

# **Female Radicalization in Canada: Motivations and Security Challenges**

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Radicalization into violent extremist groups is on the rise in Western democratic countries. This has serious implications for both national and international security, and serious attempts at curbing the trend need to be implemented immediately. As terrorist attacks continue to be employed by violent extremist groups against civilians, it is becoming increasingly clear that the security system many states have been accustomed to employing needs a second look. The terrorism that is prevalent in modern times is heavily an Islamist form of terrorism. ‘Violent Islamist extremism’ has been listed as the preeminent threat to Canada’s national security,<sup>1</sup> and will therefore be the focus of this paper. Groups such as al Qaeda or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) not only plan and carry out violent and deadly attacks, but increasingly utilise new forms of technology and social media to promote the group’s ideology abroad and recruit new members. More than any other time in history, citizens of Western democratic states are increasingly vulnerable to recruitment by these groups. This can be seen in the rising numbers of men and women, some as young as 13, making the trek to Syria to join ISIS’ proclaimed caliphate. While men have typically been the target of terrorist recruiters and academic studies alike, women are increasingly being radicalized and leaving their Western lives to join terrorist organizations that historically have had little respect for women’s rights.

The focus of this paper will be to investigate the motivations behind female radicalization and the national security implications of the rising number of women in Canada that are joining terrorist groups overseas. This will include the identification of factors that contribute to female radicalization, an assessment of the implications of female radicalization for Canada’s national security, and the development of recommendations for further prevention of radicalization and recruitment into terrorist groups. The paper will ultimately conclude that the potential return of radicalized women to Canada from abroad necessitates action on behalf of the government, security, and law enforcement agencies to establish programs that are capable of legally responding to,

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<sup>1</sup> Public Safety Canada, *Building Resilience Against Terrorism: Canada’s Counter-terrorism Strategy* (Ottawa, Ontario: Public Safety Canada, 2012): 2.

supporting, and reintegrating these women back into Canadian communities without furthering the risk of domestic terrorism.

The first part of this paper will focus on explaining current problems that radicalization into violent extremist groups, namely terrorist groups, is creating in Canada. This will show that Canada, like many other states, has faced recent terrorist attacks on and against their territory, as well as cases of citizens joining terrorist groups overseas. It will explain the breakdown of those involved and show specific cases of women in Canada who have participated in these actions. Trends of women's involvement internationally will also be explored to show the growing need for prevention in this area. This section will also look at the roles that women are playing in these terrorist organizations – from jihadi brides to suicide bombers.

The next section of the paper will look at the various factors that could explain the rise of radicalized women in general. Factors to be examined include the role of recruiters, especially women recruiters, and why they are focusing their efforts on recruiting women into their organizations. The role of social media has been a well-publicized tool in terrorist organizations' recruiting campaigns, being especially effective in recruiting the younger members of society. Social media and its role in the radicalization of women will be examined. Motivating factors of radicalization that will be explored include identity, integration, political frustration, religion, personal motivations, and romanticism. This section will conclude by comparing the expectations of those women and girls who become radicalized to the realities of those who have gone overseas to join ISIS, and the dangers they pose upon their return.

The final section of the paper will analyze the implications of radicalized women for Canada's national security. Challenges for law enforcement and government policy will be examined, including the intelligence challenges faced in identifying radicalized, or radicalizing, women. This section will then recommend a number of initiatives and strategies aimed at filling the gaps in Canada's approach to female radicalization and meeting the challenges presented by it. An especially important concern that will be addressed is the need for effective reintegration support and programs for radicalized Canadian women returning home from their life in a terrorist group. Failure to establish this support increases the risks to Canadian communities in the coming decade through various ways and means. The conclusion will sum up the findings of the

factors that play a role in female radicalization and the different risks and implications these have for Canada's national security.

### Background

While relatively isolated from many of the security problems facing its Western allies, Canada has not been completely immune to the tragedies of terrorism. Domestically, Canada has been home to anarchist terror groups, environmental radicals, and domestic nationalist terrorists such as the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), who have carried out bombings, kidnappings, arson, and murders. It has also been home to foreign terrorist groups and their attacks, such as the bombing of Air India flight 182, the Toronto 18, and the 2014 shooting of Corporal Nathan Cirillo in Ottawa. Abroad, Canadians have been killed in terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso, Somalia, the United States (US), and France – in just 2016 alone.

The Toronto 18 offers a look into what could have been a devastating attack on Canadian soil. In June 2006, 17 individuals were arrested in the Greater Toronto Area for having been part of a plan to carry out wide-spread and large-scale terrorist attacks. These planned attacks are believed to have included truck bombs, open gunfire in busy public areas, the storming of important Canadian political and cultural buildings such as the Canadian Parliament and the Canadian Broadcasting Center, and the beheading of the Canadian Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup> The 18 individuals tied to the planned attacks (the 'Toronto 18') were men primarily aged 18-25, with 4 being minors under the age of 18. Many were born in Canada or came to Canada around the ages of 7-12.<sup>3</sup> The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) alleged that the 18 individuals were all participants in a form of radical Islam and were inspired by Al Qaeda.<sup>4</sup> The idea of radicalization occurring on Canadian soil is therefore not new and continues to be an increasing concern for Canadian security agencies 10 years on.

Radicalization, as defined by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), is the process of moving from moderate beliefs to more extreme views.<sup>5</sup> Those who become radicalized into violent Islamist extremism may

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<sup>2</sup> Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*, (New York, NY: New York City Police Department, 2007): 76.

<sup>3</sup> "Toronto 18: Key Events in the Case," *CBC News*, March 4, 2011, accessed May 19, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto-18-key-events-in-the-case-1.715266>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), *Radicalization: A Guide for the Perplexed*,

believe in the more extreme teachings of the Quran and believe that they are authorized to carry out acts of violence against the government or civilians based on these beliefs. They use tactics that incite terror as a means to provoke the government into a response that is often disproportionate and corrosive to the local environment so that existing moderates become radicalized and their support base grows.<sup>6</sup> Not all those who hold extremist beliefs are terrorists, but extremists who commit violent acts of terror to further their purposes can be considered as such. Terrorism, for the purposes of this paper, will be defined as the “irregular use of violence by non-state groups against non-military targets and personnel for political ends” and requires not only acts or threats of violence but also the promotion of fear and terror to a broader audience.<sup>7</sup> Terrorists seek to radicalize moderates not only in their home countries but also abroad in Western, democratic countries.

Some of those who become radicalized in Western countries may leave for places like Syria where the extremist movement has positioned itself within its own ‘Islamic State’, while some radicalized individuals remain within their Western countries providing support through recruitment, planning, and financing. It has been estimated that ISIS had previously drawn between 3,000 to 6,000 Western fighters into its operations in Syria, with estimates having placed the number of women between 200 to 600 – some as young as 12.<sup>8</sup> Many of these Western women, like their male counterparts, were second or third generation Muslim immigrants, but a number of them have also been Western converts to Islam. These women identify themselves with the term ‘muhajirah’ or ‘muhajirat’ – the Arabic term for “one who avoids or abandons bad things” and “migrant.” This is also linked to the term ‘hijra’ – the term used to describe migration from “lands inhabited by infidels to Muslim lands” which has also been a way for women to contribute to jihad.<sup>9</sup> By using the term ‘muhajirat,’

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(Ottawa, Ontario: RCMP, 2009): 1.

<sup>6</sup> David A. Lake, “Rational Extremism: Understanding Terrorism in the Twenty-first Century,” *Dialogue IO* 1, no.1 (2002): 16.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.; Kathleen M. Blee, “Women and Organized Racial Terrorism in the United States,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no.5 (2005): 422.

<sup>8</sup> The Soufan Group, “Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq,” (2015): 4.; Jon Hembrey, “ISIS recruits: Radicalized young women motivated by ideology, sense of adventure,” *CBC News*, February 27, 2015, accessed May 18, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/isis-recruits-radicalized-young-women-motivated-by-ideology-sense-of-adventure-1.2973691>.; Anita Peresin and Alberto Cervone, “The Western Muhajirat of ISIS,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no.7 (2015): 495-6.

<sup>9</sup> Peresin and Cervone, “The Western Muhajirat,” 495-6.

Western women proclaim three things: a clear discontent with their life or way of living in the West, a desire to migrate to a place of ideal perfection – the caliphate, and the religious motivation for undertaking such changes.<sup>10</sup> While women seek to join any number of terrorist organizations, this paper will primarily concern itself with the women that have joined ISIS, as the radicalization of Western women into this group has grown into an exponential phenomenon over the past decade with little indication that the trend is slowing down.

### **The Role of Female Terrorists**

ISIS is a Salafi jihadist militant group that has adopted the traditional Sunni Islam legal doctrine that distinguishes men's and women's duties to carry out jihad based on offensive or defensive jihad. Within Sunni Islam, offensive jihad (*jihad al-talab*) is a collective duty that exists to meet the needs of an Islamic state in an offensive position so that it is able to wage war against other states.<sup>11</sup> This can only be done under the command of an existing leader and considers the physical, familial, and financial position of a Muslim before he can volunteer for offensive jihad. Traditionally, only males who were fit, able, and mature could participate in offensive jihad so long as his family would not be financially burdened.<sup>12</sup> Defensive jihad (*jihad al-daf'*) exists to meet the needs of those Muslims whose territories have been invaded or attacked, and are politically and militarily vulnerable with a lack of remediable options available to them.<sup>13</sup> Rather than a collective duty, defensive jihad does not require permission and can be performed individually. Classically, this defensive jihad was an obligation to be undertaken only by those in occupied territory or those closest to it. Contemporary jihadists have broadened the scope of classical defensive jihad from this territorial-basis to cover the globe, as they reject the legitimacy of the existing political world order for attacking Muslims around the world.<sup>14</sup> Terrorist groups such as al Qaeda and ISIS support this contemporary understanding of defensive jihad and use it to describe their fight against infidels of 'kuffar' in the West.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 497.

<sup>11</sup> Nelly Lahoud, "The Neglected Sex: The Jihadis' Exclusion of Women from Jihad," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no.5 (2014): 781.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 782.

Women's role in this defensive jihad differs based on the terrorist organization. Some groups, al Qaeda being a notable example, have allowed women to hold positions as suicide bombers because this allows women to carry out their yearning for a combat role while simultaneously denying them any power or status since their lives do not endure after carrying out their mission.<sup>15</sup> Even under defensive jihad, most terrorist organizations built upon traditional Sunni Islamic law have excluded women from the battlefield based on the need to protect women's modesty and keep men away from the distraction of women who 'tie them to this world.'<sup>16</sup> Female jihad has thus been considered different than that of males, consisting mainly of support for their husbands and raising their children with a love of jihad. In some cases, women have been included in the administrative side of terrorist organizations such as recruiting and financing. Within ISIS, most foreign women recruits have fulfilled the role of jihadi bride. They marry male fighters, bear them children, and raise the children in accordance with Shariah law. Recruiters have previously focused on giving Western women a romanticized notion of life as a wife to ISIS soldiers and have played into the idea of the caliphate as bringing freedom from Western oppression with regular comforts such as shopping and dining at coffee shops with girlfriends.<sup>17</sup>

Over the years, a number of Canadian women have left Canada for Syria, including a 20-year-old woman who called herself Umm Haritha. She arrived in Syria in late 2013 and was quickly married to a 26-year-old Palestinian foreign fighter from Sweden named Abu Ibrahim al-Suedi. Five months later, al-Suedi was killed in an attack from a rival group and Umm Haritha started a blog dedicated to offering advice and guidance to other would-be jihadi wives. She posted pictures of community buildings, Islamic clothing stores, and stories about her friends. During her childhood, Umm Haritha had lived in Canada and had a 'normal,' 'middle class' life for 14 years before her move to Syria.<sup>18</sup> When asked about the reason for the move, she replied that she desired to "live a life of honour" under Islamic law as she felt "life was degrading and an

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<sup>15</sup> Jessica Davis, "Evolution of the Global *Jihad*: Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36, no.4 (2013): 288.

<sup>16</sup> David Cook, "Women Fighting in Jihad," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no.5 (2005): 377.; Peresin and Cervone, "The Western Muhajirat," 496.

<sup>17</sup> Cook, "Women Fighting," 379.; Peresin and Cervone, "The Western Muhajirat," 501.

<sup>18</sup> Nadim Roberts, "The life of a jihadi wife: Why one Canadian woman joined ISIS's Islamic state," *CBC News*, July 7, 2014, accessed July 19, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/the-life-of-a-jihadi-wife-why-one-canadian-woman-joined-isis-s-islamic-state-1.2696385>.

embarrassment and nothing like the multicultural freedom of expression and religion they make it out to be” describing her time in Canada wearing a niqab.<sup>19</sup>

Estimates have put the number of foreign female members of ISIS close to 10 percent of all foreign members.<sup>20</sup> Many of these women responded to the call of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, to assist in the building of the new caliphate through traditional household roles, as well as skilled or auxiliary positions such as doctors, nurses, and engineers. Not only were women expected to raise their children in the way of jihad, but select women were given authority over finances, operational logistics, recruitment of both male fighters and wives, meeting medical needs, and in some cases gathering and distributing intelligence.<sup>21</sup> ISIS recognized that women often have better access to situations and areas where they can gather intelligence, or are better suited to recruit additional women due to their commonalities.<sup>22</sup> Strategically, terrorist groups in general have used women in more high-profile attacks to garner increased media attention and expand their base of both support and recruitment, especially in cases where such bases are waning.<sup>23</sup> These groups have also used women in operations as a way to recruit men by shaming them for not upholding a duty a woman is capable of, thereby motivating them to join the groups when they otherwise might not.<sup>24</sup> While terrorist groups such as ISIS have particular motivations for recruiting women, the personal motivations of women and girls who seek to join terrorist groups are increasingly converging with these strategic and operational motives such that the number of female terrorists is growing.<sup>25</sup>

The radicalization of women and girls into terrorist organizations will likely continue as extremist ideology spreads over the internet to a larger audience than ever before. The flight of women, especially those who call the West their home, deserves to be an important focus of security organizations both nationally and internationally. While many women have decided to move overseas to join ISIS or other terrorist organizations, another concern should be the women who are unable to make the move and stay in the West. One such

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Peresin and Cervone, “The Western Muhajirat,” 499.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 498.

<sup>22</sup> Anita Peresin, “Fatal Attraction: Western Muslimas and ISIS,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no.3 (2015): 31.

<sup>23</sup> Davis, “Evolution,” 284.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Katharina Von Knop, “The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda’s Women,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no.5 (2007): 398.

case occurred in December 2014 when a woman in Abu Dhabi carried out a lethal knife attack against an American woman.<sup>26</sup> Women who have left a terrorist group and return disillusioned from their time overseas are likely to be less of a threat than the less-mobile women who are motivated by the jihadist ideology and carry out attacks in their home country as a sign of support for the group.<sup>27</sup> Radicalization has been at the heart of both groups of women, whether they travel abroad or not, and it is this process that deserves the attention of security agencies.

Government policy should seek to curb radicalization both before it begins and after it has developed. To do this effectively, the radicalization process and motivations of women who choose this path need to be comprehensively understood by academics, government, and security personnel alike.

### **Recruitment Tactics and Social Media**

To understand the process of radicalization for a woman or girl in a Western state, the recruitment tactics being targeted at these women and girls need to be recognized. Social media is at the forefront of recruitment for foreign female members of terrorist groups. With the accessibility and ease with which groups can manipulate and spread propaganda, the terrorist narrative is stronger than ever before. ISIS has undeniably captured the essence of social media as a tool of recruitment through its use of websites like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Kik, WhatsApp, and Tumblr, among others.<sup>28</sup> ISIS propaganda includes photos of daily life in ISIS-controlled territory where women are treated fairly as they carry out normal activities such as eating at restaurants, cooking, and spending time with their husbands.<sup>29</sup> Peresin and Cervone note that ISIS's use of social media fulfills three roles in an individual's participation in jihad: radicalization, recruitment, and identity formation.<sup>30</sup> Included within this process are all the steps necessary for recruitment, complete with a strict guide on a woman's role in jihad. These steps include indoctrination, providing motivation for making hijra, travel information, help finding husbands, and guides on how to be the "ultimate wife" of ISIS's fighters which includes proper

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<sup>26</sup> Peresin and Cervone, "The Western Muhajirat," 505.

<sup>27</sup> Peresin, "Fatal Attraction," 31.

<sup>28</sup> Peresin, "Fatal Attraction," 26.

<sup>29</sup> Peresin and Cervone, "The Western Muhajirat," 501.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 502.

behaviour, roles, and expected living conditions in the caliphate.<sup>31</sup> ISIS continues its narrative by explicitly situating its expectations of women within a manipulated view of daily life in its territory. As will be seen, this has a strong impact on especially young female would-be terrorists.

The role of women as recruiters on social media is especially noteworthy. Umm Haritha's role as an ISIS recruiter has already been noted, but she is far from the only woman recruiter used by ISIS. Rather, ISIS uses many recruited foreign women to convince other Western women of the obligation faced by all Muslim women to participate in jihad and assist in the creation of the new caliphate. As more women radicalize and join ISIS, the more recruiters ISIS has at its disposal, which continues to fuel their media recruitment campaigns. Depicted within the ISIS recruitment narrative is a variety of motivations aimed at capturing the attention of as many individuals as possible. Many Western individuals are targeted based on their dissatisfaction they experience with their Western lives and are shown that their life in the caliphate will be relieved of these frustrations through video footage, communication with ISIS members, and photos depicting an "ideal" life.<sup>32</sup> Additional propaganda shows video footage of ISIS's battle victories, and images of the torture and executions of infidels and enemies, which feeds into the "jihadi-cool" culture conscripted by ISIS's social media team.<sup>33</sup>

Using social media allows ISIS to spread its narrative faster and further to a young generation complete with distorted views of life in the Islamic State thus triggering many to call it "an offensive strategy of psychological warfare."<sup>34</sup> The reasons behind the effectiveness of ISIS's social media campaign on Western women are extensive and varied as no single radicalized Western female has the exact same experiences with, or prior to, radicalization. The next section will look at who the Western female terrorist is – where she comes from, her age, her background, her religious and political stances, and her employment

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 503.

<sup>32</sup> Peresin, "Fatal Attraction," 25-6.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 27; Douglas Ernst, "'Jihadi-cool' subculture drives youth to Islamic State, says Muslim Council of Britain adviser", *The Washington Times*, August 22, 2014, accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/aug/22/jihadi-cool-subculture-drives-youth-to-islamic-sta/#!>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 27; Jytte Klausen, "Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no.1 (2015): 20.

history, to be followed by an examination of the different motivating factors at play in the process of radicalization.

### **Who is the Female Terrorist?**

What is clear from a number of studies done on the radicalization of Western terrorists of both genders is that there are no concrete qualifications that can identify a person susceptible to radicalization. Previous profiles might have identified a radicalized female as young, unemployed, uneducated, leaving them resentful of their socio-political status and with too much free time to turn their anger into violence. While these factors might hold in some cases, they by no means encompass an overarching profile of 'the female terrorist.' Contemporary accounts have reviewed a number of known cases of women and girls joining terrorist groups and compared them across variable such as age, education, employment, marital status, immigration, religious connections, criminal history, and activism. What one study found was that out of 222 female terrorists, the majority were young, citizens of their home country, employed, educated to secondary level, and rarely involved in criminal proceedings. This particular study, done by Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, found that female terrorists were close in age, had similar immigration statuses, and played similar roles in terrorism as male terrorists, but often had achieved a higher level of education, were less likely to be employed, and were less likely to have prior connections in the activist community compared to males.<sup>35</sup> As a study with one of the highest number of female subjects, the results allow for a general understanding of the average female terrorist.

Using the available data, the age range of females involved in terrorism in the study extended from 12 to 66, with the mean age of 22.6 years, and with over 80% of female terrorists falling on the spectrum between 16 to 35 years of age.<sup>36</sup> The majority of females had completed both secondary and post-secondary education, which according to Jacques and Taylor suggests a tendency of female terrorists to achieve a high level of education.<sup>37</sup> 92% of all terrorists within the study were employed or full-time students during their initial introduction to terrorism, with 72% of males being employed and 53% of females, making it ultimately comparable to worldwide trends of employment.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, "Myths and Realities of Female-Perpetrated Terrorism," *Law and Human Behaviour* 37, no.1 (2013): 35.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

In the sample of females, women were as likely to be married as single, but were more likely to be divorced when compared to men.<sup>39</sup> 7 women within the group (~3%) were found to have converted to a particular religion prior to or during their radicalization process.<sup>40</sup> This statistic was found to be similar to the 4.5% conversion rate found across 40 countries in Barro, Hwang, and McCleary's analysis of religious conversion.<sup>41</sup> Little to no criminal history was found within the sample, but 30% of women were found to have been raised within activist households, and 34% for men. Of those women raised within activist families, approximately 61% related their terrorist motivations to family influences.<sup>42</sup>

Ultimately, this study done by Jacques and Taylor suggests that existing stereotypes of female terrorists as uneducated and unemployed are not true and that economic hardship is not a strong risk factor for radicalization or terrorist activity.<sup>43</sup> The lack of criminal history may result from the unwillingness of convicted terrorists to confess to further or prior crimes; it may be due to the unnecessary attention from law enforcement that it would draw to would-be terrorists; or it may indicate that having a criminal background is unrelated to an individual's terrorist aspirations.<sup>44</sup> Compared to males, female terrorists were less likely to have converted to a specific religion, were less likely to be employed, and were less likely to be immigrants – indicating a more individual approach to radicalization and terrorist activity than in males where the statistics emphasized more collective terrorist activity.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, one third of the female terrorists examined in the Jacques and Taylor study had family connection to terrorist groups, indicating that activism among family members can play a role in the motivations of some women or girls to seek out terrorism.<sup>46</sup>

These findings are consistent with a number of other studies that examine the phenomenon of Western terrorism. The New York Police Department released a report entitled “Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat” which found that many of those involved in the attacks of September 11, 2001, came from non-radicalized, middle class families, and were Middle Eastern

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 40-41

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 41.; Robert Barro, Jason Hwang, and Rachel McCleary, “Religious Conversion in 40 Countries,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, no.1 (2010): 28.

<sup>42</sup> Jacques and Taylor, “Myths,” 41.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 42.

students who were “not very religious, apolitical, and with unremarkable backgrounds. Most were fluent in English, Western-educated, and accustomed to the Western lifestyle.”<sup>47</sup> Likewise, it has been found that terrorists with Western origins contradict the existing profile of the economically disadvantaged, uneducated, and unemployed terrorist.<sup>48</sup> A number of studies state that terrorists active in Western countries tend to be from the second or third generation of immigrant families and at least outwardly appeared to be well integrated into their communities.<sup>49</sup> In addition, the number of converts to radical Islam has been growing.<sup>50</sup>

As Jacques and Taylor assert in an additional study, with the inability to distinguish a clear profile for a female terrorist, it is possible that the effectiveness of a terrorist group’s recruitment campaign in radicalizing women and girls lies in their approach to using different strategies to target different motivations, thereby encompassing a wider range of potential recruits.<sup>51</sup> A variety of these motivations will be examined in the following section.

### **Motivating Factors of Radicalization**

This section will look at six of the most common motivating factors associated with the radicalization of Western women and girls – identity, integration, political frustration, religion, personal motivations, and romanticism.

#### **Identity**

As has already been noted, the demographics that describe a Western, female terrorist are not extraordinary and are not subject to extreme pressures such as poverty or suffering. Rather, the average Western, female terrorist grows up in a relatively peaceful society, but may struggle with finding their identity within

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<sup>47</sup> Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, 76.

<sup>48</sup> Meytal Grimland, Alan Apter, and Ad Kerkhof, “The Phenomenon of Suicide Bombing: A review of psycho- logical and nonpsychological factors,” *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention* 27, no.3 (2007): 115.; Mark R. Keibell and Louise Porter, “An intelligence assessment framework for identifying individuals at risk of committing acts of violence extremism against the West,” *Security Journal* 25, no.3 (2012): 214-15.

<sup>49</sup> Lorne L. Dawson, “The Study of New Religious Movements and the Radicalization of Home-Grown Terrorists: Opening a Dialogue,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no.1 (2009): 5.; Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, 76.; Aidan Kirby, “The London Bombers as ‘Self-Starters’: A Case Study of Indigenous Radicalization and the Emergence of Autonomous Cliques,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 5 (2007): 421; Brendan O’Duddy, “Radical Atmosphere: Explaining Jihadist Radicalization in the UK,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41, no.1 (2008): 38.

<sup>50</sup> Peresin, “Fatal Attraction,” 22.

<sup>51</sup> Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, “Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reasons?” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no.4 (2008): 323.

that society, especially as they transition from adolescence or young adulthood to an independent, adult life.<sup>52</sup> Young women in particular are still in the process of forming a social identity and their current social status may feel incomplete and uncertain. Some women or girls may find themselves drawn towards extremist Islam as a result of existing religious backgrounds or kin connections, despite the opportunities for upward growth in their Western society.<sup>53</sup> For Muslim females, this may exist as tension between traditional values and liberal values, which may be imposed by their families and their friends on either side.<sup>54</sup> ISIS has adapted parts of their recruitment campaign to offer young women and girls struggling with their identity an alternative path – one that offers stability, acceptance, and a sense of belonging to a global cause so that they no longer have to struggle with the tension between Western, liberal values and traditional Islamic ones.<sup>55</sup>

Other young women may be attracted to a global cause out of boredom with their “normal” lives and see joining ISIS as an act of empowerment, individuality, and meaning.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, pressure from their peer group to join the “jihadi cool” culture can drive young women to seek a sense of belonging and identity within the culture.<sup>57</sup> The process of seeking an identity and finding one within radical Islam is not reserved solely for the young. Women who find themselves at a crossroads in life due to extenuating circumstances concerning their economic situation, social position, political ideology, or personal reasons may be more vulnerable to an identity upheaval and become drawn to the empowering feeling of purpose and belonging to a global cause.<sup>58</sup>

Those women and girls who grow up as the second or third generation of immigrant families in a Western country may feel tension between their dual identities. Attempting to manage their Western identity with that of their Muslim identity can result in a feeling of crisis when confronted with conflicting ideals and expectations.<sup>59</sup> This may result in extremist thinking if there is a strong

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<sup>52</sup> Dawson, “New Religious Movements,” 8.

<sup>53</sup> Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, 83.

<sup>54</sup> Peresin, “Fatal Attraction,” 24.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Anne Speckhard, “Talking to Terrorists: What Drives Young People to Become Foreign Fighters for ISIS and other Terrorist Groups and What Can be Done in Response,” *Freedom from Fear Magazine*, 11, (2015): 3.

<sup>58</sup> Dawson, “New Religious Movements,” 7.

<sup>59</sup> Michael King and Donald M. Taylor, “The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A

dichotomy drawn between different groups resulting in an “us” versus “them” mentality.<sup>60</sup> Extremist behaviour or attitudes may further result from the concept of ‘relative deprivation’ if these women or girls compare the conditions of the group that they identify most strongly with to other groups, and subjectively perceive the material, social conditions of their group as being disadvantaged and suffering from injustice.<sup>61</sup> Feelings that result from relative deprivation, such as anger and frustration, can lead an individual to question their previously held beliefs and distance themselves from society making them open to the influence of criminal behaviour or violent radicalization.<sup>62</sup> It is important to note that these individuals may be in either an advantageous or disadvantageous position within society while simultaneously experiencing group-based relative deprivation.<sup>63</sup> This group-based relative deprivation is more commonly associated with the collective action found in terrorist groups than personal deprivation.<sup>64</sup>

### Integration

A lack of integration into society is another prominent factor in cases of radicalization. The NYPD report on radicalization states that Europe has failed to integrate those who make up the second and third generation of immigrant families and has thus contributed to a rise in the vulnerability of young Muslims to violent extremism.<sup>65</sup> The lack of integration felt by these individuals contributes heavily to feelings of tension between their religious identity and their secular Western identity, making them vulnerable to extremist ideology and rhetoric.<sup>66</sup> Through social media accounts of Western ISIS recruits, women explain their feelings of alienation they encountered in their home country.<sup>67</sup> Umm Haritha, as noted earlier, is one such example as she describes her experience wearing a niqab in Canada as “degrading and embarrassing.”<sup>68</sup> Umm Ubaydah is another foreign female recruit to ISIS who expressed her wish to live

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Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no.4 (2011): 611.; Allard R. Feddes, Liesbeth Mann and Bertjan Doosje, “Increasing self-esteem and empathy to prevent violent radicalization: a longitudinal quantitative evaluation of a resilience training focused on adolescents with a dual identity,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 45, (2015): 400.

<sup>60</sup> Iu A. Zubok and V. I. Chuprov, “The Nature and Characteristics of Youthful Extremism,” *Russian Education & Society* 52, no.1 (2010): 46.

<sup>61</sup> King and Taylor, “Radicalization,” 609.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.; Feddes, Mann and Doosje, “Increasing self-esteem,” 401.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 610.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, 83.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Peresin and Cervone, “The Western Muhajirat,” 500.

<sup>68</sup> Roberts, “The life of a jihadi wife.”

in the Islamic State because it is a society that “abides by the law of Allah” – an enticing alternative to the negative attitudes she faced in the West.<sup>69</sup> Alienation and isolation from one’s community can also increase perceived differences between one’s social group and other groups, which can in turn encourage negative attitudes towards those other groups.<sup>70</sup> This can also contribute to feelings of relative deprivation as examined earlier.

Individuals who become isolated as a result of a lack of integration into their community are also at a higher risk of engaging in violent extremism due to their detachment from less radicalized, more moderate members of society.<sup>71</sup> The time an individual spends with a group of violent extremists impacts their socialization because in many cases the longer they associate with radical ideas they may no longer be open to more moderate views.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, those more moderate members of society may also not wish to associate themselves with the individual who now holds extreme views, thus extending their isolation and reinforcement of extreme attitudes.

Group-think is another factor at play in cases where an isolated or alienated individual seeks out groups that hold radical views. The NYPD report states that these groups “appear almost essential to progressing to the Jihadization stage – the critical stage that leads to a terrorist act.”<sup>73</sup> Group-think acts as a force-multiplier for radical ideology as it equips individuals with greater access to training, skills, tools such as firearms, and the financial and motivational support that is necessary to carry out an attack.<sup>74</sup>

### Political Frustration

Perceived group-based relative deprivation can be strongly influenced by the political conditions faced by specific groups. Violent extremists who subscribe to radical Islam perceive the existence of their group to be under threat from Western policies at home and abroad. A number of wars point to the suffering and persecution of Muslim populations through Western interventions, such as

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<sup>69</sup> Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford and Ross Frenett, “Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants to ISIS,” *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, London (2015): 12.

<sup>70</sup> Keibell and Porter, “Framework,” 219.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*; Martin Innes, Laurence Abbott, Trudy Lowe, and Colin Roberts, *Hearts and Minds and Eyes and Ears: Reducing Radicalisation Risks through Reassurance-Oriented Policing*, (Cardiff, Wales: Universities Police Science Institute, 2007), 13.

<sup>73</sup> Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, 83.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.; Keibell and Porter, “Framework,” 222.

those in Afghanistan, Iraq, Chechnya, Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>75</sup> The judgment that Western policies are at the heart of the suffering of Muslims worldwide is a strong motivating factor in the process of radicalization.<sup>76</sup> The way domestic counterterrorism policies are perceived by individuals in a community is another important factor. Whole communities can feel threatened by anti-terrorism policies when they feel unfairly discriminated against on the basis of religion, culture, or ethnic origin. The infamous ‘war on terror’ may be perceived by some as a specific ‘war on Islam’ which contributes to the tension that may already exist between one’s Muslim identity and their Western identity.<sup>77</sup> These perceptions and beliefs become dangerous at the point that an individual feels that violent retaliation or revenge is necessary to stop, or to bring attention to, the injustice they feel is being brought against their group.<sup>78</sup>

Terrorist groups such as ISIS and al Qaeda have constructed their narrative to emphasize the injustices that Muslim communities across the world have suffered at the hand of Western states. Their recruitment campaigns reflect this narrative, portraying Muslims, Islam, and Islamic territory as being under attack from the West.<sup>79</sup> The images and facts they present to their audience often show the real war-time suffering of Muslim populations across the Middle East, which lends credibility to their argument in the eyes of their supporters. Individuals who identify with this narrative often oppose domestic or foreign policies as the basis of this suffering and injustice. Muslims who lack such a belief, and are satisfied with their social and political condition, make up the more moderate members of their communities who usually lack the violent or radical attitude felt by those in the radicalization stage.<sup>80</sup>

Women and girls are just as likely as men to face these injustices with the added burden of inequality and subordination felt in strongly patriarchal societies. The frustration, dissatisfaction, and inequality felt by women and girls in these societies may make them vulnerable to radicalization if they construe

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<sup>75</sup> Kebbell and Porter, “Framework,” 218.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.; Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, 84.; Pew Research Center, *Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream*, (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Centre, 2007), 36-37.

<sup>77</sup> Kebbell and Porter, “Framework,” 218-9.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>79</sup> Speckhard, “Talking to Terrorists,” 2.

<sup>80</sup> David B. Skillicorn, Christian Leuprecht, and Conrad Winn, “Homegrown Islamist Radicalization in Canada: Process Insights from an Attitudinal Survey,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 45, no.4 (2012): 952.

the terrorist narrative as offering them empowerment and personal freedom.<sup>81</sup> The entirety of women who are unhappy with their subordinated status in society are not necessarily more open to radicalization as it is also possible that their dissatisfaction may catalyze them into changing their personal circumstances through self-development and community dialogue, but vulnerability to radicalization and recruitment exists in those who reluctantly conform to their subordination.<sup>82</sup>

Terrorist groups such as ISIS promote the opportunity for women to participate in building the ‘Islamic State’ – a state and society free from Western corruption and discriminatory policies that lack respect for women.<sup>83</sup> Rather than seeing it as ‘joining a terrorist group,’ ISIS markets this as an opportunity to create a pure state governed by Shariah law where women can practice Islam honourably and without discrimination.<sup>84</sup> Under this narrative, women are able to participate and contribute to a society as opposed to the exclusion and limited opportunities they may face in traditional societies in their home country.<sup>85</sup> An extreme view of female liberation understands participation in suicide attacks as the ability to “fulfil traditional male duties and [have] the chance of being honored by the society they are living in.”<sup>86</sup> The feeling of injustice, suffering, and subordination, whether real or perceived, can be an extraordinary catalyst towards radicalization and recruitment for women and girls.

### **Religion**

Religion is a motivating factor in a number of cases of radicalized women. Some women believe that the West is waging war on Islam and that it needs to be protected. Travelling abroad to join a terrorist group is also part of hijra – the religious duty to migrate and contribute to the building of the caliphate – a way for women to carry out their own jihad.<sup>87</sup> Peresin notes that religious motivation is most often cited by women as the most important factor in their decision to radicalize, though she states that religious motivation alone is not enough to explain the commitment to hijra by Western Muslim women, which can only be

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<sup>81</sup> Margot Badran, “Women and Radicalization,” Danish Institute for International Studies, DIIS Working Paper no. 2006/5, 6.; Feddes, Mann and Doosje, “Increasing self-esteem,” 401.; [See Zehra Dunman’s case in:] Erin Marie Saltman and Melanie Smith, “Till Martyrdom Do Us Part: Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon,” Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2015, 31.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Peresin, “Fatal Attraction,” 24.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Von Knop, “The Female Jihad,” 399-400.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Peresin, “Fatal Attraction,” 24.

understood with a combination of motivating factors.<sup>88</sup> A study done by Skillicorn, Leuprecht, and Winn shows that “belief in the salience of religion is associated with both high levels of religious activity and support for terrorist groups” and that “younger age is correlated with both higher levels of religious activity and support for terrorist groups.”<sup>89</sup> That is not to say that religion itself is a risk factor, but that those who believe that their religion “justifies or necessitates violent actions is likely to increase the risk of being engaged in violent extremism.”<sup>90</sup>

As for conversion to Islam, statistics show that the greatest source of religious conversion in Europe stems from European women marrying Muslim men.<sup>91</sup> Western women who convert to Islam may have only a superficial understanding of the religion, or they may have been exposed to, or influenced by, those with a more violent interpretation of Islam, such as their husbands.<sup>92</sup> In these cases, women in the process of radicalizing may be drawn to the terrorist narrative which perpetuates images and speeches that show Islam as being under attack by the West and calls on men and women alike to defend it. One exemplary instance of this narrative occurred in 1998 with the issuing of a fatwa – a ruling on Islamic law – by Osama bin Laden that stated it was the individual duty of every Muslim, in any country, to kill Americans and their allies, both civilians and military.<sup>93</sup> Islam as a religion is not necessarily violent, but there are undoubtedly individuals whose interpretations of it believe that it justifies the use of violence in its defense. Women who subscribe to this interpretation, along with any combination of other motivating factors, are more vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment to terrorist organizations. Women who have been radicalized and recruited use these beliefs to further justify their migration to the caliphate and domestic roles within it as a religious duty.

### **Personal Motivations**

Personal motivations encompass a variety of beliefs and ideals held by individual women, in addition to those already mentioned. Compared to male involvement in terrorism, female involvement is more frequently attributed to personal

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>89</sup> Skillicorn, Leuprecht, and Winn, “Homegrown,” 950.

<sup>90</sup> Kebell and Porter, “Framework,” 220.

<sup>91</sup> Von Knop, “The Female Jihad,” 403.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.; Jon Cole and Benjamin Cole, *Martyrdom: Radicalization and Terrorism amongst British Muslims* (London: Pennant Books, 2009), 236.

<sup>93</sup> “Osama bin Laden’s Fatwa Against America,” *The Globalist*, October 7, 2001, accessed July 3, 2016, <http://www.theglobalist.com/osama-bin-ladens-fatwa-against-america/>.

motivations than to religious motivations.<sup>94</sup> The act of hijra by some women occurs because of a perceived humanitarian mission to help those affected by conflict, such as those in Syria or Iraq. A Scottish Muslim woman, Aqsa Mahmood, joined ISIS as a jihadi bride in an effort to help suffering Syrians.<sup>95</sup> Humanitarian sympathies for suffering or persecuted Muslims can contribute towards a vulnerability to radicalization when paired with political frustrations as mentioned earlier. The terrorist narrative of the war on Islam and Muslims, anger over foreign policies, and frustration with gender-based oppression can heighten one's perception of suffering and injustices around the world, and make migration to the caliphate appear to be a way to contribute humanitarian help. The women who fall under this category tend to idealize their role in the caliphate and overestimate the freedom and contributions they will be able to make once they arrive in the Islamic State.<sup>96</sup>

Alternatively, the process of radicalization for many women may be triggered or inflamed by the need for vengeance. The loss of male family members due to suicide operations, counterterrorism interventions by the 'enemy,' or failed missions can act as motivation for women to seek revenge.<sup>97</sup> It can also manifest itself as a sense of duty to take up where the male left off. Personal or family honour may also motivate women to pursue terrorism as a means of regaining lost or tarnished dignity as a consequence of strict social, religious, or cultural rules.<sup>98</sup> Personal motivations may vary amongst radicalized, or radicalizing, women, but they tend to work in conjunction with additional motivating factors to sway women towards the pursuit of radical beliefs and attitudes.

### **Romanticism**

Naïve and romanticized notions of what joining a terrorist organization entails can be attributed to the decisions of some women or girls to migrate abroad. Especially prevalent among young females, the notion of marrying a "heroic" foreign fighter can be attractive enough to encourage teenage girls to leave their Western life and join groups such as ISIS. The notion of having a brave, heroic husband is exponentially attractive to the naïve when combined with the promise

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<sup>94</sup> Jacques and Taylor, "Male and Female," 321.

<sup>95</sup> Peresin, "Fatal Attraction," 24.

<sup>96</sup> Speckhard, "Talking to Terrorists," 2.

<sup>97</sup> Von Knop, "The Female Jihad," 400.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

of a free house, financial rewards, and many Western comforts.<sup>99</sup> Other romanticized ideals of moving to the caliphate include a sense of adventure – an escape from a “boring” life and teenage rebellion – an attempt to assert individuality.<sup>100</sup> These women and girls are labelled as naïve because many of them who leave the West for these reasons do not fully understand ISIS’s ideology, the significance of the caliphate, or the roles they are expected to fulfill.<sup>101</sup> This also makes avenues of manipulation, especially via social media, more effective for recruitment. In many of these situations however, relatives, friends, and acquaintances are the primary source of inspiration and recruitment for young individuals.<sup>102</sup> However ideal their reasons for joining ISIS, Peresin notes that such motivation should not be construed as weak as it requires very strong motivation for women and young girls to leave behind their life, their family, and their friends and move to a conflict-ridden territory.<sup>103</sup>

### **Expectations versus Reality**

Given the success of ISIS’s social media campaigns, the conditions and roles women expect to encounter in the caliphate are likely different from the realities of the situation. Women who leave the West with visions of combat are met with the reality of their domestic duty to populate and raise the next generation of jihad fighters for the caliphate. The Western comforts promised to new recruits are met with the disillusionment of life in a war-torn area, complete with failing infrastructure. Promises of a life of honour and respect under Shariah law are confronted by cruel treatment – including enslavement, forced marriage, and rape – by husbands and locals.<sup>104</sup> In one case, Samra Kesinovic and Sabina Selimovic, two teens from Austria, had moved to Syria and became online ‘poster girls’ for ISIS only later to desperately attempt to return home after being married to and impregnated by male fighters.<sup>105</sup> Emotional realities include becoming a widow after a short time of marriage and at a young age, strict rules against contacting family members back home despite being promised those connections, and language-based communication problems with local people who discriminate against foreign women.<sup>106</sup> Those who have become

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<sup>99</sup> Peresin, “Fatal Attraction,” 25.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Peresin and Cervone, “The Western Muhajirat,” 500.

<sup>102</sup> Brigitte L. Nacos, “The Portrayal of Female Terrorists in the Media: Similar Framing Patterns in the News Coverage of Women in Politics and in Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no.5 (2005): 442.

<sup>103</sup> Peresin, “Fatal Attraction,” 25.

<sup>104</sup> Peresin and Cervone, “The Western Muhajirat,” 502.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Peresin, “Fatal Attraction,” 28-9.

disillusioned with their life under ISIS's rule have made attempts to return to their home countries, but are often met with further obstacles. Passports are usually confiscated on arrival to ISIS controlled territory and women have the additional burden of constant male companionship when in public, making leaving ISIS a perilous and exhausting endeavour.<sup>107</sup> Those who are caught attempting to escape can face extreme punishments including disfigurement or execution.

### **The Dangers of Domestic Terrorists**

For those women who do escape ISIS-controlled territory, a number of law enforcement challenges remain. Length and severity of legal punishments, likelihood of re-offense, and potential for rehabilitation and use in anti-recruitment strategies are some of the questions to be examined upon return. Peresin states that women who do return home due to disillusionment and regret with their living arrangements in the caliphate will likely not be interested in pursuing violent acts of jihad once they return home.<sup>108</sup> Yet, the possibility of women returning to the West with strong motivation to continue their jihadist mission, combined with any training they received in Iraq or Syria, necessitates serious security screening and considerations by law enforcement. This necessity needs to be balanced with fair opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration to Western society as those who are discouraged from returning home due to harsh penalties and jail time may continue to live under Islamic law and continue their missions, thereby undercutting chances at reducing ISIS's support.

Other, perhaps more serious, challenges arise from radicalized women who stay within their home country rather than move abroad. The reasons for not making hijra are vast and varied, including familial reasons and financial complications. Studies have also found that women are more likely to participate and be more active in domestic terrorist operations because they perceive "a greater potential for change."<sup>109</sup> These women have the opportunity to act as recruiters within their communities as well as opportunities to commit violent attacks domestically. The muhajirat has urged Western women to carry out attacks against their countries. Instances of this have been seen in the UK, France, and the US. Umm Layth and Zehra Duman are two women involved in ISIS's social media campaign that have instructed Western Muslims to commit

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>108</sup> Peresin, "Fatal Attraction," 31.

<sup>109</sup> Davis, "Evolution," 279.; Paige Whaley Eager, *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 171-211.

acts of violence in their home countries, using language such as “bring the battlefield to yourself,”<sup>110</sup> and “kill Kuffar (non-believers) in alleyways, stab them and poison them. Poison your teachers. Go to haram restaurants and poison the food in large quantities.”<sup>111</sup>

The biggest threat exists in the radicalized females that do not leave an active social media presence, thereby making their detection much more difficult. If ISIS calls on sympathisers in the West to commit attacks against their countries, domestic women may be instructed to carry out attacks such as the 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting, the 2014 shooting of Corporal Cirillo in Ottawa, or small scale attacks using knives or homemade explosives.<sup>112</sup> Peresin states that as of early 2015, there was no direct physical threat to the West from ISIS’ Western women, but that a shift in their roles may occur in the future.<sup>113</sup> As of Summer 2016, some scholars have begun to predict the collapse of ISIS as the group continues to be outmatched by conventional military forces and are increasingly losing territory and strongholds throughout Iraq and Syria.<sup>114</sup> This could mean a call to arms for ISIS’ Western women to defend their commitment to a global jihad despite any collapse of the physical organization.<sup>115</sup>

Given the rather ordinary demographics of Western women and girls vulnerable to radicalization, and the array of motivating factors that may influence them, a number of challenges exist for law enforcement, intelligence and security agencies, and government policy makers. The following section will examine the implications for national security via law enforcement, intelligence, government, policy, and counterterrorism strategy. Prevention, identification, evaluation, response, and reintegration strategies and initiatives will be the focus.

### **Security Implications and Challenges**

While Canada has yet to experience a domestic terrorist attack carried out by a radicalized Canadian woman in the name of Islam fundamentalism, the security threat that these women pose should not go unconsidered. Canada’s law enforcement and intelligence agencies have been equipped to respond to and

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<sup>110</sup> Homa Khaleeli, “The British women married to jihad”, *The Guardian*, September 6, 2014, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/06/british-women-married-to-jihad-isis-syria>, accessed July 17 2016.

<sup>111</sup> Saltman and Smith, “Martyrdom,” 35.

<sup>112</sup> Peresin, “Fatal Attraction,” 32.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Perry Carmack, “The Conundrum of the Coming Islamic State Collapse,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, published August 1, 2016, accessed August 2, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/64213>.

<sup>115</sup> Peresin, “Fatal Attraction,” 31.

prevent terrorist attacks since the FLQ made its appearance in 1963.<sup>116</sup> However, Western counterterrorism preparedness in general suffers from a cultural reluctance to assume popular involvement of women in terrorist organizations, especially those of the extremist Islamic variety due to their historic hostility towards women.<sup>117</sup> As such, the potential of these women to be used for counterterrorism and counterintelligence purposes has been ignored, and their potential destructiveness remains unanticipated and underestimated.<sup>118</sup> This cultural denial on behalf of Western states, including Canada, gives an advantage to terrorist groups who can use women in important roles while going relatively unnoticed. The continued use of women as recruiters for ISIS and other terrorist organizations should be especially concerning as the spread of propaganda along with the ease of access and concealment of online identities and activities is difficult to monitor and control.

As for Canada specifically, it is unlikely that the country hosts specific factors that influence the radicalization of women significantly in either direction when compared to other Western countries. Canada's geography may make it less likely for an attack to occur domestically, given the ease of movement between states in Western Europe and the fact that the highest numbers of female radicalization come from countries like France, Germany, the UK, and Belgium.<sup>119</sup> Canada's liberal, multicultural society may not necessarily be a deterrent to female radicalization, or radicalization in general, but its history of passive foreign policy decisions may be less of a motivating factor than more aggressive states such as the US or UK. One counter-instance was Prime Minister Stephen Harper's strongly one-sided policy in support of Israel and against Palestine. This could have been a motivating political factor in the radicalization of Canadian women at the time and may have provoked thoughts of domestic terrorism that failed to materialize. Canada's new Liberal leadership has employed a more even approach to the Israel-Palestine issue and has replaced Harper's ambassador to Israel, bringing hope that current and future radicalizing sentiments on the issue will be mitigated. Canada's extensive 11-

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<sup>116</sup> G. Davidson Smith, "Canada's counter-terrorism experience," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 5, no.1 (1993): 86.

<sup>117</sup> Karla J. Cunningham, "Countering Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no.2 (2007): 121.; This reluctance slowed understanding of female involvement in terrorism until the latter years of the Bush Administration. Since then, the general security perception of female terrorism has been better anticipated, but still lacks the level of attention given to male-perpetrated terrorist attacks.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>119</sup> Peresin and Cervone, "The Western Muhajirat," 499.

year involvement in Afghanistan and its currently minor but growing role in Syria and Iraq also stand to produce anger towards the Canadian state and its population by women with family in these states. Abating this anger and frustration towards Canada on behalf of these women is an especially important challenge in cases where relatives have been killed or wounded in war-time action.

Challenges for Canada exist in the ability to prevent, identify, evaluate, respond to, and reintegrate radicalized Canadian women. In the beginning stages of radicalization, women are unlikely to travel and do not participate in criminal or activist activities, making it hard for law enforcement or intelligence agencies to discover and monitor such individuals.<sup>120</sup> In addition, not all radicalization leads to violent behaviour,<sup>121</sup> which creates a dual dilemma for law enforcement and intelligence agencies. First, a blanket profile of radical behaviour cannot be applied to the situation because radicalized individuals do not necessarily express their beliefs in the same way as others. This also holds the potential for discrimination claims based on racial or cultural profiling if an individual believes they are being targeted based on external factors. Secondly, radical attitudes and speech that are non-violent and do not promote violence cannot be legally impeded and present the dilemma of not being able to stop what may be a motivating factor for a radical individual more prone to violence and extremism.

Challenges regarding social media relate to privacy and censorship concerns and the lack of legal and cyber capabilities to permanently shut down or track online terrorists. The ability of terrorists to conceal and create multiple identities, encrypt messages, and hide their locations makes tracking and identifying every terrorist and their supporters almost impossible. States that take a more forward approach to criminalizing online support for terrorism, such as the UK's Terrorism Act of March 2006 which criminalized the "encouragement of terrorism," are subject to legal boundaries pertaining to free speech, the protection of historical narratives and legitimate group identities, and beyond.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Silber and Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West*, 85.

<sup>121</sup> Alex S. Wilner and Claire-Jehanne Subouloz, "Transformative Radicalization: Applying Learning Theory to Islamist Radicalization," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no.5 (2011): 420.

<sup>122</sup> Johnny Ryan, "The Four P-Words of Militant Islamist Radicalization and Recruitment: Persecution, Precedent, Piety, and Perseverance." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no.11 (2007): 1006.; The protection of historical narratives ensures that legitimate cultural narratives and histories are not held as a basis of discriminatory criminalization. Legal problems exist in balancing the protection of these accurate historical narratives with efforts to combat the false

### Canadian Responses

Within Canada, knowledge and resources on countering domestic extremism and radicalization is shared between 18 departments and agencies under the Combating Violent Extremism Working Group (CVEWG).<sup>123</sup> The CVEWG has developed a “whole of government” approach with three fundamental endeavours: “1) detect and disrupt the work of violent extremists; 2) Build resilient communities; 3) Develop research, including outreach to academics.”<sup>124</sup> Documents made available by Public Safety Canada (PSC) describe initiatives that enhance the surveillance capabilities and community outreach aimed at primarily immigrant and Muslim communities, including: the PSC Citizen Engagement Program focused on outreach towards youth and immigrants to Canada; PSC’s Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security (CCRS) with its own Sub-Group on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism aimed at outreach towards Muslim communities; and the RCMP’s National Security Community Outreach Program with the mandate of establishing trust and “cooperation in protecting Canada’s national security” within minority communities, including Muslim ones.<sup>125</sup>

Challenges arise even in efforts to counter violent extremism and domestic radicalization. While these initiatives have proven effective and fruitful to their goals, Monaghan warns of the potential of falling into a feedback-loop as found within UK counterterrorism campaigns. With such a focus of surveillance and outreach towards Muslim and immigrant communities, feelings of discrimination, targeting, isolation, and even criminalization can occur.<sup>126</sup> Such feelings are often precursors to radicalization, as seen in previous sections, and can result in the exact outcomes the initiatives were meant to prevent.

Distinctly lacking in Canada’s counterterrorism approach is discussion of the female risk regarding radicalization and terrorism. Various government documents and partnerships address radicalization and counterterrorism from a broad approach with little mention of gender and the impacts it has on

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narratives promoted by terrorist groups that seek to use only a portion of the truth and bend the rest of the narrative to fit their own ideology.

<sup>123</sup> Jeffrey Monaghan, “Security Traps and Discourses of Radicalization: Examining Surveillance Practices Targeting Muslims in Canada,” *Surveillance & Society* 12, no.4 (2014): 486.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 491.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 493;

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* 495.

radicalization. As seen in earlier sections, the different motivating factors of radicalization affect males and females in different ways and to different degrees. Also lacking is a plan for the development and implementation of a counter-narrative to challenge the wide-spread terrorist narrative examined earlier, especially through the use of social media. Exit strategies for returning women and girls from Syria or other terrorist-controlled areas abroad is another challenge. As seen previously, this can prevent women from returning home to be reintegrated if punishments are decidedly harsh, or on the opposite side, mild punishments can encourage more women to return under the guise of disillusionment only to carry out an attack once back in domestic society. An all-encompassing counterterrorism strategy and counter-radicalization programs need to take into account these differences and challenges. The next section will attempt to address them.

### **Recommended Initiatives**

This final section will recommend a number of initiatives and programs to address challenges in combating female radicalization in Canada. These recommendations will fall into 5 categories – gender-based initiatives with a focus on women’s rights; integrating immigrants and fostering respect and trust within Muslim communities; exit strategies, de-radicalization, and re-integration of returning female terrorists; comprehensive counter-narratives including the use of social media, education, and de-radicalized individuals; and ‘smart counterterrorism’ and policing.

### **Women-Focused Initiatives**

One notable course of action being taken within a number of Islamic societies in Central Asia and Africa is the advancement of Islamic feminism, which emerged from the reinterpretation of Islamic religious sources with a focus on gender equality. Islamic feminism bases itself on gender-egalitarian and gender-progressive discourse to empower women in societies where patriarchal extremist discourse was, and is, heavily influential – such as Iran, South Africa, and Egypt.<sup>127</sup> This phenomenon emerged in the 1990s in response to the struggle of women against established social norms and subordination in political and economic spheres in these countries.<sup>128</sup> It focuses on creating more gender-equal societies and exposing the existing interpretations of the Quran as unfairly patriarchal. When confronted with extremism, Islamic feminism offers the

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<sup>127</sup> Badran, “Women and Radicalization,” 2-3.

<sup>128</sup> Heidi Basch-Harod, “Women of the Middle East: The *Jihad* Within,” *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture* 17, no. 3 & 4, 121.

legitimization of other roles and responsibilities beyond those offered by extremist groups. It is hypothesized that linking Islamic feminism with development assistance and concrete initiatives can help curb the appeal of extremist groups.<sup>129</sup> Badran warns that although the message of Islamic feminism has been accepted in numerous communities, the actual term ‘Islamic feminism’ remains controversial in many of these societies and needs to be used with sensitivity within local communities.<sup>130</sup> The phenomenon of Islamic feminism is one that should be supported in Canada.

To counter terrorist narratives and extremist ideology in Canada, especially within more traditional Muslim communities, Canada’s current and future outreach initiatives should use and encourage dialogue that promotes gender-progressive discourse. Offering roles and responsibilities in the creation of community programs or dialogues to Muslims of all ages could help foster a feeling of inclusiveness and respect while simultaneously offering alternatives to extremist options. Abroad, Canada’s security forces could use Islamic feminist rhetoric to promote values in those communities where it is assisting in the rebuilding and defence of societies vulnerable to extremism. The curbing and transformation of gender-based oppression has the potential to not only stop radicalization amongst women, but it also gives them the opportunity to play a role in preventing it through empowerment, development, and leadership at local levels.

In addition to challenging gender inequality in traditionally patriarchal societies, focus should be given to providing forums for debate on gender and law as well as inter-cultural dialogue, and legal literacy training for women and new immigrants.<sup>131</sup> Giving women the opportunity to be aware of their rights and freedoms under both Islamic law and the laws of their home country can offer empowerment and protect against feelings of alienation and oppression. Doing so would help communicate understanding of new cultures and prevent isolation within vulnerable communities.<sup>132</sup>

Engaging local Muslim women as active leaders in their communities – including through education, cultural and religious activities, and the media –

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<sup>129</sup> Badran, “Women and Radicalization,” 8.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Badran, “Women and Radicalization,” 9.

<sup>132</sup> Council of the European Union, *Revised EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism*, 9956/14 (May 19, 2014): 9.

can promote women's empowerment not only to local Muslim communities, but to other communities within Canada, thus fostering greater respect and understanding of Muslim women throughout the country. Encouraging the leadership of women within and outside of their communities also promotes their further education in the political, economic, and social sphere of a society.<sup>133</sup> It can also encourage women who have experiences with radicalization or extremism to speak out about their experiences and contribute to counter-radicalization initiatives within their communities.<sup>134</sup>

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) suggests that governments should endeavour to connect and interact with small women's organizations at the grassroots level in addition to any larger organizations, as grassroots organizations have a better chance of interacting with individuals vulnerable to radicalization.<sup>135</sup> Within this outreach, the OSCE recommends that governments identify and promote common goals in countering extremism and radicalization as 'points of engagement' with women's organizations as such concerns are often not among the top priorities.<sup>136</sup> The Canadian government should also listen to and attempt to correct concerns that these women's organizations hold, as doing so may address factors of radicalization within these communities.<sup>137</sup>

Furthermore, effort should be made to involve women, including Muslim women as well as women in general, in political and security sectors – especially those addressing armed conflict.<sup>138</sup> The UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 *On Women, Peace and Security* stated the importance of including women in full and equal roles in the area of security.<sup>139</sup> As a member of the United Nations (UN), Canada should seek to address and implement this resolution within its government and eliminate barriers among other levels of government. Rather than risk the adoption of radical and extremist attitudes,

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<sup>133</sup> Susan T. Fiske, "A Millennial Challenge: Extremism in Uncertain Times," *Journal of Social Issues* 69, no.3 (2013): 609.

<sup>134</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), *Women and Terrorist Radicalization Final Report* (Vienna, Austria: OSCE Secretariat, 2011/2012): 10. <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/99919?download=true>.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Badran, "Women and Radicalization," 9.

<sup>139</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, *On Women, Peace and Security*, S/RES/1325 (31 October 2000).

presenting alternative roles and responsibilities for women in the form of employment, dialogue, and recommendation allows them to avoid extremism and actively work against it. Women can work as policy makers and advisors, teachers, and community activists to address and counter radicalization locally and nationally. This can also include giving feedback on current counterterrorism policy and its success or failure within different communities.<sup>140</sup>

As the “EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism” states, respect for full human rights and fundamental freedoms is one of the foundations to countering terrorism and radicalization.<sup>141</sup> Canada’s counterterrorism policy reflects this and can only be strengthened by the further inclusion of women at all levels of government and community outreach. Collaboration with grassroots women’s organizations, and support for women leaders in education, security, government, religion, and cultural domains will promote the voice and concerns of women in recognizing vulnerabilities to, and factors of, radicalization.

### **Integration and Trust within Immigrant and Muslim Communities**

Helping Muslim Canadians feel at home within Canada is an essential part of counter-radicalization measures.<sup>142</sup> As seen earlier, feelings of alienation and isolation that stem from a lack of integration into society are motivating factors for radicalization. Community outreach with the goal of developing sustained and strong connections with Muslim communities can play a preventative role. Not only should the outreach be directed towards community leaders, but women from all levels within different communities should be able to voice their concerns in order to gain a more comprehensive approach of the issues facing women. Efforts should be taken to ensure that Muslim communities do not feel as though they are being targeted or discriminated against based on their religion, culture, or ethnic origin. In this vein, governments in Ottawa should avoid extreme partiality towards one culture or group of people over another, whether at home or abroad. The Harper government’s strong support for Israel over Palestine is an example of how this partiality has the potential to create unnecessary risk towards radicalization based on feelings of injustice and frustration at Canada’s foreign policy. Outreach programs should focus on

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<sup>140</sup> OSCE, *Final Report*, 2.

<sup>141</sup> Council of the European Union, *Revised*, 5.

<sup>142</sup> Esther Solis Al-Tabaa, “Targeting a Female Audience: American Muslim Women’s Perceptions of al-Qaida Propaganda,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 6, no.3 (2013): 13.

creating trust and cooperation while ensuring that all support and dialogue is a two-way street and that the communities are welcoming of the program. Culture and religion should be respected and observed in all communication, which should also avoid linking Islam to terrorism.<sup>143</sup> The second part of this is to encourage existing Muslim communities to meet with new Muslim immigrants and assist with their integration into the community.<sup>144</sup> This includes ensuring that Muslim women have access to the support of other women, education, and that they are aware of their rights and freedoms so they feel secure in their new country.

Families are an especially important resources for countering radicalization and should be utilised as such. Young women in particular usually have strong connections to their families, making them an important step in the prevention of radicalization. In cases of individual females radicalizing and joining terrorist groups, there is little evidence that their families are supportive of their choice, compared to families with multiple radicalizing members.<sup>145</sup> In these cases, family members are usually shocked when they learn that their daughter or sister joined a terrorist organization and are desperate to bring them back home.<sup>146</sup> Government units cooperating with communities can work with families who suspect that their daughter or sister is showing signs of radicalization. They can also work with families who are trying to bring back a female family member from abroad. This can include intelligence collection from Syria or Iraq, organization of return flights, and de-radicalization and reintegration once back in Canada.<sup>147</sup>

### **Exit Strategies and Reintegration**

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<sup>143</sup> Jorg Monar, "Common Threat and Common Response? The European Union's Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its Problems," *Government and Opposition* 42, no.3 (2007): 297.; By linking Islam to terrorism, governments promote a number of politically repressive responses to terrorist attacks, including the surveillance and deportation of Muslim immigrants and refugees based on fear of further attacks. Avoiding this link not only avoids undue discrimination and frustration on behalf of Muslim populations, but also avoids the furtherance of Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' ideology between Europeans and Middle Eastern and African 'civilizations' which has the potential to promote radicalization within the process of preparation for such a 'clash.'

<sup>144</sup> Marie Wright, "TECHNOLOGY & TERRORISM: How the Internet Facilitates Radicalization," *Forensic Examiner* 17, no.4 (2008): 19.

<sup>145</sup> Peresin, "Fatal Attraction," 22.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Peresin and Cervone, "The Western Muhajirat," 505.

De-radicalization is just as important as preventing radicalization when it comes to violent extremism. For Western women living in ISIS-controlled territory who regret their decision to move abroad, exit strategies need to be in place. To encourage their return, it is necessary to ensure that potential punishments for having joined the terrorist group are not excessively harsh. One suggestion is to show that severe punishment will not be a cause for concern for those who participate only in domestic roles as a jihadi wife and when no crimes are committed.<sup>148</sup> Rather, strict punishments should be saved for those who carried out violent acts and crimes. Additionally, voluntary disengagement from terrorism and life in the caliphate could be grounds for penalty reductions.<sup>149</sup> The criminalization of all instances of radicalization and migration to Syria would prevent those who truly do regret their decision from returning home, and could cost Canada critical intelligence and counterterror opportunities. To ensure that Canada develops the best disengagement and exit strategies for its needs and the needs of Canadian female former terrorists, consultations should be carried out with governments of other states who have experience in the area, with academics specializing in radicalization, with practitioners from a variety of relevant fields, vulnerable women, former terrorists, non-governmental organizations, and with victims of terrorism around the world.<sup>150</sup>

Upon their successful return to Canada, attempts should be made to reintegrate these women into society. A number of academics suggest surveillance of the returning individuals including monitoring of social media accounts, re-education to embrace a more moderate Islam, and involvement in anti-radicalization campaigns as a witness that can attest to their negative experiences within ISIS. Families are also instrumental in providing stability and monitoring for signs of re-radicalization. Cooperation between law enforcement and families should thus be immediately established and continuously maintained in cases of returning female terrorists in order to keep the exchange of information regarding these individual women open. Further, education programs centered on reprogramming former terrorists with a moderate interpretation of Islam and correcting misperceptions about the religion have proven successful in past cases. In Egypt, experts from Al-Azhar University have de-radicalized members of the terrorist group Al-Jihad Al-Islami through ‘ideological revision’ – the process of being re-educated about Islam so that

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 506.

<sup>150</sup> Council of the European Union, *Revised*, 12.

extremist misperceptions are corrected through dialogue and a promotion of moderation.<sup>151</sup> If reintegration does not occur, returning women will likely become outcasts of society as they suffer from a marked criminal record, a loss of education and employability, health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and instability with personal relationships including family.<sup>152</sup> To prevent re-recruitment, leadership opportunities for women in community-based counterterrorism and anti-radicalization programs is suggested to give deradicalized women a role and social identity once they have returned in order to undermine exclusion and isolation.<sup>153</sup>

### **Counter-Narratives**

Comprehensive counter-narratives need to be established and utilised across social media and in education forums to challenge the pervasive terrorist narrative that shows Islam and Muslims as being under attack from the West. Research into the impact of the terrorist narrative on different audiences can be conducted to discover different elements that can be controlled and countered. Out of the many elements of counterterrorism strategies, counter-narratives should be near the top of the list as they are simpler to address than other motivating factors or counterterrorism strategies explored in this paper, which are often long-term strategies.<sup>154</sup> Winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of the population can counteract a number of the motivating factors for recruitment such as political frustration and isolation. The “EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism” suggests working with community leaders including public figures, teachers, families, academics, religious leaders, and media and entertainment personalities who can influence public opinion and advance a positive counter-narrative.<sup>155</sup>

These counter-narratives should encourage the development and spread of a reformist Islam. This would include the promotion of Islam’s ‘itjihad’ – independent thinking – as a way of questioning the traditional and repressive view of Islam promoted by terrorist groups. Also necessary is the advancement of Islamic feminist discourse that welcomes women as leaders that are capable

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<sup>151</sup> Rohan Gunaratna and Mohamed Bin Ali, “De-Radicalization Initiatives in Egypt: A Preliminary Insight,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no.4 (2009): 278-9. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576100902750562>.

<sup>152</sup> Alpaslan Ozerdem and Sukanya Podder, “Disarming Youth Combatants: Mitigating Youth Radicalization and Violent Extremism,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no.4 (2011): 70.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-4.

<sup>154</sup> King and Taylor, “Radicalization,” 617.

<sup>155</sup> Council of the European Union, *Revised*, 8.

of creating change and opportunities for both themselves and other women within Islam and outside of it. Counter-narratives that embrace the long-term development of reformist Islam have the potential to grab the attention of Muslim Canadians who are devoted to their faith but may disagree with the repressive ideologies of ISIS associated with traditional Islam. This can not only dissuade future radicalization, but can be used to establish Muslim Canadian leaders in the fight against terrorism and its leaders who would use radical Islam to call supporters to the battlefield.<sup>156</sup>

Utilizing social media in this endeavour should be a priority for Canada. In current efforts to close accounts held by terrorists and recruiters, monitor subscribers and support, and gather information from chat rooms – those responsible for monitoring the social media accounts of women could hold a specialization in women’s psychology in order to establish an understanding of their mentality and create connections with them.<sup>157</sup> The federal government of Canada can also create websites, blogs, video channels, forums, social media accounts, and video games aimed at promoting a positive counter-narrative in order to reach a broad set of demographics.<sup>158</sup> Wright also suggests assisting allies in creating multimedia counter-narrative campaigns as terrorist propaganda is spread globally over the internet and should be a concern for all governments.<sup>159</sup>

Former women terrorists present an additional opportunity in the creation and implementation of effective counter-narratives. Those women who became disillusioned with living in ISIS territory and escaped back to Canada can talk about their experiences abroad, why they decided to join, and why they made the decision to come back. This is useful for researchers to further understand the causal mechanisms behind the decisions of females to radicalize and the appeal of narratives, and create counter strategies targeted at them. It is also useful as an education experience for those women in the process of radicalizing who may

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<sup>156</sup> A prominent Muslim Canadian working towards this goal is Irshad Manji, a Vancouver-based Muslim academic who has written two books on reforming Islam and how to reconcile faith and freedom against repressive ideologies. Her work *The Trouble with Islam Today: A Muslim’s Call for Reform in Her Faith* and *Allah, Liberty & Love* updates Islam to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and promotes a tolerant, diverse religion that welcomes freedom of thoughts and expression. For further discussion on reformist and feminist Islam and how it should be approached, see her above works.

<sup>157</sup> Peresin and Cervone, “The Western Muhajirat,” 506.

<sup>158</sup> Wright, “TECHNOLOGY,” 19.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

hear these testimonies and become disenchanted with the realities of joining a terrorist group. Counter-narratives should be created differently based on their targets. Those targeted at women should be created with specific language and imagery that appeals to women and girls in Canada.<sup>160</sup>

Lastly, establishing counter-narratives in the education process is critical to undermining the first stages of radicalization among youth. One suggestion is to educate students in middle school and above about how terrorist groups recruit and what signs to look out for, showing why the intentional targeting of civilians is never acceptable, and equipping students with problem solving skills that do not use violence.<sup>161</sup> Other suggestions state that teaching children about human rights, acceptance of alternatives and how many parts of society are socially constructed, diversity and inclusion, and critical thinking can allow children and teenagers to examine and resolve disputes and problems without resorting to violence and with respect for all people in a community.<sup>162</sup> Student activism including human rights advocacy, political public debates with government leaders, and plays and presentations about social justice to younger children can also support a counter-narrative amongst youth.<sup>163</sup>

#### **‘Smart Counterterrorism’ and Policing**

As talk of the potential collapse of ISIS continues, law enforcement and security agencies need to be aware of the threat posed by female terrorists more than ever. Historically, terrorist groups that experience pressures such as collapse are more likely to use women for suicide attacks out of desperation for media attention, recruitment, and support.<sup>164</sup> ‘Smart counterterrorism’ is one way to approach the added security threat this poses. It is a multi-agency approach to counterterrorism that includes government, federal departments and agencies, NGOs, the travel industry, the higher education community, and businesses.<sup>165</sup> It calls on preventive, defensive, and offensive measures aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the population.<sup>166</sup> This approach would not only allow information to be shared across multiple departments, but it would also extend

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<sup>160</sup> OSCE, *Final Report*, 10.

<sup>161</sup> Speckhard, “Talking to Terrorists,” 2.

<sup>162</sup> Lynn Davies, “Gender, education, extremism and security,” *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 38, no.5 (2008): 620-623.

<sup>163</sup> Darren E. Lund, “Social Justice Activism in the Heartland of Hate: Countering Extremism in Alberta,” *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 52, no.2 (2006): 186-7, 192.

<sup>164</sup> Davis, “Evolution,” 285.

<sup>165</sup> Wright, “TECHNOLOGY,” 19.

<sup>166</sup> Iztok Prezelj, “Smart Counter-terrorism: Incorporating the N-order Effects and Adopting a Human Security Perspective,” *Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* 22, no.1 (2013): 52.

the amount and scope of available information. This could allow different law enforcement, security, and intelligence agencies to cut down on repetitive procedures and tasks and increase the range of duties it can carry out in the name of counterterrorism. It is also important for Canada to ensure that law enforcement agencies conduct gender training and include women in the different levels and sectors of policing. This allows law enforcement to avoid human rights violations when dealing with women in the public, which has the potential to trigger radicalization in vulnerable individuals who are already near the tipping point.<sup>167</sup> Further, Canada should be cautious in its approach to targeted killings in the name of counterterrorism. Collateral damage has the strong potential to contribute to the terrorist narrative of the West attacking Muslims and can anger national citizens over the choice of foreign policy.<sup>168</sup>

Drawing on lessons from the New York Police Department, Canada could encourage its law enforcement personnel to pursue language training in a number of foreign languages to greater extend its ability to interact with Canada's multicultural population.<sup>169</sup> A comprehensive and international database on female terrorism should also be established. An international database could contain intelligence from a number of different sources and countries on female participation in various terrorist organization including surveillance, methods of recruitment, factors of radicalization, interviews, statistics, and trends.<sup>170</sup> This would help prevent cross-border flows of radicalized female terrorists and add to the pool of intelligence and knowledge on female terrorism for all countries involved. In regards to human intelligence (HUMINT), female assets should be employed in efforts to gain access and information on terrorist organizations due to their potential range of access to female terrorists.<sup>171</sup>

While many of these suggestions and recommendations will not stop terrorist organizations from recruiting women the goal is to prevent further radicalization through: decreasing the vulnerability of women to motivating factors and eliminating all possible factors; equipping law enforcement, security, and intelligence agencies with as much relevant knowledge and tools as possible

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<sup>167</sup> OSCE, *Final Report*, 7.

<sup>168</sup> Prezelj, "Smart," 52.

<sup>169</sup> Brian Nussbaum, "Protecting Global Cities: New York, London and the Internationalization of Municipal Policing for Counter Terrorism," *Global Crime* 8, no.3 (2007): 221.

<sup>170</sup> Cunningham, "Countering Female Terrorism," 124.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

to increase effectiveness in preventing, identifying, evaluating, and responding to female radicalization and terrorism; and decreasing the ability of terrorists to utilise surprise and tactical advantage against Western countries and their law enforcement agencies.

### **Conclusion**

Female radicalization remains a challenge for Canada. Despite any speculation about the status of ISIS, the motivating factors behind the radicalization of women and girls from Western, democratic states will continue to exist in society. This paper has presented 6 of the strongest motivating factors behind female radicalization – the search for an identity, a lack of integration into one’s community, political frustration, religious beliefs, personal motivations, and naivety and romanticism. These factors affect both genders without reservation, but women have the additional burden of gender-based stereotypes and oppression that try to conform and subordinate them – especially in more traditional, patriarchal societies. As radicalized women and girls migrate to Iraq and Syria to join ISIS, the security of their Western home countries is put at risk. As suicide bombers, jihadi wives, or domestic terrorists, radicalized women hold the potential to give away intelligence about their home country and carry out attacks against it. These concerns do not exclude Canada, and in response, the Canadian security scene has made a number of attempts to prevent, identify, and reintegrate radicalized female terrorists in Canada. To increase the effectiveness of Canadian methods of prevention, identification, evaluation, response, and reintegration, this paper suggests the implementation of a number of initiatives and strategies focusing on gender and women’s rights; the integration of immigrants and the trust of Muslim communities; exit strategies and reintegration; counter-narratives; and smart counterterrorism. The hope is that through coordinating research, intelligence, and strategies, Canada’s law enforcement and security agencies can broaden their scope and capabilities to better understand and respond to the threats from female radicalization.

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