Religious Youth Radicalization in Canada

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the existing evidence related to the question of religious youth radicalization in Canada. Our analysis suggests that all religions contain within their histories messages, texts, and movements that have supported both violence and non-violence. Our website study demonstrates that the rhetoric of religious radicalization has a marginal presence on the main websites designed by and for members of the five religious traditions we considered. Most Canadian groups continue to express their opinions, and even their grievances within the established traditions of law and deference that characterize Canadian life. There are, however, a number of problems that face anyone seeking to address what small amount of religious radicalization exists in Canada. The power of the ideology of secularism and the theory of secularization makes it difficult for people to consider other ways to manage diversity and to include religious individuals and considerations in the public arena. Moreover, the widespread religious illiteracy that characterizes Canadian society makes it difficult for policy makers or religious groups to influence public discourse around religious issues. Evidence suggests strongly that perceptions of unfairness predispose youth to criminal activities and to identification with radicalized worldviews. Nonetheless, all of these issues can be addressed through concerted and coordinated efforts.

Introduction

Parents, teachers, law-makers and other people over the age of forty view their society's youth with some suspicion. These anxieties have many roots: some are concerned that the next generation is not equipped to survive the challenges that previous generations have created for them (overpopulation, climate change, crime, drugs, economic instability); others worry that the popular culture that shapes the *Weltanschauung* of today's youth culture will lead to widespread moral vacuity. Some see in today's youth the specter of criminality and random violence; others worry that youth will be drawn into radical groups; and others are troubled by the possibility that the internet will alienate young people from their peers and parents and will make them easy prey for unscrupulous individuals and groups. The fears are many and deep.

For a moment, let us set aside the perennial concerns about "kids these days," and turn to something we might well consider a relatively new feature of public and political discourse in the West. It is probably not too much of an exaggeration to say that there is a new specter haunting not just Canadian society, but indeed Western society in general: and that is the specter of the return of religion to the international public arena. We argue that in order to understand the current and potential state of youth radicalization in Canada or elsewhere, one must see these issues in terms of a powerful intersection between age-old anxieties about youth behaviour and relatively new anxieties about the failure of the Enlightenment-era convictions that secular liberal democracy would become the universal norm.

In this article, we discuss the nature and causes of the religiously-oriented youth radicalization that might exist in contemporary Canada. Our expectation is that by accurately thematizing this issue, we might set the phenomenon in its proper context and perhaps diminish the damaging consequences of the almost exclusive focus in the West on Muslim youth radicalization. Very little research has been conducted on this phenomenon in Canada, though clearly one can see throughout public discourse (especially in the media) that the matter is on the minds (or in the nightmares) of many people.

We focus mostly on Canadians between the ages of 14 and 24. However, we feel that it is important to include both adolescents and young adults in our analysis. The early twenties is a crucial period in life that often represents an important transition from the formal education system to workforce, from living with parents to residential autonomy, from the dependence of childhood to the independence and personal responsibilities of adulthood. It includes those in school and out of school, those living with parents and those who are living on the streets, those with children of their own and those

that are childless, those who have found employment and those who are still looking for work, those living in poverty and those living in relative opulence. Within this cohort we find people from a wide variety of different life situations, racial and ethnic backgrounds, subcultures, maturity levels and degrees of moral development. Although age and religion are our primary organizational constructs, we are aware of the plethora of other social variables that impact young people.

We are exploring youth radicalization in five of the major religious traditions found in Canada: Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam. Religious radicalization is understood to connote forms of religiously-framed resistance to the dominant society (or to the society that is perceived as dominant). These forms of resistance vary in intensity; clearly and almost by definition, most expressions of religion in Canadian society do not fit under the rubric of radicalization. Religious groups promoting the peaceful use of the broader society's laws and policies in order to redress a perceived moral or religious flaw in that society cannot plausibly be considered purveyors of radicalized versions of their religious sensibilities since they are seeking to effect social change within an accepted and shared set of public mores. When we use the term "radicalized," we have in mind groups and individuals who espouse what is typically a militant minority approach to their own religion (Lincoln 2003; cf. Juergensmeyer 2002). We also employ the suffix "ized" to underline – as in the term "racialized" – the extent to which radical-ness cannot be understood except by juxtaposition against other dominant and putatively "moderate" expressions. So, one is radicalized in as much as one subscribes to a religiously-embedded view of the world that a) sets one apart from most of one's co-religionists, and b) advocates a significant degree of resistance to some larger society (and sometimes to one's co-religionists).

We are concerned here with groups of people – especially youth – whose involvement in particular radicalized movements cannot be separated from their association with a particular religion. The two phenomena must be intimately related to attract our attention. We are concerned with individuals and groups whose explicit self-understanding and whose public presence (or, to use an anthropological turn of phrase, whose public performances of identity) inextricably link their religious and their radical convictions.

Ideological subtext

While our concern is religious radicalization in contemporary Canada, it is crucial to set this phenomenon against the backdrop of broader historical shifts that occurred over the last several centuries in Europe and North America. The ideology of secularism is a crucial feature of many Western liberal democracies; it is the proverbial iron gate of reason that guards our proverbial cities from the religious, tribal, superstitious barbarians outside. With the secularization hypothesis now in tatters, it is rather problematic to assert or assume – as secularism encourages – that even in the West history is unfolding in a particular direction (toward freedom and reason and away from tyranny and religion).

Jurgen Habermas (2005) speaks of a post-secular society; however, he is not referring to the emergence of societies that are throw-backs to medieval Europe, nor to the rise of theocracies on par with Saudi Arabia. The fact is that we are in a kind of *ideological interregnum*, a liminal period in Western history during which it is not at all clear how religion and the state will be related in the coming decades. Within this interregnum, a great deal of anxiety is felt by scholars and policy makers who had understood themselves to be courtiers in the old regime of optimistic liberal secularism after September 11th, 2001.

The anxieties about religious youth radicalization grow out of an age-old concern about the younger generation. Indeed, the dominant narrative of socialization in the modern West assumed that it was normal – almost a rite of passage – for youth to rebel against their parents. Myths and legends around the world are full of such stories (cf. Shapiro 2003), and so much of modern psychology is founded on the notion of observable and predictable stages of personal and cognitive development. While the ancient myths and the modern developmental theories might presuppose conflicts between the mercurial energies of youth and the strictures of adulthood, they also involve in most cases the individual's eventual reinsertion into the existing (though perhaps somewhat expanded) adult social fabric.

What happens to a society when this narrative of reinsertion fails or grows weary? To put it another way, and to underline where this broader concern intersects with our current question, what happens when elders fear that their own youth or the youth in their neighbourhood will become attracted to radical and oppositional religious worldviews that the adults, and especially the elites among them, had left behind during migration from abroad, or during their own individuation? What happens when we find we need to question the founding assumption that as individuals and as culture mature, they will progressively eschew religion (and here we might add: magic, tribalism, superstition)?

It is crucial to remember that the concerns expressed in the public domain about religious youth radicalization cannot be separated from racism. It is an unfortunate reality that the community most associated with the specter of religious youth radicalization – Canada's roughly 750,000 Muslims – is also mostly comprised of first or second generation Canadians of South Asian, Arab and African ethnic origin. When the *Ethnic Diversity Survey* was released in 2003, its analysis of religious discrimination – which posited that in most cases such incidents were in fact attributable to racial differences that were in some sense conflated with religious differences – reminded us of the powerful role of race in our current debates about religion. We should not shy away from wondering whether the concerns expressed over "Islamic extremism" in fact represent redirected or implicit racist stereotypes about Arabs, Africans, and South Asians (Bhabha 2003; Karim 2003; cf. on racial profiling, Gabor 2004; Wortley and Tanner 2005).

However, while commentators must always be alert to the power of racism and Orientalism (Said 1979) in the way social conflicts emerge, it is also the case that religion is also often a relatively independent variable in the anxieties that

have surfaced in Canadian public discourse. That is, we live in an ideological interregnum in the midst of a mortally wounded 200 year old secularism, and it is religion – though especially its "Islamic" and "fundamentalist" strains – that is framed as the quintessential modern *bête noire*.

Religion and youth in Canada

The Canadian literature on religion and youth is ten to twenty years old (cf. Ban 1986a; 1986b; Bibby 1987; 2002; 2004; Bibby and Posterski 1992; Hewitt 1993; Waugh, Abu-Laban, Quereshi 1991), and very little examines the experience of religious youth in the wake of the cultural turning point of September 11th, 2001, which certainly led to dramatic shifts in the place of religion (per se, but especially "non-Western" religions) in public discourse (cf. Beyer 2005a; McDonough and Hoodfar 2005; Ramji 2007).

Reginald Bibby (2002; 2004) has argued that the Canadian churches have begun to rebound from the numerical declines they have been suffering over the last few decades; and these signs of recovery are associated with the fact that contemporary youth are either returning to churches, or (for those who stay away from formal church structures) at least continuing to pursue traditional existential questions in ways that are still decidedly Christian. The aura of nostalgia that pervades Bibby's sociological work in the past two decades is still evident here, as is his conviction – one might say, his theological conviction – that the attachment of youth to established Christian structures is good for them and the broader society (by which he appears to mean: "good" both socially as well as spiritually).

Seljak and Bramadat worked with scholars from across Canada to produce *Christianity and Ethnicity* in Canada (2008). In this work, Seljak and Bramadat heard – contrary to Bibby's portrait – a consistent and coherent "discourse of loss" from the senior scholars they gathered together, each of whom was asked to write a chapter about the denominations or traditions they knew best. The only author whose story about the future of his denomination or tradition in Canada was not a story of loss was Bruce Guenther, the author assigned the task of writing about the evangelical tradition; it is no accident that his chapter's tradition is the only one in which there have been gains, overall the evangelical story is positive both in terms of their raw numbers as well as their efforts at reaching out to youth.

In line with Guenther's account, Bramadat's *The Church on the World's Turf* (2000) explored the way the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship offered its evangelical and fundamentalist university student members satisfying alternatives to secular social activities many members felt were debauched. Bramadat found that the IVCF enjoyed significant growth in the late 1980s and 1990s due to effective leadership and changes in the broader Canadian and North American societies that put many conservative Protestants on the defensive. The IVCF became a home away from home and a safe context in which they could renegotiate what it might mean for these youth to be both fully Christian and fully committed to their ostensibly secular studies.

Some see in today's youth the specter of criminality and random violence; others worry that youth will be drawn into radical groups; and others are troubled by the possibility that the internet will alienate young people from their peers and parents and will make them easy prey for unscrupulous individuals and groups. The fears are many and deep.

With a few exceptions (e.g., Beyer 2005a), most sociologists in Canada are not particularly interested in non-Christian youth's religious experiences, except to note that the Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and Sikh communities of which the youth are members, have grown dramatically between 1991 and 2001 (each roughly doubled in that time, largely because of immigration (Bramadat 2005; 2007)). However, while non-Christian groups might be growing rapidly (Beyer 2005a; Bramadat and Seljak 2005), their absolute and even relative numbers are still modest (at roughly 6-7% of the Canadian population), so collecting data related to their religious lives is methodologically difficult. As a result, there is not very much academic research available that would illuminate the lives of this cohort of Canadians.

The American literature – also based mostly on studies of Christian individuals and communities and thus of limited use for a study such as ours, where one of the main phenomena we seek to address is non-Christian radicalization – explores the question of the relationship between youth religious identification and the religious lives of their parents, concluding (rather predictably) that youth are more likely to be involved in a formal religious community and to identify with the broader tradition if their parents modeled similar practices and values (Dudley 1999; Kiren and Munro 1987; cf. Penner 1995); that females are more interested in religion than males of the same age cohort; that religion is, overall, very important to youth; that subjective religiosity does not appear to decline significantly with age during youth; that about two thirds of American youth identify comfortably with the formal structures of religion; that roughly 15% of American youth are completely uninterested in religion; and that this percentage shows no signs of increasing (Smith, Faris, Denton Lundquist, Regnerus 2003).

Roughly 15% of American youth in this major national study are alienated from the communities of their parents

or have adopted approaches to their religious identities that vary significantly from those embraced by their parents. Other studies have explored the question of the relationship between deviance/crime and religiosity, though most of the studies examine Christian groups, and most confirm that higher levels of religious identification tends to be correlated with lower levels of criminality.

One very significant study for the present analysis found that for university-aged Muslim students, the Islamic dimension of their identities became increasingly significant to them in the aftermath of September 11th, 2001, as many non-Muslims treated them differently (Peek 2005). The Muslims transformed this newly ascribed identity into a central feature of their personal identities. This study reminds us of the dialogical nature of identity formation so well outlined by Charles Taylor in his now classic 1992 article on "The Politics of Recognition". As such, when exploring the way a group or an individual describes him or herself, it is crucial that observers pay close attention to the way the individual or group is described by others.

By way of some general reflections on the broad changes occurring within religion and youth culture in Canada, we would observe that the religious lives of young Canadians are currently in flux. In part, this is clearly a perennial truth: to be between 14-24 means by definition that one's life is changing rapidly as one's body matures and as one's personality and career trajectory become somewhat more stable. However, the cohort we have defined as "youth" is living in a time of unprecedented change, especially if we consider the rapid pace of globalization and the quantum leaps that have occurred in telecommunications and transportation technologies. Youth today – at least in the developed world – are probably more able and inclined than youth of any other time in history to conceive of themselves as global citizens.

One should not be too rhapsodic about such changes, and one should not assume that these changes have altered the basic patterns of cognitive or social development so well outlined by developmental psychologists over the last century. However, the capacity of youth to acquaint – and if they so desire, to involve – themselves with previously remote peoples, religions, cultures, and ideas has arguably increased exponentially over the last fifteen years. Moreover, the social and personal costs associated with extending one's reach outside of the geographical or social spaces into which one is born are arguably lower today than ever before, as is evident both in the increasing rate of mixed-race marriages that characterize the Western metropolis and the proliferation of websites that create virtual communities inhabited by people previously separated by vast differences in geography, class, economics and ideology. This extension into other realms of life can be a boon to pluralism, of course. As Trinitapoli (2007; cf. Bramadat 2000) discovered, the increasingly well-entrenched pluralism that marks our current period in the urban West has tended to soften the way exclusivist religious groups articulate their singular religious message. The fact that even profoundly exclusivist believers (such as evangelical Christians) who once could have articulated their views without fear of reprisal or censure now realize they must moderate their assertions, indicates something new about the current terrain on which individuals negotiate their identities.

The effects of this new latitude are ambiguous, and it is too early to know how these changes might influence the broader religious communities in which these youth reside. Moreover, the effects of this new terrain vary depending on the traditions one considers. For example, one might speculate – as many of the authors of *Religion and Ethnicity* in Canada (2005) and *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada* (2008) have – that we are witnessing the gradual disintegration or attenuation of institutionalized and relatively established religions (i.e., Christianity and Judaism) in Canada. However, this hypothesis likely describes processes at work in the lives of established Christian and Jewish youth of European descent much more than it does the forces that influence the lives, for example, of newcomer Asian and African Christian youth and adults who might understand ethnically-specific religious groups as important markers of their identities.

Similarly, the future symbolic significance of the mosque, temple, and *gurdwaras* for the other communities we consider in this paper is difficult to predict due to the paucity of evidence on these communities. At present, however, and based on our impressions of the current state of affairs, the situation seems to be mixed: for some youth, these religious institutions are crucial sites where they can meet friends and negotiate their identities in a comfortable setting; for others, no doubt, these sites safeguard regressive ethnic sensibilities that the youth would prefer to transcend. It seems likely that most Muslim, Hindu and Sikh youth fit somewhere between these two approaches to their traditional places of worship.

Many second and third generation youth are comfortable with notions of religious "hybridity" or "syncretism" (that is to say, the fusion of previously incommensurate horizons of meaning), may reflect their integration in the broader Canadian zeitgeist of post-modernity. Indeed, they may be in some sense the vanguard of Canadian multiculturalism: distinctly religious individuals whose religious identities are nonetheless a blend of the ancient and the modern, the here and the there, the transcendently-grounded and the historically-contingent. Perhaps in these individuals – imagine, for example, a fluently tri-lingual (French, English, Arabic) Muslim Montrealer who wears a hijab, prays five times a day, does not eat halal meat, plays hockey, is engaged to a Christian, is a political science major at Concordia University and intends to represent the Bloc Quebecois in a future federal election – are harbingers of new modalities of identity?

Perhaps, but such hybridized individuals fill others within the same communities with dread. For other youth who might be insecure about their own identities (especially if they have been the victims of discrimination by members of the dominant society), such a woman may exacerbate their own anxieties about their inabilities to negotiate their own identities as creatively as she has. Such critics might interpret this woman's hybridity as an indication of the encroachment of Western liberalism on their notion of the purity of their religion (cf. Beyer 2005b). So, while hybridized and cosmopolitan liberal youth who

are fully at home in the modern (or postmodern) world might be the ideal citizens imagined by liberal multiculturalists, for other youth, such individuals may represent great threats to their tradition and to themselves.

It is by no means the case that conservative Muslims are the only critics of the liberal cosmopolitanism we associate with contemporary youth culture. After all, readers will recall that Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh opponents of the Canadian government's 2005 same-sex rights legislation learned that they shared (to say the least) a general wariness about this particular policy and some of the broader liberalizing shifts it reflects. This acknowledgement led to concerted joint efforts to oppose the government's plans.

Given the fact that the cohort we are discussing in this paper is generally quite comfortable in the de-territorialized realm of cyberspace, there is reason to worry that if a segment of this population feels alienated from the broader Canadian society and their relatively more integrated religious peers, they may be inclined to engage in relatively anonymous identity- and solidarity-generating virtual communities that encourage them to frame their problems in Canada in terms of what Mark Juergensmeyer (2002) calls the rhetoric of a "cosmic war."

Youth in contemporary Canada

Since they are a group with relatively little economic or political power, it is relatively easy to condemn or scapegoat young people for the challenges facing modern societies. Nonetheless, despite the abject worrying and commiserating of each successive generation of adults, the vast majority of young people will ultimately grow older, take on adult roles and responsibilities and make valuable contributions to society. In other words, most young people eventually come to "behave like adults."

A common theme in the public discourse about young people is their apparent vulnerability to media influences. In the 1950s, for example, we observed media driven moral panics concerning the impact that rock and roll was having on youth values and sexuality. Likewise, in the 1960s, it was often argued that popular music directly contributed to rise of the "hippie" generation and an increase in illicit drug use and hedonism. The seventies and eighties produced similar fears that both movies and music (disco, punk, heavy metal, etc.) were destroying the moral fabric of the younger generation. Finally, over the past eighteen years, concern about youth crime – especially youth violence – has increased dramatically. As with previous decades, a great deal of discussion continues to focus on how violent forms of popular media (video games, "gangsta rap," film, etc.) may be influencing youth behaviour. Following the events of 9/11, however, new anxieties emerged concerning youth radicalization, terrorism and the influence of the Internet. Thus, while the impact of music and movies continues to be a concern with respect to "common" forms of youth violence, the Internet is thought to be a potential cause of religious radicalization among young people. Such anxieties are particularly widespread in diverse, multicultural societies such as Canada.

Critics have responded to the "media causes bad behaviour" hypothesis by noting that few studies have ever established a direct causal link between media consumption patterns and crime, violence or substance abuse. Indeed, the vast majority of consumers of violent media never engage in serious violent behaviour (see Freedman 2002). Interestingly, recent research also suggests that while most people believe that the media has absolutely no influence on their own behaviour, many feel that the media has a negative impact on others. Additional findings suggest that many adults feel that young people, and those from lower class backgrounds, are particularly vulnerable to media effects (Hoffner et al. 2001). In sum, these studies suggest that adults may find the media a convenient scapegoat when trying to explain complex social problems. Indeed, further analysis suggests that the root causes of both youth crime and youth radicalization are much more complex than simplistic media-based explanations would suggest. However, before examining issues of youth crime and radicalization in more detail, it is important to examine the general state of "the kids today."

Are things worse for youth in contemporary Canadian society than they were 10 or 30 years ago? Do we have more to fear from today's youth than previous generations? The informed answer to these two questions is a resounding "no." Nonetheless, the results of numerous studies and reports do suggest that, much like previous periods in our history, there is cause for both optimism and concern.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that young Canadians are doing just as well – if not better – than previous generations (see Smart and Adlaf 2007; Yau and O'Reilly 2007; Schissel 2006; Social Council on Social Development 2006; Boyce 2004; Doob and Cesaroni 2004; Bibby 2001). The following facts represent a few of the more promising trends:

- Young people are more educated than at any other period in Canadian history. Both literacy and high school graduation rates rose dramatically in Canada between 1950 and 2000. Similarly, in 2005, both university and community college enrolment figures hit an all time high. Canada has one of the highest post-secondary graduation rates in the world. Compared to other western nations, a high proportion of young Canadians (under 30 years of age) have either a university or college degree. The educational aspirations of high school students are much higher today than fifty years ago. Today's teens expect to graduate from university or college, compared to less than 20% in the 1950s.
- Canada's young population is more racially and ethnically diverse than older Canadians. Young Canadians are more likely than their older counterparts to speak a language other than French or English. Young Canadians are also more likely to report a non-Christian religious background. Many experts believe that presence of a young, well-educated, multicultural and multi-religious population in Canada will give the nation the cultural capital it requires to compete in the global economy.
- Regardless of racial or ethnic background, the vast majority of Canadian youth pursue conventional goals. Most want to graduate from university or college, get a good job within the mainstream economy, get

married and raise a family. The traditional Canadian dream is very much alive among young Canadians.

- On the other hand, there is very little evidence of widespread youth radicalization or extremism.
- Today's youth are much more tolerant of diversity than their predecessors. Research suggests that, compared to older adults, young people are much more likely to socialize with people from outside their own racial, ethnic or religious group. Furthermore, the current generation of Canadian youth is much less likely to openly express racial, ethnic or religious prejudice than previous cohorts.
- Younger Canadians are also much more likely to accept sexual diversity than older Canadians.
- Although the level of alcohol use has remained relatively constant among young people over the past twenty years, rates of tobacco use have declined dramatically. Illicit drug use – including marijuana use – has also declined significantly among young Canadians over the past decade.
- Overall, despite public and media concerns, the rate of youth crime in Canada has remained relatively constant over the past twenty years. However, there were significant increases in officially recorded youth violence during the 1990s and early 2000s, but much of the spike in youth violence during this period has been attributed to zero-tolerance policies in schools and tougher police charging practices on the street. In other words, school fights and other minor youth violence that used to go unrecorded by the justice system were now resulting in criminal charges. Interestingly, since the advent of the Youth Criminal Justice Act in 2003, the number of youth being charged with criminal offences has declined significantly across Canada.
- Criminological research does suggest, however, that young people are more likely to become involved with crime – as both victims and offenders – than older adults. It is important to note that the vast majority of young people never engage in serious criminal activity. Furthermore, most criminal behaviour is "adolescent-limited." In other words, while some young people may engage in crime or deviance during their teenage years, most youth mature out of crime by the time they reach their late teens or early twenties. Additional research suggests that this "aging out" effect occurs with or without special community programming or criminal justice intervention.

These findings suggest that, in general, young Canadians are doing just fine. However, despite this mainly positive picture, there are a few disturbing trends that deserve to be highlighted.

- There is growing evidence that young Canadians have become more economically polarized over the past thirty years. In other words, while the proportion of youth from high-income backgrounds has increased, so has the number of youth living in conditions of poverty. By contrast, the proportion of youth from middle-class backgrounds appears to be shrinking (see Hulchanski 2007; MacDonnell et al 2007).
- Research indicates that neighbourhoods – and by default youth – are becoming more economically segregated. Hulchanski (2007), for example, found that Toronto has become three geographically distinct cities: 20% affluent, 36% poor and 43% middle-income. The number of middle-income communities has declined significantly over the past 25 years. The affluent areas are concentrated in the centre of the city and along the subway line. The poor areas largely lie outside the urban core in what has been called the "inner-suburbs."
- Research also indicates that youth from economically disadvantaged communities (regardless of ethnic background) are more likely to suffer from a myriad of social problems including poor health, poor school performance, high drop-out rates, high unemployment, low income, low rates of university admission, high rates of teenage pregnancy and higher than average rates of both criminal offending and victimization (Greenwood 2006; Morendoff et al. 2001; Sampson and Wilson 1995; Wilson 1987).
- Research also indicates that urban neighbourhoods in Canada are becoming increasingly segregated along racial and ethnic lines (Hulchanski 2007; Walks and Bourne 2006). While some segregated neighbourhoods represent relatively affluent "ethnic enclaves", recent immigrants and certain racial minority groups (i.e, African Canadians, Native Canadians, Hispanics, etc.) are becoming increasingly concentrated in poverty stricken neighbourhoods (see Ornstein 2000; Hulchanski 2007; Walks and Bourne 2006).
- As racial minority youth become more concentrated in poor communities, they will suffer disproportionately from the various problems associated with growing up under conditions of economic disadvantage (including crime, poor educational performance, teen pregnancy, unemployment, low income, etc.).
- Although research indicates that youth crime rates have not changed dramatically over the past twenty years, serious violence may have become more concentrated among young, disadvantaged, minority males. This finding is totally consistent with findings that suggest that Canada is becoming economically segregated along racial/ethnic lines.
- To begin with, there is some evidence that serious violence may have increased somewhat among young people since the turn of the millennium. For example, in 2000, only 43 young offenders (aged 12-17 years) were charged with murder in Canada. By 2006, however, this number had almost doubled to 83. Similarly, in the 1970s the average age of Toronto homicide victims was 37 years of age and only 25% of all victims were under 25. Since 1998, however, the average age of Toronto homicide victims has declined to 33 and over 40% are under 25 years of age. Homicide victims are also increasingly male. Prior to 1990, for example, 64% of all Toronto homicide victims were male. By contrast, since 1990, this figure has increased to 74% (see Gartner and Thompson 2004).

- There is evidence to suggest that serious violence has become increasingly concentrated among poor, minority populations in Canada. For example, Gartner and Thompson (2004) found that, between 1992 and 2003, the homicide victimization rate for African Canadians in Toronto (10.2 per 100,000) was approximately five times greater than the average for the city (2.4 per 100,000). Data from a recent *Toronto Star* article revealed that over 40% of all Toronto homicide victims in 2007 were black males between 14 and 29 years of age. Disturbingly, according to the 2001 Census, black males in this age category represent less than one percent of Toronto's total population. Other research indicates that homicide victimization rates are much higher than average among Canada's Aboriginal population and among South Asian youth on the West Coast (Wortley and McCalla 2007).
- There is some evidence that youth gang activity may be increasing in Canada, particularly among minority males, and that this gang activity is responsible for the rise in youth homicide rates. It is difficult to determine whether gang activity is actually increasing – or becoming more serious (see Chettleburg 2007; Wortley and Tanner 2007).
- Data also indicate that the number of homeless street youth in Canada has increased significantly over the past two decades. As with disadvantaged minority youth, street youth suffer from high levels of criminal victimization, poor educational attainment and economic marginalization (see Karabanow 2004; Public Health Agency of Canada 2006).
- As discussed above, most young people in Canada are fully engaged with mainstream society and have conventional goals and aspirations. However, recent research suggests that a growing proportion of Canadian youth – particularly racial minority youth – have lost faith in Canadian institutions. For example, compared to white youth, minority youth are more likely to perceive racial bias or discrimination with respect to policing, the criminal courts, educational opportunities, employment opportunities and housing (School Safety Advisory Panel 2008; Wortley and McCalla 2007; Ruck and Wortley 2002).

It is important to determine the extent to which such perceptions of social injustice reflect personal experiences within Canadian society. It is equally important to examine the possible consequences of these feelings of alienation. Is it possible that young people who perceive social injustice are more likely to justify criminal activity and violence? To what extent do perceptions of injustice contribute to youth radicalization and extremism? We turn to these issues in the next sections of the report.

Race, perceptions of social injustice and youth alienation

A large body of international research documents demonstrated that significant racial differences exist with respect to people's perceptions of how criminal justice is applied. American research, for example, consistently indicates that African Americans are considerably more likely to perceive discrimination and bias within the criminal justice system – and American society in general – than white Americans. Furthermore, racial differences in perceptions of discrimination remain strongly significant after statistically controlling for other variables including age, social class, education and income.

Studies have demonstrated significant racial differences in perceptions of discrimination within the criminal justice system. For example, Henderson and his colleagues (1997) surveyed residents of Ohio and found that, while blacks and whites share some views concerning crime and criminal justice issues, they are persistently divided with respect to the neutrality of the justice system. African American respondents are much more likely than whites to express the belief that blacks are more likely to be unfairly stopped by the police, jailed without reason and sentenced to death than whites. These racial differences remain significant after controlling for socio-demographic characteristics, experience with the criminal justice system, experience with crime, neighbourhood disorder and both political and crime-related ideology. However, contrary to Hagan and Albonetti's (1982) findings, perceptions of injustice were strongest among the least affluent African Americans.

Weitzer and Tuch (1999), also found that race and social class strongly predict people's attitudes towards the justice system. In their analysis of national survey data, these authors found that, consistent with Hagan and Albonetti (1982), middle-class blacks are actually more critical of the police and justice system than lower-class blacks. Consistent with previous research, this study also shows that racial background is by far the strongest predictor of negative attitudes toward the police and criminal justice agencies. While white Americans tend to view the justice system as colour-blind, blacks are more likely to perceive racial bias and report discriminatory experiences with the police (Weitzer and Tuch 1999). The results of this study also show that educational attainment also conditions people's perceptions of the justice system. Higher educated blacks are significantly more critical of criminal justice agencies than higher educated whites and blacks with lower levels of educational attainment. However, while better educated whites are more likely to perceive discrimination against blacks than less educated whites, they are still disinclined to see police racism as widespread (Weitzer and Tuch 1999).

Recent American studies further demonstrate that perceptions of injustice are just as widespread among minority youth as among adults. A study of over 18,000 Chicago high school students (Hagan et al. 2005), for example found that black youth perceive more criminal injustice than Latino youth, who in turn perceive more criminal injustice than white youth. Hagan et al. (2005) suggest that this finding likely reflects the fact that African American youth are at a greater risk of criminal justice surveillance activities (including racial profiling) and police mistreatment than Latino Americans, who are at a greater risk than whites. This study also found that when racial differences in structural disadvantage were taken into statistical account, minority youth perceptions of injustice become more closely aligned. However, after controlling for social class, attitudinal differences between minority students and white students actually increase. Additionally,

the results of this study show that the perception of criminal injustice among African American and Latino youth varies with respect to the proportion of white students in their school. As the proportion of white students increases, so does the perception that the criminal justice system is biased. However, once the proportion of white students drops to less than half of the student body, minority perceptions of criminal injustice decline significantly. This finding suggests that certain levels of integration may produce perceptual and attitudinal changes that close the gap in racial perceptions of injustice.

Other research, conducted in the United States, confirms that perceptions of racial discrimination are not restricted to the operation of the criminal justice system. Indeed, studies consistently reveal that blacks and Hispanics, regardless of their level of education and socio-economic status, perceive high levels of racial discrimination in American society. Indeed, compared to whites, racial minorities perceive high levels of racial bias with respect to education, employment opportunities, health care and housing (see Siegelman and Welch 1991; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Morin 1995). In addition, while the majority of white Americans believe that black economic inequality is the result of black motivational deficiencies, most black Americans believe that racial inequality is the result of white racism and structural barriers to achievement.

During the 1980s, allegations that the justice system was racially biased were frequently dismissed by Canadian officials as representing the unfounded opinions of "radical" activists. It was argued that the vast majority of black and other visible minority citizens had complete confidence in the police and criminal courts. However, subsequent research has illustrated that, as in the United States, perceptions of racial discrimination are widespread in Canada.

In 1994, for example, the *Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System* conducted a survey of 1,200 Toronto adults (18 years of age or older) who identified themselves as either black, Chinese or white. Over 400 respondents were randomly selected from each racial group. The survey results indicate that three out of every four black Torontonians (76%) believe that the police treat members of their racial group worse than white people. Furthermore, 60% of the black respondents also felt that members of their racial group are treated worse by the criminal courts. Interestingly, the findings also indicate that perceptions of racial bias are not isolated within the black community. Indeed, over half of the white respondents (56%) reported that they think black people are treated worse by the police and a third (35%) think blacks are treated worse by the courts (see Wortley 1996).

Additional research suggests that a high proportion of black youth also perceive that the criminal justice system is discriminatory. For example, a 1995 survey of 1,870 Toronto high school students found that over half of the black respondents (52%) felt that the police treat members of their racial group much worse than the members of other racial groups. By contrast, 22% of South Asians, 15% of Asians and 4% of whites felt that they were subject to discriminatory treatment. This study also found that black and other racial minority students are more likely than whites to perceive racial bias with respect to school disciplinary practices and feel that racial discrimination by teachers is a major barrier to high educational achievement (Ruck and Wortley 2002).

Similarly, another high school survey, conducted in 2000, found that 74% of black students believe that members of their racial group are more likely to be unfairly stopped and questioned by the police than the members of other racial groups. This opinion was shared by only 31% of South Asians, 27% of Asians and 13% of whites (see Wortley and Tanner 2002). It should be noted that, consistent with American findings, the results of this survey suggest that perceptions of racial discrimination are in no way limited to the criminal justice system. Indeed, compared to white students, black and other racial minority students are more likely to perceive racial bias in Canada with respect to educational opportunities, employment opportunities and housing. Importantly, racial differences in perceptions of social injustice cannot be explained by racial differences in social class, parental education or other relevant demographic variables.

It is important to note that youth perceptions of social injustice in Canada do not seem to have abated with time. For example, consistent with earlier studies, a 2007 survey of over 2,000 Toronto high school students also found that a very high proportion of racial minority students believe that their racial group often experiences discrimination with respect to police treatment, teacher treatment, post-secondary educational opportunities, employment opportunities and housing. In general, black students are the most likely to perceive racial discrimination in Canadian society, followed closely by Aboriginal students, Hispanics, South Asians, West Asians and Asians. By contrast, white students are much less likely to perceive racial discrimination than students from all other racial categories (School Community Safety Advisory Panel 2008).

Findings such as these have caused various government and criminal justice representatives to admit that the "perception" of discrimination exists in Ontario and that, at the very least, the criminal justice system suffers from a serious "public relations" problem. It has also motivated various police organizations to implement programs designed to improve relationships with various minority communities (see Stenning 2003). However, there is still considerable debate about the cause of these perceptions of racial bias. Critics of the justice system feel that perceptions of discrimination reflect reality and are rooted in the lived experiences of black people. On the other hand, the conservative view is that perceptions of injustice are inaccurate and caused by other factors such as peer socialization and exposure to stories about racism in the American media. One popular explanation is that most black people in Canada are immigrants from countries where the criminal justice system is corrupt, brutal and oppressive, like Jamaica or Nigeria. As a result, many black people have based their opinion about the police and the courts on their experiences in their home country. The hypothesis is that second and third generation blacks, who have been raised in Canada, will have a much better opinion of the Canadian justice system. Research, however, suggests that the opposite is true. Recent immigrants, in fact,

perceive much less discrimination in the Canadian justice system than immigrants who have been in Canada for a long period of time. Indeed, blacks who were born in Canada tend to have far worse perceptions of the police and the criminal courts (see Ruck and Wortley 2002; Wortley and Tanner 2002; Wortley et al. 1997). How can we explain this finding? Are perceptions of discrimination based on personal and/or group experiences?

The importance of all these perceptions should not be underestimated. Indeed, how an individual perceives his or her environment may be more important than objective reality in that one's perceptions will influence how they respond to the social environment (Ruck and Wortley 2002). Some researchers have argued that the greater the perception of criminal injustice, the less likely people are to trust criminal justice professionals and cooperate with criminal investigations (see Wortley and McCalla 2007). Some scholars are beginning to recognize that perceptions of social injustice may ultimately impact the level of criminal activity within a society. Katherine Russell, for example, argues that perceptions of injustice may contribute to the higher levels of offending among the black population in the United States. She claims that "for blacks the perceived existence of unfair sanctions, combined with the absence or lack of sanctions for race-based harms, cause a diminished faith in the justice system, which in turn sets the stage for criminal offending" (Russell, 1996, 609). Considering the strength of the current racial divide in perceived injustice, it is important to further explore this hypothesis.

A large body of international research documents demonstrated that significant racial differences exist with respect to people's perceptions of how criminal justice is applied.

A brief review of the theoretical literature suggests that a connection between perceptions of social injustice and crime might well exist, and that perceptions of injustice can lead to crime. Perceptions of injustice, in our opinion, should be added to the list of possible neutralization techniques. If offenders, for example, believe that the social system in which they reside is unjust, and that their opportunities for success are blocked, they may be less likely to trust officials, lose faith in the system and resort to crime. It is plausible that perceived injustice essentially becomes a rationalization or justification for criminal behaviour. Indeed, work in the area of legitimacy and compliance suggests that people who believe that life is unfair, and that their best efforts are blocked by external forces, such as racism or class interests, are more likely to break the law.

While the research thus far has focused on the perceived fairness or legitimacy of the criminal justice system in isolation, recent Canadian research suggests that perceptions of justice in other areas of social life might be equally important in predicting deviant behaviour. A recent Canadian survey also examined the impact of perceived discrimination and social injustice on gang membership (see Wortley and Tanner 2006). This survey, conducted in 2000, involved a representative sample of 3,393 high school students. Unlike media accounts, this survey found that immigrant students (5%) were actually less likely to be currently involved in gangs than Canadian-born youth (7%). Nonetheless, the rate of gang membership was twice as high among Black (13%) and Hispanic youth (12%) than among White (6%) and Asian (5%) youth. It must be stressed that while black and Hispanic students were more likely to report gang involvement than white students, a large proportion of all gang-involved students (over 40%) were white.

Logistic regression analyses revealed that the impact of race on the probability of gang membership *was not* reduced after statistically controlling for social class, educational performance, single parent family background, peer deviance or self-control. However, the impact of race became statistically *insignificant* after introducing a variable that measured respondent perceptions of racial discrimination and social injustice. In other words, respondents who perceived racism against their own racial group – with respect to policing, housing, education and employment opportunities – were more likely to be involved in gangs than those who did not perceive racism. Furthermore, group differences in perceptions of racism seem to explain why our black and Hispanic respondents are more likely to report gang involvement than either white or Asian students (Wortley and Tanner 2006). In our opinion, these survey results are important. They indicate that, at least in the Canadian context, there may be a strong relationship between experiences and perceptions of racism and social injustice and the likelihood of gang involvement.

Conclusions drawn from the above survey are supported by additional findings from the 2005 *Toronto Youth Gang Pilot Project* (Wortley and Tanner 2007; Wortley and Tanner 2008). This project involved over detailed, qualitative interviews with over 100 known gang members from Southern Ontario. Gang members were asked to explain, in their own words, why they first became involved in gangs and their reasons for remaining involved in the gang lifestyle. The results indicate that youth, regardless of racial background, provide numerous utilitarian justifications for their gang activity. These justifications include financial gain, protection, respect, social support and companionship. However, unlike white youth, racial minority youth often maintain that their involvement in gangs is directly linked to experiences of racism, oppression and social exclusion. The following quotes are typical or respondents who felt that racism and social injustice are at the heart of a growing gang problem in Canada:

"What chance has a guy like me got in the real world? A poor black guy? Schools are shit, teachers don't think you can do the work. Nobody's gonna give me a good job. So I'll

get paid and live in another way, in another world where I can get respect and nobody cares what I look like or where I came from. I know I'll probably die young or go to jail, but what other chance is there? (Case 66, black male, 22 years).

"I remember growing up in school they would always tell you that you could become anything you want. That's pure bullshit. When you are poor, like you got nothin. I went to school with these rich kids – white kids and Chinese kids – who did fuckin nothin. But their parents gave them everything for just being fucking alive. Their parents would buy them clothes and cars and IPods and take them to travel places. They didn't realize how fuckin lucky they are. I hated those assholes. I have no problem robbing those motherfuckers and taking their shit. They don't deserve anything more than me (Case 99, Asian male, 22 years).

"It's like the only jobs they got for poor black people is like Macdonalds or Wendy's or other bullshit like that. Low, low pay, no respect. You basically just a slave, just a punk, while some fat owner gets rich. I'm not goin down like that. I'm my own boss, make way more money and don't sell myself out to shit like that. I'd rather die than embarrass myself like that (Case 64, black male, 23 years).

Indeed, some minority respondents went so far as to openly denounce Canada and their position within the social hierarchy. These individuals clearly viewed their gang membership as an act of defiance against a society that had rejected and abandoned them:

"This is not my country. This country does not care about me or my family. They just want people like us to clean the shit out of white people's toilets or look after their fuckin' kids. They want us to keep our place and keep the peace so they can go on with their fuckin lives. I'm not going out like that. I'm not goin to be some bitch. People will know who I am – I don't bow down to nobody. I won't take their fuckin shit (Case 123, black male, 22 years)".

"Canada does not care about me. Canada does not care about my family or about black people. This country is for rich white people. They make the rules. They run shit here. They just want us to stay quiet and know our place. They want us to take the shit jobs and not complain about racism. I'm not being no white person's bitch. I'm not working no low paying slave job. I will sell drugs in my crew and steal shit and not bow down to white people. At least that is some power (Case 97, black male, 21 years)".

Research to date has clearly shown that there are profound racial differences in perceptions of discrimination and social injustice. Unfortunately, the impact of these perceptions on subsequent behaviour is only now being investigated. While current American research focuses on the perceptions of black people and how such perceptions may impact their propensity for crime, it is important to note that, at least theoretically, perceptions of injustice have the potential to explain offending among people from all racial, ethnic or religious backgrounds.

Although the existing research literature suggests that perceptions of social injustice are positively related to crime and delinquency, the question remains: if experiences with discrimination and perceptions of social injustice can lead to criminality, is it possible that such negative perceptions of society can lead to religious radicalization and extremism among young people. We turn to this question in the next section of this report.

Social injustice and religious radicalization

Few studies have attempted to explore the extent of religious radicalization among Canadian youth; or the causes of religious radicalization. How can researchers identify radicalized youth? Once identified, how can researchers gain access to such individuals? If access were granted, would radicalized or extremist youth be willing to talk honestly to researchers about their experiences, perceptions and motivations? As a result of these obstacles, we know very little about youth extremism in this country. Although high profile cases – like the arrests of the Toronto 18 – point to a *possible* problem with religious radicalization – the magnitude of this problem is almost impossible to determine.

Despite serious data limitations, academics, community activists, security advisors and politicians have all, at one time or another, provided ideas or hypotheses regarding the causes and growth of religious radicalization. In general, explanatory frameworks can be dived into two broad models: 1) The Importation Model; and the 2) The Strain Model.

The Importation Model holds that religious extremism or radicalization develops in foreign countries and is "imported" into Canada and other Western nations. Importation can involve either the importation of radicals themselves (i.e., people who are radical at the time of their migration to the host country) or the importation of radical ideas and philosophies (through documents, religious texts, videos, music, sermons, Internet content, etc.). Under the importation framework, Canada bears little responsibility for the development of youth radicalization. Radicalization is created in other countries. Motivated extremists migrate to the West with the explicit goal of engaging in extremist acts or converting more followers to their cause. The policy implications associated with the importation model include increased spending on security, intelligence and surveillance strategies, increased cooperation with the international security community, preventing the immigration of known radicals, pre-screening immigrants and refugees for extremist tendencies, censuring radical literature and media content and detaining or deporting radical individuals who pose a threat to national security. This "get tough on immigration" perspective is quite popular in the United States – especially since 9/11 (see Andreas and Biersteker 2003; Kimmel and Stout 2006; Kerwin 2005; Renshon 2005; Welch 2003). Although major tenets of the importation model have had a strong impact on Canada's domestic security policies (see Bramadat and Keeble forthcoming; Harvey 2005; Pratt 2006; Roach 2003), critics continue to argue that Canada needs to further toughen its immigration system to prevent radicalization and extremism from spreading in North America (Bell 2004).

According to the Strain Model, on the other hand, most immigrants do not immigrate to Canada or other Western counties with the explicit intention of engaging in acts of religious extremism. Rather, most immigrants arrive with the intention of integrating into the mainstream social fabric of their host county. We should remember that there

is often a significant overlap between immigrants belonging to racial minority and those belonging to a religious minority groups. Moreover, these newcomers often experience great hardships including economic and social marginalization, poverty, poor housing, religious intolerance, racial profiling, blocked employment opportunities and other forms of discrimination (see Abu Laban 1998; Basran and Li 1998; Hiebert 2003; Hyman and Beiser 2000; Kazemipur and Halli 2000; Keeble 2005; Kazimpur 2000; Lyman and Cowley 2007; Picot 2004; Preston and Wang 2003; Saloojee 2002; Zaman 2004). These strains, in turn, produce feelings of social injustice and social alienation. According to the strain model, therefore, religious radicalization and extremism is rooted in the conditions immigrants face within host counties – not the social conditions that existed in their country of origin. Radicalization, in other words, is not imported from the outside. Rather, religious extremism is inspired by the negative or traumatic experiences minorities experience within the host country (see Wortley 2004).

The Strain model may be particularly relevant for explaining the religious radicalization of second-generation minority youth within Western nations. These youth, after all, grew up in Western democracies and have little lived experience in other nations. Furthermore, although they may be exposed to radical religious philosophies that originate in other countries, their negative experiences in the West may make them more vulnerable or receptive to these messages. Jock Young, for example, argues that both crime and religious radicalization emerge among second generation immigrant youth because, unlike their parents, these young people expect economic, legal and social equality but continue to experience discrimination, poverty and social exclusion. Under these circumstances, he argues, crime and extremism can flourish (Young 2003). European scholars have also found that recent terrorist incidents – including the 2005 riots in France and the 2005 bombings in London – typically involve angry, alienated second generation youth with a religious or racial minority background. These scholars typically attribute the disaffection of these youth to their "home-grown" (that is, French and British) experiences with inequality, racism and exclusion (see Angel-Ajani 2000; Baudrillard 2006; Brighton 2007; Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins 2006; Jacobs 2005; Jupp 2006; Kundnani 2007; MacDonald et al. 2005; Murray 2006; Nagel 2001; Poynting 2007).

In sum, a review of the existing literature indicates that the root causes of youth religious radicalization may be similar to the root causes of youth crime. Youth who are subjected to inequality, intolerance and discrimination are more likely to develop perceptions of injustice and feelings of social alienation than youth who are not subjected to such strains. Perceptions of social injustice, along with associated feelings of anger, despair and alienation, may provide young people with the motivations/justifications they need to participate in both crime and extremism.

Are particular religions more or less subject to radicalization?

One feature of the public discourse about religious youth radicalization is the claim, or the worry, that certain religions are inherently more prone to violence (not just youth-generated violence, but violence per se) than others. Of course, the religion that generates so many anxieties at the moment is Islam, but the role of fundamentalist Christianity in the current American administration has certainly caught the attention of some pundits and scholars (Ali 2002; Hedges 2007). A closer analysis of these five religious traditions, however, indicates a remarkable internal heterogeneity when it comes to the connections between religion and violence. In all five of these traditions, adherents have historically been able to use their religious texts and worldviews to justify both violent and non-violent postures regarding their imagined others (understood here as infidel/heathen states, cultures, tribes, or individuals).

When public commentators do acknowledge the moral ambiguity and socially constructed nature of all religion – and thus, one presumes, the likelihood that they might foment *or* discourage violence – it is often the case that such assertions are rather lacking in specifics. That is to say, the assertion itself is made as a kind of "act of faith" in the notion that no particular religion is inherently wicked. The motivations behind such bland assertions might be laudable, but without at least some details, the claims may appear to be expressions of wishful thinking. The following tables are meant provide some basic information that seems to support the circumspect claims sometimes made by commentators.

Table 1

CHRISTIANITY AND VIOLENCE

Pro-Violence Texts	"But as for the towns that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. You shall annihilate them – the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites – just as the Lord your God has commanded." Deuteronomy 20:15-18 "From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of fury of the wrath of God the Almighty." Revelation 19:15
Anti-Violence texts	"He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears in to pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." Micah 4:3 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy; But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those whose persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Matthew 5.43-46 "If you refuse to love, you must remain dead; to hate your brother is to be a murderer, and murderers, as you know, do not have eternal life in them."1 John 3.15 "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly." Luke 6.27-28
Pro-Violence Figures	**Emperor Theodosius:** (346-395CE) Used forceful imposition alongside peaceful proselytizing to spread Christianity. **Augustine:** (354-430CE) Believed that if one could not be led to worship of Christ through teaching, physical harm in the name of the church was excusable if bringing someone to Christ. **Pope Urban II:** (1st Crusade, 1095) Believed that Christ commanded the warriors of the Crusade to expel Muslims from the Christian lands (Etzioni 2007: 105). **St. Thomas Aquinas:** (1225-1274) Violence towards non-believers, or non-Christians, was said to be the responsibility of secular authorities. **Martin Luther:** (1483-1546) Recommended violence/force against Spiritualists, Anabaptists, and Antinomians. **John Calvin:** (1509-1564) Found Protestant justification for the violent suppression of heresy.
Anti-Violence Figures	**Tertullian:** (160-230CE) **St. Ambrose of Milan:** (340-397CE) **St. John Chrysostom:** (347-407CE) **St. Bernard of Clarivaux:** (1080-1153CE)

Early Christian Martyrs: Many early Christians demonstrated pacific beliefs and nonviolent practices by their refusal to enter the Roman army.

Erasmus: (1466-1536) Believed that violence drove humans to believe "what they do not believe."

George Fox: (1624-1691)

Martin Luther King Jr.: (1929-1968)

Pro-Violence Movements

The Crusades: (11th-13th Centuries), **The Spanish Inquisition:** (1478-1834), **The Protestant Reformation:** (beginning in 1517). Throughout each of these movements violence in the name of Christianity occurred with diverse justifications. Note also however, that each period of violence also inspired the defense of nonviolence as superior to violence and coercion.

The Lord's Resistance Army: (Uganda) Have terrorized northern Uganda since 1988 in its attempt to bring down the government of President Yoweri Museveni and put in its place a regime based on the Ten Commandments.

Aryan Republican Army: (U.S.A.) The Aryan Republican Army (ARA) was a militant group of Aryan Nations members and Christian Identity followers who committed 22 bank robberies in the Midwest during 1994 and 1995.

Ku Klux Klan: (U.S.A.) The Ku Klux Klan is a racist, anti-Semitic movement with a commitment to extreme violence in order to achieve its goals of racial segregation and white supremacy.

Army of God: (U.S.A. and Canada) The Army of God promotes "justifiable homicide," claiming "that killing abortion providers" is "justified in defense of innocent lives."

Anti-Violence Movements

The Waldensians: (10th Century)

Peace of Augsburg: (1555) Was a treaty signed which officially ended the religious struggle/violence between the Catholics and Lutherans and made the legal division of Christendom permanent within the Roman Empire.

Treaty of Westphalia: (1648) Were a pair of treaties signed in 1648, which ended The Thirty Years War and The Eighty Years War. The treaty called for peace between the Protestant and Catholic churches.

Lollards: (14th Century)

The Moravians: (13th and 14th Century)

Christian Humanists:(15th Century)

Anabaptists: (16th Century) Generally promoted pacifism.

Classic "Just War" Ideologies

St. Augustine, The City of God, (Book XIX, Chapter 12): Augustine is often cited as the most classic example of Justification for war in the name of Christianity. "For even they who make war desire nothing but victory – desire, that is to say, to attain to peace with glory. For what else is victory than the conquest of those who resist us? and when this is done there is peace. It is therefore with the desire for peace that wars are waged, even by those who take pleasure in exercising their warlike nature in command and battle. And hence it is obvious that peace is the end sought for by war. For every man seeks peace by waging war, but no man seeks war by making peace."

CHRISTIANITY AND VIOLENCE

Current Stance On Violence

Today, in general, justifications for violence are not widely accepted by Christian theologians and there is a greater emphasis among theologians on nonviolence and belief made from free decision.

On the other hand, there are many groups/movements that condone Just War and violence in the name of Christianity.

As well, many scholars believe that the Bush Administration's justifications for invading Iraq are closely connected with fundamentalist Christian apocalyptic sensibilities about the return of the Messiah and the role of the Middle East in this grand narrative.

JUDAISM AND VIOLENCE

Pro-Violence Texts

"One who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall be put to death; the whole congregation shall stone the blasphemer. Aliens as well as citizens, when they blaspheme the Name, shall be put to death. Anyone who kills a human being shall be put to death. Anyone who kills an animal shall make restitution for it, life for life. Anyone who maims another shall suffer the same injury in return: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; the injury inflicted is the injury to be suffered. One who kills an animal shall make restitution for it; but one who kills an man shall be put to death." Leviticus 24:16-22

Anti-Violence Texts

"I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forever." Ezekiel 37:26

Pro-Violence Figures

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935) and his son **Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook** (1891-1982): Both believed that the return of the Jews to the Holy Land marked the beginning of the Messianic Age, and that the settlement of Israel, and the surrounding occupied land was a divine commandment. Some followers believed that it was their duty to destroy the Arabs in the occupied territories.

Rabbi Meir Kahane (1932-1990): Founded the militant **Jewish Defense League** in 1968, in New York City. Though the JDL is not specifically considered to be an active terrorist organization, the JDL is referred to by the U.S. government as a "violent extremist Jewish organization." In numerous speeches and essays, and in several books, Meir Kahane preached a message of Jewish supremacy. For the JDL leader and his many fervent followers, any and all measures to further Jewish survival and welfare – including terror, dispossession and murder – are entirely justified. Meir Kahane also advocated a complete eviction of Arabs from Israel and proposed laws that separated Jews from non-Jews in every aspect of life.

Anti-Violence Figures

Rabbi Judah Leon Manges (1877-1948): Dedicated much of his life to reconciliation with Arab Palestinians. Advocated a peaceful, binational solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Martin Buber (1878-1965): Was a supporter of a non-violent, binational solution in Palestine.

A.D. Gordon (1856-1922): Believed the land of Israel could be acquired by agricultural labour, not war.

Toma Sik (1939-2004): Was a Holocaust survivor, and was known for his opposition to Israeli militarism. He is often called the "pioneer" of the Israeli-Palestinian search for peace.

Amos Oz (b. 1939): a representative of the left-wing Zionism and founder of Peace Now; a supporter of the binational solution; he does not oppose violence in the name of Israeli self-defence, as evidenced by his support of the recent Israeli war against Lebanon.

Pro-Violence Movements

Gush Emunim (The Bloc of the Faithful): Gush Emunim is an ultra-nationalist, religio-political revitalization movement and it was formed in March 1974 in the aftermath of the October 1973 War. The major activity of Gush Emunim has been to initiate Jewish settlements in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The movement has thousands of members (hundreds of thousands in the 1970's and 80's). They take literally the promise of God to the people of Israel in Ex 23:31: "I will set your boarders from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the inhabitants of the land, and you shall drive them out before you." In 1984 followers of the Gush Emunim movement were found to be responsible for a number of terrorist attacks against Arabs. There were attacks on Arab Mayors in the West Bank, and on an Islamic College in Hebron. There was also a plot to bomb the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

Anti-Violence Movements

Jewish Reform Movement: There are approximately 1.5 million members of the Jewish Reform Movement in the United States, and about 900 congregations worldwide. Central to their belief is that Judaism must adapt to the modern age. Their 1937 document entitled "The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism" clearly outlines the rejection of war and promotes peaceful solutions to conflicts, and harmonious relations between warring groups. The document suggests: "the spiritual and physical disarmament of all nations has been one of its [Judaism's] essential teachings."

Union for Reform Judaism: A resolution passed in June 2004 outlines the public protest by Jews of the demolition of Palestinian homes. However, it is also important to note that Reform Jews do not understand themselves as pacifistic since Reform Judaism still supports Israel and advocates for its protection and the retaliation against terrorism.

The Workmen's Circle: A Jewish social justice movement concerned with promoting peace, particularly in Palestine.

Classic "Just War" Ideologies

Although peace is the central teaching of rabbinical Judaism (teachings based on the writings of early Jewish scholars), the idea of Holy War occurs in the Hebrew Bible. The idea of 'Just War' is clearly expressed both in the Old Testament (see Deuteronomy 20:10-15,19-20) and in the later rabbinical tradition. While revenge and unprovoked aggression are condemned, self defense is justified.

Rabbi Meir Kahane (1932-1990): He believed in a philosophy of "sacred violence," or that killing Arabs was God's will. He suggested that violence with the intent to protect Jewish interests, was never wrong.

Current Stance on Violence

Jews have been victims of dreadful persecution, usually at the hands of Christians, for nearly two thousand years, culminating in the Holocaust. Defending modern Israel and dealing justly with the Palestinians places thoughtful Jews in a difficult dilemma. There have been stronger legitimizations of violence in Judaism, or among Jews since 1948, when Judaism was invested in a state, and during periods of the first and second temple. Extreme religious nationalism is often characteristic of those who support violence in connection with Judaism (especially after the major wars of 1948 and 1967). Many Jewish communities around the world struggle with pro- and anti-violence philosophies. Zionism in particular, (a movement concerned with the return of the Jews to Israel, the promised land, for the purpose of establishing a national state), is the backdrop against which major debates about the justification of violence are entertained.

Pro-Violence Texts

"And fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in Allah; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression." Qur'an 2:193

"Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem of war; but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." Qur'an 9:5

Anti-Violence Texts

"Allah has knowledge of the Prophet's cry, 'oh my Lord! Truly these are a people who will not believe!' But turn away from them, and say 'Peace!' But soon they shall know! Qur'an 43:88-9

"Oh you that reject Faith! I do not worship that which you worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which you have been wont to worship. Nor will you worship that which I worship. To you be your way and to me mine." Qur'an 109:1-6

"But if they desist-behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace." Qur'an 2:192

"And fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression-for, verily, God does not love aggressors." Qur'an 2:190

Pro-Violence Figures

Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949): Was the founder of Muslim Brotherhood, a complex group components of which support violence in order to defend Islam and Islamic societies from Western influence.

Ibn-Taymiya (1263-1328): His thought inspired Bin Laden. Believed that "the apostate is more blameworthy in his infidelity than an original unbeliever."

Osama Bin Laden (b. 1957): Bin Laden is a militant Islamist believed to be responsible for the foundation of Jihadist Organization Al-Qaeda. He issued two fatwa that instructed Muslims to kill American and other Western civilians and military personnel until they withdraw military forces from Islamic countries.

Anti-Violence Figures

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890–1988): Was a Pathan (or Pushtun) of Afghanistan and a devout Muslim, and raised the first nonviolent army in history to free his people from British imperial rule. He persuaded 100,000 of his countrymen to lay down the guns they had made themselves and vow to fight nonviolently.

Imam Muhammad al-Shirazi (1928-2001): A highly revered teacher in Shia Islam, Shirazi calls upon all Muslims to adhere to the teachings of Islam in all domains. The teachings most predominantly recommended by Shirazi are peace, nonviolence, freedom of expression, and pluralism.

Jawdat Said (b. 1931): An Islamic scholar who has written a number of books on nonviolence in Islam.

Pro-Violence Movements

PLO (The Palestinian Liberation Organization): Established in 1964 with Arab support. The PLO charter calls for the "elimination of Zionism" by a "war of liberation."

Hamas (Egypt-Palestine): Hamas (a word meaning courage and bravery) was established in Palestine in 1987. Hamas disagrees with the Israel-Palestine peace process and has been involved in suicide attacks and other forms of violence against Israelis.

Fatah al-Qiyadah al-Thawriyyah: Is a Palestinian organization better known as the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO). The Organization is headed by **Sabri al-Bana (Abu Nidal)** and was founded in 1974 as a consequence of Abu Nidal`s split from the Fatah organization.

Taliban: The Taliban are a Sunni Islamist nationalist movement that came to power in Afghanistan in 1996. The Taliban implemented a highly restrictive interpretation of Sharia law and became internationally known for their poor treatment of women. Both men and women faced public execution for violation of their laws.

Al-Qaeda: Osama Bin Laden established al-Qaeda in the late 1980s to bring together Arabs who fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. Current goal is to establish a pan-Islamic Caliphate throughout the world. Merged with Egyptian Islamic Jihad (Al-Jihad) in June 2001. On September 11, 2001, 19 al-Qaeda suicide attackers hijacked and crashed four US commercial jets.

Hezbollah (Party of God): A political-religious paramilitary movement based in Lebanon. The movement was created in July 1982, initially as a form of resistance to the Israeli presence in Southern Lebanon. Most of Hezbollah's followers are Shia Muslims. Hezbollah includes components oriented toward the provision of social services, as well as components oriented toward anti-Western and anti-Israeli objectives.

Anti-Violence Movements

Egypt's National Society (1850): Under the leadership of Sayyed Jamal ad-Din Afghani, forty members of the ENS, through the diligent practice of only seventeen of Islam's most basic codes, almost brought about a nonviolent revolution in Egypt against forgiven influence. Wanted their most violent weapon to be their religion and the practice of its principles.

Khudai Khidmatgar (1929): A movement organized by Ghaffar Khan in India. The movement adopted nonviolence to effect political, social, and economic reforms, based on Islam. The KK was able to carry out a nonviolent program to the extent of establishing a parallel government for a short period in Peshawar. The ideal of the KK was to serve Allah and to realize the pleasure of Allah through serving humanity.

Classic "Just War" Ideologies

Jihad in Islam represents an effort to fulfill the will of Allah. There are four functions of Jihad. These are: the development of Islamic principles to subdue carnal desires; the eradication of evil; the extension of the word of Allah to the world; and the development of security against injustice and aggression. Contrary to many stereotypes in the West (in which the word "jihad" is simply "translated" as "holy war") jihad is not synonymous with war.

There are verses in the Qur'an that command followers to enter into battle (see above), though this is usually understood to be justified only when the war is understood to be defensive in nature.

Current Stance on Violence

There is a debate within the Muslim world over the use and implementation of violence to combat what is sometimes understood to be forces working in opposition to Muslims (personally) and forces working to subvert Muslim control over regions understood to be essentially Islamic. Islam is often characterized as a religion that legitimizes violence and clashes with the liberal and democratic West, even though a) Islam (like Christianity) includes rules that govern the appropriate use of force, and b) many Muslims have been living peacefully and productively in the West for centuries.

Just as it is misleading and overly-simplistic to claim that Islam is a religion of peace, it is also misleading and overly-simplistic to claim that it is a religion of war.

SIKHISM AND VIOLENCE

Pro-Violence Texts

'Eternal God, Thou art our shield, The dagger, knife, the sword we wield, To us protector there is given. The timeless, deathless, Lord of Heaven, To us all-steel's unvanquished might, To us all-time's resistless flight, but chiefly Thou, protector brave, All steel, wilt Thine own servant save." Guru Granth Sahib (source to be confirmed)

"When all avenues have been explored, all means tried, it is rightful to draw the sword for noble cause". Guru Gobind Singh, in the Zafarnama.

"In the Guru's house, religion and worldly enjoyment should be combined – the cooking pot to feed the poor and needy and the sword to hit oppressors." Guru Hargobind

Anti-Violence Texts

"With constant peace and tranquility, they enshrine the Lord within their hearts." Hairao, Third Mehl

"No one is my enemy
No one is a foreigner
With all I am at peace
God within us renders us
Incapable of hate and prejudice."
Guru Nanak

Pro-Violence Figures

Guru Hargobind: (1595) Organized a small Sikh army and believed that it was necessary to fight in order to protect the weak and oppressed. Was the first of the Sikh Gurus to defend the faith using violence.

Guru Gobind Singh: (1666) He created the Khalsa (The Pure Ones) in 1699, changing the Sikhs into a saint-soldier order with special symbols and sacraments for protecting themselves.

Beant Singh and Constable Satwant Singh assassinated **Indira Gandhi** on October 31st, 1984. Subsequent riots after the assassination led to the death of thousands of Sikhs in India.

Anti-Violence Figures

Guru Nanak: (1469) Was the first Sikh Guru and founder of Sikhism. Preached a message which rebelled against ritualism, caste, prejudices, hypocrisy and idolatry. He advocated non-violence.

Guru Arjan Dev: (1563) He promoted non-violence resistance to the Mogul army and thus became the first Sikh martyr.

Ram Singh: (1815-1885) Preached about the end of foreign rule in India. He and his followers promoted a non-violent reaction to British forces by refusing to use the services provided by the British government.

Pro-Violence Movements

Violence in Sikhism is very closely related to the struggle for political control of Punjab as well as the death of Sikh Guru Arjun Mal, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, at the hands of Moguls who tried to convert the Sikhs to Islam. The Sikhs responded by violently defending their right to live as they wanted. Still, temples across Punjab were destroyed and captured by Muslims and Sikhs were forcibly converted to Islam.

The Khalistan Movement: (Beginning in the 1970's and 1980's) Sikh leader Jagjit Singh Chauhan traveled to the U.S.A and throughout India to propagate the formation of an independent state in the Punjab. During the 1980's some Khalistan supporters around the world turned to violence to express their concerns. The movement caused huge rifts between the Indian army and Sikh militants.

SIKHISM AND VIOLENCE

	Dal Khalsa: A pro-Khalistan organization associated with hijackings and both violent and non-violent struggle to establish Khalistan.
Anti-Violence Movements	**Sikh Martyrs:** Since the 17th Century, many Sikhs refused to renounce Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, even under though this meant that many would be killed. **Singh Sabha Movement:** (1873) Organized campaigns against the British occupation in India where Sikh men, women and children would (among other objectives) ask peacefully to be given possession of their shrines.
Classic "Just War" Ideologies	Although many of the Gurus, such as Guru Nanak, Guru Arjan Dev, and Guru Har Krishan advocated martyrdom and non-violence, others such as Guru Hargobind, and Guru Gobind Singh justified violence and war for the protection of the Sikh faith.
Current Stance on Violence	Most Sikhs would argue that violence is not tolerated in their religion. However, the tradition has often (throughout its history) been perceived as a threat by the ruling religious communities (and states). As such, being prepared for persecution and for a valiant response to this persecution has a long history in Sikhism.

HINDUISM AND VIOLENCE

Pro-Violence Texts	"O Kaunteya, if you are killed you will ascend to heaven. On the contrary if you win the war you will enjoy the comforts of earthly kingdom. Therefore get up and fight with determination." *Bhagavad Gita* 2.37 "With equanimity towards happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, victory and defeat, fight. This way you will not incur any sin." *Bhagavad Gita* 2.38
Anti-Violence Texts	**Ahimsa**, or the Hindu concept of nonviolence is named as one of the five essential virtues in the Chandogya Upanishad (3.17.4), and is discussed in the *Bhagavad Gita*.
Pro-Violence Figures	**Nathuram Godse** (1919-1949): Godse was the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi and a former RSS member (see below). He envisioned India as a nation defined by militant Hinduism. Often used parts of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana to support violence in order to condemn Gandhi's nonviolent beliefs. Interestingly, Gandhi used the same texts to justify nonviolence. **Vinayak Savarkar** (1883-1923): Known as the "Father of Hindu Nationalism (Hindutva")." Believed that Christians and Muslims could never be recognized as true Indians. Promoted violence in order to defend and promote Hinduism in India and was an associate of Godse. **Madhavrao Sadashivrao Golwalkar** (1906-1973): Prominent Hindu Nationalist leader and important figure within the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

SIKHISM AND VIOLENCE

Anti-Violence Figures

Mahatma Gandhi (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) (1869-1948): Gandhi spent much of his energy trying to transform the abstract concept of nonviolence into a political tool. Nonviolence, according to Gandhi was both a political and religious duty. Gandhi promoted an Indian Nation in which no one religion would dominate the others. Gandhi believed that cosmic battlefields that are discussed in Hindu scripture and traditions were representative of one's inner battlefield, where ethical lessons are learned and decision-making occurs.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar (1956): Known as "His Holiness," Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is involved in promoting peace and nonviolence throughout the world. His vision is to create nonviolence through Hindu wisdom and to create a violence-free global family fostering peace through human values and service. Has been given hundreds of awards for his global peace efforts.

Pro-Violence Movements

Karsevaks (meaning "volunteers"): In the Indian context, the term is often used to refer to the militant Hindu activists who, in 1992, destroyed the 16th century mosque Babri Masjid, or the Mosque of Babur, located in Ayodhya. They believed the mosque was built over top of the destroyed temple commemorating the birthplace of Lord Ram. They also believed the destruction of the mosque was the first step to restoring Hindu rule in India. This act set off Hindu-Muslim riots as far away as London.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP): Ardent supporters of the Hinduization of India and vocal critics of Dalits (low-caste Hindus) who convert to Islam. They are also known to terrorize Christian charity groups and others suspected of "anti-Hindu activities." Christmas 1998, the VHP went on a ten day rampage against Christians in the southern part of Gujarat. Violence is justified by the VHP for two reasons: a) lower castes do not possess agency in matters of faith, and b) Christianity and Islam are affronts to the integrity and cohesion of the Hindu nation.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP): Another Hindu nationalist group, they draw heavily on symbols within the Hindu tradition that support a violent ideal of masculinity.

Anti-Violence Movements

Satyagraha: Was both a philosophy and a movement developed by Mahatma Gandhi. The word means "to grasp the truth." Part of this concept involves nonviolent resistance and it was developed during the Indian independence movement.

Indian Independence Movement: Both violent and nonviolent philosophies were advocated in efforts to promote Indian independence from British colonial control.

Classic "Just War" Ideologies

Hindu texts, such as the Vedas and the *Bhagavad Gita* promote Hindusim as a warrior tradition and war is often discussed as one's religious duty. Many Hindus believe, in conjunction with these texts, that if a person dies while fighting a war in defense of his religion, he attains Viraswargam, a heaven-like place or state of existence.

Current Stance on Violence

The question of violence and its possible justifications within Hinduism have been the subjects of heated debate for centuries. A tradition that includes both Gandhi and the *Bhagavad Gita*, and that has been closely associated with political movements that have sometimes sought to use Hinduism to shape Indian identity against both Islamic and then British rule, certainly includes numerous pro- and anti-violence discourses and movements.

A satisfactory account of the connections between violence/non-violence and religion in these five traditions would approximate the length and breadth of a multi-volume encyclopedia. The preceding tables are intended to provide very preliminary evidence of a general claim we make throughout this report: all religions are internally complex cultural phenomena that are intractably related to political, social, existential and economic forces. As such, all religions have been associated throughout their long (as with Judaism) or short (as with Sikhism) histories with both violent and non-violent texts, figures, movements, and ideas.

It is regrettably quite common to adopt a naive approach to religion in which religion is understood to be, *by definition*, virtuous and faultless. The corollary to this approach is the view that wherever violence, calumny or genocide are expressed under the banner of a given religion, the religion has been, again *by definition*, "hijacked" or "distorted" (Lincoln 2003). This position is, of course, most commonly promoted by members of religious traditions themselves, and that fact alone should lead outsiders to be cautious about accepting it. There is now rather overwhelming evidence that contradicts this simplification and points instead toward the validity of the position we advocate here: that there are a great many Christianities, Hinduisms, Sikhisms, etc. Some of them are violent, intolerant, misogynistic, and others are peaceful, communitarian and egalitarian. It is not just inappropriate for scholars to make *assumptions*, but also impossible for scholars to make conclusive *assertions* regarding the veracity of one group's claims to represent the only authentic way to be Muslim, Christian, etc.

Many scholars, policy makers and members of the general public are greatly concerned about links between Islam and violence. Scholars might be asked to offer opinions on the religious claims made by a given Muslim group (or a cluster of Muslim groups). Nonetheless, one should be highly suspicious of such opinions, since mounting evidence regarding the multi-valent nature of religions throughout history (Etzioni 2007) indicates that every tradition has within itself the seeds of violence, just as each has within itself the seeds of generosity and pacifism. Islam is like all other religions in this regard.

Religious websites

There is considerable public concern that young people's extensive use of the Internet may be a possible source of religious radicalization. In order to lore this topic we decided to conduct a preliminary content analysis of major religious websites regularly accessed by Canadian youth. This analysis is designed to address two research questions: 1) To what extent do religious websites contain radical or violent content; and 2) Do the websites for some religious traditions contain more radical content than others.

We explored popular, youth-based websites for five major religious traditions: Christianity; Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. We conducted a content analysis of 181 different religious websites with a specific youth audience: 80 of these sites (44%) are classified as Christian, 45 are Jewish (25%), 40 are Muslim (22%), 11 are Sikh (6%) and 10 are Hindu (5%).

After reviewing the content of these websites, they were classified according to six basic categories. Definitions for each category of website are provided below.

Celebration Site: Contains positive information that celebrates the religious tradition. Usually such sites promoted socialization between from the same faith and promoted both religious and social events of interest to young people. Little, if any, space devoted to discussions of controversial issues.

Complaint Site Level 1: Considerable space devoted to the discussion of discrimination and bias experienced by members of the religious tradition in question. No evidence of political organization or activism.

Complaint Site Level 2: Goes beyond just listing incidents of bias or discrimination. Frames incidents of discrimination or bias as expressions of a broad Canadian social prejudice or hostility toward their group.

Complaint Site Level 3: Tries to motivate others to engage in lawful protest against discrimination and bias. Encourages peaceful protest and activism (including calls to organize lawsuits, protests, marches, human rights complaints, letter writing campaigns, etc.).

Table 2: Type of website, by religion

Type of Website	Christian Sites	Jewish Sites	Muslim Sites	Hindu Sites	Sikh Sites	TOTAL
Celebration	36%	50%	47%	90%	55%	46%
Complaint Level 1	27%	35%	17%	10%	18%	25%
Complaint Level 2	14%	3%.	20%	0%	9%	12%
Complaint Level 3	16%	7%	16%	0%	18%	13%
Complaint Level 4	4%	3%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Complaint Level 5	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Sample Size	80	40	40	10	11	181

Complaint Site Level 4: Tries to promote activism and protest as with Level Three sites. However, also contains warnings or predictions that physical conflict will result if the situation faced by their group are not addressed or remedied.

Complaint Site Level 5: Directly and explicitly promotes direct, aggressive action against Canadian institutions – or at least condones or celebrates it and frames such action as necessary and virtuous/religiously sanctioned.

The findings of our analysis are presented in Table 2. Overall, we could find very little evidence of religious radicalization on the Web across all five religious traditions. Almost 50% of all the websites we examined were Celebration sites. Level One Complaint sites are the next most common (25%), followed Level Two (12%) and Level Three Complaint sites (13%). Only 7 (3.8%) of the 181 sites we visited reached a Level Four or Level Five categorization. Five of these sites are Christian, and two are Jewish. Our research did not uncover any Muslim, Sikh, or Hindu sites that reached Level Four or Level Five standards.

According to our Muslim research colleagues, it is important to note that many Muslim youth are very aware of the heightened monitoring their community experiences in North America and Europe as result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Thus, it may be the case that many Muslim youth will simply refrain from engaging in debates or discussions on the Web that may be deemed as threatening, violent or radical by international security forces. In other words, Muslim youth who are interested in discussing issues that may be considered 'radical' would not do so on the Web where they are open to public scrutiny. Within the Muslim community, therefore, more "radical" or "extremist" discussions could be restricted to private settings with well-known or trusted associates. Some of our Muslim colleagues, in fact, admit that they actually fear discussing controversial issues at mosques because of a fear that they will be misinterpreted and labeled an extremist by undercover CSIS agents. On the other hand, extremists within the Christian community may feel somewhat more confident about expressing their radical views on the Web because they have come under much lower level of surveillance or scrutiny than Muslims.

Obstacles to responding meaningfully to religion in Canada and to religious youth radicalization

Any even superficial consideration of the central topics of major national academic and political conferences – not to mention any analysis of the stories filling Canadian national newspapers – indicates that religion has become one of the most significant sources of anxiety in the West. Even when scholars and policy makers do not claim to be focused on religion (as in discussions of military policy in Afghanistan, education policy in the Greater Toronto Area, or crime problems in the Netherlands), religion clearly haunts these ostensibly secular discussions. What absorbs so many commentators are the implications of the intersection of religion and race, ethnicity, violence, misogyny, social justice, secular civil society, migration, discrimination, security, and so forth. Once consigned to the garbage heap of (at least Western) history, "religion and…" is back on the agenda. Indeed, in some places, it has taken over the agenda, even when participants try not to admit as much.

In this article, we are concerned with the intersection of worries about youth radicalization (and its expression in criminality and terrorism) and concerns about religious radicalization. In order to understand how people might more practically and meaningfully respond to religious youth radicalization, it is useful at this point to move very briefly into the foreground the three barriers faced by people who wish to make some progress in this particular conversation. Some general remarks will elucidate the significant resistance that exists in the public and political arenas to the development of a more nuanced approach to religious youth radicalization.

First, both secularism – that is, the ideology that promotes the marginalization of religion as part of a teleological vision of human development – and the secularization hypothesis, are under siege as a result of the dearth of empirical evidence and recent political events (not merely, but certainly most famously, the events of September 11th, 2001). For scholars devoted to a dispassionate non-theological study of this issue, both the ideology and the "vulgar" expression of the secularization hypothesis are increasingly being revealed as expressions of late enlightenment-era projection and wishful thinking (Swatos 1999; Casanova 1994). Nonetheless, on some level, the growing scholarly consensus on these matters is dwarfed by the fact that both the ideology and the hypothesis are still the reigning forces governing public and elite discourse about religion in the West (Saunders 2008). The reasons for the on-going power of these models are too complex to elucidate here, but probably the simplest and most plausible explanation would be that there has yet to emerge a satisfying and world-ordering alternative paradigm.

Many people still speak as though religion will one day fade away into oblivion, even though all around the world, religion is alive and well and making in-roads into the public arena. However, we have yet to find an account that might explain the current prominence of religion in local, national, and international affairs. Similarly, we have yet to develop very adequate theories to explain so-called "home-grown" terrorists or the religious radicalization of Canadian-born (or British-born, American-born, French-born) youth. The point is that we cannot adequately explain the religious radicalization of "our" youth, partly because we cannot adequately explain (or accept) the rather striking vitality of religion in the world today.

The question one often hears is: what is wrong with these youth? What trauma occurred in their lives in the past, or to use the theory advanced above, what "strain" is plaguing them now that prevents them from accepting the dominant secular society as normal, acceptable, and natural? The question might be turned around, though: what is wrong with our Western societies that we cannot yet integrate religious ideas, values, and individuals in a productive manner? We have certainly made some considerable progress toward integrating the racial and ethnic other, but one might ask: what happened in the development of our society that made it so resistant to or intolerant of the religious other?

We have sought above to explain how secularism eventually came to dominate elite discourse in the West. So, it is worth articulating clearly that the first and most basic obstacle an activist, policy maker, or scholar faces when trying to respond to religious youth radicalization is the quite well entrenched tendency to treat Western secularism as the universal norm against which we can measure all other societies, religious communities, and civilizations. Secularism as an ideology has become so naturalized in the West as to be rendered invisible to those whose inclinations and assumptions it so accurately reflects (Taylor 2007). However, this ideology is neither invisible nor neutral to many of the people and groups we have considered in this paper. The reason a minority of religious Canadians might reject the hegemonic ideology of secularism – and might therefore involve themselves in religious groups we might consider radical or fundamentalist – is not because they are too ignorant or cognitively rigid to accept this norm, but rather because this norm is far from universally appealing.

The second obstacle to responding meaningfully to religious youth radicalization is the power within elite discourse of a binary schema according to which religious groups, individuals or movements are framed as either good and real expressions of a given religion, or evil and inauthentic expressions of a religion. There is within a certain field of public discourse a dramatically pessimistic kind of essentialism according to which particular religions (usually, in the West, the religion in question is Islam, though this argument is sometimes used to describe all religions) are understood to be essentially pernicious, with all appearances of benevolence and pacifism being attributed to individuals, or interpreted as exceptions that prove the (negative) rule. However, as Jose Casanova points out (2007; cf. Bramadat 2008), aggressively ethnocentric anti-religiousness is in fact fairly rarely articulated in elite public discourse, and the consequences for such expressions are fairly severe, as we see in the repercussions of David Ahenakew's anti-Semitic remarks. As such, we will focus on the more common binary formulation outlined here.

Beneath this dualistic view one finds the assumption alluded to above: that all religions are *essentially* oriented toward love, peace, kindness, and egalitarianism; conversely, all violent, exclusionary and radicalized religious phenomena are only *apparently* religious. It is very common, in fact, for academic and religious commentators to appeal to this sensibility, and to characterize expressions of religious radicalization as *essentially* political, economic, and pathological in origin and motivation. Although this "naive" essentialism does produce the positive consequence of safeguarding members of (usually) minority groups, it vastly underestimates the internal heterogeneity of religion throughout history and around the world (Lincoln 2002; cf. Beyer 2005b; Bramadat and Keeble 2008; Bramadat 2005).

One can understand why it might be difficult for religious insiders to accept that religions are like all other human phenomena in that they are constituted by people, ideas, movements, discourses, texts and expressions that are violent, peaceful, misogynistic, egalitarian, progressive, conservative, ugly and beautiful. However, if we as scholars, policy-makers, and activists hope to respond constructively to religious youth radicalization, we must abandon the caricatures of religion that now stand in the way of a dispassionate approach to the very real problems that face us all.

The third and final obstacle to a meaningful response to these issues is the fact that both the elite and non-elite levels of our society suffer from what Lois Sweet calls "religious illiteracy" (1997). Sweet argues that for a variety of reasons, we as a society have decided it is not worthwhile – and even those who think it is worthwhile would still argue that it is imprudent – to teach students about religion. For many decades now decision makers, enthralled as they were by the gilded promises of secularism, have opted to exclude the dispassionate study of religion from most provincial curricula (cf. Seljak 2005). As a result, we have a general public that knows virtually nothing about a force that now plays a major role shaping Canadian and international society. Moreover, this religious illiteracy now makes it extremely difficult for teachers, parents, law enforcement officials, scholars, and policy makers to engage or even understand youth who may be attracted to radicalized religion communities.

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