

## TI research: discrimination and polarisation

The research will comprise two stages: an initial questionnaire (stage 1), from which some responders will be invited to take part in a semi-structured group inquiry (stage 2).

### Stage 1

**Stage 1 (the questionnaire) is designed to investigate levels of polarisation away from the social context as a marker of extremist radicalisation.**

The questionnaire will enable us to establish any correlations between three variables:

- Religious self-identification (level of practice)
- Degree of polarisation away from the immediate social context and society at large
- Life-experiences of rejection and discrimination on religious grounds

Each of these can be thought of as producing a 'High' or a 'Low' result, with positions in between. A 'High' result overall would involve

- A high level of practice
- A high degree of polarisation
- A high level of experience of discrimination.

Thus from the three variables we can generate eight different profiles (with intermediary positions):

- HHH
- HHL
- HLH
- HLL
- LHH
- LHL
- LLH
- LLL

Of these, the four that are of direct interest to this research (focused on the issue of the role of polarisation in extremist radicalism) are those that have a 'High' for the second, polarisation, variable, i.e.:

- HHH
- HHL
- LHH
- LHL

Responders with these profiles are the ones we would wish to engage in the semi-structured inquiry groups.

## **Stage 2**

**Stage 2 (the semi-structured inquiry groups) is designed to establish the concomitants, contextual and experiential, of those who display a high level of polarisation away from the social context.**

The people involved in the groups will already have presented with a high level of polarisation. So the issue of polarisation itself does not need to be addressed again. The focus is now on the other two variables, self-identification in religious practice, and life experiences.

In each case, we should be clear as to what we want to find out.

### **1. Self-identification in religious practice**

We already know the level of religious practice claimed by each responder, from the questionnaire. We want to know three things:

- Has the claimed level of religious practice been stable over an extended period, or has it changed?
- If it has changed, what were the precipitating factors in that change?
- How does the claimed level of practice express itself?

These questions should be the basis for the group inquiry, and the discussion should be structured around them.

### **2. Life-experiences as a Muslim**

Again, we already know from the questionnaire whether the responder has a high or low level of experience of discrimination and injustice. We wish to place this in the context of their experience of living as a Muslim in British society. Again three questions are relevant:

- What was the nature of your primary Muslim experience?
- Has your life-experience as a Muslim in Britain been stable, or has it changed as far as discrimination is concerned?
- If it has changed, what factors were involved in that change?

The group discussions aim to produce qualitative material around the issue of polarisation and an indication of the consequences of polarisation for behaviour. It is at this point that the link to radical extremist behaviour should emerge.

## **Specific questions in Stage 2**

The five questions above provide the basic structure for the group enquiry. In each group, these questions will all be addressed, and in the same sequence.

For purposes of the discussion, however, they will often need to be translated into more specific questions, for example:

### ***Self-identification in religious practice***

Has your level of practice altered over the past 5 years/the past 2 years?

If your level of practice has changed, was the reason parental influence/influence of religious leaders/influence of political leaders/influence of friends/reading the Quran/other reading/reaction to world events/reaction to British politics?

Does your level of practice express itself formally/informally/in mosque attendance/in membership of some non-political Muslim organisation/in membership of a political organisation/in study/in other ways?

### ***Life-experiences as a Muslim***

Was your primary Muslim experience in your home/outside the home/in community/in isolation from community/clear/unclear/stable/conflicted?

If your life-experience as a Muslim has changed, was that because people began to treat you differently/you moved into a different social context/you became aware of new aspects of your experience/you saw yourself differently?

If your experience has changed, was that because /you identified yourself differently to the people around you/you made your Muslim identity more explicit/the social nature of Muslim identity changed?