

2019

RESEARCH REPORT

Meanwhile in Canada:

Anti-Muslim Ordinary Racism and the Banalization of Far Right Ideology

Aurélie Campana, Université Laval

Samuel Tanner, Université de Montréal

TSAS RESEARCH REPORT

RB 2019-02



TSAS publishes evidence-based, policy-relevant scholarly analyses on topics related to terrorism, security, and society, broadly defined, that touch on Canada, Canadian issues in comparative context, or global issues of interest to a Canadian audience. They are approximately 5000-8000 words in length, and written with substantial rigour and depth. They are written clearly, and with an audience of cross-disciplinary scholars, policy makers, and practitioners in the field of terrorism, security, and countering violent extremism in mind.

Research Reports are longer publications (5000-800 words in length) published in an open-access, electronic-only format on the TSAS website.

—

The Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security, and Society TSAS is supported as a national strategic initiative funded by SSHRC and Public Safety Canada, along with the following departments of the federal government:

- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Canadian Security Intelligence Service
- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada
- Correctional Services Canada
- Defence Research and Development Canada
- Global Affairs Canada • Security Intelligence Review Committee
- Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner

TSAS also receives financial support from several Canadian universities, including the University of Waterloo. Views expressed in this manuscript are those of the author(s) alone.

For more information, contact the Director of the Network, Lorne Dawson, Balsillie School of International Affairs, University of Waterloo (ldawson@uwaterloo.ca) or Elizabeth Ford Project Manager of TSAS ec2ford@uwaterloo.ca.

Abstract:

This paper focuses on the public discourse of extra-parliamentary far right groups in Canada. It analyses how these groups shape discourses on Muslims and Islam in an attempt to influence public debates on core far right issues, such as immigration. It argues that more subtle expressions of anti-Muslim views contribute to promoting ordinary racism and giving increased visibility to far right ideas.

Introduction

Research on the extreme-right has blossomed in the last decade, providing meaningful explanations for the rise of the far-right political parties and movements that have (re-)appeared almost everywhere in Europe and the United States (Rydgren, 2018: 1). Despite new insights into the different variants of this phenomenon, many questions remain. One of the most important gaps concerns extra-parliamentary movements, which have attracted far less attention than political parties (Rydgren, 2018: 9; Caiani, 2017). Extra-parliamentary movements are overt or semi-clandestine groups that do not participate in conventional political activity, considering it “an insufficient way to articulate their concerns in an attempt to get policy-makers to pay attention to them” (Joyce, 2002: 1). These more or less well established organizations position themselves either at the margins of the political field or completely outside it. Another understudied aspect concerns group-level analysis, which has, “to date, been more neglected than the two other types of explanations (macro- and micro-level) (Caiani, 2017). Factors that are “crucial to the groups themselves and their dynamics” (ibid.), such as leaders, ideologies, and propaganda, deserve much more attention.

This paper seeks to partly fill this gap by studying the public discourses of the Canadian far right. Although the Canadian extra-parliamentarian groups have different organizational structures and do not always share the same objectives, they frame a similar discourse on Muslims and Islam. Up until recently, far right groups have had very little influence, if any, on public debates. Ambrose and Mudded attribute this “failure” to the country’s unique multiculturalism policy (2015: 214). Although far right groups direct influence remain relatively low, their increased visibility in Canada raises new issues. Many authors have already determined that most far right movements and parties that emerged in the last decades in Western societies have adopted discursive strategies to moderate their language and discourse in order to promote core far right issues, like immigration¹ (e.g. Lean, 2012; Bail, 2014). Which

¹ We do not imply that far right groups are the only ones to oppose immigration and the integration of Muslims in Western societies, or that anti-Muslim groups exclusively belong to the far-right galaxy. However, anti-Muslim positions and Islamophobia has become a marker of far right parties and movements, and a tool for many far right movements and parties to mobilise electors, activists and sympathizers (Hafez, 2014).

mechanisms shape anti-Muslim discourses of Canadian far right groups? How do they generate mistrust and suspicion towards Muslims among activists and sympathizers?

This paper intends to contribute to the burgeoning literature on Canadian far right. Its main objective is to analyse the discursive mechanisms that shape anti-Muslim discourse and examine how they diffuse subtle anti-Muslim expressions and an “ordinary racism”, in an attempt to disseminate alternative views on immigration and the integration of immigrants, two issues that have become a core far right concern over years. We are interested only in discourse that is diffused in real and virtual public spaces, rather than discourse elaborated and diffused to insiders, which usually promote much more radical ideas (Edwards, 2012). We argue that by adapting their discourse to their audience, far right groups propose alternative points of views and attempt to influence divisive debates at both the local and national levels. These debates include those on the Charter of Values in the province of Quebec, the right of women to wear a veil during the Canadian citizenship ceremony, the acceptance of refugee claimants, the creation of a Muslim cemetery in the Quebec City region, etc.

Right-wing extremism, radical right, far right, alt right: contentious definitions

Although right wing extremism has attracted a great deal of attention, attempts to define this concept still trigger debate and controversy. Carter holds that academics have actually reached a high degree of consensus on its main characteristics, suggesting that “the parties’ authoritarianism, their anti-democracy, and their exclusionary and/or holistic nationalism should all be considered defining properties of right-wing extremism/radicalism” (Carter, 2018: 175), with xenophobia, racism, and populism seen as accompanying features. While there may be a consensus emerging about the predominant ideological characteristics of this movement, many concepts – such as right wing, new right, radical right, or far right – are sometimes used interchangeably or seen as competing (Backes, 2001: 14). The creation of new concepts, such as the concept of alternative right or alt-right, only adds to the conceptual cacophony. “Alt-right”, a catchall term first used in an attempt to characterize a recent evolution of the far right in the United States, refers largely to a “community of discourses” (Salazar, 2018) that now goes far

beyond American borders. The election of Donald Trump as US presidency in 2016 contributed to its popularization.

One of the problems with concepts describing the far right is that they are used indiscriminately to characterize political parties, extra-parliamentary groups, and grass-roots activists as well as self-proclaimed experts, pundits, intellectuals, or agitators who are not affiliated with any organization but contribute to transforming the Internet into a tool for promoting far right ideas. All these actors are related in some way – although their level of proximity varies – and they often rely on the same ideological arsenal. However, they do not always frame their discourse in the same way, nor do they adopt the same structures, repertoires of actions, or agendas. To capture these different political realities, we need to differentiate the different actors involved, while continuing to focus on extra-parliamentary groups.

Rydgren proposes that political parties should be differentiated from other groups and organizations that constitute the far right galaxy (2018). This distinction, although it sounds useful, fails to capture the involvement of extra-parliamentary groups in the public space and the proximity some have to traditional political parties. This proximity can be ideological but can also involve interpersonal contacts. We prefer instead to draw a distinction between radical parties or groups and extremist groups or parties. As Mudde convincingly shows, far right parties and groups can be either radical or extremist (2010: 1169), even if some are “situated on the borders” between radicalism and extremism (Rydgren, 2018: 3). The two terms are closely related but do not have the same meaning and should not be confused. Both are relative, subjective, and relational concepts and their context-bound definitions vary according to the epoch. Both also depend strongly on where the centre is located on a left-right spectrum and on what is considered moderate – and, to a certain extent, acceptable – in a given society. Both refer to ideologies, discourses, actions, and strategies that are located “outside the mainstream political thinking of a given society” (Schmid, 2014: 14). Finally, in most democratic countries, both have a pejorative connotation.

Radicalism’s etymology, however, conveys the idea that social and political changes should come from the roots. Radicalism can be aimed at progressive or conservative goals and can

promote either revolutionary or moderate means of action. In democracies, most radical parties, whether to the left or the right of the political spectrum, generally accept the rules of the political game and democracy as an organizing principle but denounce the core values of liberal democracies, like pluralism (Mudde, 2017). Extremist parties and movements, for their part, fundamentally reject both political rules and democratic values, sometimes advocating violence. What clearly distinguishes radicalism and extremism is their relation to democracy as a principle – radicalism usually values democracy while extremism rejects it – and to the state – most radicals want to transform it from within, while many extremists call its legitimacy into question. Although such a definition might not achieve consensus within the academic community, it makes a useful distinction between parties and groups that oppose mainstream societal and political principles and values and shape their discourse using similar ideological references but craft different strategies and tactics for social and political changes.

To take this great diversity, both ideological and organizational, into account, we prefer the term “far right” to “right wing”. Far right is here considered as a “container” term (Ambrose and Mudde, 2015: 214), which encompasses both radical and extreme parties and movements that defend an exclusionary form of nationalism – including white supremacy – anti-pluralism and anti-liberalism. Canadian far right is a composite and fluid movement, made up of sometimes short-lived groups. It has gained increasing visibility since at least the mid-2010s. La Meute, Storm Alliance, Pegida, and the Canadian Coalition of Concerned Citizens, among others, have organized rallies to denounce the government’s immigration and the integration policies, with special attention devoted to the integration of Muslim peoples. While far right groups have held demonstrations, marches, and rallies in the past², the frequency of these events has increased. However, their aim activities involve propaganda production and dissemination. Beyond the “extraordinary diversity of key themes in the far right arsenal” (Feldman and Pollard, 2016), most groups express anti-Muslim sentiments and hold anti-Islam positions. Some groups even define themselves as specifically anti-Islam (i.e., Pegida), while others promote anti-Islam and anti-Muslim positions among other themes, (i.e., The Soldiers of

² White Pride in Edmonton in the early 2010s or the rallies and demonstrations organized by the Heritage Front in the early 1990s are examples.

Odin, an anti-immigration group with a particular focus on Muslim immigrants). The crystallization of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim ideas is one of the main features³ of the contemporary Canadian far right. How do the groups that make up this movement shape their discourse?

Research far right discourse: methodological insights and challenges

The field research we conducted from 2013 to 2017 in four Canadian provinces (Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia) gave us a unique glimpse into the changing far right movement in Canada. The present analysis is based on 45 interviews⁴ conducted with 38 active and 4 former far right activists⁵, who represented different facets and subcultures of the Canadian movement (neo-Nazi, Christian identity, anti-Islam, anti-immigration, ultra-nationalists, white supremacists, anti-government, Skinhead, etc.). We adapted our fieldwork strategies to the person we met and to the location. A team of two researchers (one senior and a junior researcher or two skilled junior researchers) did most of the interviews, except for those conducted in British Columbia for budgetary reasons and for some of the interviews conducted in the province of Quebec. Each interview lasted from one to three hours, with an average duration of two hours. Interviews were taped, except in three cases where respondents refused to be recorded. In these three cases, we took notes.

We faced numerous difficulties in establishing contacts with far right leaders and activists, so the representativeness of our final sample is limited. Many of the potential respondents we contacted refused to meet us; some never answered; some even threatened us. Some agreed to meet but never showed up for the interview. Groups that cultivate secrecy and maintain a strategic and ideological distance from dominant social and political norms often consider

³ We are not implying that people holding anti-Muslim views could be systematically considered far right extremists, but that anti-Muslim rhetoric has become one of the main attributes of far right groups in Canada and elsewhere.

⁴ We also interviewed journalists, lawyers, social workers, and members of local anti-Fascist groups. These interviews are not included in the present analysis.

⁵ We did two interviews with two respondents and we met three times one of our respondents. We included interviews with former far right activists in the present analysis, as they disengaged quite recently from the movement. Moreover, it shows how discourses have evolved over time, even if this issue is far beyond the scope of this paper.

researchers as at best representatives of those norms, at worse as infiltrating agents of law enforcement agencies, leftists, Freemasons, Zionists, Islamists, etc. These perceptions and beliefs considerably complicated gaining access to our target audience, some of whom were fervent adopters of conspiracy theories and were frightened or enraged when we contacted them. Some wondered how we had gotten their details⁶; others took offence when we presented our research object and purposes. The great majority of them refused to consider the group they belong to as a part of the far right.

We anticipated difficulties when we started our field research, but the complications were more challenging than initially expected. Our sample therefore consists of people with a variety of ideological backgrounds, who lead/led or are/were members of far right groups and who agreed to meet and be interviewed. We fully acknowledge the limitations presented by this method of selection. However, non-representativeness is an inherent characteristic of most qualitative research on extremist or radical groups and we are certainly not the only ones to have faced these kind of limitations (i.e. Khalil, 2017; Harris et al., 2016; Dawson and Amarasingam, 2016; Horgan, 2012; Speckhard, 2009). Researching the far right is extremely challenging and the greater openness displayed by some of these groups to speak to journalists was not of help to our team.

However, despite these difficulties, we did manage to obtain a respectable, and in fact unprecedented, 45 semi-structured interviews with respondents in four different provinces. Our respondents are or were affiliated with 41 different groups⁷, some of which are now dormant or dissolved.⁸ The huge majority was male, from various socio-economic backgrounds, and aged between 20 and 60. (We contacted many women, but all but one refused to grant an interview.⁹) Wary of the research process, those we contacted invariably expressed concerns

⁶ We used publicly available information on the Internet and the snowballing process. We never divulged the names of respondents who suggested we contact certain individuals.

⁷ Some respondents were affiliated with different groups.

⁸ Most of the groups are activist groups that organized meetings behind closed-doors and/or occasionally rallies on the streets; some are Facebook groups; some are isolated radical cells. Like elsewhere, Canadian far right groups are very diverse in terms of organizational structures. Most have a Facebook page, but some are completely invisible on the surface Web.

⁹ Women have always been present in most far right groups, except those restricted to men, such as the Ontarian Proud Boys and the Northern Guard. However, they only recently started to come out the shadows, with some far right organization beginning to adapt their discourse and mode of recruitment in order to attract more women (Salyom, 2018).

about maintaining their anonymity, despite our attempts to reassure them about the integrity of the research process.

Our interview grid included questions about the content and contour of the discourse, the ideological references that inspired the discourse, the role played by context, and use of the Internet. We also asked questions about why and participants engage with these groups. The face-to-face interactions created a space for dialogue in which we could discuss the role of a particular author or event in shaping strategies. They offer invaluable insights into the rationale and the sometimes-iterative construction and dissemination of discourses. We also analysed the official messages, i.e., the material found in magazines, pamphlets, etc. and online (websites, webzines, and public social media pages). We only considered groups that have public pages and were active during our four-year period of study. Our sample for this analysis of the discourse includes groups that were prolific in digital activities but whose leaders refused to meet with us.

We used discourse analysis, inspired by Fairclough (2003), as this method seemed most relevant way to our research questions. As Lindekilde puts it, discourse analysis “uncovers how particular texts either reproduce or challenge established definitions and understandings of social reality by applying particular discursive practices and drawing on discourses inherent to the social context of reception/consumption of the text.” (2014: 199). The Fairclough-inspired discourse analysis method focuses on the interplay between the “discursive unit” (here, the text), “discursive practices” (production, dissemination, reception), and the context or social practices (the wider situation of discourses in society) (Fairclough, 1992 and Lindekilde, 2014: 199). We share Jorgensen and Philips’ assumption about the dialectical relationships between discourse and non-discursive practices and see discourse as both constitutive of and constituted by social practices (2002: 61). Discourse is neither neutral, nor independent of other social practices. Moreover, it not only reflects a social and political order but also constructs, reproduces, maintains, and/or transforms power relations, as sites of “social struggle and conflict’ (ibid.). On the practical side, we used NVivo to code and analyse our empirical material. Before turning to our results, we discuss our analytical framework.

“Ordinary Anti-Muslim racism” as discursive strategy and practice

Far-right ideology has been studied from three main perspectives. The first investigates the great varieties of discourses and discursive and rhetorical strategies shaped by individuals as well as movements and parties (e.g., Wood and Finlay, 2008; Verkuyten, 2003; 2013; Wodak and Richardson, 2013; Richardson and Colombo, 2014). The second considers ideology as a driver of the radicalization process (e.g., Koehler, 2014; Tanner and Campana, 2014). The third concentrates on the role of the Internet in the diffusion of far-right ideology (e.g., Adams and Roscigno, 2005; Caiani and Parenti, 2013; Caiani, 2017; O’Callaghan et al., 2013; Zuquete, 2015; Maddison and Ventsel, 2018). This article expands the literature on far-right discursive practices but takes a different perspective: taking into consideration the high degree of ideological fragmentation and the changing frontiers of the far right ideological corpus (Kerodal et al., 2016: 68-69), we analyse the discursive practices of far right groups and examine how they shape discourses on Muslims and Islam in an attempt to indirectly affect public debates on what has become a core far right issue.

We define ideology, following Van Dijk, as “social representations that define the social identity of a group; that is, its shared beliefs about its fundamental conditions and ways of existence and reproduction” (2006: 116). Ideology is at the basis of discourse (ibid: 121) and links, as Oliver and Johnston put it, “a theory about society with a cluster of values about what is right and wrong as well as about what to do” (2000: 7). Ideology provides content, offers “a sense of certainty, safety and identity” (Jost, 2017: 168), and works as an organizing framework for political thought and action (Freedon, 2003). It can be a driver for change (Zald, 2000; Beck, 2013), but it remains malleable: group leaders can draw on it, refine it, or repackage it, depending on their objectives and context (Payerhin and Zirakzadeh, 2006; Koehler, 2015: 27).

Discourses consist, according to Parker (1992) of “an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, which brings an object into being”. They draw on an ideological corpus among other sources. Even if radical and extremist individuals tend to express a sense of “non-corruptibility” (Toner et al. 2013; Hafez, 2018: 88),

their discourse remains in a constant “state of flux” (Sajjad and Härdig, 2016: 5). They are adaptive and versatile, as their approach to insiders differs from that directed at outsiders. The latter sounds more moderate, even if it conveys radical or extremist ideas (Edwards, 2012). Indeed, one of the main objectives of far right discourse is to challenge the “existing systems of authority” (Snow and Soule, 2010). As Freilich et al. remind us, fringe movements usually engage in an explicit promotion of an ideology that moves away from what constitutes a well-accepted social and political norm (1999). Far right discourse is filled with positive self-presentation and negative depictions of others (Van Dijk 2006: 126). This negative depiction can turn into demonization. However, as most far right groups attempt to gain additional visibility and present themselves as an alternative to dominant political thinking and traditional political parties, many adopt more subtle language and moderate the tone of their messages at public appearances.

We argue that since the mid-2000s most Canadian far right groups have used a de-demonization strategy that involves flaunting their political ideas much more publicly than previously in an attempt to influence public debates and the political agenda on far right core issues, such as immigration. They also seek to gain legitimacy as “signifying agents” (Snow and Benford, 1988: 613) by capitalizing on societal and political issues that trigger debate and tension within Canadian/Quebec society while raising new issues related to core far right themes (immigration, integration, refugees, globalisation, abortion, etc.). This de-demonization strategy entails a consciously constructed ambiguity at the discursive level in order to promote far right ideas, values, and ideals in terms that appear less extreme. This ambiguity is apparent in their presentation of positive discourses that both glorify and cast as victims the community that each group¹⁰ claims to represent and their negative components that stigmatize and demonize the othering and the other-ness.

The definition of out-groups varies from one group to another, but most Canadian far right groups target Muslim and Islam, in a context where the “national identity axis” is again prevalent (Ellinas, 2010) and Islamophobia is on the rise in most Western countries (e.g.

¹⁰ The definition of who is part of a particular group can vary considerably from one group to another. Some claim to defend “the Whites”, with some groups including only the “true” Canadians, the “Pure Wool” Quebecers. Some include Indigenous Peoples in the “true Canadians” category; others exclude them.

Gottschalk and Greenberg, 2007; Satzewich, 2011; Lean, 2012; Bail, 2014). Particularly since September 11, 2001, Islam has often been presented as a global as well as an inter-country enemy. According to Hafez (2014), in many states Islamophobia has become a form of “accepted racism.” Traverso shares this assumption and considers that “Islamophobia is fully acceptable, in a European culture whose colonial inheritance remains alive and well” (2016: 95). Canada is no exception and hostility towards Muslims and Islam has been growing since at least 9/11 (e.g., Poynting and Perry, 2007; Helly, 2012; Perry, 2014). The divisive debates mentioned in the introduction provide political opportunities for the burgeoning Canadian far right to express its ideas in the public sphere.

We argue the de-demonization strategy followed by far right groups, in which they attempt to portray themselves as less radical or extreme and their views as sensible responses to clearly visible problems, contributes to promoting an ordinary racism, here conceived as a form “new racism.” Following Taguieff (1985), Balibar describes new racism as “a racism without races”, “a racism which has as its dominant theme not biological heredity, but the irreducibility of cultural differences; a racism that, at first sight, does not imply the superiority of certain groups or peoples over others but “only” the noxiousness of the removal of borders, the incompatibility of ways of life and traditions” (1988: 32-33). Built on Ebner’s “ordinary violence” (2010: 9), the concept of ordinary racism points to a strategy and practice that its proponents believe should eventually become “a positive formative experience” (Kallis, 2008: 199). Ordinary racism aims at indirectly imposing norms and societal control on those who, according to the promoters of these norms and values, have violated them. It creates a form of societal vigilantism that transforms those who adhere to far right views into many potential gatekeepers in charge of maintaining societal order. The “others”, because they deviate from these norms, threaten this order and the identity that defines community boundaries. Societal vigilantism calls for mobilization to struggle against “the transgression, the potential transgression, or the imputed transgression of institutionalized norms” (Johnston, 1996: 230). Anticipation of transgression is a key component of the attitude of far right groups. Ordinary racism, like any form of racism, “manifests itself discursively” (Wodak and Reisigl, 2015: 576; see also Van Dijk, 1993), mainly through a process of legitimization of racist

viewpoints in a context where a shift to the right in the political scene in Europe and in the United States as well as the wide circulation of stereotypes of Muslims have made some far right themes more acceptable. In particular, it involves increasing the “porosity in the discourse between the more extreme articulations [of islamophobia] widely condemned in the mainstream, and the more normalized and insidious ones, which the former tend to render more acceptable in comparison” (Mondon and Winter, 2017: 2152-2153). Since the mid-2010s, Canadian extra-parliamentary groups have attempted to instrumentalize the political environment to preach white supremacy and denounce Islam and Muslims.

Cultural differences and the struggle for “survival”

Three overlapping mechanisms structure Canadian far right discourses and discursive practices dealing with Muslims and Islam: 1) Raising awareness of perceived threats; 2) Essentialization of the threat with emphasis on the preservation of whiteness; 3) Dramatization of intercommunity relations. These discursive mechanisms were found deductively, but their main characteristics and components were identified inductively. They are all based on the now “classical” far right assumption that the immigration of Muslim people, immigration as a whole, and the integration of newcomers into Canadian (or Quebec) society poses a serious threat to the preservation of “white” identity. The “white community” is seen as facing a “great replacement”, extinction in “their” own country, and “genocide” (Jackson, 2015). Muslim immigrants and citizens have become the main scapegoats in discourse from those on the far right, although there are some nuances. Some groups refuse to target Muslims or Islam specifically, on the grounds that Muslim representatives would use such arguments to seek more support from traditional political elites.¹¹ For others respondents, Muslim immigration is only the “tip of the iceberg” and all forms of immigration represent a serious danger for the larger community. From that perspective, Islam is only a “symptom” and immigration is the real disease.¹² Indeed, several respondents advocated that Canada should maintain strong borders

¹¹ Interview with ED1, Quebec, 2015.

¹² Interview with ED7, Quebec, 2015.

with no immigration.¹³ Finally, others consider that immigration is not a problem except when it comes to immigration from Muslim countries.¹⁴

Far right groups often consciously use the term immigration to refer only to non-White immigration, or what some call “third-world immigration”,¹⁵ and many conflate “third-world immigration” with immigration from Muslim countries. This approach is far from new. As Traverso notes, “in contemporary Europe, the immigrant basically has the features of the Muslim” (Traverso, 2016: 94). The situation is certainly a bit more complex in Canada, as Canada is a vast country and receives newcomers from almost all regions of the world. Those on the far right adapt their discourse to their surrounding environment and to the local political context. Some groups in British Columbia, for instance, target Chinese newcomers and immigrants.¹⁶ An Ontario-born group, the Canadian Combat Coalition, organised a demonstration in March 2018, coinciding with Prime Minister Trudeau’s official visit to India that denounced “Khalistan ideology and Sikh terrorism”.¹⁷ However, most far right groups across the country have made Muslims the principal symbol of immigrants and converge in the way they speak publicly about Islam and Muslims. The wide circulation of ideas, news, and images – so-called “true information” – through the Internet sustains a convergence that goes beyond Canadian borders and legitimizes other national and local groups in their actions and discourse (Caiani, 2018: 403).

Raising awareness of perceived threats

At a first glance, many far right public discourses do not appear to attack Muslims and Islam but present themselves as providing facts, based on information, numbers, or so-called scientific studies that support ideas traditionally associated with far right systems of beliefs. The logic here is to raise awareness and re-inform “misinformed” Canadians, who have been deceived by traditional parties and medias. Although far right groups do not agree on the importance of conspiracy theories, they all defend the idea that the traditional media and

¹³ Interview with ED30, Alberta, 2016.

¹⁴ Interview of Sylvain Brouillette (Jean, 2017).

¹⁵ Interview with ED20, Ontario, 2015.

¹⁶ Britten, 2016

¹⁷ Rise Canada, 11 March 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsNKJAe9yj8>

politicians distort the picture on immigration to support their own policies. As one of our respondents put it: “Ok, the media is perpetrating the belief that there are two kinds of Islam. There is peaceful Islam and there is violent Islam. There are good Muslims and there are bad Muslims. That’s what the media is telling everybody. Correct? Ok, well that is a lie! That is propaganda! And the media doesn’t even know that what they’re doing is dangerous.”¹⁸

Two main themes structure far right discourses of the groups we included in our sample. The first offers a counter-narrative to the current dominant approach to immigration. As in other Western democracies, successive federal and provincial governments have asserted for years that immigration is one of the main answers to the demographic and economic problems facing Canada (particularly low birth rates and a declining population with the resulting consequences for the economy). Many of our respondents took an educational approach in discussions with our team in an attempt to demonstrate that this approach is unfounded, wrong, or only serves particular political purposes, arguing that both provincial and federal governments are misleading the public and it is time to take steps toward new measures that would limit or stop immigration. There are, however, strong divergences between groups. Some groups push for limiting immigration to Europeans, because their whiteness would make their cultural and economic integration easier. On this point of view, Europeans would perfectly fit into the labour market and not distort it, as other immigrants do when they accept low salaries and poor status.¹⁹ Some others groups are opposed to any kind of immigration, while others call for deporting refugees and newcomers²⁰ or for creating “restoration efforts to make up for the losses sustained by Canadians proper.”²¹

One of our respondents stated that immigration costs “a fortune” to Canadians, calling the economic benefits Canadians get from and through immigration a “myth.”²² He held that immigration does not work: although the demographic argument sounds logical, “it has almost

¹⁸ Interview with ED16, British Columbia, 2015.

¹⁹ Interview with ED20, Ontario, 2015.

²⁰ Atalante Québec posted several banners in Quebec City and Montreal calling for “remigration” of refugees and asylum seekers who had entered Canada, coming from the United States, in the summer 2017 (CBC, 22 August 2017).

²¹ McDougal, 2017.

²² Interview with ED15, British Columbia, 2015.

no impact on solving the problem of the cost of aging Canadians.”²³ Another respondent stated that it is wrong to believe that newcomers will compensate economically for the ageing of the Canadians population because they do not come alone: they bring their family and sometimes their aging parents. These newcomers’ families eventually cost billions to the host society and completely annihilate any expected benefits from these new workers.²⁴

Many shared the same conclusion: Canada is bringing in far more people than it needs but fails to take care of vulnerable Canadians who need assistance. “They get jobs before people who are born here, in the federal or civil service or whatever. Provincial civil service.”²⁵ Another considers that immigrants take advantage of our health care system. “I think we’re in a bit of a crunch where I think we need to be looking after our Canadian health and our Canadian citizens, because there’s a lot of people who live in poverty, who don’t ... there’s homelessness, there’s sickness, there’s people on the street who are mentally disturbed, walking around the street, they need help!”²⁶

Far right discourses often agree on this “Canadians first” argument, which gained new momentum in the aftermath of media attention concerning the “massive arrival” of asylum seekers irregularly crossing the US-Canada border. One respondent reported that “even the parties of the left, the Green Party and the NDP, are completely committed to mass immigration even though we have persistently high unemployment. And underemployment for young people.”²⁷ Although expressed in moderate terms, this argument fits perfectly with the nativist thesis held among many far right groups in Canada and elsewhere. This thesis supports the idea that the “natives (i.e., those born-and-bred “here”) are more entitled and should take priority over “immigrants” (i.e., those “coming from elsewhere”), especially when allocation of resources is at stake (e.g., rights, jobs, public services, salaries, territory, etc.)” (Di Masso et al., 2014: 345). Nativism is seen as a strong argument by far right groups²⁸, especially in times of uncertainty and economic fragility or crisis.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Interview with ED7, Quebec, 2015.

²⁵ Interview with ED14, British Columbia, 2015.

²⁶ Interview with ED17, Ontario, 2015.

²⁷ Interview with ED5, Ontario, 2015.

²⁸ Nativism has also been central to conservatism for a long time.

A second theme focuses on the idea that the immigration policies that have been in place for decades have weakened or damaged the “white community.” One respondent believes that “white people” are silently and unconsciously assenting to their replacement in the near future by non-whites. The blame, according to him, lies with successive governments and the traditional media, who have hidden – and continue to hide– the truth from Canadian citizens.²⁹ The role of far right groups is therefore to bring “real facts” to the attention of a misinformed audience:

“Now, this cultural transformation is rooted in one thing, and primarily, in our immigration policy, right?! Now, this policy made a transition from European-based immigration, largely or 90% to Asian and Middle-Eastern and other areas of immigration ... And yet, how many people are aware of this or, you know, within general Canadian society, 1%, 2? You know, these things are not exposed, right?”³⁰

Many respondents point to multiculturalism as one of the main causes of the decline of the “white community”. A group’s leader referred to it as “a form of cultural gangbang against Canadians”³¹ Average Canadians are believed to be unaware of its consequences for their daily life: “Canadian[s] think that multiculturalism is the norm! Hey! It says it’s the greatest invention since sliced bread! It’s all over the map! It’s not, okay?! It is an aberration, okay? Arguably, all right? There’s something Canadian people don’t know!”³² However, some believe that even people who know the “truth” are afraid to express their concerns for fear of being stigmatized. As one respondent puts it: “I believe absolutely that in everything I say, think, and do, there are many people who agree with me. However, they will only agree with me when they are certain that there is no danger to their political standing in the community If you talk about multiculturalism, Islamic immigration, you can lose your job, you lose your friends, you lose

²⁹ Interview with ED6, Quebec, 2015.

³⁰ Interview with ED12, British Columbia, 2015.

³¹ Facebook post, 24 February 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/942237742559979/permalink/1520474508069630/>. Original citation “une forme de gang bang culturel contre les canadiens.”

³² Interview with ED12, British Columbia, 2015.

many things. So I believe, I am certain in my mind, that people are afraid of the fascist society that's living here with us now in Canada."³³ Another frames the same idea in another way: "Moi, j'ai un problème avec les immigrants mais y'a des mots qu'on peut pas dire".³⁴ Far right groups see their mission as speaking clearly about these taboos and creating a safe space where people can express their concerns, fear, and anger and propose solutions.

Raising awareness serves mainly to educate and warn people about the threat they believe the white majority faces: the replacement of white Canadian society by a "third-world majority"³⁵ and its ultimate extinction as a result of the massive arrival of non-white immigrants. Far right groups therefore focus on identifying the conditions that create the imputed transgression: immigration policies and multiculturalism. The second mechanism deals with identity transgression and its consequences in more polarizing terms.

Essentialization of the threat, with emphasis on the preservation of whiteness

In their attempts to essentialize the threat posed by immigrants, which are based on stereotyping, dichotomisation, and determinism, far right ideologues and promoters seldom speak clearly about race. Instead, they focus on Islam and, consciously, strategically, or due to a lack of knowledge, confuse culture and religion, presenting Islam an ideology or a political organisation. Their main objective is to legitimize far right positions on Islam and to demonstrate that cultural differences between Muslims and the so-called "Whites" are irreconcilable. Their discourses draw on a "repertoire of stereotypes, images, places, representations, stigmas and reflexes conveying a perception and a reading of the real that are condensed and codified into a stable and continuous discourse" (Traverso, 2016: 94) and contribute to re-defining the boundaries of the white community and creating a sense of cohesiveness. As Reicher et al. put it, "the belief systems that facilitate out-group hatred are

³³ Interview with ED16, Ontario, 2015.

³⁴ Interview with ED3, Quebec, 2015. Our translation: "I have a problem with immigrants, but there are things that cannot be said."

³⁵ Interview with ED5, Ontario, 2015.

centred on the ways in which we define our own social identities and those of others” (2008, p. 1326).

The opposition between the so-called “Canadian white community” and “Muslims” is not expressed in ethnic or national terms but rather in terms of civilization, referring to what Brubaker calls “civilizationism”, a process “driven by a striking convergence in the last fifteen years around the notion of a civilizational threat from Islam” (2017: 1193). This “civilizationism” comes with an essentialization of the threat in the form of a Muslim man and, increasingly, a Muslim woman. Most exclusionary nationalist Quebec groups defend this clash of civilizations thesis, but also take the position that there is a Quebec identity distinct from the Canadian one. The constitutional issue between separatists and federalists influences the discursive practices of some far right groups in Quebec that claim a position on the border between civilizationism and ethnic nationalism. However, they do not agree on the boundaries of the community they claim to represent: some want to preserve the “Pure Wool” Quebec community³⁶; others stand up for “French-Canadians”.³⁷

The threat is described in different ways. Most far right groups present Islam as an oppressive and aggressive culture and religion. Quebec’s attempts at “reasonable accommodation”, which outline how discrimination based on disability, religion, age or any other grounds prohibited by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are to be avoided, are held to at best undermine Canadian or Quebec values, at worst to support the tyranny of religious minorities, who want to overthrow the white majority and replace it. One speaks publicly, in much moderate terms, about “religious interference” in social and political life.³⁸ One respondent stated that Muslim immigration and integration is an “injustice.”³⁹ Most respondents stress that an Islamic presence will lead to the corruption of a cherished system of values and norms. Others denounce what they view as the imposition of norms incompatible with the traditional Canadian or Quebec system of values. In many Canadian far right publications, veiled women are used as an example of the presumed corruption of norms as

³⁶ Interview with ED 7, Quebec 2015.

³⁷ Interview with Skin2, Quebec, 2013.

³⁸ Tremblay, 2017.

³⁹ Interview with ED12, British Columbia, 2015.

well as the transgressive and oppressive nature of Islam. Many groups share a common position : “Le hidjab [sic] est un étendard politique, il est l'emblème d'un islam politique qui veut imposer une théocratie et remplacer les droits humains par la charia. En l'imposant aux femmes, nous sommes devant un précepte patriarcale [sic] et vient à l'encontre de nos valeurs en droits d'égalité Hommes/ Femmes.”⁴⁰ In other words, Muslim newcomers would use the idea of reasonable accommodation as a Trojan Horse for the Islamization of Quebec and Canada,⁴¹ initiating the conditions of the “great replacement.”

This normative insecurity can be transformed into physical insecurity when confronted with what is perceived to be a security threat. This argument exploits the stereotype that links Islam to violence. Since 9/11, following any terrorist attack attributed to a Muslim, far-right web and social pages worldwide carry the same argument: Islam is a religion of violence and Muslim countries are prone to insurgency, riots, and a high level of criminality and terrorism, which they export to peaceful Western societies. Terrorism, often presented as vicious form of violence that takes innocent lives, is said to find justification in the Quran and in Sharia law. This position is defended by many far right activists, as illustrated by this post on a blog. Citations of the Quran on this website followed a video of the shooting at the Parliament in Ottawa, attempting to counter the idea that Islam is a religion of peace.⁴² The author links terrorism and the Islamization of Canada and hopes to remind Canadians that they are not immune from the rise of terrorism at home or the perils of Islamization.

Another respondent strongly believes that “the only reason that Canada can have civil war with Islam is because there are Muslims in Canada! ... So, if there is violence because of Islam, well Islam doesn't care because Islam – because everywhere in the world, where you have Muslims you have violence! So Islam and violence are synonymous.”⁴³ The online political and social commentary website Rebel Media completely agrees with the last assumption and

⁴⁰ “Communiqué Action Contre le Projet de Loi 62”, Modèle de lettre à envoyer au député représentant une circonscription à l'Assemblée Nationale, La Meute Site Officiel, <https://www.lameute-officiel.org/copie-de-petition-projet-de-loi-62>. Our translation: “The hijab is a political banner; it is the symbol of a political Islam that wants to impose a theocracy, replacing human rights with the laws of sharia. Imposing it on women reveals a patriarchal precept that is contrary to our values in terms of the equality of men and women.”

⁴¹ Interview with ED29, Quebec, 2016.

⁴² “The Rise of Terrorist Attacks and the Dangers of the Islamification of Canada”, Canadian Nationalist Front, 1 April 2017, <https://wnf-canada.blogspot.com/2017/04/the-rise-of-terrorist-attacks-and.html>

⁴³ Interview with ED16, Ontario, 2015.

frequently publishes accounts that show that Muslim migrants spread violence into a peaceful society. A May 2018 article warned that a “rape culture invades our high-trust society.”⁴⁴ This piece was picked up by other Internet platforms, including the Facebook page of the Canadian Coalition Combat National.

The same tactics also serve to demonstrate that Islam poses an existential threat to Canadian or Quebec society. Following a practice now common in other Western countries, the Canadian far right portrays Islam as having “an extreme obsessional prejudice at the heart of its discourses and political programs” (Kallis, 2018: 47). This existential threat lies first in demography and far right discourse provides data to support the idea that Muslims have started to invade Canada (or Quebec). One of our respondents based his argument on unverified numbers that mixed birth rates in the countries of origin of some Muslim immigrants and the average birth rate in Canada. “Now I don’t know if you’ve studied the demographics of Islam. Demographics are the birth rate. They have 8.1. Canada’s birthrate is about 1.6. ... We’re below sustainability. That means in about thirty, forty years, we will be outnumbered. And we’re approaching an Islamic state, Sharia law. It’s a mathematical inevitability, here for Canada. Forty years from now, if you decide to have a family and children, you’re gonna be faced with Islamic culture.”⁴⁵

These existential threats are seen as calling for a reaction that goes beyond raising awareness. Acting as a gatekeeper also means taking action against these perceived threats and their supposedly alarming consequences for Quebec and Canadian society. Many far right groups promote non-violence, at least in their public discourses. Many believe that reaction requires self-defense (Verkuyten, 2013: 348), but the first step should take a political form by giving a voice to those who have been silenced and by officially representing those who are threatened with the risk of Islamization. In this context, most far right groups take on the mission of preserving and defending what they see as the non-represented victimized community, but often feel this requires going outside the limits of the tradition political field.

⁴⁴ Levant, 2018. Article reprinted on the Canadian Combat Coalition Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1189780771167521/>

⁴⁵ Interview with ED25, Alberta, 2016.

One of our respondents affirmed that he runs “a self ‘preservationist’ sort of movement.”⁴⁶ Another insisted that he is engaged in a struggle against the double standards that allow “ethnic minorities” to establish pressure groups but impede the majority when it attempts to promote the white community and its culture and create a strong political voice.⁴⁷

This discursive mechanism provides resources for rationalizing the position taken by groups on the far right; justifies the rejection of Muslims, diversity, and pluralism; and motivates political action. It also contributes to creating a very narrow definition of “white identity.” Although far right ideologues and leaders were very cautious in their discussions with us, some were clearly disguising the scope of possible actions. Most resemble pressure groups that attempt to influence public opinion and as well as strategically encouraging polarisation in an attempt to generate cohesion within the so-called white community. Their main objective is to define a new arrangement of power relations and a social hierarchy that would sustain a new social order based on this so-called whiteness.

The dramatization of intercommunity and interreligious relations

Far right discourses, even those expressed in moderate terms, create anti-Muslim sentiments and hostility (Lean, 2012). Employing popular terms and relying on a populist style, they overtly play on emotions in order to dramatize inter-community relations. Elster states that emotions “have the capacity to alter and distort the cognitive appraisal that triggered them in the first place. The object of an emotion is the emotionally distorted picture of its cause” (1994: 27). Emotions contribute to rationalizing and legitimizing political actions. While the “raising awareness” mechanism contributes to manufacturing fear, the “essentialization of threat” mechanism appeals to fear, hatred, and resentment.

Far right discourses heavily rely on injustice frames (Gamson, 2013) and discursive practices that foster negative feelings towards Islam and Muslims. One of the most common of such discourses involves listing violent incidents or crimes imputed to Muslims, in both Muslim

⁴⁶ Interview with ED34, British Columbia, 2016.

⁴⁷ Interview with ED12, British Columbia, 2015

and non-Muslim countries, with a special interest in stories involving abused children and women, as well as honour killings.⁴⁸ This information is taken from articles published in both the mainstream and alternative media. Usually, the moderator posts the news, places a comment, and sometimes asks a question without providing an answer. Most of the time, friends and followers comment on the news, often posting decontextualized pictures, illustrations, and memes. In a post reproducing a Reuters article on the visit of a senior Vatican official to Saudi Arabia, the moderator of the United Christians of Canada Facebook page, a group affiliated with the Cultural Action Party, commented on Cardinal Tauran's statement that "Christians cannot be considered second-class citizens."⁴⁹ The Cardinal was reacting to the ban on non-Muslim worship in Saudi Arabia⁵⁰, not to the situation of Christians in Western countries, but the moderator of the Facebook page used this decontextualized citation to support the position of the Cultural Action Party. This group regularly blames the Federal government for abandoning Christians and promoting Islamism and the so-called Islamization of Canada.

De-contextualization and reproduction of this kind of news about Islam creates an impression that violence or crimes are frequent occurrences, in an attempt to provide credentials for the thesis that Muslims are an inherently violent people. It also supports the idea that the threat is becoming imminent and threatens Canada, contributing to increasing fear and resentment. Conspiracy theories play on these emotions and connect the so-called attempt of Muslims to impose Islam in the Canadian society and the connivance of traditional politicians. Indeed, many sustain that politicians have created the conditions that will make the Islamization of Canada and Quebec possible. The scope of such discourse varies greatly, from criticizing the political correctness of politicians and Canadians in general,⁵¹ to considering

⁴⁸ See, for instance, the Facebook page of the "Stop Islamization of Canada" group, <https://fr-ca.facebook.com/SIOC-Stop-Islamization-of-Canada-113065962075296/> or the Facebook page of the Canadian Coalition of Concerned Citizens, <https://fr-ca.facebook.com/CanadianCCC/>

⁴⁹ Facebook post, 26 April 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/782935091840449/>

⁵⁰ Pullella, 2018

⁵¹ One of our respondents said: "But there's also a heavy overlay of political correctness throughout Canadian society that says we live in a rich, affluent land and we should share it with the whole world and let lots of poor people in. Which sounds nice in principle, but if you let just 1% of the poorest people in China and India come here we'd be completely overwhelmed. So trying to bring people into Canada truly to give them a better life is not realistic if you look at numbers." Interview with ED15, British Columbia, 2015.

Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberals to be the accomplices of Islamists, Jews, and/or Marxists. The Federal government is held to be working to make “true” Canadians and Quebecers second-class citizens or to make them disappear. Provincial governments and traditional federal and provincial parties are not immune from the attacks of far right groups, especially on the Internet. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been compared to an Islamist⁵², said to “support terrorism”,⁵³ or accused of being “the lacky of a Zio-Marxist ‘Fifth Column’ that has opened the gates of fortress Canada to an invasion!”⁵⁴ On the provincial scene, traditional political parties, even those in the opposition, are frequently accused of collusion with “political Islam”. A statement by Québec Horizon Actuel about the party of the left, Québec Solidaire, illustrates this point: “L’alliance de la gauche multiculturaliste et de l’islam politique est désormais totalement décomplexée. Québec solidaire en est l’incarnation la plus aboutie.”⁵⁵

Sensationalism contributes to creating stereotypes against Muslims and to fostering the rejection of the current political system. Far right discourses address, either directly or indirectly, the structural changes that would be required to society and the responsibility Canadian and Quebec politicians must take for “selling” Canada to minority lobbies and particularly to Muslims, who are often referred to as “Islamists”, a more pejorative term. Such discourses increase feelings of rejection and injustice, which may lead to resentment, particularly given the situation described by far right groups in which the majority will be subordinate to an aggressive minority.

Sensationalism also rests on positive messages, which are conveyed through multiple forms of positive self-representation and attempts to demonstrate that far right activists and groups are merely politically engaged people who are strongly committed to ensuring the future of a threatened and speechless community but who use different methods than those of traditional political parties. The first step is to deny any accusation of racism. Reverse racism is then used to show that “whites” are actually the first victims of racism (Van Dijk, 1992: 94). Given this,

⁵² Facebook post, 24 July 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/politikalmemes/photos/a.1667842846814019.1073741827.1667842013480769/2098799583718341/?type=3&ifg=1>. The “Make Canadians great again” Facebook page reproduced this meme.

⁵³ Levant, 2017.

⁵⁴ *The Ward News*, January, 2016

⁵⁵ Facebook post, 23 July 2018, all <https://fr-ca.facebook.com/HorizonQuebecActuel/>. “The alliance between the multiculturalist left and political Islam is already completely clear. Quebec Solidaire is the best example.”

they are within their rights in organizing and struggling against Islamization, because opposing this threat is a matter of self-protection. Members of the so-called white community need to fight against “White guilt”, often expressed by politicians when supporting discrimination policies that favour minorities. In December 2016, the blog Poste de Veille harshly criticized the then-leader of the opposition at Montreal City Hall, Valérie Plante, when she announced that her first political decision as mayor would be to ensure more diversity in the municipal administration.⁵⁶

Supporting white pride involves increasing the visibility of the white majority and constantly reaffirming its existence and claims. Demonstrations in the streets are one way to achieve this political goal. Pride is also the result of daily actions that increase self-identification and a sense of community. Local chapters of the Soldiers of Odin or Atalante Québec, for instance, develop community action programs and provide assistance to people and families in need. Atalante emphasizes that their actions – for instance, helping a family in need – contribute to rebuilding links in the community. Praising values such as mutual aid and family, a Facebook post by this group states that Atalante supports a “national preference” politics.⁵⁷ The Soldiers of Odin Canada also emphasize how engaged their members are with their local communities. The text under a picture underlines this position: “We didn't let this beautiful weather [a snow storm] stop us from delivering our donations to the Sault Ste Marie Salvation Army today, here's some pics with the hard working volunteers that work there all year round!”⁵⁸

The explicit actions suggest what is implicit: far right groups not only stand up and provide a voice for the unrepresented majority, they also take action in their local communities to redress the wrongs social policies have created for the most vulnerable. By their actions, these groups go far beyond affirmative discourses to provide a substitute for a state that is, according to them, failing to assist an endangered community because it allocates its resources instead towards refugees and immigrants. Following the same logic, some groups patrol the streets to prevent crime and help in the struggle against “radical Islam”, another term used to denigrate

⁵⁶12 December 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/postedeveille.ca/>

⁵⁷ Facebook Post, 13 July 2018, <https://fr-ca.facebook.com/atalantequebec/>

⁵⁸ Facebook post 4 January 2017, <https://fr-ca.facebook.com/OFFICIAL.SOO.1/>

Islam. ““We are Canadians helping Canadians”, ” the former president of the Quebec Chapter of the Soldiers of Odin declared to a CBC journalist, acknowledging that the group, under his leadership, was softening its anti-immigration image in order to increase its visibility and legitimacy (Monpetit, 2016). The Three Percenters, a militia born in the United States that has inspired some Canadian far right activists to form chapters in Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec,⁵⁹ is more obvious about its anti-Islam positions when providing “security” at far right demonstrations.⁶⁰ The military uniforms they wear promote the idea that there is an imminent threat and that some far right groups are ready to go one step further to defend “their community.” In this perspective, dramatization of intercommunity relations is not only used to express prejudices and emotions but also legitimizes the actions that far right groups are taking, increasingly and more visibly, in public spaces.

Conclusion: the Canadian far right – between dogmatism and pragmatism

The Canadian far right movement is certainly not the only nor the first to adopt discursive practices that soften their anti-Muslim and anti-Islam discourses and promote what we called “an ordinary racism” (e.g., Lean, 2012; Bail, 2014). Many far right movements in Western societies are following the same path, at a time when the ideas they contribute to diffusing have gained increasing visibility and resonance. The Canadian case remains, however, illustrative of a process that acts to legitimize far right points of view on core issues in a society in which far right parties have never really established firm roots. This historical and political background requires Canadian far right groups to adapt their discursive practices in an attempt to gain new adherents and enhance their legitimacy as a possible alternative to traditional parties.

This article shows that many of the groups composing the Canadian far right movement draw on similar discursive practices, adopting practices that blur the lines between racism and an ultra-nationalism and contribute to creating a climate of suspicion of Muslims, defined as

⁵⁹ They claim a chapter in each province.

⁶⁰ Lamoureux, 2017 and Hutter, 2018.

outsiders. This can generate negative sentiments among those who agree with their positions and feel that the so-called “white community” is being discriminated against. The interaction of anti-Muslims sentiments with more general anti-immigration positions and an anti-government or anti-establishment approach nurtures an ordinary racism that exploits ancient stereotypes and creates new ones, increasing the perceived gaps between communities. Muslims are often presented as the main culprits, but the federal and provincial governments have also become favorite targets of far right propagandists. The specific focus on politicians and traditional parties illustrates their attempt to enter political debates, a strategy confirmed by their efforts to create a positive picture of a proud white community that will be willing to act as a group.

This article also discusses how Canadian far right groups draw on “classical” far right themes, ideas, and ideals, such as the coming “great replacement”, stereotypes linking Islam to violence, and development of a new social order based on whiteness. In doing so, they demonstrate that they share the main assumptions circulating in the transnational far right community of discourse while also helping to determine the content of “white identity”. However, in spite of discursive convergence and a certain dogmatism, most far right discourses remain group-specific. The versatility of far right discourses serves a political purpose and often achieves its aim at the local level. Although the Internet has contributed greatly to the recognition that far right discourses need to be formatted to reach beyond national specificities, such convergence does not mean that far right groups are not pragmatic. On the contrary, discursive flexibility often guides local groups and the way ideological content is repackaged depends on many factors: the objectives the group is pursuing, its leadership’s command of far right ideology, and its level of connection with regional, national, and/or transnational networks and the surrounding environment. The tensions between global concerns and local challenges and how these affect classical far right themes is certainly worthy of further investigation.

This article advances our understanding of how the strategies of extra-parliamentarian far right propagandists attempt to influence political debates. We do not, however, pretend to explain the relationship between discourse and actions. The performativity of discourse remains a difficult question. While our work illustrates how far right groups fuel, through public

interventions and wide use of the Internet, anti-Muslim sentiments, we cannot conclude, at this time, that such discourses encourage hate crimes⁶¹, although it is important to recognize that hate crimes are underreported and it remains extremely difficult to create an overall picture of the phenomenon. The influence of far right discourses on the numbers and gravity of hate crimes certainly deserves investigation. At this time, we can only hypothesize that the wide circulation of stereotypes about Muslims and Islam, with an emphasis on their links to violence, may contribute to altering the social climate, creating a context that may lead to the conditions that allow some people to legitimize taking more extreme actions against Muslims.

References

- Adams, Josh and Vincent J. Roscigno (2005). "White Supremacists, Oppositional Culture and the World Wide Web," *Social Forces* 84(2): 759–778.
- Allen, M. (2015). *Police-reported Hate Crime in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice. Statistics. Catalogue no. 85-002-X.
- Ambrose, Emma and Cas Mudde (2015). "Canadian Multiculturalism and the Absence of the Far Right." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 21(2): 213-236.
- Backes, Uwe (2001). "L'extrême-droite : les multiples facettes d'une catégorie d'analyse". In Pascal Perrineau. *Les croisés de la société fermée : l'Europe des extrêmes droites* (La Tour d'Aigues : Éditions de l'Aube).
- Bail, Christopher (2014). *Terrified: How Anti-Muslim Fringe Organizations Became Mainstream* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Balibar, Etienne. 1988. "Y a-t-il un 'néo-racisme'?" In Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds). *Race, nation, classe : les identités ambiguës* (Paris: la Découverte) : 27–41.
- Baron, S. W. 1997. Canadian male street Skinheads: Street gang or street terrorists? *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 34 (2): 125-154.

⁶¹ Police-reported hate crimes against South Asians, West Asians, and Arabs, all of whom are often perceived as Muslims, were on the rise in 2016 although, overall, hate crimes targeting Muslim individuals declined, only slightly, after two years of considerable increases (Allen, 2015; Gaudet, 2018). Brubaker

- Beck, Colin (2013). "Ideology." In David A. Snow, Donatella della Porta, Bert Klandermans, and Doug McAdam (eds.) *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements* (Blackwell Publishing).
- Britten, Liam (2016). "New anti-Chinese flyers distributed in Richmond, police investigating." *CBC News*, 30 November, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/racist-flyers-richmond-1.3875639>
- Brubaker Rogers (2017). "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40:8: 1191-1226.
- Caiani, Manuela (2017) "Radical Right Wing Movements: Who, When, How and Why?" In *Sociopedia*, Sociopedia.isa, pp. 1-15.
- Caiani, Manuela (2018). "Radical Right Cross-National Links and International Cooperation." In Jens Rydgren (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 394-411.
- Caiani, Manuela and Linda Parenti (2013). *European and American Extreme Right Groups and the Internet* (London: Ashgate).
- Carter, Elisabeth. (2018) "Right-wing extremism/radicalism: reconstructing the concept." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 23(2), 157-182.
- Dawson, Lorne L. and Amarnath Amarasingam (2016). "Trying to Talk to Terrorists: Ethical and Methodological Challenges in Canada." *TSAS Working Paper* 16/13, July, <https://www.tsas.ca/working-papers/trying-to-talk-to-terrorists/>
- Di Masso Andrés, Angela Castrechini and Sergi Valera (2014). "Displacing xeno-racism: The discursive legitimation of native supremacy through everyday accounts of 'urban insecurity.'" *Discourse and Society* 25(3) 341–361.
- Ebner, Michael (2010). *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Edwards, Geraint O. (2012). "A comparative discourse analysis of the construction of 'in-groups' in the 2005 and 2010 manifestos of the British National Party." *Discourse and Society* 23(3): 245–258.

- Ellinas Antonis A. (2010). *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe: Playing the Nationalist Card* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010).
- Elster John (1994). "Rationality, emotions, and social norms." *Synthese* 98(1): 21–49.
- Fairclough, Norman (1992). *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Fairclough, Norman (2003). *Analysing Discourse—Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Freeden, Michael (2003). *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Freilich, Joshua D. Nelson A. Pichardo Almanzar & Craig J. Rivera (1999). "How social movement organizations explicitly and implicitly promote deviant behavior: The case of the militia movement." *Justice Quarterly* 16(3): 655-683.
- Feldman, Matthew and John Pollard (2016). "The ideologues and ideologies of the radical right: an introduction." *Patterns of Prejudice* 50(4-5): 327-336.
- Gamson, William A. (2013). "Injustice frames." In David Snow, Donatella della Porta, Bert Klandermans and Doug Mc Adam (eds.). *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements* (Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell).
- Gaudet, Maxime (2018). "Police-reported hate crime in Canada, 2016." Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Justice. Statistics. Catalogue no. 85-002-X, 25 April, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54915-eng.htm>
- Gottschalk, Peter and Gabriel Greenberg (2007). *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers).
- Hafez, Farid (2014). "Shifting borders: Islamophobia as common ground for building pan-European right-wing unity." *Patterns of Prejudice* 48(5): 479-499.
- Hafez, Mohammed M. (2018). "Fratricidal Jihadists: Why Islamists Keep losing their civil Wars." *Middle East Policy* XXV(2) : 86-99.
- Harris, Daniel J. Pete Simi and Gina Ligon (2016). "Reporting Practices of Journal Articles that Include Interviews with Extremists." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 39(7-8): 602-616.
- Helly, Denise (2012). "Islamophobia in Canada? Women's Rights, Modernity, Secularism." *RECODE Online Working Papers Series* 11, <http://www.recode.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Helly-Denise-2012-RECODE.pdf>

- Hirsch-Hoefler, Sivan and Cas Mudde (2013). "Right-wing movements." In Robert P. Snow (ed.). *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements* (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing): 1116–24.
- Horgan, John (2012). "Interviewing the Terrorists: Reflections on Fieldwork and Implications for Psychological Research," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 4(3): 195–211.
- Hutter, Kristy (2018). "Three Percenterers are Canada's 'most dangerous' extremist group, say some experts." 10 May, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/three-percenterers-canada-1.4647199>
- Jackson, Paul (2015). "'White genocide': Postwar fascism and the ideological value of evoking existential conflicts". In Cathie Carmichael and Richard C. Maguire (eds.). *The Routledge History of Genocide* (New York: Routledge): 207–226.
- Jean, Michel (2017). "Les loups montrent les crocs face à l'islam radical." *TVA Nouvelles*, 7 February, <http://www.tvanouvelles.ca/2017/02/07/les-loups-montrent-les-crocs-face-a-lislam-radical>
- Johnston, Les (1996). "What is vigilantism?" *British Journal of Criminology* 36(2): 220-236.
- Jorgensen, Marianne and Louise J. Phillips (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: Sage Publications).
- Jost John (2017). "Ideological Asymmetries and the Essence of Political Psychology." *Political Psychology* 38(2): 167-208.
- Joyce, Peter (2002). *The Politics of Protest: Extra-Parliamentary Politics in Britain since 1970* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Kallis, Aristotle (2008). "Fascism, Violence and Terror." In Brett Bowden and Micheal Davis (eds.). *Terror: from Tyrannicide to Terrorism* (St-Lucia: University of Queensland Press): 190-204.
- Kallis, Aristotle (2018). "The Radical Right and Islamophobia." In Jens Rydgren (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 42-60.

- Kerodal, Ashmini G., Joshua D. Freilich and Steven M. Chermak (2016). "Commitment to Extremist Ideology: Using Factor Analysis to Move beyond Binary Measures of Extremism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39(7-8): 687-711.
- Khalil, James (2017). "A Guide to Interviewing Terrorists and Violent Extremists." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2017.1385182.
- Kinsella, W. 1994. *Web of hate: Inside Canada's, far right network*. Toronto: Harper Collins.
- Koehler, Daniel (2014). "The Radical Online: Individual Radicalization Processes and the Role of the Internet." *The Journal of Deradicalization* 1: 116-134.
- Koehler, Daniel (2015). "Contrast Societies. Radical Social Movements and their relationships with their target societies." *A theoretical model, Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 7(1): 18-34.
- Lamoureux, Mack (2017). "The Birth of Canada's Armed, Anti-Islamic 'Patriot' Group." *Vice News*, 14 June, https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/new9wd/the-birth-of-canadas-armed-anti-islamic-patriot-group
- Lean, Nathan (2012). *The Islamophobia industry: how the right manufactures fear of Muslims* (London: Pluto Press).
- Levant, Ezra (2017). "By ordering RCMP to delete Muslim migrant files, Trudeau is "actively supporting terrorism." *The Rebel Media*, 28 November, https://www.therebel.media/ezra_levant_november_28_2017
- Levant, Ezra (2018). "More rapes in Halifax by Muslim migrants, as rape culture invades our high-trust society". *The Rebel Media*, 18 May https://www.therebel.media/ezra_levant_show_may_18_2018
- Lindekilde, Lasse (2014). « Discourse and Frame Analysis. In-Depth Analysis of Qualitative Data in Social Movement Research." In Donatella della Porta (ed.) *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 195-227.
- Madisson, Mari-Liis and Andreas Ventsel (2018). "Groupuscular identity-creation in online-communication of the Estonian extreme right." *Semiotica* 2018; 222: 25-46.
- McDougal, Maggie (2017). "Immigration Is Killing Ontario's Small Towns." *Immigration Watch Canada*, November 24, 2017,

<http://immigrationwatchcanada.org/category/archive/bulletins-january-2011-to-december-2017/>

- Mondon Aurélien & Aaron Winter (2017). "Articulations of Islamophobia: from the extreme to the mainstream?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40(13): 2151-2179.
- Monpetit Jonathan (2016). "Inside Quebec's far right: Soldiers of Odin leadership shake-up signals return to extremist roots." *CBC News*, 14 December, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-far-right-soldiers-of-odin-1.3896175>
- Mudde, Cas (2010). "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy." *West European Politics* 33(6): 1167-1186.
- Mudde, Cas (2017). *The Far right in America* (New York: Routledge).
- O'Callaghan, Derek, Derek Greene, Maura Conway, Joe Carthy, Pádraig Cunningham (2013). "An analysis of interactions within and between extreme right communities in social media." In Martin Atzmueller, Alvin Chin, Denis Helic and Andreas Hotho (eds.). *Ubiquitous social media analysis* (Berlin, Heidelberg : Springer): 88-107.
- Oliver, Pamela and Hank Johnston (2000). "What a Good Idea! Frames and Ideologies in Social Movement Research." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 5(1): 37-54.
- Parker, Ian (1992). *Discourse Dynamics* (London: Routledge).
- Perry, Barbara (2014). "Gendered Islamophobia: hate crime against Muslim women." *Social Identities* 20(4): 74-89.
- Poyting, Scott and Barbara Perry (2007). "Climates of Hate: Media and State Inspired Victimization of Muslims in Canada and Australia since 9/11." *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 19 (2): 151–171.
- Pullella, Philipp (2018). "Christians should not be second-class citizens, cardinal tells Saudi Arabia." Reuters, 26 April, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-vatican-cardinal/christians-should-not-be-second-class-citizens-cardinal-tells-saudi-arabia-idUSKBN1HX19D>
- Reicher, Stephane D., Alexander Haslam and Rashi Rath. (2008). "Making a virtue of evil: A five-step social identity model of the development of collective hate." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2(3):1313–1344.

- Reyes, Antonio (2011). "Strategies of legitimization in political discourse: From words to actions." *Discourse & Society* 22(6): 781–807.
- Richardson, John and Monica Colombo (2014). "Race and immigration in far- and extreme-right European political leaflets." In Christopher Hart and Piotr Cap *Contemporary critical discourse studies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic): 521–542.
- Rydgren, Jens (2018). "The Radical Right: An Introduction ». In Jens Rydgren (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 1-13.
- Sajjad, Tazreena and Anders C. Härdig (2016). "Too many enemies: Mobilization, marginalization, and political violence." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2015.1127807
- Sakki, Inari and Katarina Pettersson (2016). "Discursive constructions of otherness in populist radical right political blogs. » *European Journal of Social Psychology* 46(2): 156-170.
- Salazar Philippe-Joseph (2018). "The Alt-Right as a Community of Discourse." *Javnost - The Public*, 25:1-2, 135-143.
- Salyom, Catherine (2018). "Women of Quebec's far right come out of the shadows." *The Gazette*, 3 May, <https://montrealgazette.com/news/women-of-quebecs-far-right-come-out-of-the-shadows>
- Satzewich, Victor (2011). *Racism in Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Schmid, Alex. (2014). "Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?", *ICCT Research Paper*, May 2014, <https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Violent-Non-Violent-Extremism-May-2014.pdf>
- Snow, David A. and Robert D. Benford (1988). "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization." In Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Sidney Tarrow (eds). *From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research Across Cultures* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press): 197–217.
- Snow, David A. and Sarah A. Soule (2010). *A Primer on Social Movements* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company).

- Speckhard, Anne (2009). "Research Challenges Involved in Field Research and Interviews Regarding the Militant Jihad, Extremism, and Suicide Terrorism." *Democracy and Security* 5(3): 199-222.
- Taguieff, Pierre-André (1985). "Le néo-racisme différentialiste. Sur l'ambiguïté d'une évidence commune et ses effets pervers." *Langage et Société* 34 : 69-98.
- Tanner Samuel and Aurélie Campana (2014). "The radicalization of right-wing Skinheads in Quebec", *TSAS Working Paper*, n°14/07 http://library.tsas.ca/media/TSASWP14-07_Tanner-Campana.pdf.
- Toner Kaitlin et al., "Feeling Superior Is a Bipartisan Issue: Extremity (Not Direction) of Political Views Predicts Perceived Belief Superiority," *Psychological Science* 24(12): 2454-6.
- Traverso, Enzo (2016). *The End of Jewish Modernity* (London: Pluto Press).
- Tremblay, Rémi (2017). "Les islamistes testent nos lois ». *Présent.fr*, 26 July, <https://present.fr/2017/07/26/islamistes-testent-nos-lois/>
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (1992). "Discourse and the Denial of Racism." *Discourse and Society* 3(1): 87-118.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (1993). "Analyzing racism through discourse analysis: Some methodological reflections." In J. H. Stanfield II & R. M. Dennis (eds.). *Race and ethnicity in research methods. Sage focus editions, vol. 157* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications): 92-134.
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (2006). "Ideology and discourse analysis." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11(2): 115-140.
- Venner, Dominique (2013). *Un samouraï d'Occident : Le Bréviaire des insoumis* (Paris: Pierre-Guillaume de Roux Editions).
- Verkuyten, Maykel (2003). "Discourses about ethnic group (de-)essentialism: Oppressive and progressive aspects." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 42(3): 371–393.
- Verkuyten, Maykel (2013). "Justifying discrimination of Muslim immigrants: Outgroup ideology and the five-step social identity model." *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(2): 345–360.
- Wodak, Ruth (2015). *The Politics of Fear. What Right Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (London: Sage Publishers).

- Wodak, Ruth and John Richardson (eds.) (2013). *Analysing fascist discourse. European fascism in talk and text* (New York: Routledge).
- Wodak, Ruth and Martin Reisigl (2015). "Discourse and Racism." In Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton, and Deborah Schiffrin (eds.). *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Second Edition (New York: Wiley-Blackwell): 576-596.
- Wood, Clare and Finlay, William (2008). "British National Party representations of Muslims in the month after the London bombings: Homogeneity, threat, and the conspiracy tradition." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 47(4): 707-726.
- Young, Kevin and Laura Craig. 1997. "Beyond white pride: Identity, meaning and contradiction in the Canadian skinhead subculture." *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 34: 175–206.
- Zald, Mayer (2000). "Ideologically Structured Action: An Enlarged Agenda for Social Movement Research." *Mobilization: An International Journal* 5(1): 1-16.
- Zúquete José Pedro (2015). "The new frontlines of right-wing nationalism." *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 20:1, 69-85.