

Radicalization as a Vector: Exploring Non-Violent and Benevolent Processes of Radicalization.

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Abstract

Successful radicalization posits three outcomes: extremism, terrorism or both. As these are undesirable, radicalization is understood as wholly malevolent and governments work to prevent and/or stop it. Nonetheless, a handful of scholars have recognized that the same radicalization process which results in either outcome may, theoretically at least, also have beneficial outcomes such as environmental awareness or human rights. This article explores one such outcome. Based on interviews with British Muslim aid workers ($n=6$) operating in Jihadist conflict zones post Arab spring and using constructivist grounded theory, it illustrates how the research participants radicalized to humanitarianism which resulted in them assisting the most plighted of Muslims by deploying to the most wanton of areas: ones commonly referred to as Jihadist conflict zones. Evidently, these destinations are shared with Jihadists and given the array of other observable similarities (socio-demographics and [pre-]mobilization behaviours), these morally opposed groups become conflated by the security services. This is further compounded by the fact that Jihadists manipulate and/or impersonate aid workers so as to funnel people and funds. To distinguish both, this article documents the benevolent pathway of the research participants and juxtaposes it to scholarly knowledge on Jihadist pathways. Socialization was revealed to be the key distinguishing feature rather than descriptive risk factors (such as ideology or moral outrage) because the process of radicalization was not found to be the start of the radicalized pathway. It concludes that benevolently radicalized Islamic groups constitute an effective means of pathway divergence for particular typologies by offering an attractive and prosocial alternative to Jihadism. This strengths-based preventative approach (“what’s right”) takes the form of a community-centric market competitor to Jihadism rather than a problem-based approach (“what’s wrong”) which only targets those at risk, but inadvertently tars the whole community in the process.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Radicalization Hypothesis

Radicalization hypothesizes four outcomes: “terrorism”, “extremism”, “both” or “neither”.

Whether the process takes a religious, ethnic or nationalist form and results in antisocial

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attitudes or political violence, successful radicalization is always considered malevolent. Were any non-terrorism and/or non-extremism outcome(s) to result from the process, said outcomes(s) would be subsumed into the “neither” category because, per the hypothesized outcomes, it would definitionally constitute “neither” terrorism nor extremism. The problem is, this “neither” category is implied to mean “no result” because the only actionable outcomes radicalization concedes to are “terrorism” and/or “extremism”. Subsequently, the existence of any outcomes outside of the terrorism and/or extremism are imperceptible to those researching radicalization and, should they be found to exist, this would imply a fragmentary understanding of the concept.

While attempting to discern violent from non-violent extremism under conditions of identical socio-demographics and geographic mobilization (see section 3), the doctoral dissertation this article is based on stumbled upon just such a “neither” outcome which was not merely “no result”, but a wholly benevolent one in the form of humanitarianism. In other words, research participants radicalized to high-risk aid work in Jihadist conflict zones (see sections 2.2 and 2.7). However, benevolent outcomes are fundamentally at odds with contemporary understandings of radicalization, so substantial changes were made to the fledgling research agenda and the concept of radicalization was expanded upon so as to incorporate benevolence as a potential outcome (see section 2.7). This resulted in the article’s research question: how does one mobilize to Jihadist conflict zones in a benevolent rather than a malevolent manner?

1.2 Synopsis of findings

The research participant’s pathways into humanitarianism in Jihadist conflict zones (Figure 4) revealed two disagreeable findings with the radicalization literature. First was the centrality of contingency during the nascent stage of their trajectory, particularly within their broader social networks during times of personal and political upheaval, as opposed to descriptive risk factors such as group dynamics, ideology, moral outrage or grievances (ex. relative deprivation, social alienation or assaults against the *Ummah* [through foreign policy

affronts]). Therefore, this article distinguishes the radicalization process from the radicalization pathway - the former being a later component of the latter.

Second was the significance of mere involvement; participating in the generative activities which define this humanitarian community of practice allowed for constructive socialization by prototypical group members. This impacted upon the research participant's perception and paved the way for an aligned positive (social) identity based on a positive cause which inoculated the research participants from engaging in and justifying violence. Therefore, the article recommends that governments buttress alternative cause(s) which people can benevolently radicalize for and build an (partial) identity around (primary prevention) rather than countering extremism through at-risk individuals (secondary prevention).

Research participants were neither initially nor primarily motivated to act by the oft ascribed risk factors. If anything, they drifted into aid (see also: della Porta, 2006). However, risk factors did play a prominent role post involvement; close-knit groups and personal loyalties were formed. Discussions were had and topics revolved round injustices, geopolitics, British foreign policy and what Muslims are to do about it all. Emotions ran high, but they were positively channelled.² Indeed, when asked in interview why they engage in high risk humanitarianism for plighted Muslims, answers paralleled that of the radicalization literature: moral outrage, feeling obliged to "do" something about injustices, being a good Muslim by doing the right thing etc. Yet upon detailing their pathway into this community of practice, a "how" rather than "why" approach (Horgan, 2014, pp.87-90), the tertiary role of these factors in the initial stages of the pathway was revealed. This raises two points:

1. Had their happenstance encounters been malign, the socialization process which followed involvement would have fuelled rather than tempered these same arguments, thereby negatively channelling them for potentially hostile purposes. Indeed, the same situational

² Anger can be channelled to violence (Holt *et al.*, 2015, p.109; Ranstorp, 2010, p.6; Sageman, 2008 and 2017c) - an intuitive sequence. But it can also be a "source of social progress" (Byrne, 2016, p.118) when positively channelled (Bartlett, *et al.*, 2010, p.25; Githens-Mazer, 2010a; Peucker and Akbarzadeh, 2014, p.136).

argument can also be applied vice versa i.e. under different circumstances those engaged in malevolent behaviours may have engaged in different, even positive, ones (Byrne, 2016, p.118; Dutton, 2013, pp.9-10; McCauley and Moskaleiko, 2011, p.68; Reich, 2009, p.40; Schmid, 2013a, p.28; Zimbardo, 2007, p.301). As one research participant noted, “Their (Jihadists) lives went this way and my life went that way and it’s a thin line between the two” (WQB121).

2. A further consequence of critically appraising risk factors lays in establishing when the radicalization pathway (rather than the radicalization process) actually commences: is moral outrage (or any other [combination of] risk factors) truly the initial impetus or were more arbitrary factors at play before the outrage resonated?³ Even if explicitly stated in interview, such risk factor ascriptions may in fact be post-involvement rationalizations as similarly remarked upon by others (Byrne, 2016, p.107; Coolsaet, 2016, p.21; Roy, 2017b).

Although the counterfactual prohibits both points from being definitively answered, scholarly investigation can still address them. This article proposes to do so by selecting a demographic who are similar to British Jihadists (see section 3.3), but who followed a different pathway, yet one which nonetheless retains relevance for contemporary terrorism research for two reasons: (1) both humanitarians and Jihadists function in identical theatres of conflict under the aegis of Islam while simultaneously stemming from the same British counter-cultural recruitment pool and (2) Jihadists and aid workers are frequently conflated because Jihadists have used charities as a cover to enter Jihadist conflict zones (Shanahan, 2018). Indeed, there is a well-documented overlap between Islamic charities and Jihadist groups (Anonymous, 2003, pp. 39-40; Casciani, 2014; Fergusson, 2017, pp.46-51; Kaplan, 2001; Korteweg *et al.*, 2010, pp. 35-36; Nesser, 2015, p.261; Psoiu, 2014, pp.772-773; Wiktorowicz, 2002, p.197), particularly in the UK (Maher, 2013; Rudd, 2017).

³ Despite the size of risk factor based radicalization models/frameworks/metaphors, examples of indefinite factors influencing a budding pathway have been discussed in the literature. These include “chance encounters” (Malthaner, 2017, p.645; Pantucci, 2015, p.15; Sageman, 2004, p.121; Schuurman, 2017; Vidino, Marone and Entenmann, 2017, p.96), “coincidence” (Nesser, 2015, p.295), “contingency” (Jaskoski, Wilson and Lazareno, 2017, p.2; Marsden, 2017c, p.103) and “cognitive opening” (Wiktorowicz, 2005, p.20) - the latter is also understood as “openness to engagement” (Horgan, 2014, p.101) and “unfreezing” (McCauley and Moskaleiko, 2011, p.80).

1.3 Implications

The article makes one overarching argument: benevolently radicalized Muslims may present a potential means of ensuring that people are prevented from commencing the malevolent pathway by offering an attractive and prosocial alternative to terrorism.⁴ Therefore, structuring the environment so as to buttress the benevolently radicalized is posited as an effective preventative approach as involvement builds resistance to violent extremism (resilience) through the benevolent radicalization process (constructive socialization) while simultaneously stacking the odds in favour of more people having benevolent fortuitous encounters.⁵ In this sense, the benevolently radicalized become market competitors of malevolently radicalized groups, particularly given the socio-demographic similarities between both groups (see section 3.3).

To make this argument, radicalization is conceptualized as a vector (it can result in malevolent or benevolent outcomes) and the process is definitionally hinged on mobilization rather than extremism and/or terrorism by means of Githens-Mazer's (2010, p.5) definition of radicalization: "a collectively defined, individually felt moral obligation to participate in direct action" (see section 2.7 for further explanation). As the concept of radicalization is blighted by inconsistencies, the literature review section commences with a vignette which is constructed to clarify what is (not) meant by radicalization. In so doing, it also briefly covers the concepts shortcomings.

1.4 Organization of Article

The literature review argues that conceiving of radicalization as a vector allows research to remain process-centric without being shackled by conditional outcome restrictions

⁴ The credibility of humanitarianism being a moral equivalent and effective alternative is established by the fact that research participants are consistently interviewed by security service personnel at British airports prior to departure (Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act) while simultaneously being approached by Prevent staff in order to join forces. As one research participant remarked, "Like, what the hell? I wish they'd make up their bloody minds about us" (SHB 987 during a coincidental meeting with the author at Frankfurt airport [2018]).

⁵ A further argument in support of this approach is put forward by Bhui *et al.* (2012, p.7) who state that "it is important to find ways of preventing political moderates or the politically uncommitted in a community from developing sympathies for violent extremist ideologies based on perceived attacks on their religion or identity group". See also footnote 8.

i.e. researching the process of radicalization, but only when it results in extremism and/or terrorism. It argues that particular typologies can be prevented from embarking on malevolent pathways by encouraging involvement with benevolently radicalized groups. In other words, the preventive approach proffered here does not prohibit radicalization nor does it directly tackle extremism. Rather the opposite: it encourages people to radicalize, but only in a benevolent manner as benevolently radicalized groups compete with destructive movements by providing a constructive (and inoculating) alternative. This is followed by the methodology section which outlines what constructivist grounded theory is and why it was used as well as providing further details on the research participants and the research design. The results section provides a composite way-point map depicting decisions made based on events experienced and illustrates the role of contingency and mere involvement in determining the outcome vector. This model is then contrasted to various other radicalization models in order to establish empirical validity and is followed by the discussion section which outlines shortcomings and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 What is (Not) Radicalization?

A few years before 9/11, a group was started by six young men. Five of them were under 23 years old when this group was conceived and four of them were immigrants to the West. Four of them constructed functioning bombs while in high school and all were considered (slightly) eccentric by their peers. They found each other through social networks, bonded and retracted from society by sequestering themselves from non-essential social contact. With no mediating outside influence beyond computer screens, their cognitive horizons narrowed and the group polarized. Self-categorization followed with outsiders referring to them as *the mafia*. But it was their countercultural panache, subversive social identity and passionate sense of purpose which attracted others; they fervently believed “that small groups of people bound together by a sense of mission could change the world” (xxxxx, 2014, p.10). The group eventually grew

to 19 people. As their milieu rapidly radicalized, they operationalized their mission and developed an extreme commitment to their cause - a cause they worked obsessively on and one they knew would cause significant change. Post 9/11, having succeeded in their mission, these 19 individuals hit global headlines. One of its members recalled his insider experience:

“...members hang out only with other members. They ignore their families and abandon the outside world. In exchange, they experience strong feelings of belonging, and maybe get access to esoteric ‘truths’ denied to ordinary people” (xxxxxx, 2014, p.124).

The various factors at play here sound all too familiar to radicalization researchers. One may even assume that this was the metamorphosis of a budding terrorist group replete with cultic characteristics. But these were not vulnerable, angry, negatively socialized nor misinformed individuals and their organization was not an underground one. They were not mobilizing against a government, a (foreign) policy, a (perceived) injustice, a historical wrong nor the society which hosted them and they were not acting in defence of themselves or others. Indeed, their guiding principles were neither grievance based nor religiously orientated. That their group size was the same as the number of 9/11 hijackers is as coincidental as the timing. Instead, the news channels they featured on were financial and the reason for their primetime debut was their acquisition by eBay. Both quotes are from angel investor Peter Thiel (2014). This was the formation of PayPal.

2.2 Did PayPal Radicalize?

While PayPal was neither violent nor political, the mechanisms and dynamics apparent within the “mafia” were, despite the ideological disparity, congruent to those inherent with politically violent organizations, as similarly remarked upon by others (Schwerin in McCauley and Moskalenko, 2011, p.216; Kruglanski, Jasko, Cherniko, Dugas and Weber, 2017, p.222; Wiktorowicz, 2005, p.210). Focussing solely on their socialization, it could be argued that PayPal radicalized but this is circumvented by ascribing to the view

that radicalization is only radicalization when it results in extremism and/or terrorism. The trouble in doing so is that the scholarly consensus lays with the (socialization) process of radicalization, not its postulated outcomes (Al-Lami, 2009, p.2; Maskaliūnaitė, 2015, p.12; Ramakrishna, 2016a, p.151). In other words, radicalization should not be defined by predetermined outcomes - what McCauley and Moskaleiko (2017, p.217) have termed as “hypothetical intent”.

The problem is, without establishing some sort of outcome benchmark, any socialization process defined through particular characteristics could potentially be labelled as radicalization and this serves no identifiable purpose for understanding pathways toward (and away from) Jihadism. Therefore, this article adds a caveat to Githens-Mazer’s definition by clarifying that “direct action” is specified as mobilizing “in extremis” (James, 1906, p.3). Unlike the PayPal mafia, the research participants would be considered radicalized because, post involvement and socialization, they voluntarily functioned in (very) high risk areas of operation and repeatedly exposed themselves to life threatening situations.

2.3 The Cognitive-to-Behavioural Paradigm

A further consequence of defining radicalization through specific behavioural outcomes rather than cognitions is that extremism (sans mobilization) would also disqualify as radicalization. This parallels those who advocate for differentiating radicalization of opinion from radicalization of action (Borum, 2011; McCauley and Moskaleiko, 2017; Neumann, 2013) and is supported by research illustrating that people do not necessarily become terrorists based on well-developed convictions alone (McCauley and Moskaleiko, 2011; Sageman, 2008).⁶ Instead, the scholarly consensus is that the process is complex and individualized. Subsequently, the sequential movement from extremism to terrorism has been brought into question (Kundnani, 2015a, p.288; Sageman, 2016, p.106; Sedgewick, 2010, p.490), partly because attempts designed to “change behaviour by changing attitudes often fail” (Myers, 2010, p.125).

⁶ Interestingly, the same is true of the pro-life movement (Munson, 2008).

2.4 What Does This Mean for Countering Jihadist Terrorism?

There are two schools of thought in preventing terrorism; problem-based approaches and strengths-based approaches (ex. the Good Lives Model or Positive Deviance). The former is the most popular and it identifies causal variables and addresses them in various ways. For example, where ideology is identified as a root cause (as is often the case), counter-extremism follows. Yet as section 2.3 clarified, countering Islamist ideology in the hope of preventing terrorism is not a sound preventative strategy (Horgan, 2014, p.84; Kundnani, 2015b, p.8). Rather than attempting to rid society of noxious ideologies, what is proposed as more achievable and realistic is the introduction of better ideas⁷ which can effectively compete with malevolent ones (see: Staub, 2013, pp.343-352). This would function by providing a sense of (social) identity which transcends the parochialism of extremism while ensuring that adherents stay within the societal fold.

This would entail getting people involved with groups who are prosocial (morally opposed to violence) and constructively engaged in theatres where Jihadists are destructively engaged; attractive alternatives in the form of humanitarianism. This is slightly at odds with the UK's Prevent and Channel programs which only begin functioning once an individual has been identified as potentially vulnerable to violent extremism.⁸ Nonetheless, engaging with benevolent groups fulfils many of the same motivating factors for engaging in terrorism, whether that be the various risk factors⁹ (bar the desire to engage in violence) or more nebulous variables such as a cognitive opening followed by a chance encounter,¹⁰ but realized in a positive manner.¹¹

⁷ As Fernandez (in Cottee, 2015), the former coordinator for the Centre for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, states: "We don't have a counter-narrative. We have a half message: 'Don't do this', but we lack the 'Do this instead'". Benevolent Radicalization is presented here as a viable "Do this instead" option.

⁸ The reason for casting such a wide net and getting people involved beyond those merely described as "at risk" or "vulnerable to (violent) extremism" is best described by the public health approach presented by Bhui *et al.* (2012, pp.3-4): "population level reductions in characteristics (or behaviours) that carry a small individual risk for a particular illness lead to greater reductions in the overall prevalence of that illness, when compared with interventions on very few people who are identified as carrying a very high risk".

⁹ Whether that be adventure, sense of belonging or purpose, alleviating suffering, doing the right thing, being a good Muslim etc.

¹⁰ Other explanations include the frustration of basic human needs such as the need to feel secure, to have control, to have a positive identity, to be connected to others while retaining autonomy, to understand the world

Furthermore, government support for benevolent groups would downplay any jujitsu politics because adherents would be empowered by having the opportunity to act on their faith aligned affect. It is for this reason that Kundnani (2015a, p.15) states that “radicalization in the true sense of the word is the solution, not the problem.” Indeed, that radicalization can have benevolent outcomes and that terrorism can be militated through attractive alternatives are not new concepts. What is novel is their combination.

2.5 Theorizing Benevolent Radicalization

Numerous publications have articulated that the same radicalization process which creates malevolent outcomes can also lead to benevolent ones (Canadian Government, 2009, p.1; Dearey, 2010, p.29; Githens-Mazer, 2009, p.19; Kundnani, 2015a, p.15; Thompson, 2011, p.195 in Ramakrishna, 2016a, p.152; Venhaus, 2011). For example, Lakhani (2014, p.2) notes that radicalization is perceived as negative but “it can in essence be thought of as either pro-social ... or anti-social”. Providing evidence of this, McCauley and Moskalenko (2011, p.215) note that their radicalization mechanisms may be of use in understanding pathways to prosocial groups such as the NGO *Doctors Without Borders* because “the process is amoral in the sense that radicalization can occur for causes both good and bad” (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2011, p.4).

Similar analyses have been proffered by others:

1. Wiktorowicz (2005, in Kundnani 2015b, p.21) states that “the social psychological process by which individuals become active in radical Islamist groups is not all that different from moderate, non-violent Muslim groups or from non-Islamic social movements, even if the content of the ideology differs.”

and our role in it (Staub, 1989). Similarly, albeit more specified, are the 11 primary goods as identified by Purvis (2010): life, knowledge, play, work, agency, inner peace, relatedness, community, spirituality, pleasure and creativity.

¹¹ This does not mean to suggest that the UK should encourage British Muslims to mobilize in extremis by deploying to Iraq or Syria. Rather, the socialization process of getting them involved in effectively helping Muslims in blighted areas would ensure that they become inoculated to pro-violence arguments due to “path dependence”, particularly when engaged early in their trajectory (Pierson in Jaskoski *et al.*, 2017, p.14).

2. Sunstein (2009, p.149), in his exploration of the social psychological mechanisms which lead to groups going to extremes, notes that “The American Revolution, the civil rights movement, and the fall of both communism and apartheid had everything to do with mechanisms of the sort sketched here”. This is why he further notes that when “people shift from indifference to intense concern with local problems, such as poverty and crime”, then “extreme movements are good, even great”.¹²

3. In such instances, Sarma (2017, p.279) notes that non-violent radicalization “is often the fulcrum of societal growth” and for this reason Jackson (2011) states that “in some cases...it might actually be socially desirable to radicalize people, and more of them.”

2.6 Attractive Alternatives to Terrorism

Effective alternatives (in varying forms) have been postulated to militate violent extremism by numerous scholars (Atran 2010, p.224 and pp.290-291; El-Badawy, Comerford and Welby, 2015, p.7; Frey and Luechinger, 2002; Kundnani, 2015a, p.15 and p.199; Malet, 2009, pp.113-114; Marsden, 2017a; Neumann, 2016, p.182; O’Gorman, 2011, p.71; Sageman, 2008, p. 117; Schimd, 2013a, p.49; Sitter, 2013, p.11; Venhaus, 2010, pp.11-15). However, none of these are predicated on the hypothesis of providing a positive cause to radicalize for because that would be conceptually impossible given the malevolent-only confines of contemporary conceptualizations of radicalization (see footnote 7). Nonetheless, as the following section details, conceiving of radicalization as a vector allows for the theoretical possibility of utilizing benevolent radicalization as a means of offsetting malevolent radicalization particularly because, as noted by Sitter (2013, p.10), “civil society groups [such as aid groups] are often in direct competition with extremist elements for the hearts and minds of marginalized and disadvantaged elements of society”.

¹² It must be noted that “extreme” and “radical” are often used interchangeably in the literature.

2.7 Radicalization as a Vector

What distinguishes speed (a scalar quantity) from velocity (a vector) is directionality; 3 km/h as opposed to 3 km/h on a north easterly bearing. Therefore, while both speed and velocity provide a magnitude quantity (speed), a vector also indicates a heading. For the purposes of radicalization, this would be a malevolent or benevolent bearing. This distinction is important because the scalar-centric assumption is that successful radicalization is solely a question of magnitude; above a hazily defined “speed” and one is classified as a terrorist and/or extremist.

However, in order for radicalization to be conceptualized as a vector, the central defining construct requires sufficient vagueness so as to be both consistent as well as accommodating to other potential outcomes. Mobilization achieves this by eschewing specific actions taken when mobilized in global Jihadist conflict zones i.e. mobilizing to a specific theatre does not specify which actions were engaged in. Therefore, in order to incorporate mobilization as the central defining construct of radicalization, this paper utilized Githens-Mazer’s (2010, p.5) definition as it artfully avoids specificity of action in theatre while also being mobilization-centric through its outcome of “direct action” which, in this article, is clarified as mobilizing “in extremis” (James, 1906, p.3) i.e. voluntarily mobilizing to a high-risk theatre.

A further requirement for conceptualizing radicalization as a vector are the bearings themselves. These require consistent specificity in order to elucidate the subtleties of the defining construct (mobilization) i.e. whether one engages in positive or negative behaviours when mobilized in theatre. Benevolence achieves this as it stipulates the specific and consistent actions taken when mobilized. In this case, humanitarianism without engaging in any malevolent behaviours.¹³

¹³ Malevolence as a bearing is less clear-cut as it may not be consistent: one may engage in violence while also engaging in positive behaviours (albeit solely for ones in-group). Furthermore, in terms of radicalization to “homegrown” terrorism, mobilizing in extremis (“direct action”) would also not elucidate any relevant information as the potential assailant would not be crossing international boundaries to a conflict zone. Therefore, with the malevolent bearing either known or suspected, defining mobilization in extremis in this

It is this contrast between definitional construct (mobilization to global Jihadist conflict zones) and bearing (benevolently mobilized in global Jihadist conflict zones) which brings clarity and a practical nuance to understandings of radicalization unobtainable with most definitions of radicalization because their defining constructs (terrorism and/or extremism) are overly specified. Defining radicalization in such a reflexive manner challenges normative assessments of radicalization (radicalization is always a net-negative) and this duality is at the heart of terrorism studies given the context and perceiver dependent “terrorist or freedom fighter” cliché.

Despite numerous researchers having theorized on the potential upside of radicalization (see section 2.5), the radicalization hypothesis does not account for these; it only accounts for negativity (terrorists/extremists) and neutrality (everyone else). As radicalization is not perceived as a vector, positivity is not incorporated and countering it subsequently favours a problem-based approach. A change of perception is required in order for strength-based accounts to become a viable means of preventing malevolence and this is encapsulated within the research question: how does one mobilize to Jihadist conflict zones in a benevolent rather than a malevolent manner? Utilizing archetypal amalgams, Figure 1 illustrates that the research question seeks to differentiate Batman from the Joker, not the Joker (negativity) from Joe Public (neutrality) as is the norm.

“homegrown” instance would use indicative factors such as the purchase of a weapon system or specific chemical components for explosive ordnance construction.

Figure 1 Mobilized Moral Vectors vs. Joe Public

Batman	Joker	Joe Public
Hero	Villain	Bystander
Positive Deviant	Negative Deviant	Conformist
Love	Hate	Indifferent
Heal	Harm	Incapable
Good	Bad	Innocuous

It is therefore no surprise that Prevent is viewed so negatively within British Muslim communities: it inadvertently says “the best a Muslim can be is innocuous” – hence their socially securitized status. Radicalization should be expanded so that Muslims who cross the decisional line from non-mobilized to mobilized are not immediately shoehorned into the negative “Joker” status (see footnote 7). Subsequently, when radicalization is conceptualized as a vector, Batman (the research participants) and the Joker (Jihadists) become the “moral equivalents” (James, 1906) of each other and Joe Public the opposite of both because, using Githens-Mazer definition, Joe Public is not mobilized.

2.8 Militating Malevolent Radicalization through Benevolent Radicalization

Militating violent extremism through the promotion of a prosocial cause would involve a policy devoted to structuring the environment so as to encourage benevolent radicalization more generally or nudge particular typologies off the malevolent path; an identity based means of mobilization for a glorious, noble and impactful cause with significant others and one which recaptures Islam back from the Jihadists. This, loosely, is what Schmid (2013a, p.28) would refer to as “social engineering” and requires (a) recognizing that radicalization is a vector (i.e. a hammer can be utilized as a destructive weapon *or* a constructive tool [Barrett, 2017, p.135; Elshimi, 2017, p.10]) and (b) setting the scene for its constructive rather than destructive use. This would involve “an activist identity” (Ferguson,

McDaid and McAuley, 2017, pp.13-14) which can be mobilized in positive ways and thereby “channelled into productive life paths” (Atran, Axelrod, Davies and Fischhoff, 2017, p.354). Subsequently, buttressing benevolently radicalized groups in order to assist them gaining adherents’ offers a viable alternative to terrorism but is only likely to appeal to particular typologies of “potentials”.

2.9 Typologies

Various scholars have (empirically) categorized Jihadists or foreign fighters into numerous typologies based on their pathway, role and/or motivation. However, only some of these typologies would qualify as being receptive to the possibility of becoming involved with benevolently radicalized groups as others may simply want to be Jihadists (Lakhani, 2013, p.56; Roy, 2017a, p.2) or engage in violence. What follows are a list of the receptive typologies:

1. McCauley and Moskalenko’s (2014) “caring-compelled”: these people are affected by suffering and feel personally responsible in reducing it. This motivation can be adequately addressed by benevolent groups.

2. Khosrokhavar’s (2009) “existential man”. State buttressed benevolently radicalized groups would be able to bridge the multiple identity gap these people experience and replace it with a sense of pride which constructively combines their religion with their nationality.

3. Nesser’s (2015) “misfits” and “drifters”. These typologies would find a sense of belonging and develop an aligned social identity through involvement, but this need not necessarily be through benevolently radicalized groups. It should be noted that, in many ways, the prototypical group members who socialized the research participants (or “proteges” in Nesser’s typology) bear striking similarities to Nesser’s “entrepreneurs” albeit on a morally opposed level.

4. Neumann’s (2016) “defenders” seem to come closest to describing the research participants as they too (initially at least) deployed for charitable purposes. The difference is that the defenders did not leave the conflict zone and became radicalized by it whereas the

research participants only remain in theatre for a maximum of ten days before returning to the UK.

5. Venhaus's (2011) "identity seeker". Similar to Nesser's (2015) "misfits" and "drifters", this typology is primarily attracted by the need of belonging to a group rather than, initially at least, being ideologically loyal.

3. Methodology

3.1 Development of the Research Agenda

The original plan was to interview grassroots British Muslim aid workers who function solely and consistently in a humanitarian capacity in areas commonly referred to as Jihadist conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. Research questions intended to address their decision-making processes and justifications while mobilized in areas where violence is condoned and normalized. In other words, "why *not* engage in violence?" Results would then be contrasted with publicly available information on British Jihadists operational in the same theatres and (violent) extremism more generally so as to delineate the argumentative contours of violent vis-à-vis non-violent extremism.

As both groups function in areas under Jihadist control, thereby operational under the aegis of Jihadist groups, the working assumption was that both aid workers and Jihadists would lay somewhere on an extremist continuum and that the Jihadists would be more doctrinaire. However, the assumption that only extremists would travel from the UK in order to function in Jihadist areas of operation were roundly false (see Figure 2) and the trajectories the research participants took to become aid workers in these locales raised questions about the process and outcomes of radicalization rather than extremism as initially envisioned.

Therefore, research proceeded with a focus on how the research participants became high risk aid workers and, counter-intuitively, this had clear overtures to the radicalization literature.

3.2 Methodology

Constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006) was selected because its philosophical underpinnings are well aligned to the explorative nature of the research, the “how” and “process” centric nature of the research question and the data-led as opposed to theory informed analysis. It aims to generate participant led data which is abstracted to form a theory or framework. Indeed, methodological approaches in the field of terrorism and radicalization are, more often than not, discipline led rather than problem-centric. Therefore, research tends to be bound by subject matter expertise instead of adopting a holistic approach. And for good reason; interdisciplinary approaches are academically eclectic and integrating these into a coherent narrative is an astoundingly difficult task. However, a manageable means of doing so is by way of grounded theory as the literature review is determined by data rather than shaped by conceptual framework.

But this “data first, literature review later” design does not mean entering the data collection phase as a blank slate (Martin, 2006, p.47; McCallin, 2006, p.14; Urquhart and Fernandez, 2006, pp.459-460). Instead, research is conducted with “an open mind, not an empty head” (Bryant, 2017, p.219) because it is not bound by predetermined theories (De Bie and Poot, 2016, p.583). In other words, a preliminary and non-committal literature review was performed prior to data collection and the results directed further reading.

3.3 Research Sample

Initial data sampling began with British Muslims who were engaged in humanitarian activities. Purposive sampling then focussed on those who focussed (largely) on Jihadist conflict zones¹⁴ and finally theoretical sampling honed in on those who mobilized in-person as opposed to the majority who raise funds and freight supplies to location or those who raise

¹⁴ These people did not specialize in Jihadist conflict zones because they were Jihadist. Rather, these were the theatres with (often) the most suffering and they were selected out of urgency.

funds and drive aid to bordering countries which is then picked up by previously established contacts and brought by land to those in need. Unlike other methodologies, the sampling process in grounded theory does not count the initial and purposive samples because these are used to arrive at the final sample. Therefore, while the sample in this study is indeed small, a far larger number was utilized in order to obtain the theoretical sample. Finally, given the intuitive equation of

$$\text{British Muslim} + \text{Jihadist Conflict Zone} = \text{Terrorist}$$

only a small number were prepared to be interviewed. Therefore, the sample ($n=6$), while not unique in terms of British Muslim (historical) responses to global humanitarian catastrophes, cannot be confirmed as representative. But neither is it intended to be; the value of this paper lays in resultant conceptualizations and a new avenue for Countering Violent Extremism based on a small number of successful outliers who are, by definition, never representative; positive deviants as opposed to negative deviants.

All research participants were in their mid-twenties to early thirties, of second generation Pakistani descent and were educated to secondary school level. Each made between five and fifteen deployments to Jihadist conflict zones over (approximately) the last four years lasting between seven and ten days where the majority of aid provided was food or medical based. This sample share numerous characteristics with Jihadists:

- Jihadists are presumed to arise from an amorphous social scene (Hemmingsen, 2010 in Nilson, 2015, p.344; Lindauer, 2012; Neumann, 2016, p.112; Sageman, 2017a, p.12; Schmid, 2013a, p.10; Wali, 2011, p.245). Indeed, research participants stem from the same countercultural recruitment pool given their backgrounds (see [WQB 121 in] section 1.2).
- Both are Muslims (at least superficially) in locally networked kin groups with no prior experience of their future “occupation”, but introduced to it in stages.
- Like Jihadists, the research participants would, more often than not, also be considered “youth” (Atran, Axelrod, Davies and Fischhoff, 2017, p.354) with previous law enforcement encounters (mainly petty crime and gang related activities) - a

characteristic typical of the current wave of Jihadists (see, for example: Basra, Neumann and Brunner, 2016).

- Both were also affected by watching videos of Syrian and Iraqi conflict zones. These took the form of “triggering events” (Sageman, 2017b, p.33) rather than “key events” (Sageman, 2017b, p.39) and both groups upload their own videos onto social media from theatre.
- The research participants intention was to “do the right thing” and this finding has also been documented within the terrorism literature (Bartlett *et al.*, 2010, pp.30-31; Bloom, 2016; Fernandez in Cottee, 2015; Marsden, 2017b; UNOCT, 2017, p.33).
- Both groups are also largely self-funded and committed to a consciously perilous cause located within Jihadist conflict zones after departing the UK in kin groups.

The author ensured to the best of his ability that none of the research participants were extremists. To do so, the literature on extremism was consulted and risk factors and indicators thereof were compiled and contrasted to data. This resulted in Figure 2 which portrays a wholly non-extremist stance. The author also confirmed this by triangulating data: an extensive search of their social media profiles did not reveal any connection with or endorsement of any extremist organizations nor armed groups. Instead, their profiles and social network connections revealed contacts with known peaceful community figures and their numerous postings were wholly confirmatory of their humanitarian stance. Furthermore, the segment of the dissertation not presented in this article are the interviews which were conducted with various organizations and community figures working in the field of preventing violent extremism (with and without government assistance). All confirmed their non-violent/extremist dispositions, beliefs and behaviours.

Figure 2 Vulnerability to Extremist Checklist

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research Participants vote (Labour) - Publically endorse others to vote - Critical of British Foreign Policy but do not view it as a war against Islam - Do not support (violent) extremist groups. Rather, they were targeted by Daesh with an armed drone in Mosul (among other attacks) - Displayed a nuanced and detailed understanding of the politics of the region. As such, they understood that politics rather than violence will bring wars to an end. They view their role as assisting the civilians (the victims) until normalcy is restored
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publically endorse International Women’s Day - Do not believe in the social segregation of men and women - Do not view women as subservient - Are not hostile to non-Islamic practices or people i.e. they display an affinity for understanding others. As such: - Enjoy a wide circle of non-Muslim friends and acquaintances jokingly referred to as “our clean shaven brothers” (ABM 818) - Avid supporters of football (Liverpool in particular)
Religious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - View the Hijab as a personal preference - Adopt a human-centric stance to their religion - Nothing stated in interviews would be characterized as inflammatory or hateful - Two research participants make rap videos and these are endorsed by their social network on social media
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did not display cognitive rigidity (black and white thinking) - Frequently made reference to humour, particularly self-depreciating humour i.e. well-socialized and non-confrontational behaviour

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did not display unmet aspirations or personal injustices. Rather, empowerment, joy and a sense of belonging were displayed - Are not socially isolated - Did not display mental health problems (however, the author is not a clinician) - Did not display low self-esteem - They have experienced discrimination (see risk factors), but they do not brood over or nurse those wounds. To explain this, “us” and “them” descriptions were used. But this was not placed in the risk factors because they described themselves as the out-group (“them”) and felt empowered to address their “them” status. As such, they invited a prominent member of the EDL (English Defence League – a British far right group) for “tea and a chat” when he visited their area to protest. He refused the offer - Did not display identity confusion or identity conflict - Healthy relationship with their family. This was not always the case as the first point in the risk factors clarifies
Risk Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Previous criminal involvement - Previous experience with racism/discrimination - Current travel outside of UK to locations associated with extremist activity

3.4 Data Collection

After obtaining ethical consent, data collection was conducted by face-to-face interview and took place between 2016 and 2017. Questions from semi-structured interviews revolved around (1) delineating how the research participants became involved in aid, (2) what coping mechanisms they utilized when faced with the inevitable human devastation they encountered and (3) how their community views them and their actions. Each question intended to address different facets. For the first, it was to establish their pathway into impact philanthropy. These were subsequently contrasted with what is known about Jihadist

trajectories. For the second, it was to establish how the research participants stayed in role as humanitarians (specific strategies or coping mechanisms) rather than succumbing to emotion and moral outrage which is documented to precipitate violent responses.¹⁵ The third intended to probe how the British Muslim community viewed their efforts. This is important because negative community responses would have critical implications for recommendations stemming from the research and would be evident in their donations (their only source of income).¹⁶

Initial coding was used to assign labels and all levels of analysis were constantly compared. Select labels were subsequently abstracted to focused and theoretical coding which drove analysis towards category development and these, once saturated, led to the construction of (and explanation for) their pathway into impact philanthropy in global Jihadist conflict zones (see Figure 3). Results from this process guided the literature review where radicalization, under an expanded hypothesis, was used as the means of categorizing involvement.

Figure 3 Sample Coding Process

Raw Data (Summary)	Initial Coding	Focussed Coding	Theoretical Coding
Q: How did you get involved? A: A friend asked me to join him on a trip.	Mobilizing as a favour through social network	The factors which commence one's mobilization may not be the same as those which sustain mobilizations	
Q: Why did you agree? A: It sounded good. Better than what I was	Mobilizing as a better alternative (short and long term)		

¹⁵ Indeed, this is precisely how numerous “formers” who currently function in preventing violent extremism radicalized to violent extremism. For example, Nawaz (2017) of Quilliam Foundation stated during one of his podcasts, “...when the genocide happened in Serbia against Bosnian Muslims, I got so angry I got radicalized.” While not presented in this paper, emotion was revealed to play a significant role in radicalization.

¹⁶ At the time of writing, research participants have initiated long-term projects (read: more expensive) alongside more immediate aid relief. Therefore, one can assume that the community remain supportive.

doing then. I slept really well after it.			The process of involvement and the co-construction of identity and narrative through positive impact
<p>Q: Did you know it was going to feel good?</p> <p>A: No. Never crossed my mind. I thought I was doing him a favour (by helping him out). But he was doing me one (but didn't know it).</p>	Mobilizing felt good	Mobilization gives instant positive impact and influences perception	
<p>Q: Is that why you went out again?</p> <p>A: Yeah sort of. But, when you see all that bad stuff on TV... I saw that for real. Different places, same suffering. And we made an instant difference. Like, "boom"</p>	Mobilizing as part of a wider narrative of suffering and means of positive contribution		

4. Results

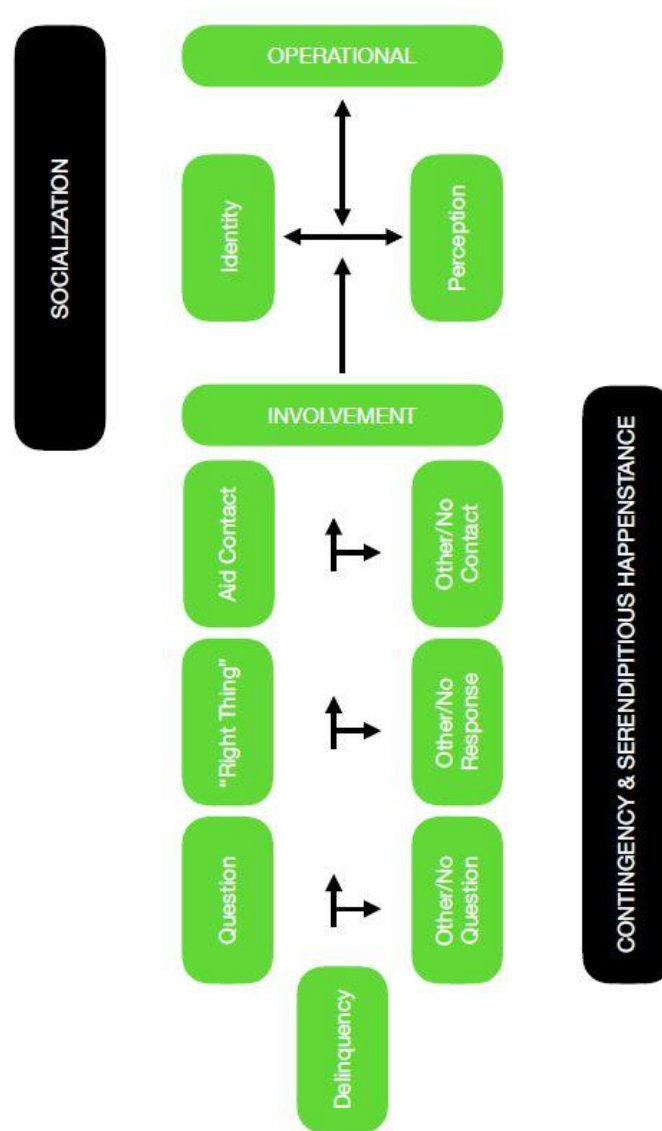
4.1 Organization

This section commences with the research participants pathway into impact philanthropy. It is abstracted to a linear model because it is a composite map of decisional way-points.¹⁷ In order to establish empirical validity for the vector concept, this is subsequently juxtaposed to models which begin with generalized forms of grievances (Silber and Bhatt, 2007; Precht, 2007; Wiktorowicz, 2005) rather than specific ones (Moghaddam, 2005; Sageman, 2017b) because the research participants did not commence their vector with specific goals or grievances. It is also not contrasted to later or other frameworks and these are rarely linear. As the model has distinct similarities to Wiktorowicz's (2005), a segment of this section is devoted to theorizing how Wiktorowicz's research participants took a malevolent vector while those of this study did not. The overall purpose is to illustrate that so few people engage in terrorism because they engage in other impactful activities; attractive alternatives engaged in through other communities of practice which are not studied by radicalization researchers because they do not fall within the remit of the predetermined successful outcomes of radicalization: extremism and/or terrorism.

¹⁷ This is not to suggest that the process itself is linear. Rather, it is presented as linear because it is a composite.

4.2 The Benevolent Pathway

Figure 4 The Benevolently Radicalized Pathway



Stage 1: Gang Affiliation and Delinquency

All research participants were involved in a delinquent gang lifestyle involving drugs and crime. They felt uncertain as to what they should do and who they wanted to be (see for

example, Hogg and Blaylock, 2012). They identified as Muslim, but did not practice Islam; their Islamic identity was latent and they were Muslim in name only. Although unstated specifically in interviews, there was an element of shame in that they were not living up to the breadwinning protector (adult/masculine) ideals of their community and culture.

Stage 2: “What am I doing?”

All research participants experienced compounding chronic problems in life. Some also experienced an acute event which brought this uncertainty to the fore. For these “acutes” it built up to the point where they asked themselves “what am I doing?” This either took the form of a drug induced epiphany or a pertinent point/realization brought up in conversation. In one case, it was a text message where his friends informed him that he “should stay low” because the police were looking for him: “Ugh,” OO161 said upon receiving the message, “what am I doing?” For the chronic it was a steady barrage of shame, resentment and guilt. The “acutes” took matters into their own hands, approached the “chronics” (who were part of the same wider social network), and asked them the same question. This resonated because either the “acutes” were able to articulate what the “chronics” were thinking/feeling, or because following the “acutes” was better than where they were at that particular moment (see Question 2 in Figure 3).

Stage 3 and 4: Doing the Right Thing and Making Contact

“What am I doing?” was followed by “what should I be doing?” Research participants turned to Islam because it is understood as unquestionably good i.e. re-establishing an Islamic identity is a guaranteed positive. To do so, they forayed back into their community. This was a transitional period in their lives and it occurred during a transitional phase in numerous Islamic majority countries; the Arab Spring. The conversations they were exposed similarly reflected uncertainty; is the Arab Spring good or bad, what will happen etc.? New social contacts were developed. Old contacts however were not broken off because the research participants did not socially isolate. Indeed, such “total” situations are a key requirement

when groups move to extremes (Bandura, 1982, p.751; Meerlo, 1956, p.201; Sunstein, 2009; Taylor, 2017; Waller, 2007).

Stage 5: Identity Enactment

Through serendipitous encounters with grassroots aid workers in their communities, *zakat* (alms giving - comparable to aid) was framed as a means for the research participants to progress from being practicing Muslims to becoming operational ones. Islam is practiced in accordance with the five pillars; *shahada* and prayer are practiced daily, fasting is only practiced during Ramadan and the *Hajj* is usually a once in a lifetime experience. Therefore, to expand quickly upon their rekindled identity, they took up *zakat* with gusto and this was their formal introduction to the suffering of the *Ummah*. Some began their humanitarian foray with a trip to Calais to help migrants while others went to Greek islands to assist the incoming refugees. Suffering was now experienced first-hand and any footage viewed over social media platforms became relatable and part of a wider narrative.

Stage 6: Perception Change

This first-hand behavioural experience generated powerful affect (frustration, anger and outrage) and this impacted upon their perception, worldview and self-concept (see, for example, Berger and Luckman, 1991). Through positive socialization by prototypical group members, this affect was channelled and operationalized where the research participants became empowered to have an effect on said suffering (and their own) and this effected their burgeoning interpretation of Islam. It was also the first time that they shouldered responsibility and they discovered a deeper existential meaning in doing such difficult work. In other words, their personal uncertainty was reflected by the uncertainty of the Arab Spring and they were able to alleviate both through aid. Furthermore, their beliefs followed their behaviour rather than the other way round and was guided by role models while being involved in a community of practice.

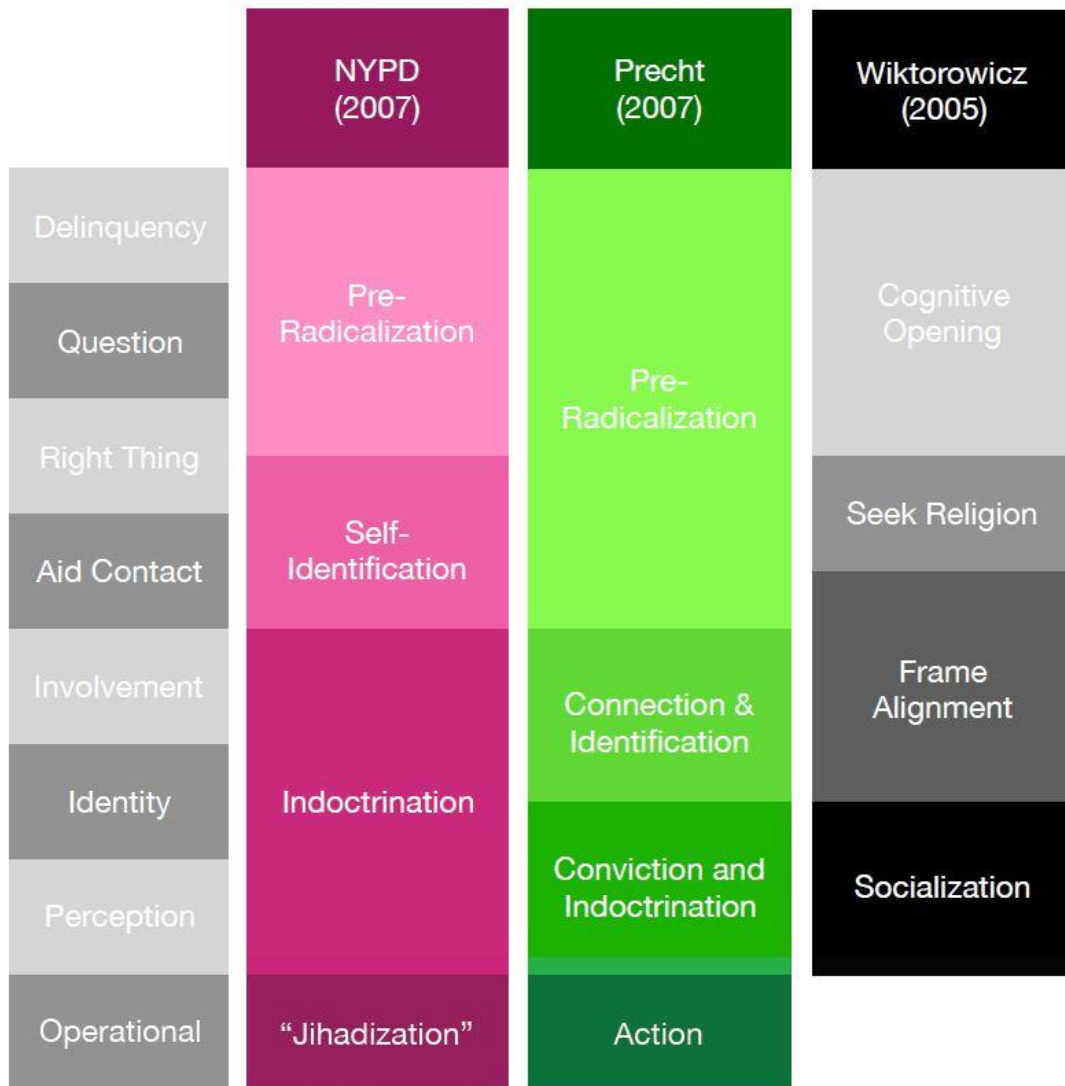
Stage 7: Operational Muslim

Their identity and worldview were now formally hinged on assisting the oppressed and their occupations and/or lifestyles now revolve (to varying degrees) around charity. Their prosocial identity now thoroughly embedded, their prognosis of dire situations revolves around protecting civilians rather than punishing aggressors and this is how they engage with their environment. What is noteworthy is that what initially led the research participants to become involved in aid was not what sustained their involvement. Doing the right thing was an aspiration, becoming the right person and staying the right person sustains it because that identity became valued.

4.3 Juxtaposing Models

There is an element of overlap with earlier radicalization models which commence with generalized grievances or experiences (Figure 4) but not with frameworks which commence with specific ones (Moghaddam, 2005; Sageman, 2008; Sageman, 2017b). Given space constraints, the following section will focus upon Wiktorowicz's (2005) model and will illustrate how the research participants followed a benevolent path while Wiktorowicz's (2005) did not.

Figure 5 Benevolent Radicalization Juxtaposed to Malevolent Radicalization



Wiktorowicz’s (2005) model has four key stages; cognitive opening, religious seeking, frame alignment and socialization. A cognitive opening may take the form of a personal crisis and this makes a person receptive to ideas that, under other circumstances, they would not have been. This is why the intersection of biographical exposure and the enabling

environment is posited to play a central role in radicalization (Briggs and Silverman, 2014, p.23; Schmid, 2013b, p.221; Silke and Brown, 2016, pp.135-136). Religious seeking is an extension of this; the individual is guided toward religion or seeks it out. Through discussion, the individuals frame aligns with the message and they “realize” that the Islamist worldview is congruent to their own. During socialization the individual adopts the ideology and group identity which is maintained through constant interaction with the Islamist group and this interaction occurs at the expense of other social interactions. Therefore, (progressive) social isolation is key (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010, p.890; Slooman and Tille, 2006, p.90).

The process of benevolent radicalization, sans isolation, is similar. Wiktorowicz’s cognitive opening is well-aligned with the transitional phases the research participants experienced in stages 1 to 3. His second stage (religious seeking) may be interpreted as “do the right thing” and making contact (stage 4) as all research participants dutifully sought out religion within their wider social network. Indeed, doing the right thing has been documented as common among those who have left to join violent Islamist groups (Bartlett *et al.*, 2010, pp.30-31; Bloom, 2016; Fernandez in Cottee, 2015; Marsden, 2017b; UNOCT, 2017, p.33). Wiktorowicz’s final two stages (frame alignment and socialization) link stages 4, 5 and 6 in so far as the actions of the research participants and how they were guided impacted upon what they came to believe about themselves, the world and their role in it. For Wiktorowicz’s participants, this resulted in a weaponized identity but for the research participants, it became that of a protector. How this occurred is described using Borum’s (2003) heuristic.

4.4 The Terrorist Mindset

Borum (2003) outlines four stages, the first of which frames an event as “it’s not right” (Borum, 2003, p.8). The second stage is comparative and what was identified in stage one is viewed as unjust; “it’s not fair”. One may, for example, view the Syrian civil war in these terms or the plight of the Rohingya. Stage three targets an out-group (which could also be a policy) and blames them for the injustice; “it’s your fault”. This, for example, is relatable to Bin Laden’s concept of targeting the far enemy. In the process of doing this, the out-group

is vilified and often dehumanized which “facilitate[s] justification for aggression” (Borum, 2003, p.7).

Stage four sees a normalization of negative stereotyping which provides the ability to assign a moral dispositional quality to all members; “you’re evil”. This process results in the justifiable use of violence against the out-group.

Conceptualizing radicalization as a vector requires a perceptual change of Borum’s (2003) model and this is achieved by organizing his stages into diagnostics and prognostics. Stage one and two are diagnostic in nature; they delineate the existence of a problem which is always defined through the assigning of victimhood. Stage three and four are prognostic in nature; they define what needs to be done to alleviate the suffering of the victims. In malevolent radicalization, stage one and two are victim based and stage three and four are perpetrator based. The research participants of this study similarly diagnosed what the problem was. But instead of blaming an out-group for the injustice, their focus remained with the victims because the prototypical group members (the archetypes [Sageman, 2017a, pp.124-125]) had convinced them that solutions to the intractable problems occurring in Jihadist conflict zones occur among political elites and power brokers.¹⁸

5. Discussion

5.1 Benevolent Radicalization as Attractive Alternative

Scholars have questioned why so few people engage in terrorism (Horgan, 2014, p.104; Kurzman, 2011, p.7; Taylor, 2010, p.128). This paper attempts an answer by positing that so few do so because they engage in other impactful political activities - many of which fall outside of the radicalization hypothesis as currently constructed and are therefore imperceptible to radicalization researchers. Furthermore, some people want to “do” something about perceived wrongs or injustices (Barrett, 2013; Horgan, 2017; Pantucci, 2015, p.13;

¹⁸ Bandura (1982, p.751) notes how Diana Oughton’s (a prominent member of the Weathermen) pathway towards militancy was equally affected by a prototypical group member who convinced her that only revolutionary force would bring the necessary changes.

Schuurman, 2017). A pragmatic and legitimate question therefore is: what is an affected, Western and “politically awakened” (Brzezinski, 2013, p.26) Sunni to “do” about grievances arising from the sectarian cleansing of Sunnis occurring in Syria and Iraq and the ensuing humanitarian crisis?

Introducing benevolent radicalization into the radicalization hypothesis would allow the nation state to craft a policy which would give potential mobilizers a legal and effective means to impact upon victims; an attractive alternative. How this would function as an alternative is best summed up by Shahar (2015): “Organizations that counter radicalization do not try to dampen the attraction of ‘noble causes’; they know the effort would be futile. Instead they attempt to substitute a different – less violent – version of the same cause” i.e. a morally equivalent version of the same cause. Subsequently, these have been termed as “attractive alternatives” (Travis, 2008) or “practical alternatives” (Briggs and Silverman, 2014, p.24).

A policy of supporting the benevolently radicalized could be operationalized through Positive Deviance. This is a strengths-based approach which is applied to problems requiring behavioural and/or social change. Its basic premise is three-fold (1) solutions to seemingly intractable problems already exist, (2) they have been discovered by the community and (3) these innovators have succeeded even though they share the same constraints and barriers as others (Pascale *et al.*, 2014, p.23). Key to this is that they do not necessarily know that they have succeeded. It is generally described as inside-out (it uses insiders, not outsiders), backward (the solution already exists but just needs to be implemented) and counter-cultural (leaders do not bring solutions – they find them in the community and expand their usage).

Furthermore, it has the lowest perturbation to impact ratio because it turns to solutions already proven within the community rather than importing foreign solutions that arouse scepticism at best and outright sabotage at worst (Pascale, *et al.*, 2010. p.13). This carries extra weight given the consensus on the importance of local community in countering violent extremism (Ellis and Abdi, 2017, p.289; Barzegar, Powers and El-Kharhilli, 2016, p.29; Schmid, 2013a, p.27) and the importance of credible and trustworthy people who resonate

with said community (Barzegar *et al.*, 2016, p.29; Braddock and Horgan, 2016; Braddock and Morrison, 2017, p.9) i.e. “epistemic authority” (Kruglanski, *et al.*, 2017, p.220).

5.2 Shortcomings of Benevolent Radicalization as Effective Alternative

As discussed in section 2.9, benevolent radicalization as attractive alternative is only posited to function for particular typologies. This raises the question of agency. In particular, do situational factors override innate tendencies (Zimbardo, 2007) or are personality characteristics nonetheless the most powerful variables (Staub, 1989). Waller (2007, pp.38-40) notes that group interactions can function as amplifiers of dispositional preference, what Sunstein (2009, pp.53-54) terms as “antecedent convictions”. Similarly, Bandura (1982, p.750) notes that one can contribute to their own destiny by developing attributes which resonate in particular social milieus. In this sense, there does seem to be a level of agency¹⁹ involved in choosing which group to become a member of i.e. adherents “self-select” (Kirby, 2007, p.423). Given the role of such dispositional factors, the preventative point of interdiction proffered in this paper is not a silver bullet.

5.3 Future Research

Sageman (2017a, p.108) notes that it would be “unwise to extrapolate from a model built on militantly nonviolent subjects to explain the turn to political violence”. This is certainly logical, but the problem is he later notes that most politically violent actors, with some rare exceptions, “start out explicitly rejecting violence” (Sageman, 2017a, p.144).²⁰ Assuming that “starting out” means socialization to mobilization, a more nuanced take would address why some people mobilized (beyond protest group) to violence while others mobilized (beyond protest group) in more constructive ways. Such an approach would

¹⁹ This may be a function of early life practices which form the rudimentary components for a positive social identity (Staub, 2004, p.68-69). See also, Oliner and Oliner (1998, pp.142-170). This may also be related to the literature on dysfunctional families and terrorism (Jenkins, 2007, p.5).

²⁰ Similarly, Munson (2008, p.6) notes that many pro-life activists began as decidedly pro-choice with “their views chang[ing] during the actual process of becoming activists - that is, in the process of becoming mobilized”.

provide a more granular exploration instead of remaining with the binary end-states of successful radicalization (terrorism and/or extremism) - a methodologically limiting and bland appraisal of human factors.

Another potential avenue for future research lays in distinguishing the radicalization pathway from the radicalization process. Results from this research indicate that the nascent stages of the pathway are characterized by happenstance whereas the radicalization process occurred post involvement.²¹ While most models and frameworks commence at the radicalization process stage (raising questions about low base rates), serendipitous meetings are nonetheless frequently mentioned throughout the literature (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008, pp.10-11; Malthaner, 2017, p.645; Pantucci, 2015, p.15; Sageman, 2004, p.121; Schuurman, 2017; Vidino, Marone and Entenmann, 2017, p.96).²² These people become role models and/or heroes (Coolsaet, 2016, p.24) and their prominence is aided by a lack of other (positive) Muslim role models (Byrne, 2016, p.162) and, in many instances, a lack of positive role models when growing up (Ramakrishna, 2016b). How serendipitous meetings with potential role models proceed and interact may adequately distinguish the radicalization process from the pathway and this requires further inquiry.

²¹ Ironically, Morrison (in Braddock, 2017) noted that many of his “Talking Terror” podcast panellists have themselves stumbled into terrorism research after such coincidental contact with an influential researcher - a point specifically mentioned by Bandura (1982, p.748).

²² These relationships become cemented through interpersonal attraction (Bandura, 1982, p.750).

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