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Radicalism Leading to Violent Extremism in Canada: A Multi-Level Analysis of Muslim Community and University Based Student Leaders' Perceptions and Experiences

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Abstract

Recently, more than 150 Canadians have joined the Islamic State (IS) in the Middle East, causing alarm among both Canadian policy makers and the general citizenry. One of the most salient questions related to this development pertains to the factors that drove these young people to extremism. Most experts posit that extremism is caused by multiple factors embedded in our social, economic, geopolitical, and cultural processes. However, evidence to support such claims is still poor as limited primary research has been done in Canada to understand, explain, and identify radicalism's causes, its main drivers, and its global-local linkages. Due to their emphasis on policy and federal law enforcement, studies of radicalism in Canada have proven inadequate in outlining a comprehensive understanding of the psycho-social conditions that might be associated with the radicalization process.

Considering the above gaps, this research draws upon three studies in order to map the perceptions of the leadership of Islamic community-based organizations and university-based student organizations with regards to issues related to social conflict, terrorism, and counter-terrorism in Canada. The objective of this study is to both document the existence of radicalism and to determine the role of critical social issues that may potentially contribute to this phenomenon. In addition, this paper will hopefully elaborate on the results of a multi-level (macro, meso, and micro) analysis of the social factors which act as key drivers of radicalism through the use of qualitative methods and the aid of social conflict and social-psychological theoretical lenses. Finally, the study concludes by exploring the Canadian national counter-terrorism (CT) strategy's effectiveness in countering radicalization.

Key Words: Radicalization; Counter-terrorism; Anarchism; Social Conflict; Level-wise Analysis of Conflict; Identity group

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Introduction

In late 2015, Winnipeg, an unassuming city in the middle of Canadian Prairies, came to public attention when law enforcement agencies apprehended Aaron Driver, also known as Harun Abdurahman. Driver had come to the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service's attention in 2014 by expressing his unequivocal support for the Islamic States (IS's) actions in the countries of the West. When he appeared before the court, a peace bond restricting his freedom of movement was sought under the provision of the new anti-terror bill (C-51) on the grounds that he 'might' commit terror act. Among other conditions imposed by the judge was the requirement that Driver undergo religious counseling. Although he was questioned by several government agencies, Driver had not committed any acts of terrorism for which a charge could be laid, leading his attorney to argue that, not only had the state violated Driver's charter rights, but that they had also committed a criminal offence by detaining him based solely on his views (CBC News, 2015a, 2015b). This case has given rise to a number of questions: did the state over-step its jurisdiction by apprehending a person who, while espousing radical views, had not committed, or conspired to commit, an act of terrorism? When is it acceptable to violate a citizen's charter rights (freedom of movement) in response to a national security threat? How religious counseling could help de-radicalize Driver, and were such measures administered and found to be effective? What else could be done to de-radicalize Aaron?

Social conflict is created by the day-to-day experiences of individual and groups: "[E]xperience become grievances, grievances become dispute, and disputes take various shapes" (Felstiner, Abel, & Sarat, 1980, pp. 631-632). However, conflict is a social construct since a part of it is rooted in people's perceptions of their social condition (whether real or imaginary). Experiences (both positive and negative) transmit through various social mediums and are shaped by socio-economic structures which ultimately lead individuals and groups to decide what goals to pursue based on their experiences (Wagner-Pacifici & Hall, 2012). For the purpose of this paper, inter-group conflict is referred to as a social condition due to categorization (in-group vs. out-group) leading to "biases and stereotypes", and when social groups try "by degrading the image one holds of out-groups, in-group esteem is enhanced as individuals within that group feel more positive about their own virtues, capabilities, and

motivations and, by extension, more negative about the virtues, capabilities, and motivations of out-groups"; here a state is also considered as an entity or group (Cuhadar & Dayton, 2011, pp. 274,275). Coser (1967) built upon this by succinctly pointing out how the ends of social conflict are destructive in nature: "social conflict [is] a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflict groups are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals"(p. 232).

A number of researchers have identified the deep psychological yearning to effect social change shared by most radicals; however, the means used to achieve such an end varies. For example, while discussing the fundamental tenets of anarchism, Meltzer (1981) argues that anarchists believe that people are born free, and that "duties imposed as obligations or ideals such as patriotism, duty to the State, worship of God, submission to higher classes or authorities, respect for inherited privileges, are lies" (Ibid, p. 12). Anarchists also think that every government is tyrannical (Ibid, p. 13), therefore they urge people to "…carry on a resistance to any and every form of tyranny. When governments use their privileges threatened, they drop the pretense of democracy and benevolence which most politicians prefer" (Ibid, p. 27). Anarchists also believe in "…fight[ing] on alone, putting forward his or her ideas in a hostile environment" (Ibid, p, 22). Nevertheless, Anarchist in the past adopted both "militant liberalism" and "pacifism" for furthering their causes (p. 25). One scholar even argued that "the international anarchist movement resembled modern nationalist and separatist terrorist groups in its approaches to violence and technology…" (Kassel, 2009, p. 237). In addition, scholars have also documented the historical presence of anarchist movements in Christianity, Buddhism, Daoism, and Islam (Christoyannopoulos, 2009; Fiscella, 2009). One scholar has even defended the use of the term "Anarca-Islam" to denote specifically "…an interpretation of the entropies 'Islam' and Anarchism", and describing it as "A resistance: to the 'Euro and logo centricity' of the 'West,' and neo-conformity in general" (Veneuse, 2009, p. 254). During the anarchist movement's zenith between 1892 and 1901, many Western heads of state lost their lives to anarchist actions, and the US in particular witnessed the "combative and innovative nature" of revolutions that were often transnational in nature, which is reminiscent of the rhetoric often used by modern day radicals (Stott, 2010, p. 66).

Since 2004, the term radicalization has predominantly come to refer to the root causes of terrorism, and has consequently "…become the master signifier of the late 'war on terror' and provided a new lens through which to view Muslim minorities" (Kundani, 2012 cited in Schmid, 2013). However, radicalization is generally understood as a process that takes place before the actual violent action, yet scholar suggest that three different contexts "the security, the integration, and the foreign-policy" each containing at least two levels "…an analytic and official level, and a public and political level" are useful to grasp its wider meaning (Sedgwick, 2010, p. 479). The Canadian government's official definition of radicalization underpins a "process" that is characterized by the adoption of an explicit ideological system that encourages radicalization and promotes the use of violence by individuals or groups in pursuance of political, ideological, or religious objectives (Public Safety Canada, 2015). However, one scholar suggests that radicalization is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and that it is therefore important to consider how the actions of state actors may contribute to it (Schmid, 2013, p. iv). If the term radicalization is difficult to pin down so too is the concept of counter/de-radicalization, not only because the process is generally vague, but the markers of its success are as well: " At different times, depending on who is speaking, it can mean a process of counselling aimed at modifying interpretations of key religious texts; distancing or disengagement from specific jihadi groups; or support for rehabilitation and reintegration of jihadi detainees into society" (International Crisis Group, 2007, p. 11). Given the nebulous nature of this account of de-radicalization, it bears pondering as to whether the de-radicalization of an extremist (total removal from radical ideas) is at all feasible, or if one can only be persuaded to disengage from radicalism. For example, a number of de-radicalization program subjects reverted back to their previous lives and carried out terrorist attacks (Porges, 2010; Taylor, 2014).

Nevertheless, the first known attempt to define 'radicalization' came from "the New York study, [as] the Pennsylvania Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission training manual." Because local police forces work on the front lines and have a considerable degree of interaction with most urban Muslim-American communities, their experiences were found invaluable in formulating policies (Huq, 2010, p. 11), exemplifying the perception that frontline government agencies are ideally suited to devise and implement counter-radicalization policies.

Available models of radicalization confirm that social-psychological factors play significant roles in the radicalization process, although some argue that each radical extremist case is unique. For example, "Borum's Four-stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset" argues that the core elements in the radicalization process are "grievance" and "injustice"; Moghaddam's staircase to terrorism talks about the "psychological interpretation of material condition", one's "perceived options to fight unfair treatment", and "moral engagement"; the NYPD model of Jihadization asserts the individual's "acceptance of, and commitment to, his individual duty to act on behalf of the cause"; and Precht's model of a "Typical" radicalization pattern noted "…identification with radical Islam; [and] …increased group bonding" (Borum, 2011, pp. 39-45). Conversely, Marc Sageman suggest that radicalization is a "bottom-up" process populated by "Young men chasing thrills, fantasies of glory, and sense of belonging to group and cause" (Sageman, 2011).

This paper presents snapshots of selected qualitative data in order to present the real voices of the research participants, and is organized into two main parts. The first part deals with the level-wise analysis of radicalization[i] in Canada, and analyzes the factors reported by the participants at the micro, meso, and macro levels. In this section, focus is kept on relating current trend of radicalism to historical anarchism. The second part of this analysis deals with counter-radicalization efforts and how they are located within the broader national Counterterrorism (CT) strategy.

Methodology

The author carried out three primary researches between early June 2013 and September 2015 exploring terrorism, counter-terrorism, and radicalization issues prevailing in Canada in general, and Manitoba in particular. Purposive sampling was used in the research and the participant group was formed by leaders from Community Based Organizations, and university-based student groups. Fiftyeight participants (n=58) (faith based-60%, ethno-cultural community based-25%, and university student group based-15%) took part in the research where they were interviewed individually for two to three hours. In addition, four focus group studies (FGD) were also carried out with the student groups of two selected universities in Manitoba. The author's rationale in selecting the samples were based on three factors: 1) the research participants position as meso level actors in social hierarchy; 2)

participants' experiences - they are neither radicals, former extremists, experts, or policy makers yet they often experience the impacts of radicalization and counter radicalization matters directly while working with citizenry as well as policy makers; and 3) participants' cross linking activities - many of the research participants either partnered with government agencies (at the macro level) or collaborated with other non-government agencies (at the meso-level) or citizenry (at the micro level) in dealing with counter radicalization issues.

The approach to the research was purely qualitative in nature which means that its emphasis was on exploring the perceptions and experiences of the participants regarding the issues mentioned above. This paper captures and presents their un-edited, verbatim responses in order to convey to the reader how the respondents truly feel about contemporary issues like counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization. Within the qualitative approach an ethnographic method was used to observe how some of the groups undertook relevant counter-terrorism related works in the study area. However, one caveat regarding the methodology is that the viewpoints presented below are the perceptions of a geographically specific cross-section of community-based and student leaders, and they therefore do not account for the experiences of any convicted radical/s.

A Level-Wise Analysis of Radicalization Factors

In order to better understand radicalization and counter-radicalization, some scholars have suggested that it may be useful to look beyond the security (by extension state) centric approach and to analyze possible factors at the macro, meso, and micro levels (Schmid, 2013). During data analysis, I mapped the perceptions and experiences of leaders from Muslim community-based groups and university-based student groups on radicalization, and categorized their responses on the macro, meso, and micro levels. Such level-wise analysis is helpful for locating key factors driving radicalization in Canada. However, it is important to note that the factors are interrelated and may extend across the various levels. The responses provided by the participants have been grouped separately and quoted verbatim in the subsequent paragraphs.

Macro Level Factors

At the macro level, ("…[the] role of government and society at home and abroad, the radicalization of public opinion and party politics, tense majority – minority relationships" (Schmid, 2013, p. 4) an effort has been made to investigate some overarching factors driving the current state of radicalization in Canada. These are discussed in this section.

Radicalism – An Ideology-Driven Social Conflict

Radicalism (in the current context, leading to violence) can be defined in multiple ways, and these definitions vary depending on the particular viewpoint of a given analyst, policymaker, law enforcement official, academic, social activist, or, for that matter, the general public. Consequently, individual or group viewpoints play an important role because counter-radicalization intervention programs are, in fact, determined based on the approach one takes to understand the phenomenon. In the subsequent paragraphs an attempt is made to capture the research participants' perceptions on the phenomenon of radicalism in their own words. Additionally, it is important to remember that the characterization of modern day radicals is notoriously fluid since it changes over time and place.

In this regard, one participant mentioned about multifaceted aspects of modern day radicalism:

> *I would say the drivers behind violent radicalisation are multi-layered, they are multifaceted you have a social perspective, you have a religious perspective, and you have political perspectives. You also have psychological perspectives when you really look and focus upon particular individuals in and of itself.*

Another participant cited the existence of certain social conditions that trigger radicalism, yet the influence of religious ideology is paramount in motivating a person towards violent extremism:

> *Importantly they [IS] appeal to the youth through social media, through high tech video, and they also appeal to their sentiment. For example, they talk about how some of the youth in western countries face racism, they don't get jobs, and you know in general the Muslims are not treated well. So they appeal to these kinds of sentiment*

and then they would pitch them towards their particular ideology and then taking verses [of Quran] out of the proper context to give it a religious flavor.

Another participant affirmed that, since social issues are the primary drivers of radicalization, it is counterproductive to link faith with it:

Obviously a person's faith impacts him/her; like I said before some people who aren't Muslim or aren't even religious he/she might act out in different way contrary to the teaching of faith. For example, somebody may go and start shooting in a school, so this person really isn't motivated by religion rather he/she is committing an act of terror. But for someone who is Muslim their religion should sort of shape his/her worldview and that is why I said it [radicalism leading to extremism] is social kind of problem.

Other participant emphasized the prevailing social issues which are confusing to young people who are constantly seeking a positive direction in life:

It is not the Islamic side or anything else. It happens to be the flavour of the day and that is what they [government] are using to justify everything that they are doing. Rather it is all social and emotional driven and yet the ideology just reinforces and gives them an answer to whatever is bothering them [youth] so that they can find a way to relate to it; sometimes it [religion] might strike a direction for them.

Another participant compared school shooting with terrorism underlining the fact that such violence is never treated as terrorism:

Obviously a person's faith will impact them this way like I said before. Some people who aren't Muslim or aren't religious they might act out in different ways; somebody may go shoot out a school that person really isn't motivated by religion but they are committing an act of terror but for someone who is Muslim their religion should sort of shape their outlook and that is why I said it [radicalism] is a social problem as it has links not to a person's religion but to a person's social conditions.

One participant spoke about the galvanizing power of social networking and how young

people are vulnerable to being seduced by the religious justifications of the ideologies of radical groups:

> *If you see their [Islamists] pamphlets you find it is full of religious preaching aimed at martyrdom. Especially when young people gather under the umbrella of Tablig e Jamat which talks about leaving worldly affairs or responsibilities and join the path of God; it is a very complex and twisted way of understanding the Islam and its original teaching. Often people join in such groups initially being not really clear about the forthcoming responsibilities but due to peer pressure…. It [being within a radical group] fills a gap in their lives. And they see a kind of sense of belongings, a kind of surrogate family feeling.*

Another participant expanded on the psychological impacts of peer pressure and its effect on people, which comes out of a social network that is founded either on religious or some other ideology:

> *Peer pressure is one of the important gateways or medium through which young people are forced to join in a particular group. This group is formed either based on ideology or for some social reason …what I am talking about is sort of benign groups formed informally anywhere and later such group might take up radical causes. What I am trying to point out is that the sense of solidarity formed within this group can be diverted towards some evil purposes. Here it is important to study, to see how group dynamics change over a period of time because in most of the cases many such groups really exist for the purpose of 'hanging out', but you never know when such innocuous group subscribe extremism.*

Anarchism and Violent Radicalism

If one considers the literal meaning of the word 'anarchy' ("Greek *anarkhia*, meaning contrary to authority or without a ruler") (Ward, 2004, p. 1), it becomes possible to gain a clearer understanding of some of the aspects of contemporary radicalism. However, modern day radicals (i.e. terrorists) put their energy more in opposing their own or foreign states

rather than the dissolution of hierarchical forms of government. It also begs question whether the radicals who decide to fight with IS actually helping it to establish a caliphate, which is merely another form of government. For example, one respondent suggested that young people are inherently motivated to do social good:

> *Sometimes young people join such [radical] groups just to gather experience and to do some good things because a young person has that drive of doing good things for the society… It is an excitement, they [youth] like to be controversial; they like to be kind of a bit different. It can also tie into conspiracy theories and how you have that kind of privileged knowledge that you are right and everyone else is wrong.*

Another participant brought up the point that global social injustices can have significant impacts on people and that some people might choose violence to redress injustices:

> *Now it is an era of global justice movement. I think global justice has always been an attractive theme for social change especially in the recent past. In the 60s the civil right movement in the United States, anti-war campaign in the 70s, when hundreds and thousands took to the streets and protested and spoke against an unjust war in Vietnam and even against the Iraq invasion in 2003. There is something about a global sense of humanity that exists, those people who are humanist, those who have some concern about social justice tend to rise up and join together in resistance.*

A different participant spoke about the germination process of extreme ideologies as a response to a dominating and oppressive political and military power:

> *It's about how one negotiates with or resists power [political and military] and its starting to acquire momentum, but there's a complicating fact that we notice here, for example, a Utopic distortion emerges from those extreme ideas. We should be looking at this aspect more deeply. What is it about this generation in this part of the world and overseas that makes them particularly predisposed to violence…what is it about our youth in this particular moment of history that makes them particularly disposed to despair of the world around them and to take up arms against a series of*

> *circumstances that they have no control over, that previous generations haven't necessarily felt motivated to take up arms against.*

One participant explained how social-psychological motivation, such as making the world a better place, fosters radicalization in the following way:

> *You are looking at peoples who are both "passionate" and at the same time "compassionate" and they are not happy the way the world is going; there is so much difficulty, struggle, you see so much unfairness and so they relate to those situations quickly. In this way they also see that the affluent Western world is very selfish and content staying in its own bubble. They want to do more; they want to see something come out of such apparent peacefulness. However, they don't have that emotional maturity to look at it in a hard way and convince themselves saying that 'I want to do something effective but it's really a long drawn out process and I am not going to get immediate results'.*

However, one participant mentioned that modern day radicals do not have sufficient ideological maturity to differentiate between means and ends of achieving social change:

> *And I think many of our young people's idealism has been fostered by a very shallow set of nominally religious beliefs and ideals therefore it has no depth, there are no firm convictions, in other word it is not radical enough. As a result, they can be easily swayed and convinced that this [violence] is the solution to injustice; this is how [terrorism] you bring changes in the world.*

Discussion of Findings

The above insights suggest two approaches for understanding the contemporary phenomenon of radicalism: a social conflict approach, which measures the impacts of various social issues, and an anarchic approach, which takes into consideration people's deep-seeded motivation to bring change to an unjust world.

The social conflict approach helps to explain the current social structure and how differential treatment of a social group can create an environment conducive to radicalism.

The events of 9/11 could not be foretold yet what followed (The Global War on Terrorism - GWoT) could have been thoughtfully planned out so that a particular socio-cultural group (i.e. Muslims) was not disproportionately targeted. Consequently, the counter-terrorism measures implemented by every Western society explicitly or implicitly situated Muslims as the 'Other', and, to a great extent, depicted them as 'sympathizers' of terrorism. A number of studies have shown that, in general, Muslims as a minority group in many Western nations have increasingly faced challenges in terms of integration, attaining gainful employment, and receiving equal treatment throughout the last decade (Angus Reid Global, 2013; Eid & Karim, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2006). What changed drastically during the era of the GWoT is that the perception of discrimination (however insignificant) has seeped into the social psyche of Muslims, which can be attributed to anti-terrorism policies that identify Islam as the major root of radicalism. Ultimately, this misidentification has played into the hands of both on and off line extremist recruiters who had already been preaching about the futility of Muslim integration into Western societies.

Faith-based ideology is one of the factors that drive radicalization; however, extremism cannot flourish or even sustain itself on a single ideology for a long time. Undoubtedly, current forms of violent extremism are fueled by selected sets of theological justifications stated in the Quran as well as subsequent jurisprudential explications (most notably Hanbali traditions) (Kirmanj, 2008).[ii] However, delving into Islam's role as a justification of violence in the name of social change is not the aim of this paper; rather, it is my contention that majority of modern day Western Muslim radicals (including the aspiring ones) might have little passion or at least superficial motivation to understand Islamic jurisprudence or scriptural historiography. In this regard, readers are referred to the initiative of hundreds of Muslims scholars all over the world who wrote 'a letter to Baghdadi' refuting his claim of the Islamic caliphate. Despite the integrity of this initiative, the fact remains that Baghdadi and his followers almost certainly ignored it (CBC Radio Ideas, 2016). Moreover before the impact of any scholastic interchange at the grassroots level has yet to be determined.

The fundamental problem here is something very different than the religion itself; it is about how one can reach out to people who have chosen radicalism, and to use authentic, faith-based counter arguments to challenge the mindset (violence can be justified on religious

grounds), with especial attention to clarifying the concept of ex-communication (*takfir*- an oft quoted term*)* (AbuKhalil, 1994, p. 678)?[iii] In the present day context where no monopoly of knowledge exists, it might be easier to reach out, but it remains very difficult to provide authenticity. Nevertheless, a significant difference is observed between Al Qaeda and IS affiliates as some of the contemporary IS followers demonstrated a deep motivation grounded in the idea of defending women and children and rebuilding a perfect society envisioned in Islam (Caliphate). Thus, it partially explains why besides common recruits of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) so many skilled Western citizens, including women (such as doctors, nurses, and engineers) also joined the IS's ranks imbued with the idea that their participation inevitably would hasten desired social change and create an egalitarian, classless, self-governing, and a just society (reminiscing some of the famous anarchists such as Alexander Berkman, Albert Parsons, Emiliano Zapata, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (Liberty for the People, 2001)) (Brooks-Pollock, 2015; CTV News, 2015; The Guardian, 2016). IS also skillfully organized its members into front line fighting forces, logisticians, financiers, and information technologists making a point that not all who join the IS are destined to be fighters. Additionally, it could successfully deploy a Utopian scheme combined with a geographical area and necessary symbols (flags, tunes).

Importantly, extremism always requires a vehicle, a platform on which it can travel and survive; here we have a powerful one – Islam. The influence of Islam cannot be downplayed at this moment; however, it is unclear whether Islam exclusively as an ideology inspired and (allegedly) continuing to inspire modern day radicals to adopt violence for social change. This is an anomaly with anarchist ideologies where anarchism as propounded by its founder ideologues thrived because of its strong denunciation of religion in general and violence in particular. However, some scholars explored how and why "religious identity (RI) leads inexorably to radical action (RA) which can include violence" and they concluded that "...organizational membership plays a mediating role in the relationship between RI and RA" (Hirsch-Hoefler, Canetti, & Eiran, 2015, pp. 1, 2). In this regard, I argue that Islam as a faith ideology is not the sole prime mover of modern day radicalism rather we must also examine how Muslims (of different stripes) attach value to it collectively (as identity groups, for example, IS). Because of the fact that "defining oneself as part of a collective…" is a powerful socio-political-cultural motivational factor, moreover, "collective identity is

manifested through shared goals, and through shared action (e.g., selecting a place of residence)" (Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, 2001, pp. 283-305, cited in ibid). Furthermore, "whether one subscribes to the belief that IS is little more than a terrorist organization, or that it is a larger social movement, there is little doubt IS is using the religion of Islam as a vehicle to forward its political agenda and achieve its strategic objectives" (Pelletier, Lundmark, Gardner, Ligon, & Kilinc, 2016, p. 2). Consequently, it can be argued that both Al Qaeda and IS generated a strong appeal about benefits of its membership (other off shoot terrorist organizations like AL Shabaab, Al Qaeda in Maghreb thus expressed their allegiances) and such organizational membership might drive the effect of religious identity on individual-level radical actions.

For argumentation sake, even if violence is overwhelmingly subscribed in Islamic codes of action, it begs question what methods should be adopted to reach out to aspiring radicals and would-be terrorists to clarify the complex Islamic scriptural explanations (for example, the roots of law - *usul al fiqh*) of use of extreme violence in conflict resolution. For example, in Canada, a substantial number of known terrorists are converts, and it is understandable that their exposure to Islam is at least superficial (for example, the BC legislative building terrorists) (Robertson, 2015; The Vancouver Sun, 2014).[iv] Even a regular Muslim (someone who is born into a practicing Muslim family) is not always expected to possess the adequate juristic knowledge required to rationalize the approval of violence through religious edict (*fatwa*). For example, Jihad is a highly contested and often passionate concept that is regularly misconstrued by both terrorists and those who are involved in countering them. Taken literally, Jihad means to "struggle" or to "strive" in the way of God (Knapp, 2003, p. 82), which seems relatively innocuous. However, when put in a social-political context the concept of Jihad takes a whole new dimension. For example, in Islamic history, during and after the death of the Prophet, both offensive and defensive Jihads were undertaken for different purposes (Wiktorowicz, 2005). The polemics for and against Jihad aside, there is one simple point to note: calling for political Jihad has to be first authorized by an elected ruler, meaning that a central authority solely retains the right to call for Jihad and is responsible for its consequences. Given this basic understanding, the recklessness and futility of the use of this concept by terrorists and their followers becomes clearly evident; however,

and perhaps tragically, many of Western policymakers, media personalities, and law enforcement officials use it as recklessly as the terrorists do.

Radical extremists are motivated to change people's lives by convincing them that the choice of violent means is a just path, a feature which is historically parallel to the anarchist movements of the last two centuries. Three themes supporting this thesis emerged from the respondents' perceptions and are enumerated in the subsequent paragraphs.

First, many of us often seek answers as to what went wrong when we witness things like the conflict in Syria or Aylan's dead body lying on a Turkish beach. Again, this is nothing new in the history of mankind, and every generation (the way we define it) has wondered in despair at the malice of their time, albeit few choose radical measures as a response. A number of scholars suggest that anarchist philosophies laid the groundwork for the important social movements of 19th and 20th centuries that ultimately led to the American, French, Spanish, and Bolshevik revolutions (Dolgoff, 1974; Landauer, 2010; Ward, 2004). Anarchists fundamentally oppose the concept of the state because states help to protect the privileged and powerful (ibid). In the court testimonies, media coverage, and online blogs dealing with radical extremism, we find abundant evidence supporting the idea that these radicals who were born and brought up in affluent Western societies ultimately turned against their own states for three reasons. The first reason is that they perceive their state as being part of a tyrannical global regime which oppresses poor and helpless Muslims countries around the globe. The state arbitrarily decides to join military coalitions to invade others without consulting its citizens and state curtails the freedoms (of movement, expression, and association) of those who oppose its power. The second reason is that they believe it is their moral and ethical responsibility to stand up to their state—a reckoning which comes from their Islamic faith which condones the sacrificing of one's life in the name of establishing a just society. The third reason why Western Muslims become radicalized against their home nations is because they view fellow Muslims as either having forgotten about the "true" teaching of Islam or having become assimilated and corrupted by the comfort and decadence of the Western world. Thus, 'fallen Muslims' have become oblivious to their duty to undertake any hardship in service of their faith (Lau, 2007). Indeed, the monologues in many of the video messages recorded by the Canadian born radicals who fought with IS clearly echo the tenets of "individualist anarchism" (Ward, 2004, p. 2). Their actions also reinforce

the idea of "conscious egoism", which was first outlined by the German writer Max Stirner (1806–56) and was later taken up by a number of 19th-century American writers who propounded that "…in protecting our own autonomy and associating with others for common advantages, we are promoting the good of all" (ibid).

The second theme that emerged is that Western born radicals view themselves as modern day Davids who are engaged in a perpetual battle against the Goliaths of the West. This is often dubbed "asymmetric war", even though they might be not sure what the end result would look like after such an asymmetric struggle (Matusitz, 2014, p. 52). Take for example the case of Ali Mohamed Dirie, who was a member of the infamous Toronto 18 that planned to attack a number of important government installations in Canada in 2006. Once released from the penitentiary on bail he managed to slip past the watch of law enforcement agencies and ended up fighting in Syria where he was eventually killed. While in the jail, he evocatively announced that his internment was only a temporary setback and, in a parole board hearing in 2010, he defiantly claimed that "I am out in two years and my actions will speak louder than words" (CBC News, 2013). We observe a similar psychological disposition among most convicted terrorists in Canada who, despite knowing that they are being monitored by law enforcement agencies and that they will eventually be apprehended, still pursue their cynical objective. For example, a number of the Toronto 18 terrorists were aware that they were being monitored and that there would be consequences for their actions, but they attempted to execute their plan nonetheless. This is a remarkably telling statement about their strongly founded convictions. Another compelling example is Calgary-born Farah Mohamed Shirdon who, in a video message, categorically proclaimed that he was coming to fight against the US administration and Canada (CBC News, 2014). His conviction is rooted in his perceived moral superiority which was acquired by joining IS in their fight against the 'evil empires'. Nevertheless, most of the radicals who embark down the path of violence are obviously aware that they will almost certainly end up dead while confronting the massive power of the state, yet they choose to do so anyway. This apparently suicidal impulse exemplifies the anarchic attitude of the radicals made above. It is also in accordance with the anarchist concept of the "heroic loser"—one who is not necessarily engaged in establishing a new social or world order but, in the words of German anarchist Gustav Landauer, embodies the idea that "the state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a

condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently" (Landuer cited in Ward, 2004, p. 8).

The third theme to emerge pertains to the next, yet obvious, question of the relationship between anarchism and religion. Although Bakunin, one of the seminal figures of anarchism, argued in favour of social revolution and claimed that "…there were three routes of escape from the miseries of life, two of them illusory and one real. The first two were the bottle and the church, 'debauchery of the body or debauchery of the mind; the third is social revolution'; the influence of religion in motivation of people to bring social change cannot be overruled (Ward, 2004, p. 35). The correlation between anarchism and religion can be both positive and negative, Islam being no exception, and there is significant historical precedence for the positive relation between the two. For example, in both the Islamic and Christian traditions, Jesus Christ is viewed as a prophet and a leader who opposed Roman oppression and made efforts to salvage the poor and sick. In the Middle Ages, religious heretics including the Albigensians, and the Anabaptists in Germany and Switzerland persistently challenged the authority of the Pope and the local rulers both violently and non-violently (Christoyannopoulos, 2009). The 1381 Peasants' revolt in Britain was led by a priest, and the puritanical movement that led to the English Revolution of 1649-59 had anarchist characteristics. Indeed the anarchist-faith relationship runs deep in Britain, with other examples including Gerrard Winstanley, the prime ideologist of the Diggers or True Levelers, who often cited the Bible to mobilize the masses, the Quakers and Shakers, and later period Universalists and Unitarians for peace movement. Most importantly, Leo Tolstoy "…exerted a powerful double pressure towards anarchism, although he always repudiated the anarchist movement and towards religion by pushing Christians towards his idiosyncratic version of anarchism as much as he pushed anarchists towards his idiosyncratic version of Christianity" (Graham, 2009, p. 246). His influence cannot be overlooked in shaping both oriental (Indian leaders such as M. K. Gandhi and J. P. Narayan) and occidental (Bart de Ligt and Aldous Huxley, Danilo Dolci and Ronald Sampson) anarchist movements in challenging colonial powers (ibid). An especial mention must be made here about M. K. Gandhi because he is the exemplary case who, being a devout Hindu, effectively fused political ambitions with religious ideologies and was able to mobilize millions of Indians in pursuit of national

independence. American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and some of his followers (Malcom X) were also devout religious figures and they all can be fit within some anarchism frames. However, an important distinction must be made here that these acclaimed religio-political leaders had clear visions and missions for their movement, often lofty ones, and most of them preferred non-violent means to achieve their goals. On the negative side, one can readily quote Sayyid Qutb's (Muslim brotherhood's ideologue) affirmation in his book *Milestone*, "Islam is a declaration of the freedom of man from servitude to other men. Thus it strives from the beginning to abolish all those systems and governments which are based on the rule of man over men and the servitude of one human being to another" and its impacts on radicalization (Fiscella, 2009, p. 286). Nonetheless, our present day radicals have neither a clear ideological goal nor have they the patience and vision to initiate the social change that motivated them to embrace radicalism in the first place.

Meso-Level Factors

In this section, participants' responses were plotted at the meso-level, or community level ("…the wider radical milieu – the supportive or even complicit social surround – which serves as a rallying point and is the 'missing link' with the terrorists' broader constituency or reference group" (Schmid, 2013, p. 4)) and they addressed how community dynamics impact radicalization. For example, one participant spoke about the concept of an "imagined community" (Anderson, 2006) and how it continues to influence people today:

> *It is something about returning to the golden age idea, when Mohammed was around and shortly after his death there was an amazing vibrant community in which he kind of alluded to. I think this is what people are envisioning now as where we [Muslims] should go. And I think that is part of what is happening with terrorism in terms of individual motivations. And so, it comes down to thinking of a 'myth', I think an understanding of where we [Muslims]as a collective are headed and what is the ideal we should strive for.*

A different participant highlighted the sense of insecurity that Muslims feel as a social group in Canada:

There is a strong sense of insecurity prevails about different faith based groups especially Muslims in Canada. Many Muslims feel very intimidated when they work, travel, and carry on with their day to day lives. Maybe it is a false assumption and false perception but the thing is they are suffering from a sense of fear and isolation and suspicion. They think others are treating them differently, badly and it is translated into religious tensions. This is not a good thing once you lose your confidence you cannot be a reasonable human being and the next step is radicalism.

One participant pointed out that capitalistic nature of the society in general and its institutions profit oriented attitudes in particular make people frustrated and hopeless:

I witness capitalism in its ugliest form, profit making attitude everywhere; the society wants to make money at the expense of human dignity. For example, an international student pays three or four times the cost of Canadian students yet the 1948 universal declaration of human rights says education is a right, so when you charge me four times more than a Canadian student you are violating my right. And I don't know if these institutions perceive this in that way. Look at the healthcare system, when I came in 2009, I could not get equal health like Canadian students because I am not Canadian, so international students were not covered by Manitoba Health. I personally could not pay from 2010 to 2011 and after that legislation was passed to include international students into Manitoba Health. But my question is, why they didn't realize that health is also a right. In this multicultural society, the immigration policies are also capitalistic and profit oriented if you just look at the types of peoples are given visas to come to Canada.

Discussion of Findings

Historically, the fall of Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of WW-I marked the end of a transnational 'caliphate', or an imagined community of Muslims. This concept originates from the Quran where God addressed His peoples as 'Oh those who you believe…' (Dukes, 2011), and the subsequent sermons of the Prophet Muhammad (compiled as Hadiths). As the Muslim empire expanded following the death of the Prophet, so too did the physical expansion of the Umma. But as expansion slowed (and eventually stopped) in the 19th and

20th centuries (in the height of Western colonization) the 'spiritual dimension' of Umma survived. How Muslims currently align with the concept and existence of Umma in a virtual world is hotly debated (Meijer, 2009). Consequently, some radical Muslim preachers and extremist recruiters who claim to be the authentic Muslim voices evoke the memory of such an imagined community (Umma) and try to marshal Muslims to fight for the "Right" cause.

The socio-psychological impact of such an imagined community is significant for two reasons. First, this concept deploys an idea of a global community of Muslims, despite their geo-political differences – they are connected, and if one is hurt it is the responsibility of other Muslims to respond, which is a very powerful motivator. Thus, the communal appeal calls for solidarity and unified action, and there are ample examples of the expression of such global solidarity, for example when Muslims protest contemporary issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Although all Muslims are theoretically supposed to be considered members of the same family (*Ummatul Muslimin*) regardless of their denomination, Sunnis are the majority. Therefore, Umma's ideological roots are grounded in Saudi Arabia, which is the center of the Sunni Islam. Despite the fact that Islam has no fixed orthodoxy, the format of conservative 'Saudi Islam' has permeated the Islamic world and established itself as the dominant theological doctrine. Nonetheless, the Saudi brand of Sunni Islam is often equated with Puritanism (i.e. Wahhabism) which rejects any moderation of Islamic traditions. It also critiques Western influence (and by extension, liberal ideologies) and does not recognize Shiites and other denominations as Muslims. As is well-known, Al-Qaeda and their affiliates are of Saudi origin, and Saudi Arabia's charitable support for religious schools (madrasas) in many Muslim countries in the developing world are linked with extreme ideologies (Blanchard, 2007, p. 4).

Second, the 'inclusion-exclusion' dynamics of the Umma is particularly significant for Muslims living in Western countries. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world and in most Western countries Sunnis are the majority Muslim group (for example, in the US 65% identified as Sunnis), a recent Pew Research Survey finds (Lipka, 2015). However, since 9/11 and the recent rise of violent extremism all around the globe, Sunni Muslims have come into the spotlight of political debate. Although both the level of religious education about and spiritual connection of terrorists to their faiths have previously seldom been explored to

determine whether or not violence can be positively attributed to Islam, counter-terrorism discourse nevertheless firmly binds Sunni Islam and terrorism together. Even the Canadian national counter-terrorism strategy is underpinned by such a connection. A direct reflection of this counter-terrorism environment is also found in government policy initiatives because they tend to either partner with 'liberal' Muslims (groups), which is altogether a separate construct only seen in Western societies, or they fund consenting liberal Sunni community groups. In this way, smaller Muslim groups (e.g. Shiites, Ahamadiyya) remain outside the realm of any government-community partnership effort to counter extremism at the grassroots level. Additionally, Sunni and other smaller Muslim group collaboration hardly exists because non-Sunnis think terrorism is exclusively a 'Sunni problem', and therefore feel reluctance with regards to engaging with either the government or the Sunnis. Consequently, it is difficult to foster a broader coalition partnership among faith groups to counter radicalization in Canada.

Most Anarchist ideologues as well as activists resisted against the authoritarian nature of state, which particularly protects its elite's interests. The rapid wave of industrialization in Europe, the UK, and the US in the late 19th and early 20th century impacted its societies and gave rise to 'bourgeoisie' class, which exploited the working class. Consequently, ruling elite class focused only in profit making and cared less about the lives and wellbeing of worker class. As a natural consequence, when the anarchist ideologies were propagated it quickly gained currency among the socially marginalized because they were already alienated within the system. Although one might argue that modern day capitalistic societies cater for their vulnerable social groups by deploying social safety nets yet scholars opined that inequality, in fact, deepened in every spheres of social life and it is endangering the future (Levy & Temin, 2007; Stiglitz, 2012, 2015). Frustration abounds among young people when they find themselves in unwanted situations particularly those who come from underdeveloped or developing countries with a great hope and expectation to work and study in the western countries. Their frustration is compounded due to profit driven nature of various institutions (for example, education, health, immigration) and consequently those who cannot be successful become easy victims of extremist (such as IS, Al Shabaab) propaganda of victimhood. For example, media reported a growing radicalization of young Somalis in

Minnesota that resulted from unemployment, poverty, and social marginalization (Padden, 2013; Pink, 2013).

Micro Level Factors

In plotting responses at the micro-level ("…the individual level, involving e.g. identity problems, failed integration, feelings of alienation, marginalization, discrimination, relative deprivation, humiliation (direct or by proxy) (Schmid, 2013, p. 4)", the important element that emerged was the struggle to locate oneself within a given social context, which is explained by one participant as follows:

> *We need to understand the process of radicalization; it starts with a single person. A person thinks or considers himself or herself as the best human being and he/she starts generating an idea that besides him/her everybody is bad so he/she develops a superiority complex and gradually insulates from outside world. He/she does not believe anymore that human being is composed of good and bad things, so he/she cannot achieve supreme good. In this process he/she starts treating others as inferiors, therefore, assumes that it his/her moral responsibility to make others all right through any means [i.e. extremism] necessary.*

Another participant thought that the struggle between individual and group identity might contribute to radicalization:

> *I think it [radicalism] could be motivated by the need for identity. If people don't see themselves fitting into a particular group they cannot then make sense of the understanding of their own identity. Obviously people have multiple identities that affect their social integration but you need that one thing [faith] that tells you who you are and may be by participating in organized religion gives you meaning, values of life and helps you to understand your identity.*

Discussion of Findings

Why does identity matter, and why now? This is an insightful question that needs to be answered from the perspective of both the individual and the group. First, social-psychologists confirm that individual and group identities are important social markers for

human beings at all stages of life (Tajfel, 1982, 2010). The identity of a person living in a Western society is multi-dimensional and is comprised of aspects relating to ethnicity, religion, culture, nationality, profession, ideology, and even their persona in the virtual, on-line world. Consequently, it is only natural that one would negotiate identity in day to day life based on which aspect of their identity presently assumes priority. However, the question can be raised as to which social conditions trigger the process through which one is compelled to disproportionately prioritize one aspect of their identity over all others. In the current context, my research participants described the complex psycho-social process of a Muslim (and also a convert) who ends up not only prioritizing his/her faith identity but also ends up defending it.

This process begins with an inquisitiveness or the lack of a proper explanation for some question, and a renewed (because most have been born into Muslim families and lived their lives within the culture) interest in Islam. There is nothing wrong in this as it is comforting to have moral and ethical direction. However, some of these Muslims gradually become more interested in researching the dogma, philosophies, and histories of 'true and authentic Islam' in response to the ongoing 'push and pull' social conditions that they face on a daily basis at school, in the workplace, in the public space, and in the virtual space. Since the internet places millions of sources that deal Islamic theology at a person's fingertips, a significant problem arises in knowing which sources—if any—can reliably be said to define 'true and authentic Islam'. Depending on the individual and the group context, some young Muslims come to identify with the orthodox teachings (Salafism) of Islam that reject any moderation and are constantly at odds with liberalism. This form of Islam is particularly attractive to them because it is anti-authoritarian, anti-West, and anti-colonial in spirit. For many of them *Ijtihad*[v] or free, independent thinking on matters related to social conflict and identity is simply not possible given their lack of patience and lack of commitment to negotiating a particular condition (for example, the obligation of a fellow Muslim to help another Muslim in distress or the right condition of Jihad). Nevertheless, this newfound, albeit myopic, theological arsenal often leads them to develop a superiority complex and to assume that only they know the ultimate truth of Islam. In this way, most nascent radicals also assume that they do not need to consult with Imams and religious scholars within the community who might challenge or disagree with their interpretations of Holy Scripture.

It appears that some of our radicals eerily resemble the characters of Aleksander Pushkin and Ivan Turgenev's, "Superfluous Man": born to well-off families, they are intelligent, well-educated, and aware of social injustices yet they do not know how to stand up against it in a right manner (Cornwell, 2002). They are misfits in their society because they think of themselves as "…hero[es] who [are] sensitive to social and ethical problems, but who fail […] to act, partly because of personal weakness, partly because of political and social restraints on [their] freedom of action" (Ellen B Chances1978, cited in ibid, p. 112). However, there is no denying the fact that people feel uncomfortable discussing national security matters in social gatherings (halaqaa, Jummah sermon) for a variety of reasons. At some point, they start attributing all of their failings to their Muslim identities and feel obliged to do something to redress it. Such a situation is further aggravated because a proper (one-to-one, personal) venue to discuss conflict issues is simply absent at home, in schools, or in universities/colleges, which compels them to resort to virtual spaces where they can share their frustration anonymously with their friends. Consequently, they end up talking with sympathizers who constantly help them to relate their Muslim identities to all the troubles.

Modern day society relies on 'identity politics' or social categorization based on race, gender, politics (left or right), and faith. Anarchists reject such categorization and they also believe that social-political-economic power structures are the "roots of problem" and therefore "…[they] wish to replace corrupt institutions entirely, and refashion a more humane society by means of direct action…" (Highleyman, 1988). Based on above discussion some analogy can be drawn with regards to radicals' struggle with their identities and how it is played out within a larger social and global context. First, the current social, political condition racialized Muslims as a different category – the 'others', and therefore, radicals oppose it. This is an effective IS recruitment strategy; it also tends to exploit identity related vulnerabilities of selected people. Second, both locally and globally the radicals identify themselves as one group working towards achieving the same goal (i.e. a just society by changing the current capitalistic societies). Modern technology, access to improvised weapons, and ease of travel facilitated such a local-global linkage, which was also prevalent during the anarchist era (although they used telegraphs, dynamites, and books to inspire others).

One might argue whether the current radicalism qualifies to be a social movement similar to anarchism. Although both anarchism and radicalism originated and thrived due to social conditions pertaining to a particular historical period, both share some common grounds. These use compelling anti-authoritarian ideology; both offer lofty social-political goals; both used terror tactics (including assassinations) to a great extent to coerce state/people; and these are "…destructive and effective in its propagandistic aims, while profoundly disorganized, unsystematic, and lacking in the objective coherence" (Kassel, 2009, p. 237). However, while anarchism is related to initiate some of the powerful social revolutions in the world (such as French, Bolshevik, Spanish, Mexico and Latin America, labour movement in the US), at least the current radicalism cannot possibly be said to have direct contribution to any major social changes (for example, Arab Spring). More so, in comparison with Anarchist influential intellectual ideologues (mostly from the Anarcho-pacifism group)[vi], who wrote volumes about their philosophies for non-violent social change, current radicalism (particularly the Islamic radicalism) draws its intellectual energy from a handful of sources that essentialized violence as the only means to achieve political end justified within a specific geo-political condition[vii]. Moreover, anarchism in the West evolved over the periods (what Immanuel Wallerstein coined as "antisystemic movement" (2002, p. 262)) especially the 1960s (anti-war, student, ecology movements and movements for the liberation of female, gay, and blacks) and current anti-globalization and green, environmentalist movements, while radicalism remained stagnant in anti-colonialism and anti-occupation-ism (Palestine, Afghanistan, Egypt and Kashmir) (Graham, 2009).

The important question to be asked is why anarchism fizzled out and whether radicalism would follow suit. In this regard, some scholars contend that anarchism ushered in civil liberties, labour rights (through Trade Unions), and social egalitarianism. Essentially more the societies embraced openness and equality, managed its peoples' grievances non-violently, stopped oppression of minorities, faster the anarchists lost their followers (Hari, 2009). In view of this, a historical incident is worth mentionable. After the Wall Street bombing in 16 September 1920 that killed 38 people, the US government launched an indiscriminate program to deport radicals and convicted hundreds in the process. In response to such violence, a presidential commission was tasked to investigate the effectiveness of the program and it came out with the following statement:

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> The crux of the question is – have the workers received their share of the enormous increase in wealth which has taken place in this country? The answer is emphatically – no ... Throughout history where a people or a group has been arbitrarily denied rights, reaction has been inevitable. Violence is a natural form of protest against injustice (ibid).

To sum up, this research looks into perceptions of local community based and student group leaders' perceptions on radicalization and counter radicalization issues. The primary reason to choose them as research participants is, they are the middle range actors situated within communities and since radicalization and counter-radicalization is a community bound phenomenon par excellence, their perspective and experience are invaluable. Moreover, this article posits that radicalization is a form of social conflict thus role of middle tier social actors to transform such conflict can be significant. In this regard, Lederach (1997) also argued that middle-range leaders occupy a respectable position between the macro policy level as well as micro individual level and being situated within a larger social network they are able to not only link different organizations with policymakers also they can influence policymakers' decisions about critical social issues (pp 41,42). The above analyses undeniably demonstrate that many radicals use Islam to justify violence; however, this is invariably a reflection of modern day malice, chiefly precipitated by the Global War on Terror phenomenon. Both terrorism and government counter-terrorism policies also have given rise to a host of psycho-social issues grounded in social-political conditions that drive radicals to violence. An overarching finding that runs through all the levels pertains to Muslims who are pushed inadvertently to defend their faith, forced to re-imagine themselves within an imagined community (Umma), and become caught up in the modernity vs. primitiveness dichotomy. However, the analyses attempted to shed light on two vital questions: why are Muslims in a disproportionate quantity the violent extremists in the West at present? And what might cause some of them to choose violence?

Counter Radicalization Efforts and Canadian National Counterterrorism (CT) Strategy

The final component of this research asked participants to comment on the effectiveness of Canadian national CT policy. Their responses are quoted in this section. As

posited, radicalization is a form of social conflict where different social groups engage in the pursuit of their individual goals (whether perceived or real) using available means. However, many of the goals might only exist in perception rather than in reality, and bringing groups together to acknowledge goal incompatibility is perhaps the most difficult exercise in resolving a social conflict (i.e. radicalization). One participant succinctly sums up this difficulty as follows:

> *Because there is no consensus [on the root cause of terrorism], everybody is trying to pin the one trigger, but definitely politics plays a huge role, but I can't say that ideology is any less important. I think that the problem is that people are in denial that ideology doesn't have anything to do with and there are people in denial that politics has anything to do with it. I think they are both equally important to the individual and I think it is part of their Islamic identity that believing that religion and politics are intertwined.*

Often it is demanded that Muslims as a community are not doing enough to counter radicalization. However, one participant lamented how Muslims as a social group are unable to respond to radicalization issues as expected by mainstream population and political leaders:

> *Muslim community itself is a struggling with the radicalization issues because you know there is a sense that the Muslim community doesn't know what is happening within their community; the people outside the community think the community knows something but the Muslim community was taken by surprise in the aftermath of terrorism related incidents.*

One respondent thought that the policy (i.e. goal) as a whole is counterproductive and that it helps extremists to show their followers how divisive the society is:

> *Well it is not only unsuccessful it is very counterproductive. I think unfortunately these [anti-terrorism bills] are the kinds of things that people use to silence others…we are giving the terrorists what they want; the terrorists do not want to see a stable country where Muslims, Christians and Jews living side by side. I do not think such policies are at all effective.*

Another participant stated that the government's approach to community consultation is not conducive to the creation of effective partnerships because government agencies only partner with likeminded groups:

> *I think when we see the government consulting with types of people who have similar worldviews it leads to those kinds of policies which are not grounded in reality. So, I think we need the government to expand the circle of expertise they are using and they should use credible Muslims from Muslim communities, the Imams the community leaders to give their inputs in developing counter radicalization policies. One thing that could be done through collaboration is building trust and the way you build trust is working together with various communities (both Muslims and non-Muslims).*

One participant observed that, as ethno-cultural groups settle in Canada, they tend to retain their past inter-group conflicts, which inhibits inter-group cohesion. Inter group animosity prohibits producing of an effective counter radicalization strategy that calls for across community cooperation and collaboration:

> *Historically all the immigrant groups that came to settle in Canada brought the experience of turmoil that they faced in their country. They brought emotional scars, bad feeling, and opposite political opinions with them; they continue to hold onto their feelings strongly at least for one generation. For example, the Irish and Ukrainian community, people coming from South America. It is natural for them to bring imported conflicts from there; they are feeling strongly about the conflict and they want Canada to care for them with regards to their past or ongoing conflicts. It frustrates them when Canadian government does not take interest in it.*

Discussion of Findings

The absence of a balanced approach to understanding radicalism inadvertently impacts counter-radicalization measures. The current trend, which heavily relies on using security actions to stop radicalization, has at least three key limitations. First, security intervention only takes place after a radical has graduated from a non-active stage to an active stage and is

both fully determined to strike and is aware of the consequences of an act of terrorism. At this stage, the window of intervention for law enforcement is quite small and a vast amount of resources are required to prevent a terrorist strike. A number of past terrorist incidents amply prove the point that it is nearly impossible to stop a determined terrorist if they have acquired enough logistics to carry out an attack. The second limitation is that security measures create fear and mistrust among the general public, and they alienate social groups who could help in providing early warnings for a suspected case. Moreover, premature security intervention (even if we allow that 'sting' operations by intelligence agencies are ethically acceptable), while preventing terrorist attacks in some cases, more often than not only reinforce pre-existing assumptions that particular social groups are targeted more often than others. Finally, each top down intervention program (for example, US's Countering Violent Extremism – CVE and UK's PREVENT) that relies on possible indicators, predictable terrorist trajectory, focusing on select suspect communities, and are based on assumed "risk and protective factors" end up as nothing less than "surreptitious intelligence - gathering tools" (Patel & German, 2015).

There seems to be no integrated approach for synchronizing the goals of policymakers, law enforcers, and various community groups (funded or not) for working towards countering radicalization (echoing the Public Safety Canada's initiative, the Canadian Network For Research on Terrorism, Security and Society – TSAS recently emphasized on this matter in their policy brief (Thompson, Hiebert, & Brooks, 2016)). As stated above, an over-reliance of a security-centric approach to CT only helps to achieve a single objective: to stop terror attacks. However, many activities occur before a terrorist truly reaches at the point of 'no return'. Although the use of terms like 'pre-emptive' measures for stopping terrorist attacks are not new within the security lexicon, this term only means that action will be taken after an aspiring terrorist is already convinced that violence is the only means to achieve their goal (however it is perceived), and that they have started to gather logistics and possible supporters in pursuance of their end. So, if the overarching goal is 'to have a safe and secure Canada' at every level, a minimum synchronization of goal-related efforts could produce different results. In this regard, security agencies can pursue their goals (intervention), and, at the same time, community groups also can pursue their goals at the grassroots level (prevention at the formative stage). There is a significant caveat worth noting at this point: the government

should be credible when launching community partnerships, otherwise "community-driven" efforts would be considered as "an attractive distractor" (Patel & German, 2015). Policy makers often publicly accuse Muslim communities of not showing requisite support against terrorism; however, this simply illustrates the fact that Muslim communities are diverse in nature, and are not even sure in what manner (theologically, socially, or intellectually) they are expected to respond.

The current Canadian CT strategy foregrounds 'Sunni Muslim extremism' as a national security threat, which therefore suggests that Sunnis (the majority of Muslims in Canada) are not doing enough to help combat extremism. But one wonders whether extremism is exclusively a 'Sunni' problem or a larger social problem. Such generalization also ignores the fact that Sunnis, although a majority in Canada, are not a monolithic group and that they come from diverse cultural traditions (among them again a majority comes from South East and South Asia) (Lipka, 2015). In addition, from the seventh century onward, people who converted to Islam beyond Saudi Arabia belonged to different geo-cultural groups that followed indigenous non-violent methods of conflict resolution. As Islam spread, it first merged with local cultures so as to avoid upsetting people's psycho-social dispositions, and, as a result, many scholars opine that Islam thrived beyond the Middle East. Further, Sunni is a religious denomination only within Islam, and there are many other denominations (such as Shiites, Ahmadiyyas, Ismailiyas) who also live in Canada and who can bring a wealth of knowledge, strength of network, and experiences to help bolster community efforts to deter radicalization. As a result, the present CT strategy precluded a significant portion of the Canadian Muslim population from helping the government in countering radicalization at the community level. Different ethno-cultural groups come to settle in Canada, but their past experiences and their various histories of segregation and oppression can create obstacles that prevent inter-group cooperation and social cohesion. Canada's reputation as a welcoming nation to immigrants (including refugees) from all over the world is well known, yet immigrants face unique challenges when it comes to social integration. However, the respondents viewed inter-group cohesion to be a type of social adhesive that can bind them together and help them to counter radicalization at the grassroots level. At the meso-level, a number of ethno-cultural communities (for convenience they can also be identified as Diaspora groups) have been officially founded under the Canadian multiculturalism policy,

and many of them receive funding to help celebrate and preserve their cultural identities. Nevertheless, inter-group dynamics between these communities need to be understood when developing partnerships to combat radicalization for two reasons. First, ethno-cultural groups who were already in conflict in their countries of origin will still retain a degree of animosity in their newly adopted country. This animosity manifests itself subtly and is not displayed through overt actions, but it inhibits members from fully participating in conflict resolution. Second, these groups have widely varying expectations of the government with regards to hearing their problems, funding certain initiatives, or the degree to which the Canadian government denounces their home country's politico-military actions in international forums. Invariably, some groups become more frustrated than others when they find that the Canadian government's position does not meet their expectations. As a result, frustration resulting from unmet expectations impairs government-community partnership, especially when it comes to counter-terrorism related matters. However, while it is important to consider how policy may affect these groups, geo-political realities that influence a sovereign nation's foreign policy cannot be rationalized at the meso-level because such groups can seldom rise above their relatively petty self-interests.

Where and how does the counter-radicalization policy fit within the broader national CT strategy? Simply speaking, if faith ideology is the primary component for indoctrination towards radicalization, any macro level intervention strategy would invariably be considered intrusive and a violation of citizens' rights to maintain religious freedoms. This is a precarious situation for a government since it is difficult to predict 'how much intervention is not too much', or at least not 'counter-productive'. If this is so, a distinction between counter-radicalization and de-radicalization should be made here. I prefer the concept of counter-radicalization because I contend that intervention must be made in the preparatory (indoctrination) stage while taking into account the impacts of all the factors discussed above. A timely prevention at the initial stage offers multiple advantages in the long run, the most important of which being that it puts the onus of prevention onto the community from which a radical comes. It should also be remembered that the current flavor of Islamic extremism will fade away over time only to be replaced with another brand of violent ideology in the future. Additionally, government will change but the communities won't, and government-community partnerships built upon trust and the desire to achieve a common goal (i.e. safe

and secure Canada) can continue to motivate people for years to come. At present, I also contend that we have enough legal and law enforcement measures to stop a terrorist prior to the commission of terror act or for dealing with post-incidence matters; therefore, this research advocates further studies in finding appropriate intervention strategies by mobilizing the available social, religious, and cultural assets of different communities (i.e. social capital).

The Canadian national CT strategy clearly identifies the 'prevention' component of the scheme in which it expects that, by undertaking certain measures with "individuals and communities", it can achieve three desired outcomes.[viii] However, the responses of the participants in this study strongly suggest that a holistic counter-radicalization strategy is necessary for two reasons. The first reason is that it is essential to continue to build dialogue between communities and local governments, law enforcement agencies, and individuals at the meso and micro level. Secondly, a holistic counter-radicalization strategy is important because it offers an alternate, yet authentic, ideology, which can only come from communities and young people at the grassroots level. Moreover, the reality is that, at the macro level, the government's intent is always interpreted at the meso and micro levels through its security and intelligence actions (interventionist); therefore, a counter-radicalization policy (preventative), once formulated, might diffuse the existing tension (trust deficit). It would also help policymakers and law enforcement agencies not to commit the 'fundamental attribution error' which is a social-psychological concept wherein an observer overestimates and attributes causes of conflict to the personal disposition of a subject while underestimating the impacts of stimuli (or context) (Ross, 1977). Nevertheless, one researcher's reflection from the current US, CVE program capture an essential dilemma of dealing with radicalization at the grassroots level:

> The issue becomes: What do you do in the middle area? If you have a loved one you're concerned about and he's radicalizing, and he's watching videos that are concerning, you can hope it's a phase and that they grow out of it, or you can call the FBI and potentially talk to your loved one through a prison cell for the next 20 years (Hughes, 2016).

In this regard, finding a middle ground is crucial and can be achieved by expanding the prevention component of the current CT strategy by identifying long, middle, and short term

goals. However, we should keep in mind the impact of the factors discussed above at the micro, meso, and macro levels and to also consider the immense potential of co-opting a diverse pool of social actors. Given this, it is encouraging that the recent Canada senate standing committee on national security report clearly underpinned such a necessity in several of their recommendations (Lang & Mitchell, 2015).

Conclusion

This article presents the perceptions and experiences of selected CBO and student group leaders with regards to terrorism, counter-terrorism, radicalization, and CT effectiveness in Canada. Their position in social hierarchy as middle range social actors as well as capacity for conflict transformation based upon their experience, legitimacy, and acceptance in the society justify choosing them as research participants. By displaying their statements verbatim, I intended to show how the participants actually think about the issues and their suggestions for improving our approaches to dealing with them. A level-wise analysis was carried out in this paper to understand some of the key factors that the research participants perceived as contributing to the current trend of radicalization in Canada. Among the macro level factors it was found that radicalism leading to violent extremism is an ideology-driven social conflict where different actors compete to pursue incompatible goals. Here, the participants asserted that social conditions, and not faith-based ideologies, are the chief driver of radicalization. It was also found that anarchism and modern day radicalism share some of the basic tenets; however, the radical's preference for violence in achieving their ends is not possibly rooted in their deep devotion to effecting social change, but rather, it stems from the fact that they are opportunistic and emotional. At the meso level, the socio-psychological impacts of Umma (an imagined community) are discussed. In addition, the inter-group dynamics of different ethno-cultural communities who ought to be partnering with government in countering radicalization is also analyzed. At the micro-level, the impact of individual and group identities was analyzed to further substantiate the fact that the current social condition has generated an 'identity thrust' for Muslims whereby many of them are forced to defend their faith identities which serves to further isolate them from society. Finally, the place of counter-radicalization initiatives was discussed within the overall CT

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strategy, emphasizing the fact that intervention to counter radicalization is important at the grass roots level by forging a broad coalition of community actors.

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Endnotes:

[i] Throughout the article 'radicalism' is referred to the current trend where radicals and their ideologues use Islam as the principal tool to motivate people to adopt violence.

[ii] Islamists literatures suggesting extreme measures for social changes can be found in the writings of: Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780-855), Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292- 1350), Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792), Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), Abul A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979), and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966). Source: Kirmanj, S. (2008). The Relationship Between Traditional and Contemporary Islamist Political Thought *Middle East Review of International Affairs, 12*(1).

[iii] The methods by which Islamic fundamentalist groups compete for political legitimacy are not original; they are borrowed from early Islamic history. The method of *takfir* (declaring the infidelity of adversaries), which is popular among contemporary fundamentalists, was perfected by a Kharijite sect known as the Azariqah. Source: Ibid, p. 678.

[iv] "And in Canada converts are probably one per cent of the Muslim population, but we found almost 19 per cent of Muslims convicted in the three litigated Canadian terrorism cases happened to be converts". Source: Robertson, D. (2015). Q&A: Researcher Scott Flower on converts and terrorism Retrieved 12 February, 2016, from http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/qa-researcher-scott-flower-on-converts-and-terrorism.

[v] "As conceived by classical Muslim jurists, ijtihad is the exertion of mental energy in the search for a legal opinion to the extent that the faculties of the jurist become incapable of further effort. In other words, ijtihad is the maximum effort expended by the jurist to master and apply the principles and rules of usuil alfiqh (legal theory) for the purpose of discovering God's law." Source: Hallaq, W. B. (1984). Was the gate of ijtihad closed? International Journal of Middle East Studies, 16(01), 3-41. P. 3

[vi] For example, Henry David Thoreau, Emma Goldman, Leo Tolstoy, Joseph Barker, Henry Clarke Wright, Peter Kropotkin, Fernand Pelloutier, and Gustav Landauer.

[vii] For example, Abdul Wahhab, Hasan al Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Deobandi based literatures.

[viii] Desired outcomes:

1. Resilience of communities to violent extremism and radicalization is bolstered.
2. Violent extremist ideology is effectively challenged by producing effective narratives to counter it.
3. The risk of individuals succumbing to violent extremism and radicalization is reduced.

Source: Building Resilience Against Terrorism: Canada's Counter-terrorism Strategy, http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/rslnc-gnst-trrrsm/index-en.aspx