extremism? Saeed (2007) argues that the media is responsible for the rise of Islamophobia as it misrepresents Islam and Muslims, often portraying them as an "alien other" (an issue that will be discussed in further detail in the next theme). Secondly, this alienation, anger and resentment felt by British Muslims because of biased media representation may even push some British Muslims towards extremism and terrorism (Richardson, 2004). Finally, by preventing people from coming back home or giving them a harsh punishment may be unfair and detrimental to young Muslims. Researchers at the King's College London's International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence reported that many young Muslims who left to join Syria thought that they were going to fight against President Assad's regime but instead got forced into fighting with ISIS (Spillet, 2015). It was reported that many of these young Muslims wished to come back but felt trapped because they feared being jailed if they returned to Britain. As documented in previous research, it is the vulnerabilities of young Muslims, driven by peer pressure, ISIS' propaganda and the search for belonging and identity that attract British Muslim youth to Syria. Therefore, it is important to take these vulnerabilities into consideration when deciding what punishment should be given to British Muslims who wish to return to the UK.

While the current findings and previous research suggest that many British Muslims are sympathetic towards young Muslims, it is important to understand that this does not imply that they are supportive of their actions. In fact, while most participants were forgiving, there were concerns that Muslim youth who had joined ISIS and wanted to return to their homes may pose a threat to the UK: *"I think there's a massive risk with that because if they've gone*

to Syria, you don't know what kind of extremities they've been exposed to, what they've seen or how far they've been radicalised. But it shouldn't be completely non- negotiable." (Interview 8), *"It's very scary for them, to be let back into the country because of what they're capable of."* (Interview 6). Research has shown that many Muslims are being trained in Syria to come back and commit terror attacks in their own countries (Qatja, 2016). This holds serious implications as the decision to let radicalised Muslims back into the UK may be detrimental to the safety of others. Nevertheless, some participants saw this as an opportunity to reach those responsible for radicalising youth and subsequently put an end to terrorism: *"You could probably use them to identify other terrorists and stop other Muslims from being radicalised."* (Interview 9), *"They should be put under interrogation to see why and use them to our advantage and find out what's actually happening in Syria and if they have any contacts and to get to the bottom of it."* (Interview 6). Moreover, jihadists who were regretful for their actions could be used as an example to show others who are thinking of travelling to Syria that the reality of life under ISIS does not match the image portrayed through ISIS propaganda.

Theme 4 - Perceived injustices against the Muslim community

Blame

Some participants referred to the 9/11 terror attacks and held the US government responsible: *"I think it's too late and deep and goes back too far to the 9/11 and the American government. I think the American government have created their own problems and they're creating anger amongst Muslims by bombing innocent people."* (Interview 3), *"It's not simple as let's get rid of ISIS. It's all come from 9/11."* (Interview 7). These findings are consistent with a survey poll of 3040 British Muslims which found that nearly one third of respondents thought that the US government was responsible for 9/11 (Goins-Phillips, 2016). Islamophobia has significantly increased since the 9/11 which has caused much anger among Muslim communities. Another participant blamed the Syrian president for the killing of innocent people and felt that something needed to be done about corrupt world leaders and the Syrian conflict: *"The governments need to address why Muslims are so angry. Innocent people are dying in Syria every day and it's not a clear battle. President Assad is a joke. These leaders should be going to jail for war criminal charges."* (Interview 7). As Kumar (2012) argues, not only do many Muslims feel that political leaders are to blame for the rise

in Islamophobia, they are also angry for being expected to condemn terrorism and apologise on behalf of Muslim terrorists.

The frustration-aggression hypothesis, first proposed by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer & Sears (1939), illustrates how anger and frustration regarding a political situation may lead some young Muslims to terrorism. This hypothesis is underpinned by key concepts of the relative deprivation hypothesis which suggests that when an individual faces perceived injustice, discrimination, political oppression and low social status, this may cause them to engage in violence (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006). While the frustration-aggression hypothesis has been widely used in criminological literature, its application to the study of terrorism is flawed for many reasons. Critics argue that the hypothesis is overly-simplistic and assumes that violence is always a consequence of frustration. There are many people in situations that are frustrating but this does not necessarily mean that they will be violent towards others or become terrorists. Instead, frustrated individuals may isolate themselves from society and seek to achieve their goals using non-violent approaches (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006). While frustration may indeed contribute to political violence, the frustration-aggression hypothesis alone is not enough to explain the causes terrorism. This is not to say that frustration driven by conditions such as perceived injustices, discrimination, and political oppression have no relevance to terrorism. However, the hypothesis fails to explain the process by which people become terrorists and therefore it is necessary to differentiate between causal factors and contributing factors to better understand terrorism.

Blame was also attributed to the media for primarily associating the words extremism and terrorism with Muslims and Islam: “*In the media if you see extremist or terrorist, you automatically think Muslim. And I think the media is to blame for that.*” (Interview 7), “*You automatically think of Islam when you hear these words. There’s other groups like IRA trying to radicalise other people but now the way it has been perceived in the media, people only associate these words with Islam.*” (Interview 9). The view that media played a significant role in the negative view representation of Islam and its attribution to violence and terrorism was reinforced by another participants who stated: “When I hear radicalisation, I just think of bombs and suicide bombers and Muslims, killing and violence.” (Interview 6). As discussed earlier, several researchers agree that that the media is responsible for the rise of Islamophobia in Britain (Saeed, 2007; Richardson, 2004; Kumar, 2012). Portraying British Muslims as “alien” and not a part of the mainstream British culture through biased media

representation not only alienates and stigmatises the Muslim community, but also has the potential to push young Muslim towards terrorism.

Political revenge

When asked about the reasons for why Asmal travelled to Syria, participants thought that the suffering and oppression of Muslims around the world may have been a significant contributor:

"*I think ISIS use the suffering of Muslims and the fact that Muslims are dying across the world, in Syria.*" (Interview 9), "*I get upset and annoyed when I read the news and feel that there are many injustices so maybe he [Asmal] felt the same but it might have just been that he wanted to make a difference. He might have been upset and angry at what is going on over there. I see what's going on in Syria and Yemen and it makes me really upset and I feel helpless. Maybe he felt like that was his only option to help and do something for the ummah.*" (Interview 7).

There is a plethora of research which contends that political revenge is a driver of terrorism (Schmind & Jongman, 1988; Crenshaw, 1981; Cota-McKinley, Woody & Bell, 2001; Richardson, 2006). As suggested by a participant in the current study, Muslims are "killing in revenge for bad things that have happened *to other Muslims.*" (Interview 2). Juergensmeyer (2001) states that if Muslim believes that the ummah is oppressed or has been wronged by those in power, this may create feelings of humiliation and revenge, thereby pushing some Muslims towards political violence. Revenge has been cited as a motivator for terrorism by many suicide bombers who felt that Muslim countries were being mistreated and oppressed by foreign political leaders. For example, the suffering of innocent Muslims in Palestine at the hands of the Israeli Defence Force which provoked feelings of humiliation and revenge in Muslims worldwide, leading some to carry out suicide bomb attacks (El-Sarraj, 2002). The notion that perceived injustices can lead Muslims to terrorism is supported by research which found that Islamic terrorists are usually exposed to graphic images of massacred children and women in Muslim countries (Weimann, 2006), and Muslims were more supportive of martyrdom and expressed willingness to participate in suicide bombing after viewing images of dead Muslims (Pyszczynski, Abdollahi, Solomon, Greenberg, Cohen, & Weise, 2006).While several researchers suggest that perceived injustices against Muslims by political leaders motivate Muslims to join terrorist organisations, it is difficult to measure feelings of oppression and humiliation; therefore, more empirical research is required to

support this assumption. Even if perceived oppression did lead people to terrorism, this theory alone fails to explain why only a small minority of people become terrorists and not others who are faced with similar political grievances.

Discrimination post 9/11

The data revealed that discrimination against Muslims was recognised as a contributor of Islamist terrorism. Participants felt that stopping people who looked Asian or Muslim at airports without a valid reason was racist and targeted Muslim communities: "*I think some people just use it to be racist. How many terrorists have they actually managed to stop with this strategy. I think it can intimidate innocent muslims.5 It could be beneficial but is also racist. I have friends who have beards and they're more likely to get stopped.* Research has found that Muslims are more likely to be racially profiled and face discrimination at airports than non-Muslims. For example, a focus group study by Choudhry & Fenwick (2011) revealed that several Muslim participants reported being stopped on domestic and international flights whereas none of the non-Muslims participants had any negative experiences or recalled being stopped at airports. Nagra (2011) found that all thirty participants in a study of young Canadian Muslims had reported being extensively interrogated and searched at airports. Similarly, a participant in the current study expressed her annoyance at getting stopped randomly at an airport with her family when "*the whole plane was full of white people and they didn't stop anyone but us*" (Interview 7). The same participant also felt that Sikhs were getting stopped at airports because they resembled people of the Muslim faith due to their beards or turbans and this was causing them to become "*annoyed because people think they're Muslims and they hate that because they don't want to be associated with us. This is why there's so many Sikhs in UKIP and EDL because they want everyone to know that they're not associated with Muslims.*" (Interview 7).

Many studies confirm that that following the 9/11 terror attacks, there has been a rise in Islamophobia and Muslims in the West have been subjected to intense scrutiny and discrimination (Fekete 2004; Stein, 2003; Helly, 2004). Nagra (2011) found that post 9/11, there was a significant increase in the number of Muslims that had been victims of hate crime, received racist comments and struggled to gain employment because of their faith. Consequently, Muslims began to fear for their safety, struggled to make friends and felt that they no longer belonged in the West. While one would expect that Western Muslims would detach themselves from Islam in a bid to avoid such discrimination, research has found that

this is not the case. Instead, many young Muslims in Britain try to fight this negative perception of Islam by reclaiming their faith and strengthening their religious identity (Nagra, 2011). For example, some Muslims may start dressing more religiously, learning more about their religion, and building stronger relationships with fellow Muslims. Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) theory of reactive ethnicity suggests that when people face discrimination, they tend to establish a closer relationship with their ethnic group as a way of dealing with the perceived discrimination. Unfortunately, some alienated Muslims may end up going to the wrong people while seeking knowledge about Islam. The present findings support this in that participants believed that discrimination can alienate young Muslims, thereby allowing ISIS to exploit their feelings and widen the divide between Muslims and non-Muslims: "*Say if people get stopped, it's making it easier for ISIS to seek out people. It's giving ISIS another thing to play on. That is helping ISIS' cause of creating that us and them divide.*" (Interview 9), *"It's hurtful and can isolate young muslims."* (Interview 6). Referring to the US travel ban which banned nationals from seven Muslim-majority countries from travelling to the US, another participant criticised the ban and felt that this would make Muslims even more angry: *"Like the Trump travel ban is taking away people's rights and its discriminatory. I think rules like that are a bigger threat than ISIS because that is what allows anger and terrorism to breed in young Muslims."* (Interview 8). These findings are supported by previous research which has found that feeling of isolation and alienation resulting from discrimination are motivating factors for joining terrorist groups (Silke, 2008; Spalek, 2008).

The labelling theory of crime (Becker, 1963) proposes that crime is not a consequence of one's social background or behaviour, but rather a social construction. According to this theory, when authorities label individuals as deviants or criminals based on stereotypical assumptions, this creates a self-fulfilling prophecy and leads such individuals to deviancy and crime (Marx, 1981). The labelling theory supports the current findings as participants felt that by discriminating against Muslims and treating them all as suspect communities may even cause some Muslims to become terrorists: "*For you to pinpoint somebody out and target them will build resentment I think. Some people might think well if you think I'm a terrorist, I might as well be like that because you're treating me like that anyway.*" (Interview 8), *"I think it's racist and may even push people towards terrorism."* (Interview 3), *"They can't assume that if you're wearing a Muslim attire or have a beard you're a terrorist because that could make Muslims feel like they're being targeted and may cause them to become terrorists."* (Interview 4). When applying this theory to terrorism, it is important to bear in

mind that a person who commits an act of terror may not even recognise it as such. Terrorism can be carried out by both the government or its citizens; thus, the definition is ultimately dependent upon the political context (Zulueta, 2006). As illustrated by the saying 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter', Yasser Arafat is one example of a person who was considered a terrorist by many people but followers of the Palestine Liberation Organisation considered him a true leader of the Palestinians (Lafree & Duggan, 2007). This example reinforces a key concept of the labelling theory that an act is considered a crime based on the process of social interactions. The theory also provides an insight into why some young Muslims who join ISIS may not recognise their behaviour as terrorism. Highlighting the dangers of discrimination and stigmatisation of innocent Muslims as potential terrorists, the application of the labelling theory to Islamic terrorism illustrates the need for authorities and those in power to rethink their approach to fighting the 'war on terror'.

Counter-terrorism strategies

When asked about their views on counter-terrorism strategies, only three participants had heard of the PREVENT strategy. One participant was a secondary school teacher and had received training as part of the PREVENT programme on how to identify pupils who may be at risk of becoming radicalised. Although this participant thought that the workshop was "really good" and "eye opening", she also felt that PREVENT could potentially bear negative consequences: *The majority of our pupils are non-Muslim. I think that if these children were to see the material that we've seen, it might have a negative effect on non-Muslims. I was unaware of how people become radicalised until I watched the video and after watching it, non-Muslims might think is this what goes on in non-Muslim communities. I think it might make them think negatively of fellow Muslim pupils and incite racism."* (Interview 8). Another participant felt that such programs should not just be targeted at Muslims but should be aimed at the wider community: "*I don't think they should have programs for just Muslims because young Muslims that are thirteen/fourteen might not even know it's an issue so if you're going into schools to talk, you're putting it in their heads that the issue is just with them and their religion and making young people want to read into even more which might make them feel like they're being targeted. It's a minority that go over so it should be addressed as an issue in general and not just targeted at Muslims."* (Interview 2).

Appleby (2010) support's the findings above and argues that UK's counter terrorism strategy creates labels which alienate Muslims. While there is no mention of Islam or Muslims in any

legal documents for the PREVENT strategy, the documents produced by the government view extremism as an issue deep-rooted within the Muslim community. As the government advises British universities to prevent recruitment of extremists by monitoring students who look Muslim and Asian (Brown & Saeed, 2014), this places all Muslim at the centre of the perceived threat. Using the labelling theory, Appleby (2010) illustrates how counter-terrorism strategies may potentially contribute to terrorism. He argues that the government uses the label 'Muslim' in its counter-terrorism strategies and fails to acknowledge other individual identities and social groups that extremists may belong to. By focusing only on Muslims' religious identities, the counter-terrorism strategy ignores that there may be individuals who identify as Muslims but do not practice and so religion is not their strongest identity. Labels such as 'British Muslims', 'British Sikhs' and 'British Hindus' imply that people belonging to these labels differ to the mainstream British community (Appleby, 2010). As such, labelling individuals based on their religious or ethnic background prevents them from identifying as just 'British', thereby creating community division. The labelling theory demonstrates how the government, through the use of labels in its counter-terrorism strategy, has the power to alienate Muslims and constantly remind them that they belong to the 'other' deviant community. The theory suggests that terrorist come into existence because they are being forced to respond to and adopt this label of the 'other'; thus, if the government did not label Muslims as the *other* then 'terrorists' would not exist (Tuman, 2003). Moreover, theorists argue that when authorities label people as terrorists, not only will the labelled indivduals embrace this label and use it to their advantage, they will use it to engage with other criminals and create a new identity that can speak on behalf of the 'other' (Tannenbaum, 1938). Thus, it is not possible to combat terrorism if the government's counter-terrorism strategies continue to emphasise that the Muslims community is 'alien' and different to the mainstream British community.

While the UK's counter-terrorism strategies is scrutinised for alienating British Muslims, the strategy should not be disregarded as entirely problematic either. The criticisms thrown at counter terrorism strategies have weight but the government has displayed serious efforts to revise its previous versions so as to address the issues regarding marginalisation. As suggested by a participant in the current study, counter-terrorism strategies need to be "*more inclusive and don't make it seem like it's Muslims versus non-Muslims. Make sure that everyone is mixing. Every religion and race, and that will tone down all this. You see in schools all the time, there's so much segregation and nothing seems to be done about it.*

Speak to people that aren't Muslim and see what their views on terrorism and have healthy debates." (Interview 7). The growing number British Muslims travelling to Syria highlights the need for policy-maker to address how and why people become radicalised. As suggested by a participant, it would prove difficult to tackle terrorism without addressing it with the Muslim community: "*You've got to be realistic too. The problem is with Muslim communities."* (Interview 8). Until policy-makers can investigate the causes of radicalisation among Muslim youth without discriminating and marginalising the wider community, it is not possible to successfully counter the radicalisation process.

Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to explore the multi-faceted phenomenon of Islamic terrorism and gain a better understanding of why more and more young Muslims are joining ISIS. The research questions for this study were:

- What are young British Muslims' views on other Muslims who join Islamic extremist groups and what is ISIS' appeal for young Muslims?
- How are Muslims being targeted by terrorist groups and what role does social media play in the recruitment of young Muslims?
- How do counter terrorism strategies affect Muslim youth and what proposals to tackle radicalisation should be implemented in Britain?

Th following section will summarise the key findings from the themes identified in the present study. Implications for practice will be discussed alongside methodological issues and limitations of the current research. Taking into consideration the findings and conclusions from the present study, areas for future research will also be discussed.

Summary of themes

The current study identified four major themes within the analysis which explored the issue of terrorism from the perspective of Muslim youth in Britain. The first theme, *Poor grasp of Islamic faith,* provided an insight into the level of religious knowledge possessed by Muslim youth, suggesting that some young Muslims may be limited in their understanding of Islam and what it teaches about violence. The input of participants and their views on Jihad and Quranic teachings address the research questions in that they illustrated how some Muslim youth may be radicalised by extremists. For example, the misinterpretation of Quranic verses at the hands of ISIS may present a distorted and contradictory version of Islam to young Muslims. Moreover, the concept of being rewarded in Jannah (heaven) and the afterlife by fighting for ISIS helps explain why the terror group's narrative may appeal to some young Muslims; not only are young Muslims being offered worldly pleasures by joining ISIS, they are also being promised spiritual reward in Heaven and the afterlife. Although men and women were understood to play different roles under the rule of ISIS, participants felt that both men and women are driven by the same motive – religious reward.

The second theme, *The influence of social networks on terrorism*, pointed towards a number of social networks and relationships that may influence young people to become terrorists. Family members, peers, and older Muslims were believed to play a significant role in driving young Muslims towards terrorism. Participants recognised poor family relationships and a lack of closeness with parents as a contributor of terrorism in young Muslims. Similarly, peer pressure was understood to play a significant role in the radicalisation of young Muslims as was the influence of older Muslims. Many participants thought that it was not just Muslims from Syria who were influencing younger Muslims to join ISIS but there were older Muslims from Britain involved too. Mosques and schools, where young people develop and learn about religion, were considered to play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards Islamic extremism. Participants expressed their concerns for mosques being target spots for ISIS recruitment and also criticised the harsh disciplining methods employed by Islamic teachers. The way in which religious education was being taught in British schools was also scrutinised by participants for misrepresenting the nature of Islam and being incapable of challenging racism and religious intolerance.

Social media was identified as an online social network which facilitated the grooming of young Muslims by ISIS. Social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp were considered some of the major platforms used to manipulate young Muslims. While participants believed that social media was an effective strategy for ISIS to attract and recruit younger people, the consensus among participants was that young people must show some interest in ISIS and its cause first for them to be targeted. Participants felt that Muslims may become involved with terrorists online based on the type of websites they visit and the content they share online, thereby illustrating how online social networking may put young Muslims at risk of being identified and targeted by ISIS.

The third theme, *Psychological vulnerabilities of Muslim youth,* revealed discrepancies in opinions regarding the mental health of young Muslims that join ISIS. While some participants felt that there must be underlying mental disorders contributing to the involvement in terrorism, others felt that Muslim youth who travel to Syria are making a well-informed decision. The majority of participants did, however, feel that young Muslims were being brainwashed by ISIS due to their vulnerability and naivety. Participants thought that Muslim youth living in the West may join terrorist groups because they feel lost and

want a sense of belonging. There was a strong view that young Muslims struggle to manage their Western and religious identities. Feelings of alienation, isolation and confusion were also cited as common factors influencing Muslim youth to join ISIS. Although there was strong disapproval of the actions of young Muslims who travel to Syria, participants expressed sympathy for such people and felt that they were not entirely to blame because they are young and misguided. Participants who personally knew Asmal were more sympathetic because they believed that he was not fully aware of the consequences of his action and only those who have bad intentions should be punished. The belief that some young Muslims who travel to Syria are psychologically vulnerable was reinforced when participants suggested that Muslims who are remorseful should be allowed to return to the UK. Participants believed that punishing those who had travelled to Syria and preventing them from coming back to their homes would not only be detrimental to Muslim youth themselves but also to society.

Finally, the fourth theme, *Perceived injustices against the Muslim community,* brought forth many issues surrounding the radicalisation of young Muslims. Some participants referred to the 9/11 terror attacks and held the US government responsible and political leaders responsible for the rise of Islamophobia. Blame was also attributed to the media for misrepresenting Islam and associating it with extremism and terrorism, causing Muslims in the West to feel alienated. Participants thought that that oppression of Muslims worldwide may invoke political revenge and push young Muslims to join terrorist groups. Perceived discrimination was identified as a significant contributor of Islamist terrorism. Counter-terrorism strategies were believed to be discriminatory and targeting Muslim communities, further widening the gap between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Instead, participants felt that counter-terrorism strategies should not just be targeted at Muslims but should be addressed with the wider community as discrimination not only has the potential to alienate young Muslims, it further allows young Muslims to be exploited by ISIS.

Implications for practice

The findings from the current study illustrate that there are several factors influencing the process of radicalisation in young Muslims. The study reinforces the common view that most terrorists who join ISIS have a poor grasp of the Islamic faith. As ISIS offers young Muslims the incentive of being rewarded in both this life and the afterlife, this highlights some issues policy-makers may face when trying to tackle terrorism. Misinterpretations of Islamic

concepts such as jihad and martyrdom are not only problematic for the Muslim community, but also for others around them. As Hathout (2002) suggests, it is vital to educate Muslims, particularly those who may be at increased risk of radicalisation, about what Islam teaches about violence. Failure to properly educate young Muslims about Islamic concepts such as Jihad and martyrdom may lead to further misunderstandings about Islam and subsequently increase Islamic terrorism.

The present study highlights the need for parents, particularly those from Asian backgrounds, to build close relationships with children. As children are more likely to be obedient and better adjusted if they have a strong emotional attachment with parents (Laible, Carlo & Raffaelli, 2000), helping families improve relationships among themselves may help young people desist from criminal behaviour. Given that Munshi who travelled to Syria with Asmal was the brother of Britain's youngest convicted terrorist, and from Dewsbury, a town that has previous links with Islamist terrorism, this highlights the need for crime analysts to examine the demographical factors (age, ethnicity, location, family convictions etc) that may contribute to the involvement of young Muslims in terrorism. It is necessary for governing bodies to examine the material being taught in Mosques and also to ensure that young Muslims are not being subjected to harsh disciplining as this may build resentment towards authority, and subsequently allow terrorist groups to target vulnerable Muslims. As the present research suggested that Muslim leaders may hold extremist views, it is important for mosques and Islamic institutions to be regulated by the British government to stop the spread of Islamic extremism. Moreover, intelligence agencies need to further investigate the role older Muslims may play in the recruitment of younger Muslims for ISIS, particularly in mosques and areas with a high population of Muslims. Schools also have a duty to enhance the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim communities to stop young Muslims from feeling alienated. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to challenge any misunderstandings children may have learned about Islam outside of school as failure to do so may result in children internalising the view that Muslims are socially and culturally different.

Social media, as a recruitment tool for ISIS, poses many challenges for those trying to tackle radicalisations. Other than monitoring online activity, there is not much more governments can do to stop the proliferation of ISIS propaganda to prospective recruits. Nevertheless, as Awan (2007) argues, the use of the internet by terrorist organisations is more likely to reinforce pre-existing views in young Muslims rather than radicalise them. While ISIS' social

media strategy and propaganda has played a significant role in the recruitment of foreign fighters, peer pressure and real-life social networks are argued to play a greater role in radicalising of young Muslims (McVeigh, 2014). Therefore, it is important to exercise more efforts into finding the root causes of extremism rather than the methods used to facilitate recruitment.

In relation to the psychological vulnerabilities of Muslims in Britain, researchers need to look at which individuals are at an increased risk of facing an identity crisis, particularly in the Asian community. Moreover, there is a need for the British government to carefully examine the media representation of Islam and Muslims as the portrayal of British Muslims as the "alien other" not only gives rise to Islamophobia, it also has the potential to push young Muslim towards terrorism. Lastly, the government needs to rethink its approach to fighting terrorism as counter-terrorism strategies stigmatise Muslims and continue to emphasise that the Muslims community is 'alien' and different to the mainstream British community. As discrimination and alienation are key drivers of Islamist terrorism, it is important for government leaders to distance terrorism from Islam by removing the labels that create the association between Muslims and terrorism.

Methodological Considerations and Research Limitations

While the present study provides a useful insight into why several British Muslims might join ISIS, the research is not without its limitations. The study explored terrorism from the perspective of British Asian Muslims from West Yorkshire, and not from the perspective of terrorists themselves; thus, the reliability of the findings and generalisability to the wider Muslim community can be questioned. However, it would prove difficult to obtain data directly from young Muslims involved in terrorism due to legal reasons as many of these young Muslims are under 18 years of age. Silke (2004) supports that it is difficult to obtain data directly from terrorists themselves and therefore a limitation of terrorism research is that it relies heavily on the use of secondary data analysis.

Another limitation of the present study was that the researcher shared the same ethnic and religious background (Asian and Muslim) as participants which could potentially cause confirmation bias. Confirmation bias occurs if the researcher interprets the raw data based on their own individual beliefs and culture (Stenbacka, 2001). The researcher may only pay attention to certain responses that they deem relevant to their research hypotheses,

disregarding any information that does not confirm their hypotheses. Although a conscious effort was made by the researcher to assess and evaluate the raw data and challenge any pre-existing beliefs, it is difficult to completely eradicate confirmation bias. However, the current research may not have obtained the same quality of data if the researcher was from a different religious background as interviewees may have felt less comfortable discussing their views on terrorism.

One strength of thematic analysis is that it has more theoretical flexibility than other qualitative methods of data analysis. This theoretical independence means that thematic analysis may be an easier method to learn, especially for those who are new to qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Consequently, thematic analysis was the best method for analysis in this study as not only did it serve as a flexible research tool which is independent of theoretical knowledge, it was a more accessible form of analysis for the researcher. It can be applied to research questions that focus on the experiences and understandings of people in regard to a particular subject, making it suitable for studying people's views on terrorism. As thematic analysis is suitable for large data sets and can be used to generate analyses that are underpinned by data or theory, this method was deemed the most appropriate for this study.

Recommendations for future research

The present study emphasises the need for researchers to investigate the role older Muslims with extremist views play in the recruitment of younger Muslims as this area is lacking in research. While the current research suggested that men and women have similar motives for travelling to Syria, future research could focus solely on the motivating factors of young women as terrorism research has predominantly focused on young men. Moreover, focus group studies of young Muslims could be carried out to obtain qualitative data on a larger scale. Another area for research could be to explore the experiences of family members of those who have left Britain and joined Syria as this may provide a better insight into the background of such individuals and the motivating factors that influence them to become terrorists. Lastly, further research is required regarding the efficacy of UK counter-terrorism strategies as many Muslims do not consider this approach beneficial; rather, it bears negative consequences for not only Muslims communities, but also for others around them.

Key conclusions

This study has shown that the phenomenon of terrorism among Muslim youth is rather complex. This research has contributed to the existing literature on the topic of Islamic terrorism by exploring a wide range of factors including religion, social networks, psychological vulnerabilities and discrimination that underlie terrorist behaviour of young Muslims. By identifying the drivers of religious extremism from a Muslim youth perspective, this will enable policy-makers and researchers to better understand the root causes of terrorism and fight radicalisation. It is hoped that by providing young Muslims with a voice, terrorism researchers will be more informed of the factors contributing to terrorism among Muslim youth. It is expected that this study will provide opportunities for further research and practise by developing treatment rationales for terrorism.

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Appendix 1 – Interview transcripts

Interview 1

ISIS & Syria
I: Are you aware of the current situation in Syria and the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS?
P: Yes
I: What are your views on men/women who join Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS?
P: I feel that they are deluded and also misguided and they're very naïve because they take the information the wrong way and they go too far with it.
I: **What do you think is the main reason behind young Muslims travelling abroad and fighting in Syria?**
P: Naivety. I think they're all naïve and that one bit of miscommunication can take them the wrong way.
I: What do you think are the key motivators for joining such groups?
P: I think they they're lost and they're trying to find some sort of comfort and belonging. I think they feel that they don't belong here and they're led astray.

Jihad & religion
I: What is your understanding of the terms radicalisation and extremism?
P: radicalisation is when someone becomes too radical and extreme in their views. And radicalisation is when people are too extreme and take their views to another level of extremity.
I: What does the word jihad mean to you?
P: striving for God. I think extremists use that as justification for committing terror attacks.
I: Yeah some terrorists have used extracts of the Quran to justify acts of terrorism, do you think that it is in any way understandable?
P: No. I think they're going too deep into it and taking the meaning literally. When they're trying to seek the truth about their religion, they're going to the wrong people or going onto dodgy websites.
I: Do you think there are any Islamic teachings that may be interpreted in such a way that they can be used to justify Islamic terrorism?
P: I don't think the Quran promotes violence. If that was the case, then all Muslims would be terrorists. I think there are certain texts in the Quran that speak about war and fighting but that's in reference to history and doesn't necessarily mean that it's relevant to this day and age.

Examples of young people
I: Why do you think some young men decide to join ISIS?
P: I think they feel like they don't belong anywhere and perhaps they find comfort in groups like ISIS. They're lost and naïve. They're led astray because of their naive minds and they're vulnerable.
I: What is Isis' appeal for young people? Why does Isis appeal to teenage girls and boys?
P: Young people are more vulnerable and older people have found what they are looking for in life whereas young people might be looking for a purpose or some sort of adventure. And ISIS may seem like they'll give them a good life and by joining ISIS they think that they are pleasing their lord.
I: Have you heard of Talha Asmal from Dewsbury who joined Syria in ISIS?
P: Yeah.
What do you think led him to do what he did?
I think the wrong crowd because him and his friend went right? So yeah I think the wrong crowd. And the way them two went about things, I think they were lost. They didn't belong to anything. And when you're lost, you'll do anything to make yourself feel comfortable.
P: Have you heard about the 3 school girls from east London who went to Syria?

No

I: Well there's been speculations that these girls and many other young girls have left the UK to marry ISIS fighters in Syria. Do you think men and women have different motivations for joining ISIS?

P: I don't think it's a case of men and women. I just think younger people aren't as knowledgeable like they're still young and they haven't got much life experience and they're more vulnerable. The older you are the more you know.

I: Why do you think it is that only some men/women leave for Syria and not the vast majority of young Muslims?

P: I feel that most people are grounded and disciplined and they have a good education. They're taught well in mosque but there's a small minority that don't have that and they might not be grounded and disciplined. I think It depends on your upbringing. If you have a good education, which most of us do have, I don't think you will go on this path to Syria.

I: What do you think should be done with people who go to Syria but then wish to return back to the UK?

P: I think that they should be allowed back because if they have gone and seen the wrong message and they regret it and want to come back, they should be allowed back instead of pushing them away which could have a more negative impact on them and others. It could lead to another terror attack so we could essentially be saving lives.

I: Do you have any sympathy for these young people?

P: no I don't but with the right teaching and communication, these people could be educated and stopped from becoming terrorists.

Do you think these people are being groomed or do you think that they are fully aware of the consequences of their actions?

I: that could be a possibility. There's so much awareness out there and people know it's wrong so I think they do know what they're doing. You know what's right and wrong, they should know better.

Social Networks

I: How do you think young Muslims are being targeted by terrorist groups?

P: I don't think it's purely young Muslims being targeted. These young Muslims must be showing some interest in ISIS for them to be picked out. If they're searching for certain things online relating to ISIS, then they're bound to come under the attention of ISIS. I think it's equal parties to blame. For a terrorist to groom somebody, they must have been searching on sites and chats in the first place to get in contact with ISIS. I think they phrase things in a way which make people think that they're doing something good for their religion. They portray things in a way that makes these people think they're doing something better than what they really are doing. I think by saying that they're being targeted takes away the responsibility from young Muslims. I do think they play an equal role. Those kids aren't going to get a random message from ISIS unless they're on a platform which allows ISIS to seek them.

I: What part do you think older Muslims play in the recruitment of younger Muslims? Do you think they have any role?

P: older muslims are the ones that have a stronger influence. If it comes from an older man, who is respected, you're more likely to believe. So they must have older Muslims that are recruiting and they're the leaders. The youngsters are just being used to fulfil ISIS' actions.

Counter-terrorism strategies

I: What proposals to tackle radicalisation among young Muslims should be implemented in Britain?

P: more bans on website. There's too much access to certain things on the internet. They need to monitor what's being searched by people.

I: Have you heard about the UK counter-terrorism strategy called PREVENT? Like stop and search laws of stopping and searching people. What are your views on it?

P: I think they're good because terror attacks are becoming more and more frequent but people are also misusing their powers and stopping every Asian man at the airport that look Muslim. But it's a good idea because it can prevent terror attacks.

How would you approach reducing this idea of radicalisation and what would you do to counter the threat from terrorism?

P: I think in schools they need to teach religious education in a better way. You have to have discipline and grounding from a young age. Even in mosques. They've changed a bit now because before we just used to go pray Quran and come straight home. But I think now they've started teaching more stories about Islam and what it says about violence. They need to di it more. Islam isn't just about praying Quran; it's more than that. They need to teach Islam to non-Muslims too and what its really about. They need to know because they don't really much. I don't think schools teach the right thing. If you have a strong foundation, then you're less likely to go astray. They need to encourage learning about the meanings of texts so people don't misinterpret. There must be more underlying problems. Like your friends and siblings have a big influence on you so looking at the crowd young people are in.

Can parents/schools/mosques do more to prevent youth from being radicalised?

P: just more education. The more you push someone to do something, the more it pushes them away. So it has to be someone who is close to the child that can educate them like the parents, the friends or siblings. Someone that hits home for them. If you bring a stranger to their house, they're less likely to listen. They can always do more. You spend so much time with parents, school, mosques so it's really important to teach kids and give them a good upbringing. They need to take it upon themselves to do more and shape their children to be good representatives of Islam.

Interview 2

ISIS & Syria

I: Are you aware of the current situation in Syria and the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS?

P: Yeah.

I: What are your views on men/women who join Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS?

P: I think they are innocent people that are brainwashed into thinking out religion says something else. They end up doing something that they shouldn't thinking our religion allows it like blowing themselves up and killing innocents.

I: **What do you think is the main reason behind young Muslims travelling abroad and fighting in Syria?**

P: I think they go over because they talk to someone or get in contact with someone and that person convinces them that they're doing a good thing. And they're killing in revenge for the bad things that have happened to other Muslims.

I: What do you think are the key motivators for joining such groups?

P: They get promised things that don't happen. Like they get promised that they're gonna go to heaven if they go there and fight but when they go there they get forced to do things that they don't necessarily want to do.

Jihad & religion

I: What is your understanding of the terms radicalisation and extremism?

P: I don't know

I: What does the word jihad mean to you?

P: To do something for your religion.

I: Yeah some terrorists have used extracts of the Quran to justify acts of terrorism, do you think that it is in any way understandable?

P: No it'd clear cut but people may manipulate others into believing this is what the Quran says and get them to do things that they wouldn't do.

I: Do you think there are any Islamic teachings that may be interpreted in such a way that they can be used to justify Islamic terrorism?

P: no, theres stories in the past during the prophet's time when there were wars going on but there's nothing in the quran that can justify what isis and these terrorists are doing.

Examples of young people

I: Why do you think some young men decide to join ISIS?

P: they want a fast ticket to heaven. They think theyre fighting for a good cause but theyre actually not.

I:What is Isis' appeal for young people? Why does Isis appeal to teenage girls and boys?

P: because young people are naïve and easily manipulated and easily convinced to do stupid things.

I: Have you heard of Talha Asmal from Dewsbury who joined Syria in ISIS?

P: Yeah he was friends with my brother.

What do you think led him to do what he did?

P**:** He got talking to someone on social media and that person led him to believe he was gonna fight for a good cause and when he went there, they explained to him what was gonna happen and it wasn't what he went for. He went there thinking that he was going to help people but he was strapped to a bomb and forced to blow himself up. And he was talking to someone from there through Facebook. He told my brother he was going on a holiday and then my brother found out and we saw it all over the news that he'd blown himself up.

I: Have you heard about the 3 school girls from east London who went to Syria?

P: yeah

I: There's been speculations that these girls and many other young girls have left the UK to marry ISIS fighters in Syria. Do you think mean and women have different motivations for joining ISIS?

P: I think the media portrays things differently. I don't know to be honest I've not really thought about that. Yeah and no. I think they have similar motives but some things men can do and women can't.

I**: Why do you think it is that only some men/women leave for Syria and not the vast majority of young Muslims?**

P: I think it's more to do with the people you're surrounded by. A lot of my friends have travelled to Syria to deliver human aid but there's also a small minority of people who want to do good but end up meeting the wrong people.

I: What do you think should be done with people who go to Syria but then wish to return back to the UK?

P: They should be allowed to come back. The longer the stay there, the more chance of something bad happening to them. At the end of the day, they're only human and everyone deserves a second chance.

I: Do you have any sympathy for these young people?

P: Yeah. Like Talha might have gone there and committed a terror attack but I know he wasn't like that. I've met him and he was a good kid with good intentions. I don't think he had a choice to escape once he got there. Once he got there. It was game over for him.

Do you think these people are being groomed or do you think that they are fully aware of the consequences of their actions?

No they're not fully aware of what they're getting themselves into and when they get there, they're just seen as an extra pair of hands. Wherever they're needed, they'll be used.

Social Networks

I: How do you think young Muslims are being targeted by terrorist groups?

P: I think through social media. They're talking to people on Facebook and maybe it does start off with a genuine religious conversation and as the person gets to know more about you, it all switches and they take advantage.

I: Are young Muslims being targeted on the internet through social media networks?

Yeah. From areas like this such as Bradford, Dewsbury, Birmingham because there's a high population of Muslims.

I: What part do you think older Muslims play in the recruitment of younger Muslims? Do you think they have any role?

P: I think there are older Muslims involved whether it be here or in Syria and they're just looking for an extra pair of hands to be used.

Counter-terrorism strategies

I:What proposals to tackle radicalisation among young Muslims should be implemented in Britain?

P: I'm not sure. Monitor social media more because people are having conversations that they shouldn't be having.

I: Have you heard about the UK counter-terrorism strategy called PREVENT? Like stop and search laws of stopping and searching people. What are your views on it?

P: I don't think its fair because not all Muslims are like that and there's a few but Muslims as a whole are seen in a bad way. I think they need to be thorough with everybody and not just people that look muslim or like a terrorist.

How would you approach reducing this idea of radicalisation and what would you do to counter the threat from terrorism?

P: Monitor social media and maybe monitoring the type of things people teach at mosques.

I: What actions do you think should be taken to stop young men and women from going to Syria and joining ISIS?

P: Keeping an eye on them more and parents should know exactly where their child is. If they're going on holiday, they should have all the details of their flight bookings.

I: Can parents/schools/mosques do more to prevent youth from being radicalised?

P: they need to make them more aware of the dangers because it's becoming more and more common. People get groomed on facebook in sexual ways and its quite similar in that sense so they need to be made more aware. I don't think mosques teach a lot about radicalisation so they need to talk to the kids more and let them know what's going on.

Interview 3

ISIS & Syria

I: Are you aware of the current situation in Syria and the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS?

P: Yeah.

I: What are your views on men/women who join Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS?

P: I don't support it. I think it's wrong and shouldn't be encouraged.

I**: What do you think is the main reason behind young Muslims travelling abroad and fighting in Syria?**

P: It's brainwashing. They're taking advantage of young, vulnerable people. They're confused.

I: What do you think are the key motivators for joining such groups?

P: I think they're trying to look for answers. Like in the case of my friend, he was looking for answers from knowledgeable people and they couldn't give him a response. So that kind of cemented in his mind that what he's doing is right if scholars don't have the answers to his questions.

Jihad & religion

I: What is your understanding of the terms radicalisation and extremism?

P: The first thing that comes to mind is Muslims and brown people. It's become associated with Islam. So when I hear those words, I think of my own people and colour.

I: What does the word jihad mean to you?

P: Giving your life for religious reasons.

I: Yeah some terrorists have used extracts of the Quran to justify acts of terrorism, do you think that it is in any way understandable?

P: No not at all because the Quran was written over 1400 years ago and the situation was different. You can't take that conext and apply to today and use it as a justification for terrorism.

I: Do you think there are any Islamic teachings that may be interpreted in such a way that they can be used to justify Islamic terrorism?

P: I think if you look at one particular part of the quran you might think that's justification for me to go and commit a violent act but if you look at it in its entirety, you'll see that islam is about peace and love and bringing people together. But if you're looking at segments, then you're taking it out of context.

Examples of young people

I: Why do you think some young men decide to join ISIS?

P: Young people are more impressionable. It's confusion. I think there's a mental breakdown somewhere for someone to have courage to do that, your mind can't be in the right place.

I: What is Isis' appeal for young people? Why does Isis appeal to teenage girls and boys?

P: They're more vulnerable.

I: Have you heard of Talha Asmal from Dewsbury who joined Syria in ISIS?

P: Yeah he was my friend.

What do you think led him to do what he did?

P**:** He looked into it and did his research. He was a Quran hafiz so he wasn't thick. I think it was the people that he was talking to. He just started digging deeper and deeper and his mind was boggled. His whole mind couldn't see the other side of the argument. Obviously I didn't know he was going to do it till after he went so I was really shocked. Had I known he was going to leave, I would have done everything I could to stop him.

I: Have you heard about the 3 school girls from east London who went to Syria?

P: yeah

I: There's been speculations that these girls and many other young girls have left the UK to marry ISIS fighters in Syria. What is your view on women wanting to become jihadi brides.

P: There's nothing good coming from that.

Do you think mean and women have different motivations for joining ISIS?

Yeah. I think once their brainwashed, men just want to go and fight. I think its different when they get there and realise there's no going back. For women, it's different. Depends on their background and what they're running from. I think they're unhappy with their own lives and that's why they go.

I: Why do you think it is that only some men/women leave for Syria and not the vast majority of young Muslims?

P: I think it's how your brought up and the values you're brought up with. If you have an unstable environment and upbringing, that triggers it. Siblings and friends are a big influence too.

I: What do you think should be done with people who go to Syria but then wish to return back to the UK?

P: Its more subjective. I think you can't really change someone's views but you should give them a chance but offer them rehabilitation than just throw them in prison and let them out a few years later even more damaged.

I: Do you have any sympathy for these young people?

P: Yeah. I don't think they're entirely to blame

Do you think these people are being groomed or do you think that they are fully aware of the consequences of their actions?

Groomed.

Social Networks
I: How do you think young Muslims are being targeted by terrorist groups?
P: The person must go asking questions themselves first or even the media like bbc news which peaks people's interests. Talha was very clever. He didn't let anyone that he was speaking to someone and he was using code language so that the police couldn't track them. There's people in this country that are targeting muslims and not just doing it from Syria.
I: do you think they're older Muslims?
They're definitely older Muslims that are cowards. They can't go themselves so they use these young people and send them over.
I: Are young Muslims being targeted on the internet through social media networks?
You don't just trust a stranger from across the world. But social media is being used by people living here to target young Muslims.

Counter-terrorism strategies
I:What proposals to tackle radicalisation among young Muslims should be implemented in Britain?
P: I don't think they should have programs for just Muslims because young Muslims that are 13/14 might not even know it's an issue so if you're going into schools to talk, you're putting it in their heads that the issue is just with them and their religion and making young people want to read into even more which might make them feel like they're being targeted. It's a minority that go over so it should be addressed as an issue in general and not just targeted at Muslims.
 I: Have you heard about the UK counter-terrorism strategy called PREVENT? Like stop and search laws of stopping and searching people. What are your views on it?
P: I think it's racist and may even push people towards terrorism.
How would you approach reducing this idea of radicalisation and what would you do to counter the threat from terrorism?
P: I don't know. I think it's too late and deep and goes back too far to the 9/11 and the American government. I think the American government have created their own problems and they're creating anger amongst Muslims by bombing innocent people.

I: What actions do you think should be taken to stop young men and women from going to Syria and joining ISIS?
P: I don't think you should say don't do this and do go to Syria and join ISIS. But you need to teach them more about what Islam really says about violence.

Interview 4

ISIS & Syria
I: Are you aware of the current situation in Syria and the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS?
P: Yes
I: What are your views on men/women who join Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS?
P: I think they are extreme and classed as terrorists.
I: **What do you think is the main reason behind young Muslims travelling abroad and fighting in Syria?**
P: I think they're naïve and get brainwashed easily.
I: What do you think are the key motivators for joining such groups?
P: They think it's Islamic but it's not and because they're young and naïve, they're easily influenced.

Jihad & religion
I: What is your understanding of the terms radicalisation and extremism?
P: It's when somebody is imposing their views on someone.
I: What does the word jihad mean to you?
P: Fighting with your inner self but now it's associated with violence but that isn't the real meaning.
I: Yeah some terrorists have used extracts of the Quran to justify acts of terrorism, do you think that it is in any way understandable?
P: No
I: Do you think there are any Islamic teachings that may be interpreted in such a way that they can be used to justify Islamic terrorism?
P: People make their own meanings and its misinterpreted. Only qualified scholars have the right to interpret. And if they're interpreting it wrong, then we have a big problem.

Examples of young people
I: Why do you think some young men decide to join ISIS?
P: They've got nothing better to do with their lives. Lack of education. Islamically and academically.
I: What is Isis' appeal for young people? Why does Isis appeal to teenage girls and boys?
P: Young people are eager to learn more about islam but I think it depends on the kinds of people they speak to and if it's a radical person, they'll just see that as the truth because they're more vulnerable. As you're growing, you learn but these young people haven't had the chance and are being thrown into the deep end by these radicals. If violence was what Islam taught, then every Muslim would be fighting in Syria right now.
I: Have you heard of Talha Asmal from Dewsbury who joined Syria in ISIS?
P: Yeah I have.
What do you think led him to do what he did?
A range of factors. He might have had some family members who shared the same views. He might have been seeking his own place in religion and a sense of belonging but he got caught in the wrong group.
P: Have you heard about the 3 school girls from east London who went to Syria?
yeah
I: There's been speculations that these girls and many other young girls have left the UK to marry ISIS fighters in Syria. Do you think mean and women have different motivations for joining ISIS?
P: It's ridiculous. I think they must have the same motive – religion.
I:Why do you think it is that only some men/women leave for Syria and not the vast majority of young Muslims?
P: The minority don't have an understanding of Islam.
I: What do you think should be done with people who go to Syria but then wish to return back to the UK?
P: Depends on what they've done. If they have, then no. If they haven't done anything, they need to educated.
I: Do you have any sympathy for these young people?
P: It depends on their intention. If they have gone with the intention to help people, then yeah. But just to cause violence then no.
Do you think these people are being groomed or do you think that they are fully aware of the consequences of their actions?
I: No. Anybody in their right mind wouldn't do it.

Social Networks
I: How do you think young Muslims are being targeted by terrorist groups?
P: Young kids must be initiating it themselves. How would a radical get in touch with them? People get in touch with you if you're posting or tweeting the same views as them.

I: What part do you think older Muslims play in the recruitment of younger Muslims? Do you think they have any role?
P: Younger ones are physically stronger. Older Muslims are the leaders and might make the calls but put these young people forward. But you can never be sure because if we knew, it wouldn't be happening.

Counter-terrorism strategies
I: What proposals to tackle radicalisation among young Muslims should be implemented in Britain?
P: People keep saying masjids should do more but they shouldn't be seen as the wrong doers. You can't start screening every Muslim. It needs to be fair. Don't just pick on Muslims.
I: Have you heard about the UK counter-terrorism strategy called PREVENT? Like stop and search laws of stopping and searching people. What are your views on it?
P: I don't see a problem as long as they don't give them grief. But they need to have a real reason to stop someone and proper criteria. They can't assume that if you're wearing a Muslim attire or have a bead you're a terrorist because that could make Muslims feel like they're being targeted and may cause them to become terrorists.
How would you approach reducing this idea of radicalisation and what would you do to counter the threat from terrorism?
P: everyone has to play a part, whether it's school or mosques. They should be given talks in schools and use the same strategy everywhere. Kids are unaware and don't even know the real meaning of terrorism so yeah more needs to be taught at schools.

Interview 5

ISIS & Syria
I: Are you aware of the current situation in Syria and the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS?
P: Kind of
I: What are your views on men/women who join Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS?
P: I don't agree with it and I think they get brainwashed to do it. But I think they must already have some extremist views to get brainwashed because if someone was trying to brainwash me on facebook, id block them.
I**: What do you think is the main reason behind young Muslims travelling abroad and fighting in Syria?**
P: They think they're doing something good, They're told that the life there is amazing and young boys are attracted to the idea of using weapons. These people could be here or there. And use Islam to brainwash them and tell them they'll go to Jannah if they go fight. It's nothing to do with Islam. They're killing in Islam's name.

Jihad & religion
I: What is your understanding of the terms radicalisation and extremism?
P: Brainwashing someone into thinking their opinion is right and getting them to do thing that aren't right. What was the next one? Extremism. Having extreme views about something.
I: What does the word jihad mean to you?
P: Battle, wars, fighting.
I: Yeah some terrorists have used extracts of the Quran to justify acts of terrorism, do you think that it is in any way understandable?
P: No. it's made up and twisted the Quran because it doesn't represent that at all.
I: Do you think there are any Islamic teachings that may be interpreted in such a way that they can be used to justify Islamic terrorism?

P: No. Back in those days when there were wars, it was understandable because non-Muslims were killing Muslims but right now, it's not relevant. But people twist things and make out Islam encourages violence when it doesn't.

Examples of young people
I: **Why do you think some young men decide to join ISIS?**
P: I think they're brainwashed. Or maybe they've grown up in such a way to have extreme views and gone to mosques that don't represent Islam properly.
I: **What is Isis' appeal for young people? Why does Isis appeal to teenage girls and boys?**
P: younger people are easier to brainwash than older people.
I: **Have you heard of Talha Asmal from Dewsbury who joined Syria in ISIS?**
P: Yeah I went to college with him.
What do you think led him to do what he did?
He was a really nice and quiet guy and really Islamic. He was a hafiz. So maybe he was talking to the wrong people and he thought what he was doing is right think because I don't think he's do something like that knowing that it's so wrong. We were all so shocked because he was a really nice and quiet guy. Anyone could be walking on the street and they could have extremist views and you'd never know so how are you supposed to stop people from going to Syria because they seem like normal people.
P: **Have you heard about the 3 school girls from east London who went to Syria?**
yeah
I: **There's been speculations that these girls and many other young girls have left the UK to marry ISIS fighters in Syria. Do you think mean and women have different motivations for joining ISIS?**
P: Maybe women go so they can have children and raise them to fight and to take care of ISIS fighters.
I:**Why do you think it is that only some men/women leave for Syria and not the vast majority of young Muslims?**
P: People that go are quite naïve but I wouldn't blame it all on their naivety. Some people are more intelligent and but someone who doesn't have much knowledge would fall into the trap of isis.
I: **What do you think should be done with people who go to Syria but then wish to return back to the UK?**
P: Yeah because they've been lied to and don't know what they're doing.
I: **Do you have any sympathy for these young people?**
P: Yes and no. Because I knew Talha I had sympathy for him because I thought that's not him and maybe he got brainwashed. But people that have extreme views and know what they're doing, I don't have any sympathy for them. People that go and change their mind, I do have sympathy for them.
I: **What part do you think older Muslims play in the recruitment of younger Muslims? Do you think they have any role?**
P: I feel like other people are involved in the whole situation. How would a young person even go to isis? Obviously someone is telling them to come to this place and where to meet. I don't think someone can just decide to go by themselves. I feel like older people are sending younger people because they're healthier and know that they can fight and young boys are more interested in weapons so it appeals to them more. ISIS know that young men would be attracted to this whole idea of fighting because it's masculine.
Do you think these people are here on in Syria?
I think its here too. How can someone you've never met have such a big impact on you and influence you to leave your family and travel to join isis. It must be someone that they know or became close to because you wouldn't just trust someone over social media.

Social Networks

I: How do you think young Muslims are being targeted by terrorist groups?

P: Through someone they already know. In order to be targeted, they must exhibit extreme views. I knew that Talha was Islamic and wanted to help the Syrians so maybe that's why he was targeted because he expressed those views but with me, I don't think anyone would because I don't have extreme views.

What do you mean by extreme?

Say if you saw someone wasn't wearing hijab, you started saying horrible things about them. But Talha wasn't like that at all. I feel that if a terrorist group though that somebody held such views, they're more likely to target them. I feel like Talha was really normal who talked about Islam in a positive way but didn't hold any extremist views. He just used to mind his own business.

Counter-terrorism strategies

I: What proposals to tackle radicalisation among young Muslims should be implemented in Britain?

P: Raise more awareness. If you suspect something from a friend, you should know who you can report it. Just let people know that it's happening and do something with the borders. Be stricter on the border from turkey to Syria.

I: Have you heard about the UK counter-terrorism strategy called PREVENT? Like stop and search laws of stopping and searching people. What are your views on it?

P: For someone who doesn't have extreme views, it can be hurtful. I think some people just use it to be racist. I wouldn't like it if I was stopped and questioned for no reason. How many terrorists have they actually managed to stop with this strategy. I think it can intimidate innocent Muslims.

How would you approach reducing this idea of radicalisation and what would you do to counter the threat from terrorism?

P: More tight security in turkey. More awareness in schools and the community. Have it on social media more so that they know who they can speak to if they felt like they were being targeted by a terrorist or knew someone else that was.

I: Can parents/schools/mosques do more to prevent youth from being radicalised?

P: mosque yeah. Kids look up to Islamic teachers and if they taught kids that ISIS are terrorists, these children would take that into account.

Interview 6

ISIS & Syria

I: Are you aware of the current situation in Syria and the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS?

P: Yeah. When I go onto facebook, I see a lot about it.

I: What are your views on men/women who join Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS?

P: I think it's wrong because these groups are not doing anything goof got the world and the women that are doing it to have babies to keep ISIS growing and contribute to destroying other parts of the world.

I: What do you think is the main reason behind young Muslims travelling abroad and fighting in Syria?

P: Its down to brainwashing. Religion doesn't teach them to be violent but some scriptures may be misinterpreted. These extremist groups target young and naïve people and brainwash them into thinking that there's a greater good in the hereafter when that's not the case. They brainwash them into thinking there's more benefits than costs to this.

I: What do you think are the key motivators for joining such groups?

P: The benefits are more than the costs. So maybe not in this world but in the hereafter. They think they're pleasing god and that's the main thing these terrorists say to brainwash young Muslims. They say to them forget about all these disbelievers, it's all about god.

Jihad & religion

I: What is your understanding of the terms radicalisation and extremism?

P: when I hear radicalisation, I just think of bombs and suicide bombers and Muslims, killing and violence. Being extreme in their beliefs.

I: What does the word jihad mean to you?

P: Fighting ones desires or fighting against oneself. Jihad means fighting in the way of god but that doesn't mean god is telling us to fight other people that aren't believers. It's a personal thing and means when you want to do something evil, fight against yourself. Terrorists only look at the literal meaning and think they need to go out and physically fight.

I: Yeah some terrorists have used extracts of the Quran to justify acts of terrorism, do you think that it is in any way understandable?

P: If you take any line out of its context, then yeah it can be used in their favour. For example, in the Quran, there's an extract which talks about killing the non-believers but it's not saying to do it for no reason, it's because they're at war with them.

Examples of young people

I: Why do you think some young men decide to join ISIS?

P: Men are naturally more prone to fighting. It's like survival of the fittest. Men want to be seen as stronger and acts of violence may excite them. They're more easy to lure men in than females. Females will go and marry ISIS fighters so they can look after ISIS babies and breed more violence.

I: What is Isis' appeal for young people? Why does Isis appeal to teenage girls and boys?

P: They're more naïve and gullible. Living in this generation, there's a lot of hate against Islam and ISIS might use that to their advantage and say that this world isn't for us.

I: Have you heard of Talha Asmal from Dewsbury who joined Syria in ISIS?

P: Yeah I have.

What do you think led him to do what he did?

He's from a Muslim area, there's a big famous mosque there – Markaz. So he's in a situation where it's really easy to meet the wrong people. Someone had a very strong influence on him so I don't think it was his decision alone. I think he was in contact with the wrong people who sold it to him very well. It comes down to personality. ISIS are intelligent and good at mind games and if they saw someone and thought they looked young and naïve, they could mislead them by saying you're doing really well why don't you come and help us.

P: Have you heard about the 3 school girls from east London who went to Syria?

yeah

I: There's been speculations that these girls and many other young girls have left the UK to marry ISIS fighters in Syria.

P: They're thinking that they're helping Islam grow. These girls are nurturing children so they can grow them into soldiers for ISIS. Because women can't physically fight, by marrying ISIS fighters, they feel like they're contributing. The only way they can do that is by marrying and supporting ISIS fighters.

Do you think men and women have different motivations for joining ISIS?

It boils down to the same motive of helping ISIS and trying to fight against non-Muslims. The same motive is there but they do it in different ways.

I: Why do you think it is that only some men/women leave for Syria and not the vast majority of young Muslims?

P: it's a very secular society that we live in and many Muslims are not as practicing. When you're practicing, its really easy to be influenced and become extreme and passionate about what you believe. I think it depends on what stage of practice you're in.

I: What do you think should be done with people who go to Syria but then wish to return back to the UK?
P: Its very scary for them, to be let back into the country because of what they're capable of. They should be put under interrogation to see why and use them to our advantage and find out what's actually happening in Syria and if they have any contacts and to get to the bottom of it.
I: Do you have any sympathy for these young people?
P: I am a sympathetic person but the only sympathy I can give them is that they're naive and stupid. Why would they put themselves in such a risky situation. I feel sorry for them because they don't know that they're being fooled and tricked into it.

Social Networks
I: How do you think young Muslims are being targeted by terrorist groups?
P: Social networks. Twitter. Isis have tweets and they see people and message them in a manipulative way. They might post something that a Muslim can relate to and make them think that it's about us and look what the west is doing to us and make them think that Islam is hated.
I: What part do you think older Muslims play in the recruitment of younger Muslims? Do you think they have any role?
P: It comes down to naivety. Younger Muslims have more energy and old Muslims take a back seat because they're not going to be around for long so they need to keep this generation of ISIS going. They can't send an old person over because in a few years they might be dead and they won't have anyone to pass these terrorist views onto the younger generation. If they recruit younger people, they can keep the cycle going.

Counter-terrorism strategies
I: What proposals to tackle radicalisation among young Muslims should be implemented in Britain?
P: There should be more youth clubs, more teaching in schools. If children are getting this information from a young age, maybe it would reduce terrorism.
I: Have you heard about the UK counter-terrorism strategy called PREVENT? Like stop and search laws of stopping and searching people. What are your views on it?
P: It could be beneficial but is also racist. I have friends who have beards and they're more likely to get stopped. Its hurtful and can isolate young Muslims.
How would you approach reducing this idea of radicalisation and what would you do to counter the threat from terrorism?
Try talking them out of it and report any behaviour that is suspicious.
I: Can parents/schools/mosques do more to prevent youth from being radicalised?
P: mosques need to emphasise the positive side to Islam and teach them what the media doesn't show. A lot of it comes down to upbringing. So parents need to speak about it and teach their kids about how bad it is.

Interview 7

ISIS & Syria
I: Are you aware of the current situation in Syria and the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS?
P: Yeah.
I: What are your views on men/women who join Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS?
P: I think they're very misguided. Those that join the war there don't really know what's going on there and they get carried away in the hype. I do believe its brainwashing because if you knew Islam, you'd know that it's not about violence. They're not Muslims. I think it's a cry for attention. It might

even be good intentions that have been misplaced. They don't know how to help but they can't truly know what they're doing, surely.

I: **What do you think is the main reason behind young Muslims travelling abroad and fighting in Syria?**

P: I think misinformation. There's people in ISIS that get in contact with people from here and make them believe that they're doing something good but these young people don't do their own research. I think they're angry and trying to make a difference but go about it the wrong way. But they might not know that

I: **What do you think are the key motivators for joining such groups?**

P: There's a narrative of the west being against Muslims. So maybe they want to fight for the ummah and fight against the unfair treatment of innocent Muslims. They're doing it in the name of Islam but that's not what Muslims believe.

Jihad & religion

I: **What is your understanding of the terms radicalisation and extremism?**

P: Now I don't think the meaning is even close to what those words mean. I don't think you're an extremist if you believe in your religion but nowadays its linked to Muslims and some people might think that just by praying 5 times a day is extreme. But I think extreme is thinking of joining ISIS and killing people. Those terms are mainly associated with Islam. If you were to say extremist, even for me as a Muslim, the first thing that would come to mind is a Muslim. And that's just the way we've been conditioned now. In the media if you see extremist or terrorist, you automatically think Muslim. And I think the media is to blame for that.

I: **What does the word jihad mean to you?**

P: the meaning has completely changed. Now even my brain thinks of it in a negative way. It means to struggle and fight but not for the wrong reasons or for murdering innocent people. It's not a negative thing but it's wrongly translated in the climate we're in and through the media and films.

I: **Some terrorists have used extracts of the Quran to justify acts of terrorism, do you think that it is in any way understandable?**

P: No. You can't take one ayah out of context. Times have changed since then anyway. They ignore the ayahs that say if you kill one innocent person, then it is like you have killed the whole of mankind. You can't pick and choose a surah that fits your purpose. I don't think ISIS are true Muslims and believe they're doing it to destroy Islam. They're fighting in the name of Islam but it's for their own political gains. They don't care about Islam because if they did, they would follow the ways of the prophet. The just and fair way he dealt with war.

I: **Do you think there are any Islamic teachings that may be interpreted in such a way that they can be used to justify Islamic terrorism?**

P: I could never read the Quran and feel angry or think that I need to go and fight someone. But I can see how it can get twisted along the line. Someone with bad intentions can take something and go to someone who's vulnerable or impressionable and say look this is why you need to fight. It's people with wrong intentions who misinterpret. We have to account for our own cations and I feel sorry for those who are going to Syria and fighting because they're going to have a lot to answer for. And they don't have the fear of Allah in them. They're not aware of Islam. They're deluded and think they're promised paradise but they're looking at it from a very biased view point.

Examples of young people

I: **Why do you think some young men decide to join ISIS?**

P: It might be due to peer pressure like those three school girls left together and the two boys from Batley were friends. I think men also get influenced and wrapped up in it especially if their friends are doing it. Or they don't see themselves tied to anything here where they've got a good job or their family is close which makes it easier for them to go. So, if you get a few vulnerable people

together, who are all in a similar situation and don't care about being here, they're not going to value their life enough.

I: What is Isis' appeal for young people? Why does Isis appeal to teenage girls and boys?

P: I cannot see the appeal. I tried to see what good could come from those three girls who went to turkey and crossed the border. They risk dying and never being allowed back. I think the most obvious thing would be that they think if they die, they die a martyr and go straight to heaven.

I: Have you heard about the 3 school girls from east London who went to Syria?

P: yeah

I: There's been speculations that these girls and many other young girls have left the UK to marry ISIS fighters in Syria. Do you think mean and women have different motivations for joining ISIS?

P: I think it's stupid and irresponsible. As a girl, I could never imagine leaving home and my family without telling them. They know that Britain will never let them back in so the chances are they're never going to see their families again. So, they must be brainwashed.

Talha asmal?

I get upset and annoyed when I read the news and feel that there are many injustices so maybe he felt the same but it might have just been that he wanted to make a difference. He might have been upset and angry at what is going on over there. I see what's going on in Syria and Yemen and it makes me upset and I feel helpless. Maybe he felt like that was his only option to help and do something for the ummah.

Do you think men and women have different motivations for joining ISIS?

Yeah because he will have known that he was going to fight and I'm assuming women don't go to fight. They're going to get married. I think they're both irresponsible.

I: Why do you think it is that only some men/women leave for Syria and not the vast majority of young Muslims?

P: It not Islam. It has nothing to do with Islam. The world should be scared if that is what Islam teaches because there's, millions of Muslims and if that was what we were taught from a young age, we'd all be over there and there would be riots everywhere. I think it's a psychological thing and you've got to be a very special kind of person to go over there and do this. It must be combination of factors like upbringing and also your mental health. You've got to be deluded.

I: What do you think should be done with people who go to Syria but then wish to return back to the UK?

P: I don't have as harsh of a viewpoint as the majority of Britain would where in that case of the three girls, people were saying don't let them come back and that isn't going to solve the problem. They're kids, I see my sister as a kid. My sister is 16 and if she was to do something like that, she wouldn't but if she was, I would argue that she is too young to understand and be held responsible. And if it is brainwashing, that's serious. But I can understand the worry that if you let them back, they could do something really bad. But I think they need to be educated on why they shouldn't go rather than trying to persuade people to let them back in.

I: Do you have any sympathy for these young people?

P: I feel sad that they think this way. If they understood Islam. They wouldn't do that. And if they were close to their families, maybe they wouldn't do that. I just feel sad for them.

Do you think these people are being groomed or do you think that they are fully aware of the consequences of their actions?

100% being groomed. Depends on their age, especially the girls. I don't think they would do it if they knew the consequences.

Social Networks

I: How do you think young Muslims are being targeted by terrorist groups?

P: I've heard that there's a lot of stuff online like encrypted messages where others can't pick up on what they're saying and apps like WhatsApp. But I always wonder how they get in contact with them anyway. Maybe it's a case of people here going out and looking for these people. I think they show

interest first. Like I don't see how someone could come up to me and be like do you want to go to Syria. I would have to contact them.

How do they convey?

Twitter and Facebook. You can share whatever you want to. You can be a bit sly and not say anything that's too extreme and once you've got their trust, you move onto messaging directly. I don't think these young Muslims have bad intentions but the people that they're speaking to do have bad intentions.

I: Are young Muslims being targeted on the internet through social media networks?

I still don't understand how someone can know how someone is vulnerable. Maybe they strike up a relationship with them and get their trust.

I: What part do you think older Muslims play in the recruitment of younger Muslims? Do you think they have any role?

P: I think older Muslims are more grounded and have more will power. They know more about Islam about young kids. The older you get the more rational you get and think more clearly, whereas the things these kids are doing is very rash. Older people have families and children that they could never leave. So, if young people feel lonely or isolated, they're more likely to join ISIS. There's people in this country that are targeting Muslims and not just doing it from Syria. I could see how they might make it seem attractive, kind of like how young men are encouraged to join the army and fight for their country. In the same way, ISIS may be glorifying fighting.

Counter-terrorism strategies

I: What proposals to tackle radicalisation among young Muslims should be implemented in Britain? P: the government need to address why Muslims are so angry. The media is setting up Muslims to fail. Think about the way media is. Communities can educate more and learn to fight with knowledge rather than actions. It's not a war like it was in the time of the prophet where it was Muslims versus non-Muslims. This is ambiguous. Innocent people are dying in Syria every day and it's not a clear battle. Education is key. They're just ruining their own life.

I: Have you heard about the UK counter-terrorism strategy called PREVENT? Like stop and search laws of stopping and searching people. What are your views on it?

P: I think that that's going to stir up more hate and annoy Muslims. We got stopped randomly and that annoyed me, the whole plane was full of white people and they didn't stop anyone but us. Why? That's irritating. They're painting everyone with the same brush. I've seen so many tweets and stories about people getting stopped if they're wearing a turban and Sikhs are getting annoyed because people think they're Muslims and they hate that because they don't want to be associated with us. This is why there's so many people in UKIP and EDL because they want everyone to know that they're not associated with Muslims.

How would you approach reducing this idea of radicalisation and what would you do to counter the threat from terrorism?

P: I think they need to look at the government. The world leaders aren't doing enough to get rid of world leaders. President Assad id a joke, it's not simple as let's get rid of ISIS. It's all come from 9/11. It's just been stirring and stirring and stirring but we need to tackle getting corrupt leaders out. These leaders should be going to jail for war criminal charges. When you can see that the government is so corrupt, they need to address getting rid of those leaders first.

I: What actions do you think should be taken to stop young men and women from going to Syria and joining ISIS?

P: People aren't going directly to Syria. They go from turkey a l lot. So more border controls. You can change our mind-set to theirs so how can you change theirs to ours. It's hard.

I: Can parents/schools/mosques do more to prevent youth from being radicalised?

P: I think in Asian communities, I don't think they have strong relationships. So, parents need to be close to their kids so they could never feel like they want to leave you. Have stronger relationships

with kids so they don't want to leave you. Schools don't do enough. We only learn the basics. Maybe be more inclusive and don't make it seem like its Muslims versus non-Muslims. Make sure that everyone is mixing. Every religion and race, and that will tone down all this. You see in schools all the time, there's so much segregation and nothing seems to be done about it. Like my non-muslim friend will defend my religion and that means more to me than a Muslim doing that. So, everyone needs to mingle. Speak to people that aren't Muslim and see what their views on terrorism. And have healthy debates.

Interview 8

ISIS & Syria
I: Are you aware of the current situation in Syria and the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS?
P: Yeah.
I: What are your views on men/women who join Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS?
P: I think that they are easily impressionable young people who don't have an accurate representation of Islam maybe or what ISIS even stands for.
I: What do you think is the main reason behind young Muslims travelling abroad and fighting in Syria?
P: mixed messages. So, getting the wrong impression through maybe social media or maybe people are lacking in their own intelligence or their own research. They've been easily influenced and what to do right by their religion but they don't really know what their religion means.
I: What do you think are the key motivators for joining such groups?
P: some sort of religious gratification. Their warped perception of Islam. Getting gratification from their religion but they've got the wrong idea of it basically.

Jihad & religion
I: What is your understanding of the terms radicalisation and extremism?
P: Radicalisation is when somebody has wrong been exposed to messages and they become desensitised to the wrongness of something. Extremism is when they take something from the Quran and become extreme in their views. They take the literal meaning of something. For example, in the prophet's time it might have been relevant but now it's taken out of context.
I: What does the word jihad mean to you?
P: Internal struggle for the sake of god.
I: Some terrorists have used extracts of the Quran to justify acts of terrorism, do you think that it is in any way understandable?
P: no. but everything is open to interpretation. So, it's how each individual interprets it, you can't really control that.
I: Do you think there are any Islamic teachings that may be interpreted in such a way that they can be used to justify Islamic terrorism?
P: no. there are verses in the Quran that talk about fighting enemies but for every verse like that, there's another verse that will negate it. Like there's a verse in the Quran that says if you were to kill one innocent person, it's like you killed all of mankind. So I think people pick and choose which parts of the Quran they want to follow and take them out of context.

Examples of young people
I: Why do you think some young men decide to join ISIS?
P: maybe alienation. They feel like they don't fit in the western world. Maybe they want to go to a place that they feel like they belong to for a sense of identity.
I: What is Isis' appeal for young people? Why does Isis appeal to teenage girls and boys?
P: I think they go because they're at that point in their life where they're the most vulnerable. So it's probably vulnerability and their age and the lack of the external world really.

I: So what do you think ISIS offer to these people?

P: I'm not sure. I don't know what they could possibly offer to anyone.

I: Have you heard about Talha Asmal from Dewsbury?

P: yeah

I: What do you think led him to do what he did?

P: I think he might have wanted a sense of belonging. Obviously Islamic state is related to Islam so maybe he thought he would be benefitting his religion or his afterlife. Or maybe he would get rewarded for it in some way.

I: Have you heard about the 3 school girls from east London who went to Syria?

P: yeah

I: There's been speculations that these girls and many other young girls have left the UK to marry ISIS fighters in Syria. What is your view on jihadi brides?

P; I think they're really confused because I don't understand the logic behind it. I don't know what they would gain from it. Again, I think it's that sense of maybe wanting to belong to something or be a part of something. Maybe they want to do right by their religion but they don't know how to.

Do you think mean and women have different motivations for joining ISIS?

Maybe in the roles that they play when they go to Syria but in the end goal I think it is to gain some sort of reward in the afterlife. I think they both want to help other Muslims around the world that they believe are oppressed or suffering.

I: Why do you think it is that only some men/women leave for Syria and not the vast majority of young Muslims?

P: the vast majority of Muslims know what jihad really is. They try to get that religious gratification through more appropriate means like the things that Islam prescribes like the 5 daily prayers, praying the Quran, and things like that rather than going to that extreme version. I think most Muslims want to live in harmony with the west without compromising their religion.

I: What do you think should be done with people who go to Syria but then wish to return back to the UK?

P: I don't think they should be allowed back because. It depends on their age. If they're really young and they want to come back to their parents because they've been misled. But I think there's a massive risk with that because if they've gone to Syria, you don't know what kind of extremities they've been exposed to, what they've seen or how far they've been radicalised. But it shouldn't be completely non- negotiable.

I: Do you have any sympathy for these young people?

P: in some ways. If they don't have a supportive network then unfortunately, it can turn out like this for some people where they become extreme. I think maybe if Talha had support, things could have been different. If he had spoken to someone about his intentions. Someone could have helped him out. So u feel like a lot of these young people don't have anyone to talk to that they can confide in.

Do you think these people are being groomed or do you think that they are fully aware of the consequences of their actions?

I think it depends. Some make very intelligible choices and do it on purpose but others get caught in the hype, but I think that a lot of them are making a well informed decision.

Social Networks

I: How do you think young Muslims are being targeted by terrorist groups?

P: I think they're attacking Muslims countries.

How do they convey their message?

Not very well. Like I don't know what their message is. I don't understand what their motive is or what they're trying to achieve by committing these acts of terror.

I: Are young Muslims being targeted on the internet through social media networks?

P: didn't ISIS send messages through social media? I think there's groups online that promote their cause. Because social media is so prevalent in everyone's life nowadays, I feel like you can be easily influence or impressionable if you follow these groups. Facebook mainly. I think these people must show interest to these groups first for ISIS to track them down. But I don't think it's difficult for ISIS to seek vulnerable people out either.

I: Why is it young Muslims and not older?

P: older ones have more knowledge and understanding of Islam.

I: What part do you think older Muslims play in the recruitment of younger Muslims? Do you think they have any role?

P: I think some people might secretly hold extremist views. You have to go through a lot of obstacles to get there which I don't think these young people can overcome by themselves. Maybe they had an older influencer.

Counter-terrorism strategies

I: What proposals to tackle radicalisation among young Muslims should be implemented in Britain?

P: Knowledge and support. I think a lot of people that join ISIS feel alienation and a lack of support. If that was put in place through schools, youth centres and even mosques, if they were educated properly and issues were addressed and not brushed under the carpet then that would be very beneficial.

I: Have you heard about the UK counter-terrorism strategy called PREVENT? Like stop and search laws of stopping and searching people. What are your views on it?

P: yeah. They came to our school to do a workshop. I thought it was really good. They came and showed us videos of two scenarios where children may have been radicalised. It was really eye opening for me. I knew very little about how people might get radicalised so I thought the training was really good. The only problem is that I think with young people, some wouldn't take on the message. They might idolise the person in the video and want to be like that. If a pupil was quiet and they became loud, they might have support from external bodies. They might feel a new sense of confidence. Or if they were very loud and suddenly became quiet or submissive, that might indicate that they have something to hide and don't want anyone to know what they're doing. And generally looking for more vulnerable kids because somebody might not have a father figure, they might seek a father figure through ISIS leaders or that kind of thing. But it's generally the same kind of signs you're looking for when you're looking at child protection cases. But they haven't shown the video to our kids yet. The majority of our pupils are non-Muslim. I think that if these children were to see the material that we've seen. It might have a negative effect on non-Muslims. I was unaware of how people become radicalised until I watched the video and after watching it, non-Muslims might think is this what goes on in non-Muslim communities. I think it might make them think negatively of fellow Muslim pupils and incite racism.

What do you think about the checks at airports?

I think they're negative because everyone goes through the security checks anyway and how many terrorists do they actually manage to stop at airports. For you to pinpoint somebody out and target them will build resentment I think. Some people might think well if you think I'm a terrorist, I might as well be like that because you're treating me like that anyway. I think it does marginalise Muslims but you've got to be realistic too. The problem is with Muslim communities. Obviously there can be other terrorist groups but ISIS is the biggest threat at this moment.

How would you approach reducing this idea of radicalisation and what would you do to counter the threat from terrorism?

P: education is key. If you educated pupils, not just pupils but children in general, I think there's less likelihood of things like this happening. Other than that I don't think there's anything else we can do. Airports should be checked just as regularly but realistically what else can you do because then

comes a question of human rights. Like the Trump travel ban is taking away people's rights and its discriminatory. I think rules like that are a bigger threat than ISIS because that is what allows anger and terrorism to breed in young Muslims.

I: What actions do you think should be taken to stop young men and women from going to Syria and joining ISIS?

P: maybe monitor people who seem to be threat and make it more difficult for people to get to Syria. It can't be difficult to get to Syria f young kids are doing it.

I: Can parents/schools/mosques do more to prevent youth from being radicalised?

P: definitely. I don't think we talk about it enough in the community. It feels like we're distant. It happens around the corner from us. So maybe if we talk about it more, then young Muslims will feel like they can speak about it too and that way they're less likely to become radicalised. I think mosques have a responsibility. They shouldn't just be there to learn the basics. Mosques should be the place where you do talk about religion and all forms of it.

Interview 9

ISIS & Syria

I: Are you aware of the current situation in Syria and the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS?

P: Yeah.

I: What are your views on men/women who join Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS?

P: I think they're vulnerable people that actually want to do the right thing but they're misled by extremists. Extremists take advantage of these vulnerable people. They don't know what they're letting themselves in for.

I**: What do you think is the main reason behind young Muslims travelling abroad and fighting in Syria?**

P: I think ISIS use the suffering of Muslims and the fact that Muslims are dying across the world, in Syria. Like last week there was a bombing in Pakistan and I think extremists use this to their advantage.

I: What do you think are the key motivators for joining such groups?

P: fight for Islam. Well what they think is fighting for Islam when in fact they're fighting for terrorism. They think they're doing a good thing, almost like a charity and they'll be rewarded for it by God.

Jihad & religion

I: What is your understanding of the terms radicalisation and extremism?

P: extremism is taking the literal words of Islam and how it was perceived back in the prophet's time. Taking that and using it to make young naïve Muslims turn extreme. Radicalisation is using that to get the most out of these vulnerable people. I think both the words are mainly associated with just Islam even though there are other terrorist groups out there. You automatically think of Islam when you hear these words. There's other groups like IRA trying to radicalise other people but now the way it has been perceived in the media, people only associate these words with Islam.

I: What does the word jihad mean to you?

P: to me as a Muslim, it's defeating your inner demons.

Do you think that others see it as the same?

No I think for a lot of people, they see it as dying for your religion but I think most scholars would agree that the greatest jihad is fighting your inner demons and it's a personal struggle.

I: Some terrorists have used extracts of the Quran to justify acts of terrorism, do you think that it is in any way understandable?

P: no. because the literal words of the Quran were written in a time where it was completed different to our life today.

I: Do you think there are any Islamic teachings that may be interpreted in such a way that they can be used to justify Islamic terrorism?

P: yeah but they are misinterpreted.

Examples of young people
I: Why do you think some young men decide to join ISIS?
P: because they think they're doing the right thing.
I: What is Isis' appeal for young people? Why does Isis appeal to teenage girls and boys?
P: because they think that the western world is not the Islamic world and they think they're going into a place that Allah thinks is right for them. So they think they're going towards Islam but they're going a completely wrong way.
I: Have you heard about Talha Asmal from Dewsbury?
P: yeah
I: What do you think led him to do what he did?
P: from what I've heard, he thought the Western world was disillusioned and he had to fight against it. I think there was that chance that if he had been guided, he could have been stopped. But someone definitely took advantage it. I think he was religious but someone definitely played on it.
I: Have you heard about the 3 school girls from east London who went to Syria?
P: yeah
I: There's been speculations that these girls and many other young girls have left the UK to marry ISIS fighters in Syria. What is your view on jihadi brides?
P: I think they're not very smart. They've been taken advantage of as well. They think that they're doing the right thing as well. They must think that there's so many men out there fighting for Islam and dying, they need to go out there and play their part.
What do you think their part is?
Repopulating. Creating more fighters.
Do you think mean and women have different motivations for joining ISIS?
No. I think there's some that think they're going to fight for the right cause – Islam. but there's other that just want to go and cause terror. I think they both have same motives but different roles.
I: Why do you think it is that only some men/women leave for Syria and not the vast majority of young Muslims?
P: because the vast majority realise it's the wrong thing to do and those that do go, they go out seeking answers themselves and get caught up in the wrong crowd of people.
I: What do you think should be done with people who go to Syria but then wish to return back to the UK?
P: I think they should be let back in. You could probably use them to identify other terrorists and stop other Muslims from being radicalised. They've gone thinking they're doing the right thing but then realise they've done wrong but when they get there so they should be forgiven.
I: Do you have any sympathy for these young people?
P: yeah because they've been misguided.
Do you think these people are being groomed or do you think that they are fully aware of the consequences of their actions?
I think they're being groomed. They know the consequences of their actions but they're led to believe that they're not consequences, it's a reward.

Social Networks
I: How do you think young Muslims are being targeted by terrorist groups?
P: I think some mosques and the internet. They know who to target because of what people search on the net. There will be certain people at mosque that are teaching younger people and if they have extreme views, they'll pass them onto young people.
How do they convey their message?

They make videos of people from ISIS talking and promotional videos. I've actually seen one myself on twitter. There people on twitter saying things like I hate westernisation but I love your sandwiches.

I: Are young Muslims being targeted on the internet through social media networks?

P: I think through Facebook videos. Twitter is the same. The message ISIS put out gets spread on there. I don't think it's the beheading videos that attract people, it's the videos that promote the good things about living in Syria is what attracts them and the lifestyle and their aim, not their methods.

I: Why is it young Muslims and not older?

P: because they're naïve.

I: What part do you think older Muslims play in the recruitment of younger Muslims? Do you think they have any role?

P: I think they know which buttons to press and what info to put out infront of them. I saw a video a few years ago of live chats where people from ISIS were answering questions for people. This little girl who has joined know she was western at first but then she started researching ISIS and ended up on this chat. They convinced her to move. If someone doesn't show any interest, they're not going to get influenced. It's when people start looking into it, they become victim to ISIS.

Counter-terrorism strategies

I: What proposals to tackle radicalisation among young Muslims should be implemented in Britain?

P: I think there needs to be elder Muslims and scholars to send out the right message.

I: Have you heard about the UK counter-terrorism strategy called PREVENT? Like stop and search laws of stopping and searching people. What are your views on it?

P: it's giving ISIS ammunition. Say if people get stopped, it's making it easier for ISIS to see out people. It's giving ISIS another thing to play on. That is helping ISIS' cause of creating that us and them divide.

How would you approach reducing this idea of radicalisation and what would you do to counter the threat from terrorism?

P: I think it's all about what we're fed. I think the media doesn't help because it creates a more negative view of Islam. You need schemes and get Islam more involved in schools. Like people learn so much about Christmas and things like that so schools need to teach in schools that being a Muslim doesn't make you an outcast.

I: What actions do you think should be taken to stop young men and women from going to Syria and joining ISIS?

P: border patrol. But then that goes back to the issue of stopping people at airports and discriminating against Muslims.

I: Can parents/schools/mosques do more to prevent youth from being radicalised?

P: yeah. Especially mosques. That's where you go to learn about Islam and if they're only teaching the basics, that's all you know. I think growing up you need to know what Islam is truly about and also be taught about the risks of radicalisation.

Interview 10

ISIS & Syria

I: Are you aware of the current situation in Syria and the terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS?

P: I have some knowledge on it.

I: What are your views on young men/women who join Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS?
P: I feel like a lot of them don't know what they're getting themselves into and a lot of its down to influence by people who they think are guiding them on the right path.
I: What do you think is the main reason behind young Muslims travelling abroad and fighting in Syria?
P: I think they think they're doing it for a good cause. People give them false promises and they don't know what they're getting themselves into.
I: What do you think are the key motivators for joining such groups?
P: I think they think they're gonna get rewarded for what they're doing in that they'll go to Jannah. They think they're going to be martyrs.

Jihad & religion
I: What is your understanding of the terms radicalisation and extremism?
P: radicalisation is when you have a strong belief about something and extremism is imposing your views on someone else in the wrong manner.
I: What does the word jihad mean to you?
P: I've heard it but don't really know what it means. Isn't it fighting for your beliefs?
I: Some terrorists have used extracts of the Quran to justify acts of terrorism, do you think that it is in any way understandable?
P: no. I think that what the Quran promotes and what IS promotes are 2 different things. The fact that they're using things for the Quran and saying that they're doing it in the name of Allah, is wrong. Islam has nothing to with what ISIS do.
I: Do you think there are any Islamic teachings that may be interpreted in such a way that they can be used to justify Islamic terrorism?
P: no I don't think so.

Examples of young people
I: Why do you think some young men decide to join ISIS?
P: men go to fight for what they think is a good cause.
I: What is Isis' appeal for young people? Why does Isis appeal to teenage girls and boys?
P: I think younger people have less of an understanding of these things and young people are easily influenced.
I: Have you heard about Talha Asmal from Dewsbury?
P: yeah
I: What do you think led him to do what he did?
P: well I know about Talha and his friend. I'm friends with Munshi's cousin who went with Talha. They thought that they were going for a good reason. They thought they were going to fight for a good reason. One of them is dead now. His family had no idea. I think they came into contact with people wo tricked them and led them to go to Syria. I know that his family was quite religious but I think for you to make a decision like that, it needs the influence of someone else to make you go fight for ISIS.
I: Have you heard about the 3 school girls from east London who went to Syria?
P: yeah
I: There's been speculations that these girls and many other young girls have left the UK to marry ISIS fighters in Syria. What is your view on jihadi brides?
P: It doesn't make sense to me. I don't understand why anyone would want to do that.
Do you think mean and women have different motivations for joining ISIS?
When I think of people going to ISIS, I don't think of women. In my head, I think people go to fight. What you hear about ISIS is all terror so I don't see what the motive for women could be. I think extremist religious beliefs are the motives. They use religion as an excuse to do these things. I think a lot of people that are part of ISIS are non-believers.

I: Why do you think it is that only some men/women leave for Syria and not the vast majority of young Muslims?

P: because you hear about ISIS commit acts of terrorism and Islam does not promote that. And I think the vast majority are knowledgeable and a small minority can get influenced.

I: What do you think should be done with people who go to Syria but then wish to return back to the UK?

P: I think they should be let back. It's a tricky one. There's a chance they might come back and commit a terror attack but you have to speak to them. It's a tough call. But they should be given a chance to give their side of the story or repent.

I: Do you have any sympathy for these young people?

P: yeah because a lot of people that do go have been given a wrong impression of Islam and haven't been taught that Islam promotes peace.

Do you think these people are being groomed or do you think that they are fully aware of the consequences of their actions?

I don't feel like they're full aware. There being promised something else. They're being told by someone who seems to have power that what they're getting themselves into is a good thing.

Social Networks

I: How do you think young Muslims are being targeted by terrorist groups?

P: I think when terrorist groups take the name of Islam, it's giving a bad name to Islam.

I: How are ISIS seeking these people?

P: Probably through mosques and stuff like that. There might be someone who has extreme views and secretly pass their message in. they probably speak to individual people and see what's going on in their minds. They might mention something to someone and see who shows interest and build their trust and convince them to join ISIS.

I: How do they convey their message?

P: people who have strong opinions about something may posts their opinions online and ISIS use that as a gateway for people to reach them.

I: Are young Muslims being targeted on the internet through social media networks?

P: most likely. Like I said, normal will express their views say there's a major terror attack and they tweet about it, they might be sympathetic towards why someone did what they did and ISIS could message them and say I agree with you.

I: Why is it young Muslims and not older?

P: because older people have seen a lot more and older people don't use social media as much. Social media is the easiest way to attract younger people. Younger people don't have enough knowledge. And younger people have more respect for the older people who are preaching to the younger ones.

I: What part do you think older Muslims play in the recruitment of younger Muslims? Do you think they have any role?

P: I think the people that are getting younger Muslims to join ISIS are older. I think older people have a part to play. I think there are older Muslims here are passing on the wrong message. They're sending young people over. The only other way is over social media and you are less likely to listen to someone online.

Counter-terrorism strategies

I: What proposals to tackle radicalisation among young Muslims should be implemented in Britain?

P: I think they need to monitor younger people at the border on the route to get to Syria. they spend too much time asking the people who have nothing to do with Syria who are perfectly fine.

I: Have you heard about the UK counter-terrorism strategy called PREVENT? Like stop and search laws of stopping and searching people. What are your views on it?

P: I think that they spend too much time questioning innocent Muslims. I'm okay with being stopped but that's my personal experience. But one of my friends got stopped for 3-4 hours with his family and that ruined their journey.

How would you approach reducing this idea of radicalisation and what would you do to counter the threat from terrorism?

P: well the online system keeps a track of everything. They need to find a way around people's privacy but still being able to detect unusual online behaviour.

I: What actions do you think should be taken to stop young men and women from going to Syria and joining ISIS?

P: I think stopping people shouldn't be stopped without a valid reason.

I: Can parents/schools/mosques do more to prevent youth from being radicalised?

P: you can't tell parents what to do and how to raise kids but they're an important a factor. If parents give you the right guidance, they can go the right way. I don't think schools can do much because it would cause a lot of controversy if only Muslims are being targeted. I don't think schools can detect signs of radicalisation. I think friends can see these signs but not many people would tell on their friends. There could be an ISIS member running a mosque so I think it would be difficult to stop people from being radicalised. I think you can't completely eradicate terrorism. I think more efforts should be paid to finding people who are radicalising youth as they're the root cause.

Appendix 2 – Information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in a study about Islamic terrorism. Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it me if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the study about?
The purpose of this study is to explore people's views on young Muslims who have been linked with terrorist organisations such as ISIS to gain a better understanding of why Muslim youth may be drawn to Islamic terrorism.

Why I have been approached?
You have been asked to participate because I am interested in what Muslims' think about other Muslims who have left their homes and families and travelled to Syria. As more and more young Muslims are leaving their families and travelling to Syria, it is necessary to gain a better understanding of what Muslims believe ISIS' appeal is for young people in order to prevent more youth from being radicalised.

Do I have to take part?
It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form.

You can withdraw at any point prior to the work being submitted or published whether in print or at conferences. and you will be free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

What will I need to do?
If you agree to take part in the research you will be asked a few questions in relation to Islamic terrorism, ISIS and the current war situation in Syria. You will be asked about what your views are on Muslim men and women who join Islamic extremist groups such as ISIS.

The interview will be recorded and last approximately 30 minutes. Should you feel distress at any point during the experiment, you may withdraw from the study, without giving reason. Due to the nature of the study, you may have further concerns and wish to speak to speak to either my supervisor, or a confidential emotional support helpline. Details will be provided at the end of the study.

Will my identity be disclosed?
The data collected will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of my research project, and your identity will remain anonymous. All information disclosed within the interview will be kept confidential, unless you indicate that you or anyone else is at risk of serious harm, in which case I would have a duty to report this information to the authorities in accordance with counter terrorism legislations.

What will happen to the information?
All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure and any identifying material, such as names will be removed in order to ensure anonymity. It is anticipated that the research may, at some point, be published in a journal or report. However, should this happen, your anonymity will be ensured, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form.

Who can I contact for further information?
If you require any further information about the research, please contact me on:
U0957618@unimail.hud.ac.uk

Appendix 3 – consent form

University of HUDDERSFIELD

Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

Consent form

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the study, and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

If you require any further information about the research, please contact me on:

U0957618@unimail.hud.ac.uk

Name of participant:
Signature:
Date:

Name of researcher:
Signature:
Date:

Appendix 4 – Debrief

Debrief

Thank you for taking time to participate in this research study.

The aim of this research is to explore people's views of Muslims who have been linked with terrorist organisations such as ISIS to gain a better understanding of why Muslim youth may be drawn to Islamic terrorism. I was interested in finding out what people understand to be the drivers of religious extremism and what people's views are on men/women who travel to war torn countries such as Syria and join Islamic extremist groups.

All of your data will be kept confidential. If you wish for your results to be retracted and destroyed, contact me before 15/3/16. If you would like a summary of the research findings once the data has been analysed, please leave your email address with the researcher.

If you experienced any psychological distress or discomfort whilst undertaking part in this study and would like to speak to somebody regarding this, you can contact the Samaritans confidential emotional support helpline on 0845 790 9090, or visit their website http://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you. Alternatively, if you wish to speak to my supervisor, Dr Jason Roach, he can be contacted on: J.roach@hud.ac.uk

Many thanks again.

Zara Akbar

U0957618@unimail.hud.ac.uk