Sketch of a Social Ecology Model for Explaining Homegrown Terrorist Radicalisation

The study of homegrown jihadi terrorist radicalisation has veered from early efforts to theorise what was happening, which were often insufficiently grounded in empirical evidence, to a reticence to theorise much at all, given the perceived complexity of the phenomenon. Yet knowledge acquisition and mobilisation in this relatively new field remains acutely dependent on how we conceptualise what is happening and integrate our findings. This Research Note provides an initial argument for the merits of adopting a fairly straightforward ecological approach to organising and extending our grasp of the social and social psychological factors influencing the career of potential jihadists.

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Dr. Lorne L. Dawson is a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo. He has written three books, edited four books, and published sixty five academic articles and book chapters. Most of his research was in the sociology of religion, but work on why some new religions become violent led to research on the process of radicalisation leading to terrorism. He is the Project Director of the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society (www.tsas.ca), and is currently engaged in qualitative research on foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq (e.g., L. L. Dawson and A. Amarasingam, "Talking to Foreign Fighters: Insights into the Motivations for *Hijrah* to Syria and Iraq," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 40, no. 3 (2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1274216). He is currently preparing a book (with Dr. Amarasingam) on foreign jihadi fighters for Hurst/Oxford University Press. He makes numerous invited presentations to academic and government groups, and is frequently interviewed in the media in Canada about terrorism.

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Introduction[1]

Some experts have argued that we should divert our attention from unfathomable 'why' questions about the motivations for terrorism, especially in the context of homegrown terrorism, and concentrate on the more manageable questions about 'how' terrorism happens.[2] While there is methodological merit in the proposal, given the excessively speculative character of so much written on the motivations of terrorists, in the minds of most people it is nigh on impossible to separate the two questions. We might never fully understand why anyone becomes a terrorist, but the careful comparative analysis of many cases points to some significant similarities that we need to delineate and explore further. In doing so, I argue that it would be beneficial to take an ecological approach. This approach focuses on the interaction of an individual (or group) with their environment, and it assumes that no single factor will explain why something is happening. Rather an effort should be made to model the many and diverse factors that impact, in various combinations and to varying degrees, the progression of an individual along the path of radicalisation towards violence. In line with the ecological modes of thinking now engrained in our awareness, we need to move beyond linear or stage models of this progression. We are not dealing with an easily delimited set of factors which lead someone almost inevitably towards radicalisation. Rather we need to think in terms of the dynamic interplay of individuals with their environment, and hence the many sets of variables, including hard-to-predict contingencies, that work in complex yet identifiable ways to radicalise individuals, though rarely in the same way.

This point of view is now fairly common in the discourse of terrorism studies, and it informs the way studies of radicalisation are conceived and conducted. Few discussions of terrorism and the process of radicalisation, however, adopt a sufficiently systematic and comprehensive approach. Understandably, most of the research continues to dwell on various specific clusters of either social, group, or individual causes of terrorism, often in line with certain specific theoretical orientations associated with one of these analytical levels.[3] A few more general multi-level studies of the research on radicalisation have been published that are enlightening, but they have not generated integrated explanatory frameworks.[4] Here

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[1] Versions of this ecological model have been presented in a wide variety of forums in the last several years, including, for example, the RCMP E Division INSET (January 29, 2015), RCMP 2015 National Security Interviewing Workshop (April 24, 2015), Memorial University (April 27, 2015), Canadian Forces College (October 8, 2015 and February 9, 2016), Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (February 25, 2016), Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society Workshop (February 26, 2016), and Queen's University (March 16, 2016). The account presented in this paper is derived from L. L. Dawson, "How Terrorism Grows at Home," *The Globe and Mail*, 23 April 2013, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/how-terrorism-grows-at-home/article11484304/ and L. L. Dawson, A. Amarasingam, and A. Bain, **"**Talking to Foreign Fighters: Socio-economic Push versus Existential Pull Factors", *TSAS Working Paper* no. 16-14, July 2016, http://tsas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/TSASWP16-14_Dawson-Amarasingam-Bain.pdf.
[2] J. Horgan, "From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618 (2008), pp. 80-94.
[3] For example, R. Agnew, "A General Strain Theory of Terrorism", *Theoretical Criminology* 14, no. 2 (2010), pp. 131-153; M. King and D. M. Taylor, "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 4 (2011), pp. 602-622; J. A. Piazza, "Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination, and Domestic Terrorism", *Peace Research* 48, no. 3 (2011), pp. 339-353; A. W. Kruglanski, M. J. Gelfand, J. Belanger, A. Sheveland, M. Hetiarachchi, and R. Gunaratna, "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism", *Advances in Political Psychology* 35, (Suppl. 1) (2014), pp. 69-93.
[4] For example, C. R. McCauley and S. Moshalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways to Terrorism", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 3 (2008), pp. 415-433; R. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories", *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no.4 (2011), pp. 7-36; M. Hafez and C. Mullins, "The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism", *Studies in Conflict*

the focus is on delineating an overarching framework for constructing a larger ecological model of homegrown jihadist terrorism, derived from and utilising the results of many more specific kinds of studies being done on aspects of the process of radicalisation or case studies of the radicalisation of specific individuals or groups. Ideally, the model would encompass all pertinent environmental factors and patterns of interaction, physical, biological, psychological, and social. But in this context I will simply sketch the array of primary social and social-psychological environmental niches that need to be studied in tandem to develop anything like a sufficient understanding of how homegrown jihadi terrorists and foreign fighters emerge from larger pools of aggrieved or alienated young men and women.

In other words, this model is limited to a social systems approach[5], covering relevant factors at the macro (or societal), meso (or group), and micro (or individual), levels.[6] But rather than use these standard sociological categories to organise the analysis, I have opted for something more concrete. In part this is because the framework emerged from efforts to make sense of the radicalisation of young, largely suburban, Canadians for law enforcement and military personnel, government policy advisors, and the general public. This context encouraged me to think more in terms of situations and choices that stemmed from life experiences that everyone could hypothetically grasp, or perhaps even identify with, to some degree. My objective has been to humanise the terrorists so that people can better understand how and why "remarkably ordinary"[7] individuals can end up doing such extraordinary things.

Not all who undergo a process of radicalisation leading to violence in the West are young adults (in their twenties), but the majority appear to be, and the trend is towards radicalisation at even younger ages.[8] This sketch pivots on this demographic finding. The primary focus of attention is young men, since women, while they are radicalising in larger numbers, remain a small minority, and it is still too early to definitively say whether there are additional gender specific interpretive issues.

The basic unit of analysis for the model is the individual social actor and his point of view as an agent involved in multiple contexts that influence his process of

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and Terrorism 38 (2015), pp. 958-975. An exception is provided by the sophisticated studies of Donatella della Porta: D. Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; D. Della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. But her work has yet to make significant inroads into the discourse of terrorism studies, perhaps because of its sheer complexity and its primary focus on the more classic expressions of clandestine European terrorism in the 1970s and 80s (e.g., the Red Brigades and Baader Meinhof Group), and not homegrown jihadism. One of the anonymous reviewers of this article has called my attention to another recent and promising exception, Bart Schuurman's work on the Hofstad group: see B. Schuurman, E. Bakker and Q. Eijkman, "Structural Influences on Involvement in European Homegrown Jihadism: A Case Study", *Terrorism and Political Violence,* 9 May 2016, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546553.2016.1158165 and B. Schuurman and J. G. Horgan, "Rationales for Terrorist Violence in Homegrown Jihadist Groups: A Case Study from the Netherlands", *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 27 (2016), pp. 55-63.

[5] T. Parsons, "Social Systems", in T. Parsons, *Social Systems and the Evolution of Action Theory* (New York: Free Press, 1977), pp. 177–203.

[6] D. Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp.9-10.

[7] M. D. Silber and A. Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (New York: New York City Police Department, 2007).

[8] For example, M. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); E. Bakker, "Characteristics of Jihadi Terrorists in Europe (2001-2009)" in R. Coolsaet, ed. *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge.* Surrey: Ashgate, 2011, pp. 131-144; L. L. Dawson, "Trying to Make Sense of Home-Grown Terrorist Radicalization: The Case of the Toronto 18", in P. Bramadat and L. L. Dawson, eds. *Religious Radicalization and Securitization in Canada and Beyond* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), pp. 64-91; A. Rabasa and C. Benard, *Eurojihad: Patterns of Islamist Radicalization and Terrorism in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); L. L. Dawson and A. Amarasingam, "Talking to Foreign Fighters: Insights into the Motivations for Hijrah to Syria and Iraq", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 40, no. 3 (forthcoming 2017).

radicalisation. While the objective is to frame the overall environment the model is cognisant of Herbert Blumer's sage advice:

> …if [a] scholar wishes to understand the action of people it is necessary for him to see their objects [i.e. physical, social, and conceptual] as they see them. Failure to see their objects as they see them, or a substitution of his meanings of the objects for their meanings, is the gravest kind of error that the social scientist can commit. It leads to the setting up of a fictitious world. Simply put, people act towards things on the basis of the meaning that these things have for them, not on the basis of the meaning that these things have for the outside scholar. Yet we are confronted left and right with studies of human group life and of the behavior of people in which the scholar has made no attempt to find out how the people see what they are acting toward.[9]

In other words, the larger model is being constructed to facilitate an exercise of the "sociological imagination"[10] whereby we can gain a sense of the actor's "definition of the situation," and trace his "career path" to becoming a terrorist. Ultimately the objective is to develop as much familiarity with the lived experience of these individuals as possible, by all means available, including speaking with them (if we can), with due consideration to the larger social structural and social psychological conditions influencing their choices and actions.[11] Doing so emulates some of the most insightful work produced on the motivations for terrorism, such as the early essays by Martha Crenshaw[12] and Donatella della Porta.[13]

My efforts in this regard are shaped by my years studying a parallel social phenomenon, conversions to new religious movements[14]; my study of the Toronto 18 terrorism case [15]; copious reading of other case studies and research on radicalisation; and my research with foreign fighters in Syria.[16] The approach is born of a synthesis of what I have read and heard.

Here I am presenting a scaled-down and almost commonsensical version of the model, free of copious citations of the relevant literature. Knowledgeable readers will understand where I am implicitly tapping into existing literature in several different disciplines, studies that can be mined systematically to flesh out the model. The

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[9] H. Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 50-51.
[10] C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).
[11] M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. by A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1964 (1947)); A. Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (Evanston, ILL: Northwestern University Press, 1967).
[12] M. Crenshaw, "The Subjective Reality of the Terrorist: Ideological and Psychological Factors in Terrorism", in R. O. Slater and M. Stohl, eds. *Current Perspectives on International Terrorism* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988).
[13] D. Della Porta, "Introduction: On Individual Motivation in Underground Political Organizations", in B. Klandermans and D. della Porta, eds. "Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations", *International Social Movement Research* 4 (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1992).
[14] L. L. Dawson, "Who Joins New Religious Movements and Why: Twenty Years of Research and What Have We Learned?" *Studies in Religion* 25, no. 2 (1996), pp. 193-213.
[15] L. L. Dawson, "Trying to Make Sense of Home-Grown Terrorist Radicalization: The Case of the Toronto 18", (2014), pp. 64-91.
[16] L. L. Dawson and A. Amarasingam, "Talking to Foreign Fighters", (forthcoming 2017).

references provided are limited to pivotal or highly representative publications related to key points.[17]

In sketching the basic elements of a social ecology model of radicalisation I begin with the most general and pervasive factors that may be pertinent and move towards more specific and discriminating factors. I move, in other words, from consideration of factors for which we have the least direct empirical evidence, with regard to becoming a terrorist, to ones that are better substantiated in the research on radicalisation.[18] Each environmental niche, and how they interact and interpenetrate, warrants a level of analysis and empirical study that far exceeds my capacity to delineate in the space available, and the research required to develop a sound understanding of each niche would have to be collaborative, calling on the expertise of teams of pertinent researchers from diverse backgrounds. To prompt such research, I think there is merit in at least sketching the larger organising model at this time.

The Model

As indicated, the model is focused on the individual and his or her involvement in terrorism. The focus is on the combination of factors, as perceived by the actor, which might be motivating their engagement with extremism and perhaps political violence. Starting at the highest level of generality, we must recognise that homegrown terrorism is a product of the new social conditions in which we all live, what some sociologists call "late modernity", the "risk society", or "liquid modernity".[19] The full range of social structural changes and their social psychological consequences addressed in these theories is far too complex to dwell on here, but most obviously homegrown terrorism is a product of the process of globalisation, which is at the heart of all these theories. In the case of jihadists in non-Muslim majority countries, the data suggests they are drawn predominantly from the 1.5 to 2.0 generation of immigrants. There is a link then between homegrown terrorism and the unprecedented movement of peoples around the world, the ability of immigrants to stay in regular contact with people and issues in their homelands, and the capacity to spread the messages fueling terrorism with relative ease by the internet. It is also reflected in the intense pressure felt by some of the children of immigrants to manage the expectations of two often discordant worlds, the cultural traditions and norms of their parents and the pervasive pop cultural demands of their non-immigrant peer groups. For the young, there is a desperate need to fit in, and yet be seemingly unique, and the torque of the situation can be particularly acute for those from cultural and ethnic minorities.[20] Finally, we live in a world where the local and

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[17] This sketch is not based on an examination of other applications of a social ecology model, as is common in public health research, and in particular the prevention of interpersonal violence (see, e.g., the brief statements provided by the World Health Organization http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/ecology/en/ and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/social-ecologicalmodel.html). I only became aware of these parallels recently, and it is clear they warrant exploration.
[18] For example, M. Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism", *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (1981), pp. 379-399; A. Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33, (2010), pp. 797-814; A. Rabasa and C. Benard, *Eurojihad* (2015); M. Hafez and C. Mullins, "The Radicalization Puzzle" (2015), pp. 958-975.
[19] A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); U. Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, trans. by M. Ritter (London: Sage, 1992 [1986]); Z. Baumann, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).
[20] O. Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); B. Spalek, "Disconnection and Exclusion: Pathways to Radicalisation?" in T. Abbas, ed. *Islamic Political Radicalism: A European*

the global are increasingly merged, where global conflicts and grievances receive attention every day in the media and penetrate into every home. We now worry about what is happening to people continents away. This combination of factors is not completely unique to the late modern world, but it is fair to say that no previous generation of young people, especially immigrant youth, have borne their combined impact to the same degree. For some it can set off an existential search for greater ontological security in the face of a de-traditionalised social environment and a precarious socio-economic future.[21]

Figure 1. Five Ecological Niches of Homegrown Terrorist Radicalisation
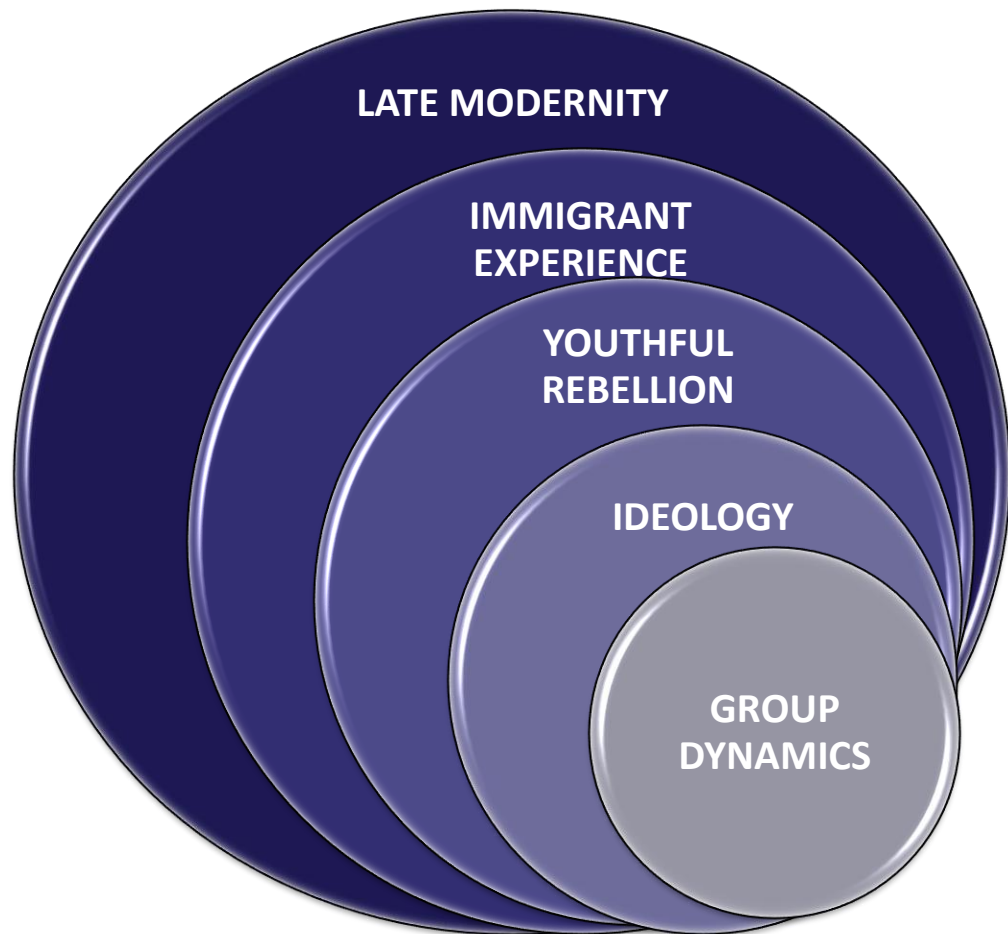
For the individuals who radicalise, these factors play into and aggravate the identity struggles characteristic of adolescence and young adulthood, literally making a bad situation worse. But for whatever reason these young men, and some women, are having a really hard time finding themselves, especially in an age marked by what Giddens aptly calls "the project of the self" (i.e. social pressure to construct a unique personal identity). Their lives may also be buffeted by seemingly minor experiences of discrimination and abuse born of their 'alien' status, things they have taken to heart

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Perspective (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2007) pp.192-206; M. L. Stroink, "Processes and Preconditions Underlying Terrorism in Second-Generation Immigrants", *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 13, no. 3 (2007), pp. 295-312; J. Cesari, "Muslims in Europe and the Risk of Radicalism" in R. Coolsaet, ed. *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2011) pp. 97-107.
[21] C. Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security", *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (2004), pp. 741-767; S. Cottee and K. Hayward, "Terrorist (E)motives: The Existential Attractions of Terrorism", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34, no.12 (2011), pp. 963-986.

in ways that may surprise us. Outwardly, as the New York City Police Department report on homegrown radicalisation asserts [22], these young people may appear "remarkably ordinary." Friends and family are little aware of the inner struggles going on, yet studies reveal that the seemingly sudden turn to an unconventional and even deviant point of view usually has its roots in a prolonged inner turmoil.[23]

Three other complicated yet, in a sense, easily understood psychological factors seem to play a role—one which separates these individuals from other confused and rebellious youth. It is the combination and intensity of these factors, in the right social conditions, that is decisive. First, there is evidence of a marked "quest for significance"[24], a desire to make a mark in the world, or to separate from the crowd. This may or may not have its roots in a drive to compensate for perceived humiliations, personally or on the part of the group with which they are forging their new social identity, namely the *ummah*. Second, there is a real concern with moral issues, with knowing and doing the right thing – again not as determined by the seemingly apathetic and corrupt surrounding society – but by some higher or transcendent authority.[25] Ironically, young terrorists in the making are gripped by a stronger sense of moral duty than their peers, and not less, as commonly assumed by outsiders. A kind of altruism often is manifest in the stated motivations of these terrorists, and based on my interviews with foreign fighters in Syria, I think it is sincere, if misguided.[26]Third, there appears to be a stronger orientation to action, to adventure and risk. This is merely an observation, though, and like everything noted here, it warrants more systematic investigation. We need to work towards a greater integration of research on adolescent psychology and adventurism, with the data available on specific individuals and groups who have radicalised.

When individuals in this condition come into contact with the terrorist narrative, which more often than not they have sought out[27], a cognitive opening exists to be recruited to a cause. The terrorist ideology connects the dots in a satisfying way, one which offers a simple but definitive explanation for their angst, offers a grand solution, targets a culprit, and prescribes a course of action. Most of all it sets the individuals struggles in a transcendent frame of meaning that gives an ultimate and virtuous purpose to their existence. It places their personal troubles in solidarity with those of a whole people.[28] The initial appeal may be just fanciful, and the young men play at being radicals. But interaction with others further along in the process, or those fully committed to the cause, online or in person, will consolidate the leanings in rapid order. Invariably it is the shared nature of the experience between close friends or family members that ratchets-up the enthusiasm, and eventually the courage to act. As many convicted homegrown jihadists have acknowledged, long hours spent watching videos online and discussing jihadist tracts with other angry young men, solidified their commitment to the cause. This is how the bonds of loyalty to the group are forged that start to take precedence over everything else, like a platoon of soldiers training for war. As experimental social psychologists have shown

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[22] M. D. Silber and A. Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West* (2007).

[23] S. V. Levine, *Radical Departures: Desperate Detours to Growing Up* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984).

[24] A. W. Kruglanski et al., "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization" (2014), pp. 69-93.

[25] J. S. Ginges et al., "Psychology out of the laboratory: The challenge of violent extremism", *American Psychologist* 66, no.6 (2011), pp. 507-519.

[26] L. L. Dawson and A. Amarasingam, "Talking to Foreign Fighters", (forthcoming 2017).

[27] M. Warburg, "Seeking the Seekers in the Sociology of Religion", *Social Compass* 48, no. 1 (2001), pp. 91-101; Colonel J. M Venhaus, "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda", *United States Institute of Peace,* Special Report 236, 4 May 2010, http://www.usip.org/publications/why-youth-join-al-qaeda.

[28] Q. Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

in myriad ways, our behaviour is shaped in crucial ways by the contexts into which we are put, far more than we are willing to admit. The students designated as prisoners and guards in the famous Stanford County prison experiment reverted to abusing each other in a matter of days, though they knew full well that they were just role-playing, and the experiment had to be terminated.[29] For young jihadists role play soon becomes reality too.

In most cases I would say the help and encouragement of some other outside mentors is required to complete the process of radicalisation, to turn wannabe terrorists into deployable agents or independent martyrs for the cause. The process of radicalisation needs to be legitimated to be complete. Anger and frustration have their role to play in the process, but it is the positive investment in an alternate world-saving role that matters most, no matter how strange it may appear to outsiders. More often than not, the acts of violence will be precipitated by some triggering event, which may be either public or private in nature. The trigger may not make much sense to the rest of us, but it will be consequential in symbolic ways in the terrorist`s story of the struggle of good and evil.

For some the trigger may be very obvious and personal, such as the death of a parent or the loss of a lover.[30] For others it might be something more vicarious and ordinary, such as yet another news report of the suffering of fellow Muslims at the hands of the U.S. military. There is no set list of triggers and we will misunderstand what is happening if we draw overly simple correlations between disruptions in people's lives and the onset of extremism. Once again, we need to take into account the multiple interactions of diverse factors across the ecological niches and at different analytic levels (i.e. individual, communal, and societal). This does not mean every instance of radicalisation is idiosyncratic. There is significant variation. But, as with most social phenomenon, patterns can be discerned in the seeming diversity, and ways exist for making them stand out.[31]

Concluding Remarks

In sum, many contingent factors will determine if anyone radicalises, let alone commits an act of terrorism. In recognising this we need to be honest about our own lives. Our careers and marriages often are the result of happenstance; the result of meeting the 'right' person or situation at the 'right' time. Such is also the case in the lives of terrorists, and consequently it is the occurrence of a perfect storm of factors that account for why any individual ultimately decides to plant bombs and kill innocent civilians, or leave everything behind to serve the so-called Islamic State in a distant and foreign land.

No one niche or set of variables is necessarily more important than another in this approach to modeling the process of radicalisation, the relative significance of

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[29] C. R. McCauley and S. Moshalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[30] K. Ballen, *Terrorists In Love: The Real Lives of Islamic Radicals* (New York: The Free Press, 2011).

[31] R. Prus, "Generic Social Processes: Maximizing Conceptual Development in Ethnographic Research", *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 16, no. 3 (1987), pp. 250-291; R. Prus, *Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

various combinations of variables in each ecological niche and their diverse linkages with the variables in the other niches will determine the career of each extremist. The complexity of this situation can appear daunting. But as the research on radicalisation to date amply demonstrates, this fact needs to be more realistically and completely factored into our explanatory efforts. Most human behaviour, when examined thoroughly, turns out to be complex. But in other instances of extraordinary behaviour with highly undesirable social consequences (e.g., pedophilia, drug addiction, domestic violence, and sociopathy in general), the social sciences have endeavoured to fashion complex and multi-variable models to bring the necessary measure of analytical order to phenomena that are hard to grasp, in part because they fall so far outside of conventional norms. Some very well-known initial attempts have been made to model the process of radicalisation leading to violence[32], and while they have helped lay a foundation for all later attempts to model the phenomenon, they have also been criticised extensively.[33] Most generally, they have been taken to task for being too simplistic and/or partial in their coverage. Their insights, relating to social movements and mobilisation, the importance of social networks, the social psychological impact of in-group/out-group dynamics, social identification processes, and many other factors, have an important role to play in developing a more comprehensive ecological model. But in recent years, while some excellent analytical syntheses of the research on radicalisation have been published[34], no new explanatory models have emerged. The reluctance to create such theoretical models is understandable, but the practical and intellectual pressures to do so remain strong. The ecological approach seeks to balance the need to do greater justice to the complicated and variable nature of the process of radicalisation with the need to model the overall process in a way that resonates more intuitively with the practical orientations of those charged with protecting us from terrorism. An ecological approach maximises and synchronises the processes of knowledge acquisition and mobilisation.

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[32] For example, M. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Q. Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising* (2005); F. M. Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration", *American Psychologist* 60, no.2 (2005), pp. 161-169; M. D. Silber and A. Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West* (2007).
[33] For example, J. Horgan, "From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes" (2008), pp. 80-94; R. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism" (2011), pp. 7-36; M. King and D. M. Taylor, "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists" (2011).
[34] For example, A. Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Violent Radicalization in Europe" (2010), pp. 797-814; R. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism" (2011), pp. 7-36; M. Hafez and C. Mullins, "The Radicalization Puzzle" (2015), pp. 958-975.

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Sketch of a Social Ecology Model for Explaining Homegrown Terrorist Radicalisation

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