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## Theorising radicalisation and practices of surveillance

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From theorising radicalisation to surveillance practices:

Muslims in the cross hairs of scrutiny

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### **Abstract**

There are several psychological analyses of the processes of radicalisation resulting in terrorism. However, we know little about how those in authority (e.g., the police) conceptualise the psychological dynamics to radicalisation. Accordingly, we present a detailed account of an official UK counter-terrorism intervention, the Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent, designed to enlist front-line professionals in identifying and referring those at risk of radicalisation. Specifically, we report data gathered during an observation of this intervention delivered by the police in Scotland. This provides insight into the psychological model of radicalisation being disseminated in the UK and we evaluate the merits of this model in the light of current psychological theory. First, we consider how this model may overlook certain social dynamics relevant to understanding radicalisation. Second, we discuss how this neglect limits consideration of how the surveillance warranted by the official model may lead Muslims to disengage from majority group members. Our analysis points to how political psychology's analysis of social identities and citizenship can inform public policy and practice.

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I feel like this is my community, this is my country as well and I don't see why I should have to be put into that scenario where it's a sort of "them and us" [] I just don't feel comfortable because I feel like it's my people turning against me [] Scottish people, the Scottish community.

This quote comes from a Scottish Muslim student explaining her distress over the visits Scottish counter-terrorism police officers were making to her Islamic student society.

According to her, many overseas students were comfortable with such visits (on the grounds they had nothing to hide). Yet in contrast, she and other local Scottish Muslims regarded such scrutiny as a hurtful questioning of their Scottishness and belonging. Indeed, her heartfelt distress at what she saw as "my people turning against me" reminded us of Scott's (1990, p.107) observation that "the anger born of a sense of betrayal implies an earlier faith".

Needless to say, the police had not intended such offence and were genuinely puzzled by it.

This example highlights the importance of those in authority understanding how members of the community make sense of their treatment. Throughout the course of our work on policing we have met many senior police officers (including some centrally involved in counter-terrorism) and have been struck by the extent to which psychological assumptions about the dynamics of alienation and radicalisation underpin their work. Yet, although many officers were thoughtful and sensitive, we believe their models feature a number of assumptions that limit their ability to anticipate how well-meaning interventions may be received in ways that undermine their work. Moreover, we believe political psychology's analyses of identity, citizenship and the social processes through which people are positioned (see Haste, 2004, 2006) can help shed light on these unintended consequences.

The vehicle for our exploration of these issues is a detailed observational analysis of one prominent intervention for dealing with violent extremism – the 'Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent' (WRAP). 'Prevent' is an element of CONTEST -- the UK

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Government's counter-terrorism strategy -- and aims to "prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support" (HM Government, 2011, p. 12). WRAP is a training workshop designed to help front-line professionals (e.g., teachers, health workers), security agents (e.g., shopping centre security officers), and various community organisations, identify signs of vulnerability in individuals and support those individuals (either directly or through referral to authorities). Attesting to its significance, at the conclusion of 2013, over 35,000 public servants alone had received WRAP training. At the time of writing (and in the wake of various terrorist concerns), it is being updated and it is likely that it and similar inventions will continue to receive political support (Home Office announcement, 24 November, 2014).

Below, we document the nature of this intervention and draw on research and theory in political psychology to explicate the psychological assumptions in this model. We then consider how these encourage the neglect of other important psychological processes. Our analysis is motivated by two concerns. The first is general and concerns the relationship between theory and practice. Although political psychology has important contributions to make in intervention design, this input has been limited: Susan Brandon of the FBI (2011) laments that "one might have expected greater impacts, given that counterterrorism strategies can work only if they are based on sound behavioral and social science principles" (p. 503). She attributes this in part to a lack of science expertise within government and to the difficulty across all areas of government in translating research into policies and practices and cautions that this allows "for methods or tools that lack any sound scientific basis to make their way into practice" (p. 503). The second is more specific and concerns the cost of neglecting insights from political psychology: One risk of partial analyses of radicalisation is that it is all too easy to design interventions that have deleterious unanticipated consequences. Indeed, bearing in mind our opening quote, our analysis considers how the practices

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encouraged by the WRAP program could themselves undermine positive Muslim-authority relations and increase the credibility of ‘radical’ voices.

### **The Workshop: Method**

In 2010, two of the authors attended a 3-hour WRAP workshop held in Edinburgh’s City Chambers. The (public) event included approximately 30 participants (two of whom were female) invited by Lothian and Borders Police. The participants included security workers, business people and a bus driver, seated around tables in groups of 5-6. Two police officers (one male, one female) co-facilitated the session, showing video clips and leading a series of interactive exercises. At the outset, the researchers explained their presence and obtained permission to audio-record the event. The corpus of materials available for analysis comprises the official WRAP facilitator handbook (FH), the accompanying video (V), and the transcript of the whole event featuring the female and male police officer facilitators (FPF/MPF) and female and male participants (FP/MP). These materials were subjected to thematic analysis in which coding proceeded through an iterative process (Braun & Clarke, 2012). We focussed on identifying the use of psychological constructs in explaining the radicalisation process. Once key constructs were identified (i.e., identity, social influence, discrimination, and grievance formation), we explored the psychological assumptions underlying them.

The workshop’s structure followed closely the 12 sections in the facilitator’s handbook which specified particular objectives and the means (e.g., video clips, group exercises) to achieve them. First, drawing upon material from the handbook, video, group exercises and discussions, we provide a detailed ethnographic account of the intervention. This is structured using the section headings provided in the facilitator’s handbook. Second, we consider the psychological constructs on which the intervention rests.

### **The Workshop: data**

1. Introduction. The workshop began with a welcome in which the male facilitator referred to the handbook's introduction stating that the workshop would provide an "understanding of the Prevent agenda; your role within it; the knowledge and confidence to discuss grievances; and the ability to use your existing expertise and professional judgment to recognise potentially vulnerable individuals" (FH p. 2). Elaborating on this, there was an emphasis on Scotland's vulnerability (evinced by the 2007 attack on Glasgow airport) and the "acknowledgement that we (police) cannot do this (fight terrorism) on our own [] it's done by grass roots policing, grass roots community engagement, and grass roots community cohesion" (MPF). This was developed in the accompanying video clip which described terrorism as a 'social crime' with social origins and consequences (much like stealing to support a drug habit which affected *all* communities) and so warranted the active involvement of *all* community members. Indeed, the video's narrator explained: "If terrorism is a social crime, then there's only one place to look for a solution: our communities". Next, participants engaged in an exercise in which they generated a list of crimes affecting their community. The crimes mentioned included vandalism, theft, fraud, gang violence, and hate crime. As 'terrorism' was not mentioned, the female facilitator (following the handbook instructions) observed: "Nobody's mentioned terrorism as affecting their community []. Part of today is to understand that no community is immune from the threat of terrorism".

2. The source of the problem. Having established the relevance of terrorism for all, the focus shifted to the processes producing violent extremism. A seven minute video-clip featuring an interview with an academic historian provided a brief history of terrorism and delivered two key messages. The first was a human need to belong and the suggestion that "some people

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are more inclined to join groups than others” (V). The second was the importance of the “group dynamic” and how groups may subvert the individual. Indeed, the narrator concluded: “History proves it. The groups we surround ourselves with define who we are – and what we do. A sense of belonging can drive otherwise ordinary people, especially the young and vulnerable, to extremes” (V). These messages permeated what followed and are central to understanding the psychological assumptions underpinning the WRAP model of radicalisation.

3. Persuade, induce, incite. The next section focused on social influence as key to understanding various crimes. Participants were invited to return to the previously generated list of crimes and to call out ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the question of whether the individual committing the crime could have experienced “persuasion, inducement or incitement from another to commit these crimes” (MPF). The first crime was ‘theft’ and several called out ‘yes’. On being invited to expand, one participant explained: “peer pressure, one of their mates has stolen something and they can put the pressure on” (MP). The facilitator responded “peer pressure is an important point and one we will come back to” and proceeded through the remaining crimes listed, all of which participants were encouraged to recognize as having potential for outside influence. The facilitator concluded: “what this is saying is there is generally someone at the back of it (crime) that is inciting and inducing” (MPF).

4. A ‘normal’ social process. The handbook described the next section’s objectives as being to show that “radicalisation uses normal social processes – therefore you can understand it”; and to examine “what is it that drives us to do things we wouldn’t ordinarily do?” (FH). Accordingly, the female facilitator gave an example where against her own preference, she sometimes agreed to watch sport with her husband on weekends: “Every so often there will



be this rigmarole where one of us will exert more pressure on the other one and a bit more of a guilt trip on the other one that will mean that one of us will give in” (FPF). She then asked: “would anyone like to share when they’ve been dragged along to do something or someone’s put that little bit of pressure on them to the point where they’ve felt guilted into it”. A male participant volunteered that he occasionally went out on Friday nights with friends when he would prefer to stay at home; to which the facilitator responded, “this might be another example of peer pressure” (FPF).

As these examples illustrate, the dominant model of social influence appears to be of ‘public compliance’ where people go along with others and do what they themselves do not wish to do (Kelman, 1958), rather than of ‘private acceptance’ where people’s attitudes genuinely change. This is certainly reflected in the facilitator’s handbook which lists reasons for acquiescence as: “keep the peace; didn’t want someone thinking badly of them; to return a favour; to earn some credit or kudos; hoodwinked into it; (and) fear” (FH, p. 11). The familiarity of this account of social influence was not only apparent from the ease with which participants contributed, it was also indicated in the joking that surrounded the examples given: e.g., the male facilitator quipped “This section feels a wee bit like a therapy session. But feel free, we’re all amongst friends”. We see in this comment and in the shared laughter accompanying it a shared understanding of influence as involving compliance and as having a manipulative quality. The message that we all experience and understand such processes was clearly articulated in the handbook’s concluding statement for this section:

Criminals and violent extremists who influence others to act on their behalf don’t have a magic formula or secret art. [ ] While the underlying normality of the influencing process might at first make it seem frightening, think again: the normality means – as you have just proved – we all have the skills to recognise the process and its effects (FH, p. 12).

5. “This is England”. Next, participants had an opportunity to demonstrate their skills in diagnosing the dynamics to manipulation. This involved viewing a clip taken from a well-known film, ‘This is England’, which concerned young people’s involvement in right-wing extremism in the 1980s. The clip was introduced by the video narrator’s observation that young people are particularly vulnerable to recruitment to violent extremism:

‘When we look for the vulnerable in our society we are often drawn to young people. The characteristics they possess, enthusiasm, idealism, ambition, imagination, are exactly what can be used and exploited’ (V).

The selected film-clip featured a 12 year old boy (Shaun) who the narrator describes as “vulnerable, bullied and poor (and) has recently lost his marine father in the Falklands conflict and so is angry”. The scene concerns a meeting where an older man named Combo makes an impassioned argument to Shaun and his friends about the betrayal of the British working class, and seeks to recruit them to his nationalist cause. Following the clip, participants discussed in their groups their interpretation of what they had seen, and these observations were then collated and discussed. Participants’ observations ranged from noting that Combo’s audience consists of those “who have been bullied through their lives, the weaker” (MP); to commentary on the “intimidating” lay out of the room where “Combo is standing” and the others are “huddled together” (MP); and the sense that “there is no easy escape, you were jammed in with your friends and couldn’t get out without making yourself visible” (FP).

The facilitator’s handbook prompted discussion about two aspects of this scene. The first is the notion that, in the words of one participant, Combo is “socially skilled and manipulative” as demonstrated by his “guilting people” and “chang(ing) tack when he

recognizes this wee lad is vulnerable [] because his father died in the Falklands” (FP). The male facilitator affirmed this account and emphasised how Combo exploited Shaun’s emotional vulnerability and offered him a narrative in which he could feel pride and solidarity with the memory of his father. Thus, participants’ attention was drawn to the way Combo’s influence involved a skill to “adapt a narrative to fit” and “give Shaun a cause and empower him to act” (FH).

The second is the notion of “forced choice” which refers to a critical moment where Combo draws a line on the floor and invites those present to publicly declare their allegiance by stepping over it. This is understood as “enforcing group pressure” and forcing a choice where “you’re either with us or against us” (FH). Of course, one can refuse and some do, but as the facilitator makes clear, the price is exclusion from the group.

Throughout, Shaun is characterized as innocent, passive and unable to resist - easy prey for any agent of influence. By contrast, Combo is characterized as knowing, powerful and agentic. Indeed, one woman comments that even “his uniform was sending a message. You had a skinhead, you had his prison tattoos [] so he’s sending a message before he opened his mouth that I am a dangerous man” (FP). Thus, we have a representation of influence in terms of the powerful bullying the weak and of a relationship where one may feel morally obliged to intervene.

6. Narratives. Building on the points arising from the film-clip, the discussion turned to the ways in which Combo (and others) were able to create a “single narrative” which entails “giving a reason for a course of action and hiding behind something whether it be Thatcher’s Britain or whether it be Al Qaida” (MPF).

Here, those who seek to recruit the susceptible are depicted as cynically preying on the vulnerable and their grievances (indeed, the handbook emphasises that one should not

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“lose sight of the key fact that these AQ influenced extremists are criminals”: FH p. 15). We also see the narratives offered by such agents of influence as playing upon individuals’ grievances. For example, the female facilitator explains that extremists “will look up grievances people in minority communities have and turn them into a reason to listen to my story; a reason to believe that what I am telling you is the way to go”.

Again a video clip was shown. It featured a Muslim community worker who explained how Al Qaeda represented current grievances in terms of historical and global events going back to the Crusades, and continued:

The problem we have is that many young people are suffering from grievances. There is a perception that there is discrimination, humiliation, polarisation, taking place in our society. [] In many cases the grievances that people feel are very, very real. But in some cases they’re perceived. Either way it’s irrelevant, because their perception is their reality, and as a result of those discriminations that they suffer, they can buy into ideology.

Countering this representation the speaker emphasised that WRAP - and related interventions - were focused on:

‘empowering people to make sure that [] we all feel safe and confident that extremist ideologies of any kind [] can’t pervade through our society.’

7. Recognizing vulnerability. Following a short break for refreshments, the workshop explored the factors contributing to (and indicating) ‘vulnerability’ (defined as: “individuals who because of their circumstance, experiences or state of mind are open to recruitment by violent extremists” FH, p. 19). The handbook differentiates between factors internal to the individual (e.g., ‘identity crisis’, ‘low self-esteem, ‘social exclusion’) and those beyond the

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individual's control (e.g., 'foreign policy', 'media', 'group identity'), and the next exercise explored how such factors combined to make people "susceptible to the violent extremist message" (MPF). Following the handbook guidelines, the male facilitator presented Shaun as an example of someone who, following his bereavement was suffering an 'identity crisis'. This crisis (e.g., concerning what it means to be a man) was described as personal and specific to him (an internal factor). Other things – e.g., foreign policy (in this case the Falklands war in which his father died) were depicted as outside Shaun's control (an external factor). The importance of this differentiation was underlined by the facilitator who explained that there was little point in talking about external factors such as foreign policy in Afghanistan and Iraq ('we have to move away from that because we can't change foreign policy'). Rather, the focus was on factors internal to the individual and participants were invited to "shout out from the floor some examples of personal and external issues". The first responses were 'discrimination' (FP) and 'sexuality' (MP) both of which were listed as 'personal'. Next, someone called out 'unemployment' (FP), to which the male facilitator asked, "personal or external?" and the participant responded: "the causes are external but when you are unemployed it is personal". The facilitator then posed the question: "What does unemployment touch on? We've talked about foreign policy, domestic policy?" and (in-keeping with the guidance in the facilitator's handbook) proceeded to construe unemployment as an external factor. After further discussion on the distinction between internal and external factors the topic shifted to religion and how one 'internal' factor was a "lack of theological resilience" which rendered one vulnerable to externally-provided distorted versions of Islam.

8. The symptoms in action. Next participants discussed several real-life case studies of Muslim radicalisation with attention focusing on how the internal and external factors identified in the previous exercise were involved. Following a brief presentation of one case

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in which a young convert (Nicky Reilly) attempted to blow up a restaurant, the female facilitator listed several ‘personal’ factors:

Discrimination in terms of his height and weight - so he fits the bill there. Education - due to being someone with Aspergers’ - probably could be better. Financial issues due to the fact he’s sharing a flat with family members and there’s been criminality in the family [] there was not a lot of money around in that household.

She then moved to list external factors:

Obviously we’ve got the media and the internet. Religious – he didn’t have sufficient knowledge of religion so he’s picked up on a distorted image of Islam. His unemployment status. So, Nicky Reilly fits perfectly in our stereotype of vulnerability.

The next case concerned two doctors who attacked Glasgow airport and a London nightclub. The facilitators’ handbook suggests that this case be used ‘to illustrate that vulnerability does not mean weakness’ (p. 21) and the female facilitator observed that the Glasgow doctors “don’t fit quite so neatly into this stereotyped image of the vulnerable” (FPF). Specifically, they were depicted as “more inclined to be affected by foreign policy – I don’t think Nicky Reilly was aware of foreign policy” and the officer continued, “rather than a lack of education, the level of education of these doctors led them to take a different view of the world”. The conclusion was that “there is not a check-list and this exercise shows that factors affecting communities work in different ways” (FPF). Indeed, the male facilitator observed that whilst Nicky Reilly “is stereotypically vulnerable; the doctors are not vulnerable, but they are more susceptible” (MPF). However, despite this distinction, the ensuing discussion focused on weakness.

9. Vulnerability. The conceptualisation of vulnerability (and susceptibility) was developed through a video interview with an addiction expert who drew parallels between the susceptibilities that result in addiction and radicalisation. According to the narrator the key was early childhood “because we all rely on the sort of first years of our life to develop an identity”:

They may be having problems in school, they may be having problems subsequent to that in terms of finding a role for themselves, finding a job, employment, issues like this, and also particularly in relationships too. [ ] They can experience an episode of racism or rejection that really then opens the wound wide, wide, open again so that they’re left with this great big gaping chasm of not sure where they fit in. Now that’s when the extremists turn up, and they begin to feed them with an ideology that appears in the form of a remedy, when actually it’s the worst poison, and they suggest that you are different, but you’re different for a reason, because you’re special, you’re superior, you have a divine mission. (V).

Again, the focus here is upon individual weakness and the power of another’s narrative to transform a personal crisis into a sense of grievance. At one level, experiences of social exclusion and discrimination are recognised as relevant. However, it is clear that they are conceptualised in terms of their role in undermining individuals’ sense of identity, thus making them susceptible to others’ narratives.

With regard to the identification of such susceptibility the video’s narrator asked “Who in your opinion is most likely to spot this?” to which the addiction expert responded “Any frontline sort of public sector employee”. The narrator continued that such frontline staff could themselves intervene and “heal that wound that the violent extremist can come along and infect”. Indeed, he continued: “human relationships do the damage but human relationships can also undo the damage [... for] the simple act of talking and sharing, or

recognising and referring, can make all the difference”. This message was emphasised by the male facilitator, who, referring to an example of a prison guard befriending someone imprisoned for terrorism-related offences, closed the section with the observation:

What was interesting was that whilst AQ-inspired terrorists will build on this West vs Islam ideology in a single narrative that we talked about earlier on, there’s a simple example of an inmate having a blether (conversation) with one of the wardens and actually breaking it down. And that is in a nutshell what the whole Prevent strategy is about.

10. Recognize, understand, and refer. The workshop then discussed the signs of vulnerability and again this was introduced by a videoed interview. This featured a school head-teacher who related a case in which a student was observed challenging authority, intimidating other students, showing leadership, and being vocal about religion and foreign affairs (V).

Following the video the female facilitator observed, “in their own right, if someone presented with a couple of these issues there would be no alarm bells. [ ] But perhaps when we’re looking at it where all these features are in one person we start to have some doubts”. She then invited participants to suggest how they would respond and answers included: speaking with the boy’s parents, teachers, students, the local Mosque, education department, and social services. To this list the facilitator added ‘the police’: “any organization or individual could flag up a concern with the police and there would then be a whole army of people to take that further”. This was underlined by her male colleague who emphasised the importance of overcoming any reluctance to involve the police. The next section to the video involved the head-teacher explaining how he had “networked with our partner agencies”, “sharing the issue”, “sharing responsibility” and “raising awareness” because “when we actually boil it down and look at the individual concerned [ ] they are largely the victims, because they have not been given an alternative way”.



11 & 12. The community solution and conclusion. Building on the previous section's message that people had a duty to act, the last two sections emphasised people's responsibility and competence to take action within their communities. The workshop ended with the video narrator asking participants to use their common sense and their professional judgement to recognize and refer those who may not have committed a crime, but present nonetheless as being vulnerable to radicalisation:

When I started on this journey to try to understand radicalisation, I thought the big picture could be too complicated for me to get my head around let alone do anything about, but ultimately it's all about people. All of us, how we interact with each other in our communities. Relationships can be part of the problem, but they're definitely the solution. [ ] If we can continue to encourage discussion and understanding, if we can recognise and support the vulnerable, if we all play our part, however small, then together we can make the difference.

### **Analysis**

Clearly, there is much of merit in what we have described above. WRAP avoids characterising those drawn to violent extremism as fundamentally evil. Rather, radicalization is depicted as deriving from (a) a series of risk factors, which (b) undermine individual identity, and so (c) make people receptive to social influence by individuals and groups (Crenshaw, 2004; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Moghaddam, 2007). This contextualisation helps make the radicalisation process more intelligible and research confirms that experiences of personal loss, drug addiction, and trauma, do indeed often feature in the biographies of some of those drawn to violent extremism (Kruglanski, Crenshaw, Post, & Victoroff, 2007; Kruglanski et al., 2014; Post, Sprinzak, & Denny, 2009).

However, whilst WRAP provides insights into what otherwise remains hard to fathom, its contextualisation of behavior is limited by an exclusive focus on individual vulnerability. Whilst this could be dismissed as an issue only of concern to academics, we

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believe it has enormous practical significance: One result of this narrow focus on the individual is that it becomes easy to overlook how the search for signs of individual vulnerability (encouraged by WRAP) could actually contribute to the straining of social relationships that WRAP champions as the basis for diverting individuals from a path to radicalisation.

Political psychology is well-placed to further contextualise the radicalisation process and sensitize us to how interventions premised on the search for those with diverse forms of individual vulnerability may contribute (albeit unintentionally) to forms of alienation and even radicalisation. Accordingly, our analysis of WRAP's adequacy draws upon research concerning identity and influence, citizenship, and the role played by authorities in shaping intergroup relations.

### Identity and influence

Identity permeates WRAP's conceptualisation of radicalisation. However, identity is conceptualised in very narrow terms: that which defines persons as unique. Although 'groups' feature in the WRAP model they are conceptualised as an external force that impact upon the individual. Where people lack a secure sense of the autonomous self, the group becomes powerful and belonging is conceptualised as a form of consolation for psychological needs. Inevitably, this shapes the conceptualisation of the social influence processes involved in radicalisation. What is positive in the WRAP model is a normalisation of this social influence: it is something that is familiar in the fabric of our everyday lives. Yet, the image is of a particular sort - one in which influence is mediated by inter-personal power and manipulation (with the corollary that the analytic focus is on the individual and his/her vulnerabilities, and upon the intensity of the surrounding *external* pressures).

This image is popular in much discussion of social problems – e.g., how young people come to adopt practices (e.g., smoking; drug addiction) that they know are bad for them -- and is problematic in all manner of ways (see Hopkins, 1994). Most obviously, it fails to recognise that we categorise ourselves in group terms (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) and that these psychological investments allow forms of genuine social influence where others shape our beliefs about what we *want* to do and feel we *ought* to do (Turner, 1991). The social identity approach to group behavior highlights the importance of the social-categorical relationship between individuals and research confirms that with regard to influence this is key: Influence is stronger from those with whom one shares a social self-categorisation (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). Moreover, the social identity perspective emphasises that even if one does identify with a particular group, one does not do anything that group members propose. Rather there are limits: people only heed proposals that are congruent with the group's worldview and can help make sense of the social context (e.g., McGarty, Haslam, Hutchinson, & Turner, 1994). Indeed, research on in-group deviance and criticism (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988; Morton, Postmes, & Jetten, 2007; Teixeira, Demoulin, & Yzerbyt, 2013) and on leadership (e.g., Abrams, Randsley de Moura, Marques, & Hutchison, 2008; Duck & Fielding, 1999) points to the risks group members take when they propose an alternative worldview or one that does not mesh with people's experience of reality.

All this cautions against the theoretical utility of the concept of peer pressure (Hopkins, 1994). Far from being an imposition accepted because of one's individual vulnerabilities, our group memberships and social identities are rooted in, and are a means of responding to, social reality. Which social categories are employed to define the self and one's relations with others is not random. Rather, for a self-categorisation to be sustained, it must be able to make sense of one's experiences and the social context which one inhabits.

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The wider corollary of this insight is that in order to understand self-categorisation and the group processes that follow (e.g., social influence) we need to explore how individuals are positioned through the actions and practices of others and how this impacts on who they regard as their fellows (e.g., if one is interested in how people come to self-define in terms of nations, one needs to explore the social practices through which the nation is made socially and psychologically relevant: Billig, 1995).

Again, this requires a shift in focus from the individual and their vulnerabilities to the social context in which they live. Rather than being passive recipients of influence, people seek out and use others as a resource, and draw upon those whose views help in the process of making sense of their lived experience: not any message source, message content, or narrative, will suffice. With regard to the potential for extremist voices to be influential it follows that much is to be gained through understanding the ways in which the structure of people's interactions with others are integral to the formation of particular social categorical relations and social identities (especially those interactions that create a sense of 'them' or 'us').

In order to illustrate why this is so important, and what it might mean in more concrete terms, consider how the WRAP model conceptualises the experiences believed to render people susceptible to the lure of extremist voices. Clearly, WRAP recognizes that social experiences – e.g., discrimination – can be hurtful and can motivate extremism (e.g., through encouraging receptivity to narratives couched in 'them' and 'us' terms). However, the analysis of the mechanisms involved is limited because it assumes that discrimination is simply one of many factors which undermine the development of a healthy self and thus makes people vulnerable to exploitative groups. Indeed, in the WRAP exercise we studied, discrimination was considered alongside identity crisis, social exclusion, drug or alcohol abuse, distrust of civil society, mental health, lack of theological resilience, unemployment

etc. That is, discrimination's link to radicalisation was depicted as no different to, say, losing a parent or losing one's job: all operate equally through their toxic effect on our personal selfhood.

Again, the social identity perspective provides an alternative analysis suggesting that the link between individual experience and the adoption of radical narratives is (a) much less arbitrary, and (b) mediated by processes other than those concerning individual vulnerability (e.g., 'identity crisis'). Rather, for a narrative to be influential it must have a social categorical structure that can help make sense of one's lived experience. Moreover, research from this perspective shows that the experience of a 'common fate' of discrimination may help constitute particular social categorical relationships that position people such that they are distanced from authority figures and begin to accord others (e.g., anti-authority voices) more credibility (Drury & Reicher, 2009). That is, rather than the radicalising effect of discrimination being mediated by 'identity crisis', it arises because discrimination functions as a group-making practice that defines one as 'other' and so defines relations in intergroup ('them and us') terms (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Cronin, Levin, Branscombe, van Laar, & Tropp, 2012; Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt, & Spears, 2001).

Recent research conducted with Turkish students (Simon & Reichert, 2010) lends support to this analysis: participants' personal experiences of discrimination rendered them more sympathetic to others' experience and to non-normative forms of political action. Research by Blackwood and colleagues (2013a) also hints at these processes and there was evidence for participants both (a) drawing on the collective narrative to make sense of their personal experiences; and (b) conversely, using their personal experiences to validate the collective narrative. More particularly – and this was independent of participants' own views -- such experiences were seen as providing insight (and credibility) to those within their community who expressed more oppositional identities (Blackwood, Hopkins, & Reicher,

2013b). Finally, some of those who saw themselves as leaders themselves believed that these experiences were consequential for what messages within the community would be heeded and so expressed doubt about their ability to urge cooperation with the authorities without compromising their own credibility.

### Citizenship

The concept of citizenship foregrounds the issue of individuals' relationship with the polity (typically the state): It is on the basis of one's membership of the polity that individuals obtain diverse rights. The rights may be formal (the right to vote). They may also be informal as when individuals experience the right to speak and be heard as a member of the community in everyday settings (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). Yet, to self-categorise as a member of the community (and believe that one has these informal rights) is one thing. The degree to which others recognise one's self-categorisation (Cheryan & Monin, 2005) and afford one those informal rights (Wakefield et al., 2011), is another. For example, British Muslims sometimes report believing that when they criticise British military action in Iraq and Afghanistan, they are not heard as British citizens deliberating on British national interest but are judged as Muslims voicing alien identity-related concerns (Hopkins, 2011; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). So too, British Muslims sometimes report that when they voice concerns about Palestine, they believe their concerns are interpreted differently than if they were voiced by a non-Muslim Briton. Specifically, they report that their critical comments are easily construed in terms of 'Muslim extremism' when if they were voiced by their fellow non-Muslim Britons they would be construed more positively (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011).

These observations raise the question of whether the interest in Muslims' views and behavior encouraged by WRAP may be experienced as a form of 'othering' that positions individuals in ways that compromise their own self-categorisation as members of the national

community (and the sense of citizenship that such a categorisation entails). Moreover, it raises the question of whether such scrutiny could actually contribute to the production of social identities that support sentiments that imply a distance from the social institutions associated with good citizenship (e.g., various legal institutions). Certainly, various community organizations (e.g., the *Muslim Council of Britain*) have voiced concerns about the consequences of government counter-terrorism measures for British Muslims' confidence in authorities (Home Affairs Committee, 2005). Empirical analyses substantiate some of these concerns (e.g., Choudhury & Fenwick, 2011; Spalek & Lambert, 2008). According to Tyler and Lind's (1992) relational model of procedural justice informing much of the psychological research in this area (e.g., Jackson & Sunshine, 2007), people's confidence in, and cooperation with authorities is shaped by their perception of whether those authorities exercise their power fairly, respectfully and legitimately. For instance, in one recent study amongst American Muslims in New York (Tyler, Schulhofer, & Huq, 2010) there was strong evidence that perceived lack of procedural justice led to a perception of authorities as illegitimate, which in turn reduced willingness to voluntarily cooperate with counter-terrorism measures.

UK research conducted with Scottish Muslims echoes these findings. Blackwood and colleagues (2012; 2013a, b) report that many of their Muslim participants identified as British and saw themselves as having positive relations with authorities (with some being involved in promoting the national security agenda), but that the attention they attracted (particularly in airports) resulted in varying degrees of alienation. They reported having their membership of a valued national group (e.g., Scottish or British) questioned, and being seen in terms of one category when they would prefer to be seen in terms of another (e.g., being seen as a Muslim and nothing but a Muslim, Blackwood et al., 2013a). Moreover, the experience of misrecognition applied to these different identities in somewhat different ways. Thus, in

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relation to being a loyal Scot or a respectable professional, the experience of surveillance, of being stopped, and particularly of being pulled aside in public view was seen as denying one's very membership of these categories. These experiences were seen as implying that one was not truly loyal or as not properly respectable. In relation to Muslim identity, the concern was more about the meaning attributed to category membership. Thus, respondents saw their religious commitment as a sign of decency and trustworthiness and were indignant at the way it was treated as a sign of danger.

Blackwood and colleagues (Blackwood, Hopkins, & Reicher, 2012, 2013a, 2013b) also found that withholding information from the authorities was sometimes deemed both legitimate and necessary. From an official point of view, such behavior can easily lead to a charge that the individuals involved have failed to act as good citizens. Yet, from the minority's perspective, such behavior may be read as warranted as one's citizenship has not been recognized. Indeed they may be experienced as acts of resistance that assert one's citizenship status and one's right to be treated in accordance with one's self-definition as a law-abiding member of the national community (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011).

All this is testimony to the ways in which the scrutiny accorded to Muslims' behavior may be problematic and may be experienced as problematizing their citizenship. Indeed, what are actually acts of citizenship may be misperceived. As noted above, Muslim activism around Palestine or anti-war protests are routinely read as driven by alien identity concerns in a way that non-Muslim activism on such issues is not (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). To find in such citizenship behaviors evidence of 'radicalisation' and so a warrant for additional scrutiny is to miss what this activism can mean in terms of an individual's positioning as a citizen: whilst one definition of the 'good' and 'responsible' citizen entails conformity to social expectations and rules, other definitions include the responsibility to act on moral judgements of injustice and harm (Haste, 2004).



### The role of authorities

The degree to which one's citizenship is recognised and valued by others in everyday life is communicated in countless routine interactions. However, there is good evidence to suggest that how one is treated by those in authority has particular importance. In part this is because these authority figures have direct power to intervene into one's life. In part, it is because the approach adopted by those in authority can set the tone for how ordinary people behave towards one. For example, Smelser (1962) argued that McCarthyite repression against anarchists and communists in the United States legitimized popular hostility towards members of these groups. More recently, there is UK evidence that government counter-terrorism measures that target minorities for additional scrutiny invite members of the majority community to treat these minorities as suspect (Home Affairs Committee, 2005; Hillyard, 1993) and to endorse negative images of them (Poynting & Mason, 2006). Within social and political psychology, field and experimental studies attest to the special position that authorities, as societal representatives, occupy in terms of communicating societal norms and expectations to the wider community (Tyler & Lind, 1992). So too, research explores how the communication of wider group norms encourages group members to adopt behaviors congruent with those norms (Terry, Hogg, & Blackwood, 2001). In other words, such research implies a complex communicative process in which the actions of the authorities are important and can impact upon majority group members' assumptions about particular groups.

For minorities, the role of the police and other authorities is thus doubly important, not only because such bodies have the power to intervene in one's life, but also because they are regarded as representative of the wider community. This means that one's treatment by the authorities may be experienced as revealing the degree to which one is (or is not) included

in that community (Talbot & Böse, 2007). When authorities, as representatives of the majority, treat one unfairly then this amounts to being told that one is not valued and respected by the group (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007), and indeed, that group members as a whole share the view that one does not belong (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Moreover, the fact that one's interactions with the authorities so often occur in public view adds to their significance. Indeed, a common source of distress in Blackwood and colleagues' research (Blackwood, Hopkins & Reicher, 2013a, 2013b) in airports concerned the symbolism of being treated disrespectfully in a public context where others could observe them being so positioned and treated; and where they had the sense that those others (fellow Britons) would not defend them.

From the perspective of concerns about social inclusion and social cohesion, these experiences point to processes which are far from trivial. If one's group is regarded as suspect or 'other', minorities may retreat and establish alternative 'safe spaces' where social recognition and acceptance are more easily accomplished. Alternatively, where interaction with majority group members is unavoidable, minority group members may show low levels of intimacy-building behavior and reduced disclosure (e.g., Cook, Arrow, & Malle, 2011). Blackwood and colleagues (Blackwood, Hopkins, & Reicher, 2013b, in press) report multiple small acts of disengagement where people seek either to avoid interaction or to avoid engaging the self when they are forced to interact. We would expect that this in turn would undermine the possibility of intimate and productive contact between minorities and majorities which is both the mark of an inclusive community and the pre-condition for being able to act on one's citizenship (Blackwood et al., in press).

All this implies a rather different analysis of the dynamics to alienation than that implied by the WRAP program – one which highlights the experience of discrimination and 'othering'. It also implies that the way in which people respond to their immediate social

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experience is moderated by processes of social influence whereby others offer a broader framework in which to make sense of that experience and also proposals as to the appropriate response. In any group, there will always be multiple voices vying for influence and proposing different courses of action (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Indeed, within any minority group there will be different accounts of the social dynamics to its marginalisation. For example, if some Muslims' accounts of anti-Islamic sentiments ('Islamophobia') highlight the role of intergroup misunderstanding and ignorance, others emphasise issues of majority power and how the majority actively seeks to control and disempower the minority (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006). These contrasting diagnoses of the bases for Muslims' marginalisation give rise to contrasting arguments within the community as to how they could and should act to change their predicament. Moreover, such arguments often entail dispute about the nature of Muslim identity (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006; Hopkins, Reicher & Kahani-Hopkins, 2003) and in extreme cases this can take the form of denunciation geared to galvanise support for projects in which the authorities are clearly defined as outgroup (Finlay, 2014).

The appeal of these arguments will depend on several factors. One, as we have discussed, is the 'fit' between the influence message and one's direct experience – and hence the ability of the influence agent to make sense of what has happened to the subject of influence. The second concerns the availability of different voices and different messages. To the extent that more moderate voices withdraw from the field, then those advocating radical solutions will acquire more influence. This, we suggest, is a further potential effect of official scrutiny of minorities. For example, work on riots and public order policing (e.g., Reicher et al, 2007), suggests that the actions of authorities can be critical in silencing moderate voices. Where the actions of the police positioned all crowd members as 'other' and dangerous, this led to more moderate crowd members (a) seeing themselves as 'other' to the police and as

sharing a common category membership with the crowd; (b) desisting from attempting to urge moderation upon other crowd members, and (c) an overall shift in influence within the crowd away from moderation and towards those advocating confrontation. Moreover, the consequences of such alienation need not be active support for those advocating violence: There is evidence that anti-authority behavior is more likely to occur in contexts where other group members feel less able to intervene (Callaway & Harrelson-Stephens, 2006).

### **Conclusion**

At the outset to this paper we cited a Scottish Muslim student referring to her distress at feeling she was – because of the scrutiny she and other Scottish Muslims experienced – positioned in terms of a “scenario where it’s a sort of ‘them and us’”. In many respects this sense of ‘them and us’ is exactly what official interventions seek to counter. This in itself should give pause for thought.

However, there is another point. Our analysis implies that this blind-spot is not incidental but rather is only possible because the psychological analysis instantiated in WRAP offers a very partial analysis of how and why people become alienated and radicalised. Our analysis shows that the psychology manifested in WRAP focuses on individual weaknesses and vulnerabilities which result in an inability to resist the influence of manipulative others who take advantage of such weaknesses to fabricate narratives that misrepresent and distort experience. On the basis of our analysis we believe that such a narrow focus can blind the authorities (including the police, but also the frontline staff they recruit to WRAP’s agenda) to the corrosive effects of their own practices.

For us, WRAP is a revelation because it is an intervention that embodies (and propagates) a partial psychological model of alienation and radicalisation - one that would benefit from incorporating current perspectives that offer a more complex and dynamic

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understanding. This partiality is not simply theoretical. It has practical implications. If agencies' theoretical understanding of identity and group processes is limited, then their interventions will be similarly compromised, and there is the danger that by encouraging surveillance, interventions such as WRAP may inadvertently contribute to the psychological group formation that allows more radical voices a degree of credibility that they would otherwise not have. We firmly believe that a re-socialised analysis of psychological group formation and social influence (i.e., one that is not based upon models of individual weakness and vulnerability) would not only offer a better insight into the dynamics of radicalisation but would also encourage the authorities to reflect upon their own practices and how these may easily position Muslims as other and subvert individuals' self-conceptions as citizens.

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