



Do Canadian Muslim Youth Rebel?

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Abstract

With the rise of terrorist attacks in European countries, the topic of second-generation Muslims living in the West becomes heated more than ever. Second-generation Muslims are born and raised in Canada and usually have multiple ethnic backgrounds. They need to deal with multiple identities as well as being young, which comes with its own challenges. For the purpose of this paper, seven in-depth interviews were conducted on young Muslim men and women. This paper seeks to illuminate issues of Muslim youth rebellion by asking whom they rebel against. The paper examines how and why in rare instances a form of rebellion by Muslim youth has led to terrorism. This study shows that not all the religious and cultural identity crises of Muslim youth leads to violence and terrorism. The majority of Muslim youth rebellion is directed against their parents' cultures, rather than against Western liberal values or Islam.

Keywords: Youth, Second-generation Muslims, Canada, Radicalization, Cultural Rebellion, Western Liberal Values, Belonging

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Causes and Consequences

Between 2006 and 2011, the population of Canada increased by 5.9 percent, yet this growth was mainly due to immigration (World Population Review, 2014). This points to the increasing role of immigrants in the make-up of the Canadian society. In 2010, the Pew Research Center estimated that the number of Muslims in Canada had increased to 940,000 (Pew Research Center, 2011). In fact, the Muslim population increased from 2% of the Canadian population in 2001 to 3.2% in 2011 (Jordan Press, 2013). The growth of the Muslim population has especially been rapid from the 1970s until today, leading to the formation of various ethnic community centers, as well as numerous Mosques in Canada (Ramji, 2008, p. 104). Moreover, The National Household Survey indicates that Muslims' population is set to grow even further in the future. In fact, Muslims are the fastest growing religious group in Canada, and, after Christians, they are the second largest religious group of the country (Ibid, p. 105). The majority of Canadian Muslims live in Ontario and mostly in the Toronto area. Finally, Muslims are the youngest religious group in Canada, with a mean age of around 28 years old (Ibid, p. 106).

These younger generations, known as second-generation Muslims, are born and raised in Canada or they have immigrated to Canada in their childhood and went to Canadian schools. They usually have multiple ethnic backgrounds, with their parents coming from various Muslim majority countries (Ramji, 2008, p. 105). Second-generation Muslim youth need to deal with multiple identities, as well as being young at the same time, which comes with its own challenges and difficulties. The aim of this paper is to look at the challenges that lead some Muslim youth to rebel. This paper seeks to illuminate issues of Muslim youth rebellion by asking whom and what they rebel against. The paper begins by providing a brief literature review of existing scholarship on Muslims living in the West. It then examines how in

rare instances, a form of rebellion by some Muslim youth has led to terrorism and how this has resulted in the portrayal of Muslim youth rebellion as a “conveyor belt” to terrorism. This study shows that not all religious and cultural identity crises of Muslim youth lead to violence and terrorism. It also argues that the large majority of Muslim youth rebellion is not only non-violent but is directed against their parents’ ethnic traditions and cultures, rather than against Western liberal values or Islam. For the purpose of this paper, in-depth interviews have been conducted on seven young Muslims in Ottawa and Montreal. Although it should be noted that the results of this study should not be generalized to the Muslim population of Canada.

Muslim youth, like any other youth, have to deal with lots of challenges such as unemployment, economic dislocation, and pressures from their families to follow traditional ways and from society to follow specific norms.

While the number of Muslim youth in North America is increasing, little is known compared to their population with regard to their culture, social experience, and multigenerational acculturation, and even the challenges of adaptation they face as a religious and ethnic minority (Tirmazi, Husain, & Mirza, 2012, p. 57). We need to look at the methodology and the participants before going into the details of literature review.

Methodology

I have conducted in-depth interviews with seven young men and women. Out of seven, three were women, and four were men. They were all from Ottawa and Montreal. Their ages were between 18 and 23 years old. All the participants were students from the four universities of Ottawa, Carleton, McGill, and Concordia. Five of the participants lived with their parents and two of them, one man from Ottawa and

one woman from Montreal, had rented a separate place. Except a young man, the rest of the participants had part-time jobs besides being a student, which made them somehow financially independent from their parents. Data collection was based on the snowball sampling. In-depth interviews were conducted and two of the participants were interviewed twice for more clarity. In-depth interviews helped the researcher to understand the perspective and views of these youths on the issue of Muslim youth in the West. Second-generations are Canadian, but, at the same time, their religion, Islam, is a minority religion in Canada. The interviews were conducted between January 2017 and April 2017.

Literature Review

Abdo, author of *Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America After 9/11*, argues that second-generation Muslims are becoming 'more religious' in North America. Abdo believes that these young Muslims are shaping a 'New Islamic Identity', which is different from their parent immigrants (Abdo, 2007). Shahnaz Khan and Clay argue that Muslims living in the West have created a third identity that is separate, but influenced by both their Islamic backgrounds as well as the societies they are living in (Khan, 2011). Meshal argues that most Muslim immigrants in Canada cast aside their original culture and adopt a different identity, seeing themselves as Muslim-Canadians. They distinguish Islamic tenets from their ethnic cultural practices. For example, a survey of 129 Muslim women living in different Canadian cities showed that the majority of them identified themselves as Muslim-Canadians (Meshal, 2003).

Gurbuz and Gurbuz-Kucuksarı studied headscarf practice in American colleges and concluded that Muslim girls are "torn in between dominant secular norms in the society and values of Islamic faith; most American Muslim college girls see their headscarf practice

as “liberating” and “empowering” (Gurbuz and Gurbuz-Kucuksarı, 2009, p. 387-399). Ryan also examines the performance of Muslim women in Britain in the post 9/11 and 7/7 era. She comes to the conclusion that these women resist stigmatization “by asserting their moral integrity” (Ryan, 2011, p. 73). Moreover, Muslim women in the UK want to be “just normal” and indeed the practice of veiling is the act of laying claim to what it means to be a “normal” Muslim woman (Gurbuz and Gurbuz-Kucuksarı, 2003, p. 389).

Some scholarship on Muslims living in the West has a weakness and that is the lack of differentiation between the various generations of Muslims living in the West. This has prevented these scholars from examining the role of intergenerational difference in the religious identity of Muslims. One particular exception to this approach is the very recent book by Hisham Aidi titled *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture*, which examines the music culture of young European and American Muslims. Aidi examines how these youth have used music to fight against war and prejudice and how hip hop and jazz are used as a form of resistance against being marginalized in society, as well as against Western imperialism, such as the American ‘War on Terror’ (Aidi, 2014). The book’s scope is quite ambitious as its study area spans the entire globe, from Tunis and Morocco to the Bronx, and Aidi interviews a wide range of musicians from DJs and rappers to Sufis who practice ‘divine’ trance. The book argues that Muslim youth are using music to rebel politically and culturally. The author asserts that since 9/11 “Muslims have launched a range of social movements integrationist, separatist, utopian, dystopian, secular, and Islamist to challenge the myriad policies, narratives and frontiers of the American imperium” (ibid, p. 22). Aidi’s book is a fascinating read on the distinctiveness and diversity of Muslim youth cultures. Nevertheless, since the study only focuses on music culture, it only examines a part of Muslim youth identity. As such, my research project that focuses on religious identity would help supplement studies such

as that of Aidi's, and would help in the process of achieving a more comprehensive understanding of second-generation Muslims. Beyer is a scholar who has worked on second-generation Muslims in Canada. He has examined the role of religious identity with regard to the level of educational attainment among first- and second-generation immigrants to Canada (Beyer, 2005). However, Beyer's research relies on statistics to reach conclusions; this approach limits the scope of issues that can be studied and also restricts efforts to explain the religious identity and behavior of Muslim youth. Perhaps this is why Beyer himself has recently turned to an interview-based methodology in his study of Canadian youth (Beyer & Ramji, 2014).

Several scholars, such as Jacobson (1997), Archer (2001), Mandaville (2001), Glynn (2002), Roy (2004), and Kibria (2008) have studied the growth of fundamentalist Islamic values among second and third generation Muslim immigrant youth in North American and European countries. These studies consistently raise concern about the alienation of Muslim youth from the Western societies they are living in and their subsequent path towards fundamentalism and even terrorism. This paper will demonstrate, however, that while youth rebellion in Muslim communities can lead to violence and terrorism, such cases are rare, and as such, Muslim youth rebellion should not be automatically categorized as a threat to society.

Muslim Youth Rebellion and its Connection with Terrorism

On July 7, 2006, on a normal Thursday morning, London witnessed a terrifying and tragic suicide attack. One of the attackers detonated his bomb on a bus, while the other three targeted London's Underground train stations. Fifty-two civilians were killed by the terrorist attack and the British public was severely shocked. Four Muslim youths were identified as the perpetrators of the suicide attacks. Three of the four were British born men with Pakistani backgrounds. One of

the bombers in a videotaped message declared, “Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible.”¹

A major reason why these Muslim youth become critical of Western values, more so than their first-generation parents, might be because they felt they had no role in their parent’s decision to bring them to live in Western societies. In fact, these second-generation youth might become critical of not only Western values and norms, but also of their parents since their parents chose to come to the West (Yilmaz, 2012). During a long and in-depth interview, one young woman told me her feelings with regard to the Canadian government. This feeling is common among some youths that do not feel they are as successful as other Canadian youth. She said:

When growing up here we were on student Visa and we didn’t have permanent residency. So, we didn’t have many benefits like we didn’t have health care and I couldn’t go to school for a year because my dad’s visa had expired and for me it was a terrible experience. Even when they gave us permanent residency after a long time, I was like that’s too little too late. I mean I lived here so long, and I didn’t see a difference between myself and other kids but because of this bureaucratic stuff it was a huge difference. That is the main reason that I don’t have a sense of belonging to Canada.

She continued and said, “I don’t feel Canadian although I was born here, and I always considered myself as an outsider. I live with Canadians, but I am not living Canadian.” It was interesting that she has distanced herself from her parents as well and has rented a separate place “because I don’t want to see them anymore! I don’t care about their stupid cultural ceremonies.”

1. BBC News, “London Bomber: Text in Full,” September 1, 2005.

Moreover, some of these youth feel less attached to the Western countries they are living in because of their mixed ethnic backgrounds. This notion is also present among other non-Muslim youths with mixed ethnic backgrounds. For example, one British Chinese youth explained, “When you are not pure British nor pure Chinese, it is hard to belong to a country” (Valentine 1998). The multi-ethnic backgrounds of these youths effectively mean that they are caught between two or more cultures, each with its own pulls and pressures (Khan, 2012: 20).

Even second-generation Muslim youth who come from a single ethnic background often feel the pressures of the competing values and norms of their parents and religious communities and the Western societies they are living in. Often times this leads to the creation of mixed identities. As one youth explained, you are “confused” about who you are, “Western, Pakistani, or Muslim.” One of the second-generation participants of this study told me:

When I am here in Canada, I feel that I am Iranian and when I go to Iran, I feel that I am Canadian. It has good and bad things to it. It is bad because you don't feel that you don't belong in anywhere.

One result of the identity crisis mentioned above is that such youth might end up isolated and alone, lacking any social groups that they feel they “belong in.” In such circumstances, they become easy prey for extremist Islamic militant groups that invite them into a new “brotherhood” or “sisterhood”. These groups promise to end the youth's isolation and provide them with connections to similar youth who have also undergone an identity crisis. This is why, like joining any other gang, the youth who feel more isolated are more likely to join radicalized groups than others (Bell, 2006).

Terrorist groups such as ISIS then play a leading role in creating a new identity for these disenchanting youth that is in accordance with

their own cynical political aims and objectives. For example, in the case of ISIS, the new identity is tied into the goal of creating a new “Muslim Caliphate” (Ahmad, 2012, p. 40). Even non-militant fundamentalist groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir are only able to attract youth after promising to make them part of a new “global Muslim community”. Thus, these organizations are able to provide a new group identity and sense of belonging to these disenfranchised Muslim youths.

Therefore, while global politics does play a role in this radicalization, it might not be the primary reason why these youth join extremist groups. For example, while some youth might feel anger regarding Western wars on Muslim countries, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the suffering they have caused, and while these issues are extensively used by extremist groups as a rallying cry to recruit new people and inflict “revenge” upon the Western world, in many instances, these youth only become familiar with such topics after joining these groups (Khan, 2012, p. 109). Thus, the primary impetus for their affiliation with these organizations is the identity crisis discussed earlier. What is interesting is that these youths are usually not religious prior to joining the terrorist organizations. This allows terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS to “teach” Islam to its new members according to their own extreme Wahhabi version of Islam that indoctrinates violence in all possible ways without any regard to what the religion actually preaches.

At the same time, however, it is crucial to understand that such radicalization toward terrorism is rare among Muslim youth and is in no way endemic as some media outlets claim. This has been confirmed by numerous studies, such as Kashyap and Lewis (2013), Alexander (2004), Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (2004), Abbas (2005), Hopkins (2006), Maxwell (2006), Dwyer et al. (2008), and Dwyer and Shah (2009). This, however, hasn’t prevented the media from presenting Muslim youth as alienated from Western society and vulnerable to “radicalization” and “extremist imams.”

Moreover, the media has presented Muslims as the sole source of terrorism, disregarding the fact that non-Muslim youth have also fallen prey to non-Muslim terrorist groups. For example, in the 2001-2012 period, there were 135 terrorist plots by non-Muslim perpetrators against US targets compared to 60 terrorist plots by American and foreign originated Muslim perpetrators (The Muslim Public Affairs Council, 2013). The point of these numbers is not to downplay and disregard extremist acts committed by Muslims, but rather to show that terrorism is not solely a “Muslim problem”. In fact, just as disenfranchised Muslim youth could fall into the hands of radical Islamic groups, disenfranchised non-Muslim youth can also fall prey to white supremacists or extremist anti-government organizations.

A Rebellion against Ethnic Culture and Values

A much more common, yet understudied, rebellion among Muslim youth is their rejection of their parent’s cultural and religious heritage. While research data has shown that Muslim immigrant parents have been successful in transmitting a firm belief in God to their children, oftentimes Muslim youth express discontent regarding their parents’ religious demands and the boundaries they draw supposedly based on “sharia law.” These youth come to believe that the religion practiced and preached by their parents is a mixture of Islam and ethnic traditions and values. As a result, they seek to define their own “new” Islam that is “purer”. For example, a study found that youth expressed that their “true” Islam was more progressive, anti-racist, enlightened, and less biased than their parents’ religion. As such, these youth saw themselves as part of a “new generation” of Muslims (Minganti, 2008). One of the male participants of this study mentioned,

I mean most people don’t know that you could be as Canadian as possible and still be a very practicing Muslim. Obviously, there are

certain things that you can't do because of your religion. There is still a lot that you can do. A lot of people mix up between culture and religion like my mum and dad. They tell me that I can only marry a Pakistani girl. This is against Islam and it is because their own Pakistani culture is very important for them.

In many instances, these youth feel little connection to their parents' home countries. For example, one youth told Khan that unlike his parents, he was not Pakistani at all and that he had been to the country just once and only then for a wedding (Khan 2012). One of the participants of this study said, "my parents always told us that you are Saudi Arabian, but when I went to Saudi Arabia it was so different than what I previously expected." Another young man told me that:

I think in my heart I want to call Emirates home but in reality, it is not because whenever I go back, I can't relate to that country and its people anymore. I mean in your heart you want to say that Emirates is your home, which is a home because your parents and grandparents were born there, but when you go there you see that the culture is different, and people are living a different life. I could understand and relate to Canadian culture very much, but, in my mind, a dilemma always exists, and I have this identity mix up thing and a dilemma of where do I consider home.

Another participant said

I don't see how second-generation would have trouble engaging in this society, I mean you have grown up here and lived your whole life here so it is not that hard to integrate.

In another example, after interviewing twenty Muslim youth in Toronto and London, Ontario, Bullock and Nesbitt-Larking reported

that the interviewees exhibited “little connection to their parents’ country” and that many of them “were not interested in the politics of their parents’ home country.” All six participants of this study have mentioned that they have little interest in what is going on in their parents’ countries and at the same time they check the Canadian News constantly. Moreover, Muslim youth who rebel believe that, in many instances, their parent’s ethnic culture and tradition are, in fact, contradictory to Islamic values (Bullock and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011). For example, Karlsson Minganti found that Muslim youth often criticized the racialized hierarchies in the Muslim communities, in contrast to Islam’s message of sameness and equality. These youth felt that such “anti-Islamic” values were being manifested in their parent’s prejudices against other ethnicities and the placing of restrictions in their friendships and marriages (Karlsson Minganti, 2008).

As a result of the cultural discord between some Muslim youth and their parents, these youth rebel against an “imposed” and “inherited” cultural tradition that is alien to them. One of the participants of this study told me:

I have dual identity. When I was at school, I used to be a lot with non-Iranian and non-Muslim friends, so I kind of made a boarder around what happened at home and what happened at school. I knew that I should stay within this boarder. There were some things that were okay only in school and some stuff okay only at home.

Moreover, these youth come to believe that religion is only used as a cloak to impose these values, while the reality of the “true” Islam is entirely different. Such view of an “imposed Islam” is similar to marginalized groups living elsewhere in the Muslim world. For example, Mahmood, in her study of marginalized pious Muslim women who decided to establish their own independent religious movement in Egypt, reports that these women critiqued that:

The ritual acts of worship in the popular imagination have increasingly acquired the status of customs or conventions, a kind of “Muslim folklore” undertaken as a form of entertainment or as a means to display a religio-cultural identity. According to them, this has led to the decline of an alternative understanding of worship, one in which rituals are performed as a means to the training and realization of piety in the entirety of one’s life (Mahmood, 2005, p. 48).

Moreover, some Muslim youth become isolated from their parents’ community due to the cultural divide. Interviews show, for example, that some youths did not attend mosque because they thought that the Imam was “old-fashioned” and that, as one youth said, they are “immigrants” and their English has an accent and as a result “we don’t fully understand what they are saying” (Valentine, 1998, p. 20). One of the participants told me,

To be honest, the lectures don’t interest me at all because they are not related to today’s world and today’s youth. It is even worse for the third generation because many of the imams are boring. Imams being second-generation themselves help to connect with youth. I think someone who is raised here knows better how to act around a young boy or girl who is raised here.

Beyer and Ramji, after interviewing 200 second-generation immigrant youths in Canada, have come to two interesting conclusions. The first is that the type of religion that Muslim youth practice is sometimes different from their parents in a way that they see religious faith as more of a personal relationship with God, rather than obedience to strict rules. This is relevant among Hindus and Buddhists that were interviewed as well. The second conclusion is that extremism is not prevalent at all among Muslim youth and that second-generation

Muslims can integrate in the Canadian society, as well as practice their faith simultaneously (Beyer & Ramji, 2014).

Beyer argues that having a strong connection to Islam among second-generation Muslims is for some of them a form of youthful rebellion. Youths becoming more religious than their parents are common among many second-generation youths since they were not raised religious by their parents and have become religious only recently. One male participant for example declared, “every generation has its own rebellion and ours is what is called ‘Islamic Revival Movement.’ Things like going back to the sources such as the hijab and beard which is more present in new generation rather than the older one” (ibid, p. 97).

At the same time, these youths might feel marginalized by a secular Western society that misrepresents and demonizes them. This is especially true among youths who have adopted or held on to visible religious symbols such as the hijab. For example, a 1997-1998 survey of 129 Muslim women living in different Canadian cities showed that women who don’t wear the hijab were twice as likely as their veiled counterparts to have more than ten non-Muslim friends. Further evidence demonstrates that over a third of Canadian women who wear the hijab reported to have only one to three non-Muslim friends (Meshal, 2003). In the context of Canadian female Muslims, research data shows that women who do not wear the hijab feel more integrated into society and more “Canadian” (ibid: 96). Research has shown that Muslim youths compared to Hindu or Christian youths are less likely to assimilate into the Western society. For example, Muslim Arabs are less likely to assimilate than Christian Arabs although Muslim youth tend to adapt to the host country faster than their parents (Tirmazi, 2012).

Nevertheless and interestingly, many Muslim Canadian youth do not believe that Islamic and Western values necessarily contradict each other. Bullock and Nesbitt-Larking’s study, for example, found that

nearly all the youths they interviewed thought “it was possible to be a devout Muslim and an active citizen in Canada” (Bullock and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011, p. 33). Some of Beyer’s participants have mentioned this concept as well, and that is why he concluded that some of his participants argued that the level of religiosity does not contradict their sense of belonging to Canada (Beyer, 2014). In my own Master Thesis research project, in which I interviewed university-aged Muslim women regarding their adoption of the hijab, all participants in the study indicated that a strong part of their identity was shaped by Canadian values, which they saw as complimentary to Islamic values. One interviewee declared, “To me, being a Canadian is a part of my culture. I think being Canadian is being multicultural, diverse, open-minded, and democratic. These notions are completely compatible with Islam; therefore, you can be both Muslim and Canadian at the same time.”

These interviewees expressed that they did not feel “less Canadian” after adopting the Hijab: “I feel like I am still the same person in terms of integration and feeling Canadian because wearing hijab does not mean that all of a sudden I lose my Canadian identity.” Another responded to the question, “Do you feel that you are being recognized by other people as a Canadian woman?” by stating that “I am Canadian and Canadians come in all colors, religions, and races, so I don’t see why anyone should not think I am Canadian.” She continued, “When I started to wear the hijab, I think I did feel different in terms of my appearance, but I don’t think I felt less Canadian.”

At the same time, it is important to note that while Muslim youth strongly feel that their Canadian identities are very much intact and that there are no fundamental conflicts between being Muslim and Canadian, this does not mean that they do not face strong tensions between prevalent practices of Canadian youths and their Islamic values. Issues such as sex before marriages, as well as the use of alcohol in the dominant culture create social pressures of conformity

that sometimes lead to identity crises within Muslim youth. Therefore, while these youth do not see such issues as what makes one 'Canadian,' this does not mean that they are not caught between the pull of Islamic teachings on the one hand and the norms of a secular society on the other. A real life example will make this clear.

A research project by Zain Al-Dien on the perceptions of Canadian Muslim youth regarding sex education at school found that these programs were seen as problematic and clashing with their sense of religious 'morality' and that they encouraged a lifestyle that was 'un-Islamic.' At the same time, however, many of the study's participants also indicated that sex education programs were useful and necessary, even if they were insensitive to their religious beliefs. These youth indicated that they would rather learn about sex through their parents than these school programs, but that in reality their parents largely avoided the topic and provided them with no information or skills (Zain Al-Dien, 2010).

Indeed, the issue of sex and sexuality is at the forefront of the challenges Muslims youth face. On the one hand, pre-marital, extra-marital, and same sex relationships are explicitly banned in Islam, though on the other, these youth are living in a society in which remaining a virgin is increasingly becoming rare and even looked down upon. Survey results of Canadian youth show that nearly half of grade eleven students and 75 percent of first year university students had had sex at least once (Boyce, Maryanne, & MacKinnon, 2006). What makes the predicament of Muslim youth even worse is that they are not able to rely on their parents for guidance and support. The participants in Zain Al-Dien's study reported that they were highly interested in seeking information and support from Islamic centers regarding sex education, if such programs were available (Zain Al-Dien, 2010).

In many cases, however, Islamic centers, which have been formed and are currently run by first-generation Muslim immigrants, are

not suited to address the needs of Muslim youths. This is one of the primary reasons for the rise of Muslim ‘youth clubs’ in Canadian cities such as Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal. These youth centers, which operate independently from their parent organizations, should be seen as the manifestation of Muslim youth rebellion against the cultural and religious heritage of their parents.

What is strikingly surprising about some centers is that these youth have rented facilities that are entirely separate from their parent organizations, even though those organizations had ample space for the accommodation of ‘youth activities,’ and also that their centers are managed and run entirely by the youths themselves. Needless to say, the religious activities and the understanding of Islam preached and practiced in the these youth clubs is different from the religious centers of their parents, exposing the intergenerational divide in the Muslim community living in Canada as never before.

Conclusion

The radicalization of Muslim youth towards violence, while rare, is sensationalized by the media and acted upon by Western governments. For example, the director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) has proclaimed that, in his interviews with young Canadian Muslims, he is often told, “I can’t participate in the political process because it’s against my religion” (Bullock and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011). In reality, research has shown that Muslim youth are more likely to participate in Canada’s political process than non-Muslim youth (ibid). Moreover, the rebellion of youths in the Muslim community should not be solely understood through the prism of “radicalization” and terrorism, but through the understanding that the great majority of such rebellions are directed against their ethnic cultures and traditions.

Moreover, government authorities and traditional Islamic centers

misunderstand what to do with rebellious Muslim youth. For example, the newly published 'United Against Terrorism Handbook,' prepared jointly by the RCMP and the National Council of Canadian Muslims, declares, "It is best if you are a youth or someone who is not very knowledgeable about Islam to seek help from an elder or an imam to confront an extremist and to challenge them" (Royal Canadian Mounted Police and The National Council of Canadian Muslims, 2014). What these authorities fail to understand is that rebellious Muslim youth are primarily disenchanted with their own elders and Imams to begin with, and that they seek to redefine religion according to their own needs and the circumstances they are living in. As pointed earlier, Muslim elders and traditional Islamic centers were seen as being of little help in regards to common real life issues, such as sex and sexuality, let alone in the much more complicated subject of the role of Islam in today's political world.

This paper has also exposed how the secular liberal discourse of the West has misrepresented and downplayed the agency and empowerment of Muslim youth who are seen as cultural and religious dupes under the influence of extremists. In reality, rather than being under danger of radicalization, in the grand majority of cases, Muslim youth seize the initiative and rebel against the religious and cultural authority of their parents' generation. This is why it is important to understand the pressures and incentives faced by Muslim youth both from mainstream Canadian society as well as from their own ethnic and religious families and communities. In reaction to these pressures, Muslim youth in Canada have opted to form their own "new" Islam that is not "imposed" or "inherited" and is more adaptable to the times and circumstances in which they are living. By realizing this development and acknowledging that Canadian Muslim youth rebellion is not a dangerous form of anti-Western phenomenon, we are able to understand the more complex relationship of these youth to Islam and their ethnic communities, and form government policy accordingly.

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