Mapping Fundamentalisms: The Psychology of Religion as a Sub-Discipline in the Understanding of Religiously Motivated Violence

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Summary

The psychology of religion has a vital role to play in understanding religiously motivated violence, and thus contributing to its prevention. Psychological pathology alone fails to explain either terrorists' actions or the fundamentalist religiosity that is co-opted as its legitimation. Normal social psychological processes such as uncertainty reduction, terror management, social identity, meaning making (through religion), in combination with cognitive factors such as intratextuality and low integrative complexity, provide a more adequate understanding of the radicalization of young people, some of whom go on to commit violence against hated out-groups.

Keywords

Islam, Muslims, radicalization, Social Identity Theory, Terror Management Theory, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, social categorization, values

British born Ed Husain was 16 when he became an Islamic fundamentalist. As a child, he inhabited both British and Muslim life-worlds, but a new vision of the world, excluding all things Western, came into sharp focus through neo-Islamist teachings. Against his parent's wishes, and counter to the traditional spirituality of the Muslim religion in which he was reared, Ed immersed himself in a series of student organizations that promised a new world order—a transnational \textit{umma} of committed brothers and sisters. It was an honor for this lonely teenager to be selected by Muslim peers to promote a superior, purified, intensified Islam. The new, radical Islam taught that the establishment of a pure Islamic state was the centerpiece, the purpose, of \textit{Qur'anic}...
teaching. Muslim youth in the West could now distance themselves from the social timidity of their immigrant parents. But Ed Husain found this new confidence comes at a cost: The utopian concept of a transnational Islamic state, as the one solution to poverty and corruption of governments oppressing Muslims the world over, could not be questioned. Ed Husain embarked on six years of hectic political activism in the belief that the overthrow of Western powers so inimical to ‘true’ Islam would shortly ensue. The adrenalin rush of upward moves into ever widening circles of influence crashed when Ed first witnessed the violence his beliefs inspired. He got out, and tells his story in *The Islamist* (Husain, 2007).

Similar to Husain, the emerging profile of the suicide bomber in the UK is of a well-educated, rational young man acting as trained soldier focused on a mission. Psychologically abnormal individuals lack the stability needed to bring such a task to completion, and thus are not recruited by terrorist groups (Taarnby, 2003). In nearly all cases, suicide terrorists spend time immersed in a tightly knit, totalist group that intensifies the social and cognitive dynamics: uncertainty reduction, terror management, social identity, meaning making, intratextuality and low integrative complexity.

To understand the appeal of radical neo-Islam, historical, cultural and religious contexts need also be considered. Drawing upon our current research on the violent radicalization of young Muslims in the UK, this chapter will present an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to make sense of religious violence in the wider societal context, along with a map of fundamentalisms to help locate the religious factors involved.

**The Wider Societal Context**

The Twin Towers attack of 9/11 inaugurated a pattern of religious violence that has been difficult to grasp. Whereas previous terrorism served as a bargaining chip to obtain clear political goals, the goals of current networks of violence are less concrete. We view the new pattern of violence as a long-term strategy to transform the role of religion in modern Islamic societies into a mobilizing narrative in which the prestige of Islam vis-à-vis the West becomes the central concern. This mobilizing narrative serves several important goals. It deflects attention away from the internal troubles within Islamic countries by concentrating on both real and perceived harm dealt by Western policies (past and present). By finding a scapegoat outside itself, the cohesion of the traditional Muslim social order is preserved. Pressure to reform is warded off; utopia is promised.
As this mobilizing narrative is adopted within the Muslim community in Europe by means of Saudi backed resources (Mirza, Senthilkumaran, & Ja'far, 2007), radical groups provide a bulwark for second and third generation immigrants from the identity conflict produced by the clash between their Muslim and European values and identities. This last statement forms the building block of our analysis of violent radicalization among young Muslims in Europe.

Clash of Values

Second-generation Western Muslims imbibe two sets of conflicting values. The structural forces underlying this clash of values is made clear by a substantial amount of sociological data gathered from over 80 countries over the past four decades (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). The different values espoused by developing nations, and those in developed, post-industrialized societies, are both connected to a particular economic base. For most people living in advanced industrialized societies, survival needs are generally assured (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). This economic prosperity (and its attendant specialization and welfare provision) affords individuals an unprecedented degree of freedom from traditionally prescribed roles and obligations. The subjugation of nature through science and technology has made belief in supernatural forces (believed to control nature) peripheral to society’s functioning. As supernatural forces are no longer needed to guarantee survival, institutions and culture invariably become secularized (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

In the later stages of modernization, the autonomy brought about by post-industrial, post-material specialization (for example, in IT and communication technologies), along with the social flexibility enabled by the welfare state, has resulted in relationships of choice (vs. duty). A widespread rejection of truths emanating from traditional sources of authority ensues, as these are perceived to be at odds with individual’s internal subjective experience. And so, modern culture has taken a ‘subjective turn’, and institutional religion is in sharp decline. However, the increased cultural capital of wealthy, autonomy-loving societies fosters individuals’ search for meaning, and this guarantees the survival of the religious niche, albeit within a non-authoritarian, individualized framework (Heelas, 2005). This is the story of most mainline Christian denominations, and Reform Judaism in the West. It is threatening to be the story for Western Muslim populations.

In short, modernization brings about successive value changes along two dimensions: (a) traditional values change to secular, rational values and (b) survival values change to self-expression values. These values are tolerant of
a broad range of lifestyles that are not centred on survival of the group, including homosexuality, abortion, and single parent families. In contrast, nation states still bound by survival needs show values such as respect for religious authority and traditional family patterns (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

We have argued elsewhere (Savage & Liht, 2008), that the two consecutive phases of modernization (first, secularization and second, emancipation from authority) correspond to two discernible phases in the development of fundamentalist movements in the most prosperous Western societies, particularly the US. The first wave came about as a reaction to the critical examination of sacred texts in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (and coincides with widespread elimination of the fear of starvation). This first wave of fundamentalism was preoccupied mainly with the Darwinian theory and with Biblical criticism. The second wave has been, until now, an unexplained resurgence in the 1970’s and 80’s in which Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, and other fundamentalisms exploded onto the world stage, much to the surprise of secularization theorists. This we now understand as a reaction to the ‘subjective turn’: the loss of status enjoyed by religious authority, the increase of choice within post-industrial lifestyles, and the secular humanist morality that underpins it. This second wave of fundamentalism also coincides with the rise in the service sector and information technologies that are foundational to the self-expression values of post-industrial, post-material society. These technologies also, ironically, enabled fundamentalisms to go ‘global’ on limited budgets.

**Intratextuality**

There are strong reactions to these cultural changes both within traditional societies and in the post-industrial West. One of the ways in which communities defend secularization and the ‘subjective turn’ is to adopt an intratextual approach to their authority sources. The literalist neo-Islamic teachings encountered by Ed Husain, and with its unquestioned utopian central authority belief is an example of an intratextual belief system organized in such a way so that it depends exclusively (intratextually) upon the sacred text. Hood, Hill and Williamson (2005) consider this to be a defining feature of fundamentalism. In an intratextual system, other sources of knowledge that might relativize the religious claims (such as other interpretations of Islam, Darwinism, or Biblical historical criticism) are excluded. In an intratextual system, the text has power to denote itself as sacred, and only a sacred text can specify which truths are absolute. All other peripheral beliefs descend from this two-pronged
(admittedly circular) premise. This places strict limits on how the sacred text/s should be interpreted, and how much personal freedom individuals should enjoy. The cognitive certainty thus afforded facilitates a powerful way of making sense of the world—one that endows life with coherence and personal significance for the believer. The intratextually supported meaning system achieves the desired aims of providing adherents with a sense of purpose, and coherent, rather than conflicting values.

Word-Based Religious Knowing

Another feature of fundamentalist religiosity is its emphasis on rationality. Religious truth claims are presented as 'rational' propositions (following the logic of intratextuality), often, it is argued, as a means of keeping pace with the greater prestige of scientific rationality (Barr, 1978; Harris, 1998). The teachings encountered by Ed Husain scorned metaphorical or emotional approaches to religion, and concentrated upon logical word-based arguments.

A number of dual process models make a distinction between cold (rational) and hot (emotional) processing. Anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse (2004) argues that religious cultures, past and present, generally take two forms: doctrinal and imagistic. On the level of individual informational processing, Watts (2002) suggests similarly that two subsystems associated with meaning are important in religious knowing (based on a general model of cognitive functioning proposed by Teasdale and Barnard, 1987): (a) a propositional system—to do with language and rational argumentation vital for problem solving and purposeful actions in the real world, and (b), an implicational system—to do with deeply felt meanings not easily put into words, but that synthesize input from sensory perception, bodily states, and emotions in a holistic and integrative process. Implicational content is articulated in symbol, art, myth or ritual. It provides meaning to purposeful action.

Watts (2002) argues that religious knowing entails both systems, but suggests that religious meanings are quintessentially implicational in the way they layer symbol, ritual, story and metaphor. Religious devotees thus possess a reservoir of tacit, implicational information with which to understand the multiple meanings of (word-based) religious doctrines. Under ideal conditions allowing for cross-talk between propositional and implicational ways of knowing, dogmatic conclusions from religious belief systems were usually avoided in the pre-modern period.

However, as science has become the main model to which other sources of knowledge aspire (the social sciences are one such example), Western and now
Muslim societies have been losing the capacity to read their sacred texts in an implicational, metaphorical sense. Instead, they have become preoccupied with the empirical 'veracity' of their content, and thus their vulnerability to falsification increases. Ironically, in seeking to keep pace with the status of scientific knowing, Christian fundamentalists in the 19th century wedded themselves to an earlier Newtonian model of science, and the Common Sense Realism philosophy upon which scriptural inerrancy most easily rests. And so, the intratextual defence becomes even more vehement in order to shield propositional beliefs from all other threats. It would seem that a balance between propositional and implicational ways of knowing is to be preferred, as well as a balance between a religion's traditional focus upon the transcendent realm, and its organizing role in the social/material realm. Using these as two orthogonal dimensions, different emphases of religious belief systems can be plotted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Coordinate system for representing different emphases of religious belief systems

This coordinate system is rotated clockwise by 90° compared to the similar system used by DeMarinis, this issue.
Earlier research on fundamentalism has tended to indiscriminately label those with literal, fervent or activist beliefs as fundamentalists. These could be located in Quadrants 1, 2, and 4, respectively, whereas those in Quadrant 3 have a more nominal or extrinsic approach to faith. We argue that greater specification is needed in order to unpack fundamentalism's link with violent radicalization. In Figure 2, the six contemporary Islamic orientations (based on Ramadan's analysis, 2004), can be plotted as such: in Quadrant 1 are Salafi Literalists devoted to various medieval traditions of literal interpretation; in Quadrant 4 are Sufi mystics who demonstrate a devout mystical adherence to their faith. Neither of these two Muslim orientations in the West generally evoke violence. We argue that violence is distilled within Quadrant 2:

Figure 2. The Six Contemporary Islamic Orientations (Based on Ramadan’s (2004) analysis)
political emphasis of radical neo-Islam (originating in the writings of radical Muslim thinkers such as Mawdudi, Qutb, and Nabhani, combined with the literalist emphasis of Wahabi Saudi Salafist literalism). In line with this, Admani (2008) reports that it is not the religiously observant Muslims in the UK (from Quadrants 1 and 4) who are being radicalized, but rather it is young second and third generation Muslims whose traditional Muslim roots are often attenuated (Quadrant 3, cultural Muslims) who are most vulnerable to violent radicalization.

**Integrative Complexity**

What characterizes the ideology emanating from Quadrant 4 Saudi ideologues (along with its unquestioned utopian authority belief) is its lack of complexity: An all good in-group (the Muslim community) is pitted against a dominant, all-bad, illegitimate out-group (the West). This low level of integrative complexity (IC) is a powerful predictor of inter-group confrontation (Liht, Suedfeld, & Krawczyk, 2005; Suedfeld, Guttieri, & Tetlock, 2003). In contrast, integratively complex thinking recognizes the legitimacy of different evaluative viewpoints, and is capable of higher order synthesis of these viewpoints. Low integrative complexity thinks in terms of, for example, binary, black-and-white contrasts with little or no integration of the perspectives. The kind of logic that is necessary to achieve higher levels of integration between non-compatible perspectives includes both dialectical reasoning (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) and analogical reasoning (x is like y, as in the metaphor ‘man is a wolf’). Classical binary logical/mathematical thinking alone is not sufficient (Reich, 2002). In this way, an exclusive emphasis on propositional processing makes low levels of IC more likely. An examination of the integrative complexity of Bin Laden’s speeches and sermons over 11.5 years between December of 1994 through July of 2006 (Unrath, 2007) demonstrated that Bin Laden’s speeches and sermons significantly dropped to very low levels of integrative complexity directly before 9/11, and again just before the foiled attempt to blow up airplanes in June 2006. These findings are in line with predictions that drops in IC predict violent confrontation.

Neo-Islam’s simplified, binary presentation of social reality echoes the *myth of redemptive violence*. In this dualist narrative structure, rooted in the ancient Babylonian myth of creation, violence is seen as necessary and redemptive (Ricoeur, 1986). As chaos and evil are understood as the basic substratum of reality, pre-emptive force is continually required to keep it at bay. It is not incidental that radical neo-Islamic extreme speech purports to connect young Muslims to God. People are reluctant to venture into the territory of mobiliz-
ing to kill themselves and others unless they believe they have God on their side, and that they have joined an epic battle to fight against evil.

Radicalizers have harnessed religious belief to political ends using well-worn rhetorical strategies that, for example, associating good values and emotions with the in-group, and bad values and emotions with the out-group. By aggravating painful emotions, and particularly by transforming emotions of shame into rage against the out-group, young people are poised to seek ways to seek recompense their fictive kin, the transnational umma.

When the world is presented as a stark choice between failed westernization (and its secular values), many Muslims increasingly value the meaning and identity that derives from an intensified religious worldview. European Muslims (and some Europeans) are understandably attracted to an intensified Islamic tradition untouched by textual criticism—one that provides a firm basis for personal morality, strong family values and a trans-national community of belonging (Moghaddam, 2006).

Thus, we argue that European Muslims experience an acute heightening of tension owing to a dissonance of Western/secular vs. Muslim/religious values and that this tension is experienced as self-definitional uncertainty. The solution to this uncertainty is an increasingly widespread intensification of Islamic identity. Interestingly, this does not signify a wholesale return to the traditional religion of their parents (Mirza, Senthilkumaran, & Ja'far, 2007). The new, intensified Islamic identity of young people selectively functions to distance them from the inferior immigrant status of their parents, while bolstering a sense of shared identity across a transnational umma. Similar patterns occur when British young people convert to fundamentalist Christianity. They distance themselves from their nominal Christian parents, and adopt the counter-cultural characteristics of Christian fundamentalism and construct a new identity in a similarly selective, post-modern way.

While many of the young people with intensified commitment to neo-Islam are trying to live more coherent lives by joining groups that buffer them from uncertainty, this is at the cost of full civic participation in wider society, and at the risk of further radicalization.

The path to violent radicalization, we propose, can be summarised as such:

1. Tension (stemming from the juxtaposition of pre and post-material values) is internalized as self-definitional uncertainty.
2. Uncertainty is experienced as a deficit of a functional cultural worldview.
3. The deficit results in an increased motivation to identify with fringe totalitarian group/s in order to withstand the dissonance with the host society.
4. As the social identity of individuals becomes salient over personal identity, perceptions concerning the status of the in-group vis-à-vis other groups become important.

5. Current events and historical factors are selectively highlighted in the ideology and contribute to perceptions of the de-legitimization of the out-group and the rightful dominance of Islam.

6. This resulting increase in mobilization potential fosters acceptance of radical ideologies that promote violent confrontation with the out-group.

**Social Psychological Theory Relevant to Violent Radicalization**

So far, we have argued the first point of our proposed model. In order to elucidate steps 2 through 6, in the next sections we will delve into key social psychology theories and their relationship to our understanding of religiously motivated violence.

**Terror Management Theory**

Terror Management Theory advances the idea that a shared worldview provides individuals, in their day-to-day experience, with a defence from inevitable existential anxiety: the fear of death. Fear of death is often unconscious, but can become conscious—sometimes painfully so—when death is made salient in some way. A large body of research shows that subtle reminders of death increase the way people defend their cultural worldview (Bassett, 2005).

A cultural worldview minimizes death anxiety by providing an understanding of the universe that has order, meaning, and standards of acceptable behavior. The latter, when upheld, confers self-esteem. Worldviews promise death transcendence to its members, for example, through religious beliefs in an afterlife, or through one's creative contributions transmitted through culture. The defence a worldview provides acts not only to postpone death anxiety, but to dissipate death related thoughts altogether (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003). In short, Terror Management Theory maintains that if death is made salient, people will intensify strivings for self-esteem and will respond positively towards people and ideas that support their cultural worldview. Conversely, they will respond negatively towards those people and ideas that undermine their worldview.

The second main hypothesis derived from Terror Management Theory is that when self-esteem is lowered or the validity of a cultural worldview is damaged, death anxiety will increase—a highly aversive experience, priming the
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search for a solution. We argue that for young Muslims in Britain, their native cultural defence against death anxiety is undermined by the Western, secular worldview and its values. This tension is doubly exacerbated by the (real and/or imagined) exclusion and subordination that young Muslims experience within the dominant secular British culture. The resultant state of lowered self-esteem and anxiety has two effects. One, according to Terror Management Theory, is that young British Muslims are likely to respond negatively towards the dominant Western culture that excludes or subordinates them (and damages their Muslim cultural worldview); two, they are primed to find a solution to the anxiety and lowered self-esteem.

The solution, it is observed, is occurring through an intensification of religious (rather than ethnic) identity for second and third generation young Muslims in the UK, in contra-distinction to the more ethnically based, communal, and traditional identity of their parents. The new radical Islam achieves a number of aims: Young people can ‘divorce’ themselves from their parent’s inferior status, they can enjoy an enhanced self-esteem through their Islamic identity (along with a moral superiority over the decadent West), and death anxiety is buffered by a robust worldview and through their participation in a transnational umma. The lowered self-esteem and damaged worldview resulting from un-buffered death anxiety are effectively rebuilt by a new radical Islamic worldview. Thus, we argue that measures of mortality salience should predict the motivation to reduce the self-definitional uncertainty through joining radical groups.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Uncertainty reduction research derives from the finding that most people do not tend to categorize themselves into groups unless there is a motive to alleviate uncertainty in the first place. Uncertainty is said to arise from instability, as in economic crises or war, and from the inability to obtain confirmation for one’s beliefs and attitudes from objective criteria. If this occurs, there is a need to find a group that verifies these elements of one’s cultural worldview (Hogg, 2003). The fit with British and European Muslims is apparent.

Self-categorization research defines the existence of a group in terms of people sharing a self-conception defined by a representation of the group. The representation takes the form of a prototype—a fuzzy set of features that captures in-group similarities and inter-group differences regarding beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and feelings (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Similarities among in-group members and differences between the in-group and all other
out-groups are typically exaggerated as this helps to maintain clear category boundaries, and enhances identity clarity.

As people shift from a more personal, individualistic self-representation to a group oriented self-categorization, their attitudes, behavior, and self-construal will be more influenced by the group’s prototype. Group-based self-categorization (defined by the group prototype) will result in depersonalization of the self and others: People will self-define and behave in ways that match the prototype and will perceive out-group members in terms of what makes them different from the group prototype. Thus, perception of self and other is organized, and simplified, by the group prototype (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). For example, as young British Muslims experience self-definitional uncertainty from the conflict between their British and Muslim values and identities, they will be motivated to join groups with which to identify.

This process is already heightened in adolescence as part of normal socio-psychological development, as adolescents are primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others compared to what they feel they are (Erikson, 1993). The unique, complex features of threatened young Muslims' personal identity will tend to subside in preference for identification with the group prototype. By categorizing the self as a group member akin to the group prototype (resulting in a degree of depersonalization), a well-delineated self-concept is achieved, free from uncertainty.

In social contexts of particularly high uncertainty, there will be an upsurge in the formation of, and identification with, highly homogeneous groups that (a) enforce strong conformity to the group prototype (exemplified by the group leader, usually male), and (b) that maximally differentiate themselves from other groups in uncertainty relevant dimensions. As such, groups that are highly homogeneous and intolerant of internal diversity will be attractive to people undergoing extreme levels of uncertainty. Personal doubt and ambiguity about the world are replaced by group beliefs—and group beliefs (particularly religious beliefs) are much better equipped to withstand threats to convictions and worth than are an individual’s beliefs. Although the depersonalization resulting from self-categorization in terms of the group does not necessarily entail total de-individuation (the total loss of previous self-definition) or the de-humanization of out-group members, we posit that under group pressure it can very well lead to these states. These latter states can legitimate violence against the faceless, hated other.

Prior research with incarcerated terrorists indicates that their personal identity is assimilated to their group identity to the point of being fused (and thus simplified), and that their perceptions of the hated out-group undergo
simplification and stereotyping (Post, 2005). Consequently, the way is paved for the abrogation of normal moral revulsion towards killing; moral responsibility is bequeathed to the group. In this way, totalist groups have been found to play a pivotal role in preparing young people for acts of terrorism. Thus, we argue that measuring the degree of loss of complexity in regards to conceptions of self and other will be an effective measure of an individual's (or group's) vulnerability to the influence of extremist groups.

**Social Identity Theory**

Social Identity Theory, deriving from the minimal group experiment, posits that once groups are formed, there will be a competitive relationship between groups that is motivated by the need to derive a positive self-evaluation from one's group membership (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Social identity combines two normal human processes.

The first process concerns the categories people use to simplify the flow of stimuli that makes up our experience of the world. Exaggerating differences between one's in-group from other groups, while minimizing differences among one's own in-group members, helps people to maintain clear social categories. The second process concerns the ongoing need for positive self-esteem. It is normal for people to favor their own group (their in-group), and to enhance its image. The flip side of this is that by comparison, other groups (out-groups) are often denigrated. The minimal group experiments show that this occurs even when group membership is somewhat arbitrary and without a past history (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994).

The minimal group experiments are now legendary in social psychology research, revealing profound, robust aspects of human nature. These landmark experiments reveal the stark way humans categorize people as us and them, and how an immediate in-group preference takes place. The continued replication of the findings cross-culturally has prompted an evolutionary hypothesis: A psychological mechanism evolved to enable hominids to identify good and bad reciprocators. In brief, the evolutionary explanation involves a limited amount of resources to invest in collective enterprises like hunting, so that hominids developed a way to differentiate who to collaborate with, and whom to exclude, on the basis of maximizing the potential benefit of collaboration (Abrams, Hogg, & Marques, 2005).

Social Identity Theory has built upon the minimal group experimental findings to the wider arena of inter-group conflict and collective mobilization. This is where Social Identity Theory becomes particularly relevant to the study
of Islamic terrorism in the wider context of post-material Western society. The main points are that belonging to groups, and the value one attaches to different groups in society, will reflect in part the value and prospects of the individual: the individual's social self-concept. As such, people feel strongly motivated to achieve a positive and superior positioning of their group vis-à-vis the out-group/s. Thus they are prepared to behave in a way that increases the likelihood of that happening (Hornsey & Hogg, 2002).

A deficit in personal positive self-esteem might motivate a shift to a more group-based search for self-enhancement (Abrams & Hogg, 2004), and it is the subjective perception of the group's status that matters to individuals. The individual will construct the image of a group based on personal experiences, choice, and on what is out there in the theatre of inter-group ideology communicated by elites and the media, in order to bolster self-esteem.

It is clear that groups stand in varying power and prestige relationships to each other (Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish, & Hodge, 1996). Some group memberships will be open to incorporate members of other groups, while other memberships are closed. When upward mobility to the dominant group is thwarted, skilled individuals will tend to mobilize others in their own group in order to improve the group's status as a whole: A group strategy (rather than an individual strategy) will be taken. Conversely, when upward mobility between groups is possible, the motivation to adopt a group strategy by members of subordinate groups diminishes.

Members of subordinate groups comparing adversely with other dominant groups will be motivated to change the perception of their subordinate status. However, members of the dominant group will want to resist that. Consequently, conflict over group status will be an integral part of dynamic inter-group situations. The nature of Islamic terrorism that seeks to alter the symbolic status of groups on the world stage, more so than seeking to achieve particular discrete goals, fits in well with this research paradigm.

Even though members of groups that compare negatively to other more dominant groups find that this impacts their self-concept negatively, it is only when other alternatives are subjectively entertained and deemed possible that group members will venture into trying to achieve a revision of the hierarchy. When groups see the status hierarchy as non-permanent and unstable, together with the perception that the current situation is illegitimate and unfair, these perceptions combine to catalyze collective mobilization to bring about change. In this vein, 9/11 introduced perceptions of new possibilities for a sweeping revision of global group status hierarchies.
When a group stops seeing itself as inevitably subordinate to another, and when altering its inferior status becomes a realistic possibility, a new ideology will be needed in order to challenge the hierarchy of the dominant group. Ideologies designed for this task will include a justification for using various means of challenging the status quo, whether peaceful resistance (as in Gandhi's satyagraha) or terrorism (distorting and over-extending concepts of jihad). Moreover, the fact of the past grandeur of Islam, and the popularity of illegitimate subordination in the writings of a host of Islamic intellectuals resonating with post-colonial Western self-deprecation (Moghaddam, 2006), provide a belief amplification frame alignment in which to base a convincing neo-Islamic discourse that reinforces the motivation to revise the current status hierarchy of Islam vis-à-vis the West.

Conclusion

To conclude, we have argued that three paradigms in social psychology, terror management, uncertainty reduction, and the social identity tradition, can enable psychologists of religion to better understand religiously motivated violence. Theories that emphasize subjective perceptions and the construction of social identity are particularly useful in a post-material context where group membership is not a given, but a matter of active identification. In this understanding, groups perform, as it were, in front of a global audience via near-instant media coverage. Thus, we argue that measures of perceptions of relevant group status hierarchies (such as Muslim vs. Western), and their perceived impermeability, legitimacy and stability will be useful measures to identify young people vulnerable to violent radicalization, and thus inform efforts at prevention. However, a social psychological approach to religious issues on its own can be reductionistic, failing to consider the powerful religious motivations that enter—admittedly—as effect rather than as primary cause, but then take on a life of their own. The psychology of religion has much to offer a multi-disciplinary understanding of religious violence. The starting point for our map is a broad sociological and historical perspective that sheds light upon the clash of values, and the role religion and fundamentalism (intratextuality) are playing in global conflicts and terrorism today. Religion, as a source of identity and meaning making, is reclaiming centre stage.
References


