

EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORIES OF RADICALIZED FEMALES IN MONTREAL

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BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- Extremist groups have been active in recruiting females
- A few females have gone to Syria from Canada:
 - an estimated 10-12 young females ('16)
 - 5 of them produced children in ISIS territory
- These women
 - educated in Canadian schools
 - socialized in Canada
- Very little research on this topic
- Studies on radicalized women have depended largely on secondary sources such as online media



AIMS OF THE STUDY: OBTAIN PRIMARY DATA

- To explore the educational trajectories of radicalized females who had either left Greater Montreal to join ISIS or had attempted to do so
- To better understand the circumstances that make some females vulnerable to ISIS propaganda
- To examine the process of radicalization of young females in Montreal
- To shed new light on this emerging phenomenon in the Quebec context
- Racism and Islamophobia exist in all parts of Canada: there is no attempt at comparison



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Overall question:

- What circumstances make some girls vulnerable to ISIS propaganda?
 - -formal education system
 - -informal education
 - -non-formal education

Three sets of secondary research questions

- What are the females' educational experiences?
- What were their relationships with their peer group/ family members?
- How did the females use social media and the internet?



THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN CVE

- Education is an obvious tool to address extremist ideologies
 - It is sustainable and cost-effective
 - it develops critical thinking, democratic values and ethical consciousness



It is an important ‘soft power’ tool to complement ‘hard power’ initiatives



WOMEN AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

- Women are generally victims of violence
- Violence by women is generally considered exceptional
- Yet, they can also be participants or active accomplices
- Women have long been involved in violent actions & movements



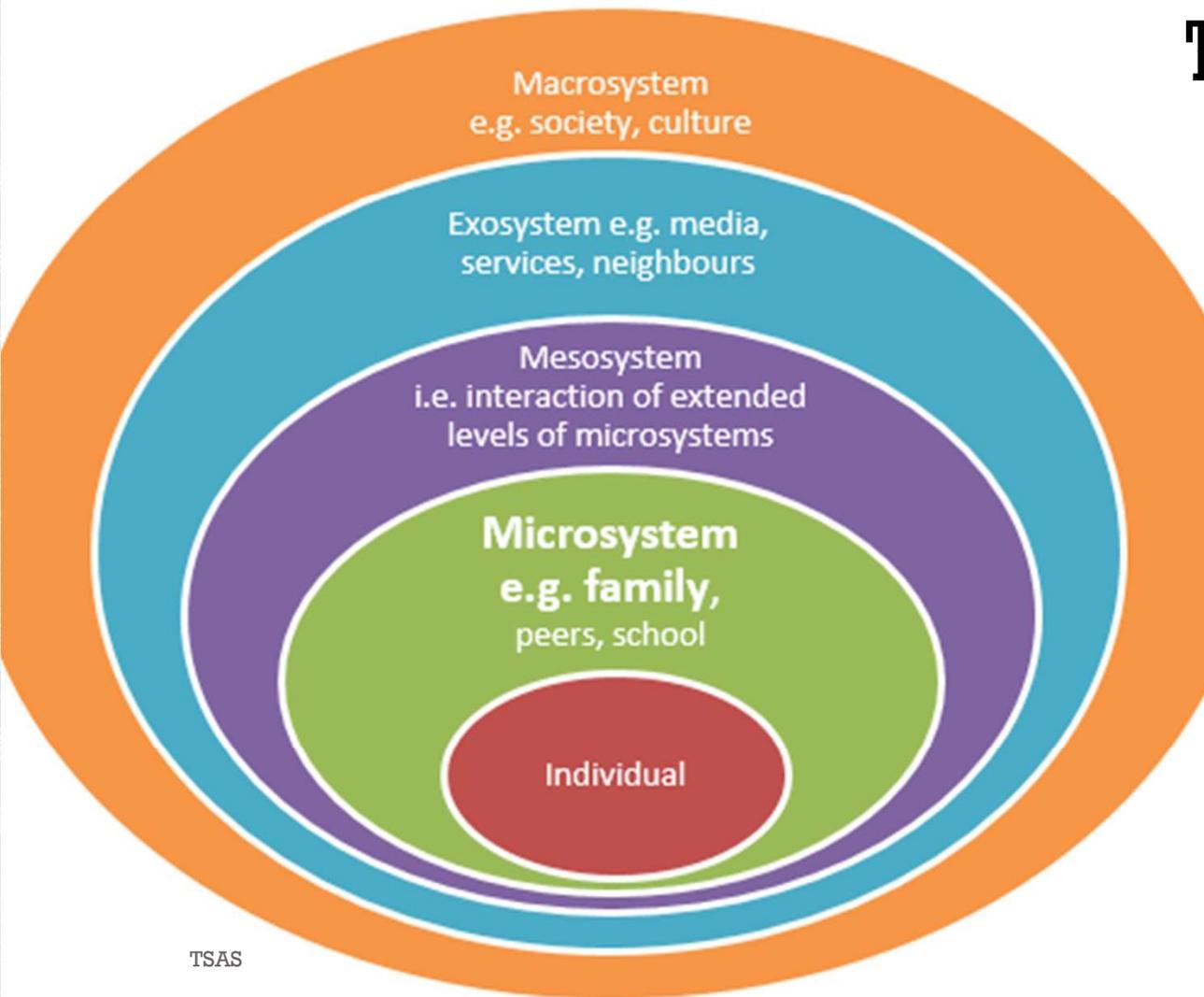
- Historically, their roles have been subordinate in violent organizations with a few exceptions



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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1989) **ecological systems theory** postulates that human development is influenced by biological, psychological, social, and institutional factors in one's social-ecological environment.



METHODOLOGY

- Two young females who grew up in Montreal and had left for Syria
 - 17/18 years old; good students
- Focus group interviews with families, peer groups, and community leaders who were close to Quebecoise females who left Montreal to join ISIS
- Recruitment was done through personal connections and snowball sampling
- Qualitative data analysis software NVivo

Participant	Description
Focus group I: Three male community leaders	
Participant S	Male; social worker
Participant I	Male; Imam
Participant P	Male; Researcher
Focus group II: Three female friends	
Participant A	Female; 19-years-old
Participant F	Female; 19-years-old
Participant K	Female; 20-years-old
Focus groups III: With two individuals	
Mother	Mother of radicalized Female #1
Participant B	Brother (non-biological but of same community) of radicalized Female #2

FINDINGS: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

- **A) Exclusionary educational experiences among Muslim youth in greater Montreal**
- Experiences of discrimination and marginalization faced by Muslim students from teachers and school administrators at elementary, secondary, and CEGEP levels
- For the youth participants, non-formal educational spaces were not of concern; unexpectedly, their parents and some adults were most concerned
- Messages in the hidden curriculum were exclusionary for those who are not ethnically French and Québécoise

Welcome to Canada
مرحبا بكم في كندا

Please have a seat !
You're home !



FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

B) Strained relationships at home between parents and with parents

- differential treatment for girls



FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

C. No information was available on media searches by the radicalized females.

- They kept all arrangements to leave for Syria secret

D. Negative media narratives on Islam were considered more harmful than the use of social media itself

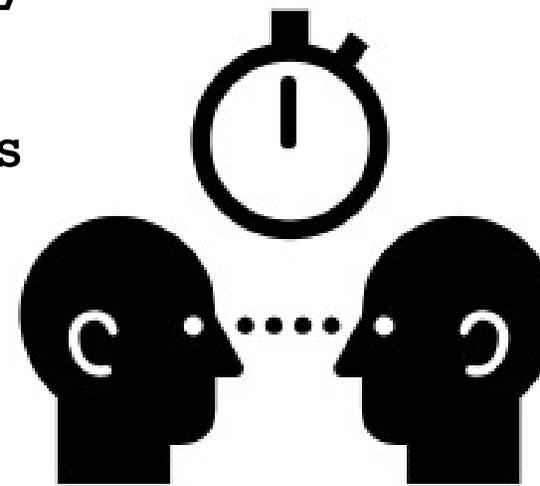
- Islamophobia and attitude towards female clothing

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CONCLUSION

- Primary data on extremists or radicalized persons very difficult to obtain
 - Participants very nervous and reluctant to talk
 - Many have been approached by the police and reporters frequently
- This small project:
- Overall, gender-specific push factors could not be identified in terms of radicalization of the females in Quebec - except
 - women who wear the hijab have additional negative experiences in school and society
 - greater restrictions are placed on the movements of girls than boys by the Muslim families



CONCLUSION

- For the two females in the study:
 - their family circumstances
 - experiences of marginalization in school and society
 - culminated into the need to escape to "a better world"
- A combination of factors:
 - shape the path to radicalization for all extremists
 - each female's individual circumstances, experiences and thought processes make them more or less vulnerable to radicalization



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Concrete efforts are needed to improve integration of “cultural communities” into the social institutions in Quebec society
 - merely emphasis on learning French is not enough. These young women are Francophones and speak very good French
- Improvement in teacher education is urgent
 - need training in dialogical methods through critical pedagogy
 - greater focus on the affective and moral dimensions (not only cognitive skills)
 - important to discuss controversial topics and relate curriculum content to the lived experiences of students
 - in their developmental stage youth need connections, not merely contacts: identity is constructed through relationships
- A comprehensive approach to CVE/PVE is needed: education’s ‘soft power’ should be added to ‘hard power’ initiatives





THANK YOU