

Women's Roles in Preventing Extremism through Education in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Many societies around the world are affected by extremist violence. There has been great effort to combat extremism. This study examined women's roles in preventing extremism in Afghanistan. Using individual interviewing with female educators as the primary research method, the study revealed 7 themes, i.e., *Inconsistency in defining extremism, no discussion of extremism in public secondary schools, no criticality in the education system, multidimensionality of extremism, families as a source of extremism, extremism not seen as having religious ideology, extremism is political, a result of the lack of access to quality/critical education and lack of resources*. Connecting these themes to the research objectives, I concluded that there is an inconsistent understanding of extremism among female educators which is problematic, and while they are somewhat effective in preventing extremism, some of their male students resist their teachings. Also, lack of resources and quality education was a common concern among female educators and identified as factors that push youth towards extremist violence.

Résumé

De nombreuses sociétés du monde entier sont touchées par la violence extrémiste et des efforts considérables ont été déployés pour lutter contre l'extrémisme. Cette étude examine le rôle des femmes dans la prévention de l'extrémisme en Afghanistan. En se basant sur des entretiens individuels avec des éducatrices, l'étude a révélé 7 thèmes: *incohérence dans la définition de l'extrémisme, absence de discussion sur l'extrémisme dans les écoles secondaires publiques, absence de criticité dans le système éducatif, multidimensionalité de l'extrémisme, l'extrémisme prenant source dans le milieu familial, l'extrémisme n'étant pas considéré comme ayant une idéologie religieuse, l'extrémisme politique, résultat du manque d'accès à une éducation critique et de qualité et du manque de ressources*. En reliant ces thèmes aux objectifs de la recherche, j'ai conclu qu'il existe une compréhension incohérente de l'extrémisme parmi les éducatrices et que ceci se relève être problématique. Même si elles sont assez efficaces pour prévenir l'extrémisme, certains de leurs étudiants masculins résistent à leurs enseignements. De plus, le manque de ressources et d'éducation de qualité comme un facteur poussant les jeunes vers la violence extrémiste fut identifié comme étant une préoccupation commune parmi les éducatrices.

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To my siblings, I am grateful for all of you in ways I can't describe. (کازم مهربان، بردار). (عزیزم، ناهید جانم و صادق عزیزم، تا بی نهایت دوستتان دارم و تشکر برای اینکه همیشه مشوق من بودید و هستید)

Kazem, Nahid, Sadeq and Saber, without each one of you and your love, I would not be where I am today. To all my dear friends in Vancouver and in Montreal, thank you for your support, your love and your encouragements. I'm very lucky to have people like you in my life.

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گفتند یافت می‌نشود جسته‌ایم ما

گفت آنکه یافت می‌نشود آنم آرزوست

مولانا

Last but not least, I'm truly grateful and extend my thanks for my wonderful participants, the amazing Afghan women, who shared with me, their time and experiences as educators. This work would have not been possible without their voices. I truly appreciate them.

Dedication

To the Women of Afghanistan,

Especially *Farkhunda Malikzada* who was killed by a mob of extremist men on March 2015

تقدیم به

زنان سرزمینم افغانستان، به ویژه فرخنده ملک زاده

هرگز نگاه‌هایت را فراموش نمیکنم. تو به من قدرت جلو رفتن میدهی

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview of the Study

1.1 Situating Myself

I am a Canadian woman of Afghan origin. My parents were refugees from Afghanistan in Iran where I was born and grew up. I moved to Canada with my family when I was 16 years old. When I enrolled in my graduate studies, I was interested in many different topics and didn't know where to start. I wasn't sure what topic to pick for my thesis research project. As I learned more about research in my classes, I knew that I had to start with myself. Or at least somewhere that is connected to me somehow. Agreeing with Hampton (1995), research "is about learning [and] about finding things out (p.49)", I wanted to learn about ways in which Afghan women influence society. I wanted to write upon the backdrop that Afghan women are often shown as helpless victims and reported as passive individuals. To argue against this helpless image, in this introductory chapter I use my own memories to reflect on different moments in my life that are related to women's roles in resisting uncritical religious education.

"Memory comes before knowledge" (Hampton, 1995, p.50), and they are a part of what we know, they also affect the way we interpret and see the world. Therefore, my motive for picking this topic for my research project is emotional, because I feel (Hampton, 1995, p. 52), because research is not "emotionless, passionless, abstract, intellectual" and objective, if anyone claims that, it's a "lie" (Hampton, 1995, p.52). So, my motive started with me, my life and my memories, with my subjective experiences, interpretations and understandings as I live in this world. And so, my writing only demonstrates my experience in relation to the different concepts that are discussed such as Hijab, religious teachings as well as conversations around these issues. I wrote about these

from my “narrow platform about myself regarding things” that may or may not be common or relevant to other people (Hampton, 1995, p.47). The following vignettes are from an autobiography paper that I wrote in my first year in the program.

Conversations about Hijab:

I remember my mom told me once, how she used to wear a Niqab (which covers the face), when I was very young. One day when the children in the neighborhood ran away from her as she walked in the streets, she took her Niqab off and never wore it again. She was bold like that. If she did not like something, she wouldn't do it, no matter what other people thought. Because of this, my mother and father argued a lot. My mother was never passive and obedient. She would not accept something that did not make sense to her. She would ask questions and try to find answers to them, either through reading books or through conversing with people. She was and still is a very social person. My grandmother admitted many years later, to me as an adult that one reason she wanted my mother, to be married so young was that so she, my grandmother, would not be responsible for her, because my mother was so rebellious, outspoken and strong.

When we came to Canada, I told my mother, I didn't want to wear a headscarf or Hijab, anymore, because I didn't want to look different than my classmates. It surprised me when my mother, despite her cultural and religious beliefs, didn't object to my request. She told me “do as you wish, my daughter.” I do not know if she meant it sarcastically or really meant it at the time. But my sister, who is younger than me and I both took it literally and did as we wished! As teenagers who were trying hard to fit in our new home in Vancouver, Canada we were happy that we were able to look ‘normal’ like all the other girls. I will never forget that day, because I didn't think that my mother would be so ‘open-minded’, meaning so open to change so quickly. I was so happy for my sister and I. Obviously, my three brothers did not have to worry about these things as there is no compulsory Hijab requirements for men in Islam. At that time, I did not feel different or forced to do something I didn't like for the sake of ‘honor’ or what other people thought of us. I was very fortunate and lucky that my mother cared more about her children's happiness than what others would say about us or about her. Regrettably, this is very uncommon in the community and in the culture in which we were brought up. Unfortunately, some of my friends weren't so lucky. They weren't allowed to discard their Hijabs so easily. I had a friend who hated her Hijab so much. As soon as she got to school, she would take it off and hide it in her bag-pack. After school, as she got close to her home, she would take it out of her bag and wear it. She would pretend she was wearing

it all day. I was so glad; I didn't have to do that. But I was worried for my friend who learned to lie so easily.



My mom, Fatemeh in 2006, a few months after we arrived in Canada

Religious Teachings:

I grew up in Iran. Over there, we never questioned anything, mostly because we were brought up in a traditional household and culture. Because of that, there was only one truth. There was one god and all the rules on how to live was written in one book called the Quran. There were no options. But I always wondered why everyone had to do all those things. Maybe the words or phrases in the Quran could be interpreted differently. Maybe it could be more lenient with more options. For example, we had to pray 3 times a day (morning, noon & evening). And it had to be done in Arabic, a language I didn't understand. Once I asked my mother why we prayed in Arabic. Wouldn't it be easier and better to pray in Persian? So, we knew what we were saying to God? I thought to myself that it would make more sense, since that way we can feel closer and connected to God. My mother agreed with me, and maybe she didn't know the answer, so she told me to pray in Persian. And so, I prayed in Persian for a while.

Another day, I asked my mother why did it have to be a specific time of the day? Why can't I pray whenever I want to talk to God? And why do I have to do the Vozoo (washing face, feet and hands before praying). I told her that maybe that was a requirement 1400 years ago (during the emergence of Islam) when there weren't showers and people didn't wash themselves often. Maybe Mohammad told people to do the Vozoo before praying so they'd at least wash their hands, feet and faces 2-3 times a day. But we shower daily now, and we are very clean every day, why do we still have to do the Vozoo before praying? Either my mother had never thought about these things

or she didn't want to question the rules; but she told me, I didn't have to do the Vozoo either as long as I prayed. I continued praying without doing the Vozoo and eventually stopped 'praying' because I convinced myself I didn't have to formally 'pray' to connect and speak to God. As our capacity to question, to compare, to doubt and to weigh gets curious, our good sense also becomes more attuned (Freire, 2001). My questions helped me see things differently and to be open to other possibilities. My curiosity for the logic behind Vozoo or praying in Arabic allowed me to resist the uncritical component of such religious teachings. I allowed myself to disagree with absolute answers and rules and as such became "attuned" with my own good sense. I did what made sense to me.

I think by questioning all the different things we had to do and having conversations with my mother helped me realize many things. A conversation can be a learning experience and fun. It can be a location where knowledge acquired stays with us, empowering us to abandon fear and insecurity and find the place of compassion and connection. Compassion creates a spirit of tolerance, it intensifies the longing to communicate, to understand (hooks, 2010). All those conversations with my mother, were truly educational for me, as they made me ponder the deep implications on everything we did on a daily basis. Also, those conversations with my mother truly led to an intellectual communion (Turkle, 2015, p. 246).

I also had to fast during Ramazan starting at nine years old. I remember I would get so thirsty that I made excuses to shower during the day. My mother warned me not to drink water, but I always did. Because it was so hot, I couldn't resist! As a child, I hated fasting so much, and I'm glad that now, in some parts, the Mula's (religious leaders) have raised the age to at least 14 years old. Fast forward to twenty years now, neither my mother nor I believe in any of those things we were thought were absolute truths. At that time, we both really believed that not fasting will result in a horrible sin that will get us to hell, or we will have hard punishment on judgement day. Even as a child, I questioned the absoluteness of such beliefs and the only person that I dared to voice my questions and concerns to, was my mother and I am very appreciative of all those conversations. My mother and I still have many conversations. We talk almost every day and through our conversations, I always learn something new from her.



My youngest brother, my mother, my cousin, me & my sister in 1998 in Iran

1.2 Context of the Study

Extremism means “the quality or state of being extreme”, or “the advocacy of extreme measures or views” (Merriam-Webster's dictionary, n.d). The term is often used in political or religious sense that favours an immoderate uncompromising policy regarding ideology, political orientation, and political theory (The free dictionary, n.d). Often it is used when the ideology is considered to be outside mainstream attitudes of society.

Extremism sometimes leads to violence, and violent extremism has become a threat to many societies around the world. It has jeopardized people’s security and well-being as well has disrupted peace in both developed and developing worlds. Extremism like most social phenomena has a gendered perspective (“Preventing violent”, 2017). Although, involvement of women in extremism or radicalism is not a new phenomenon, women are often mistakenly stereotyped as passive victims (“Government of Quebec”, 2016). Yet, it has been noted that many women play

active roles in its promotion as they support the male fighters (“Preventing violent”, 2017), while sometimes they are the perpetrators of violence themselves.

This research focuses on Afghanistan, where there have been two major foreign interventions during the last century (Shahed, 2018). The first one was the Soviet invasion which was very destructive and destabilizing – “over a million Afghans were killed and nearly five million crossed over to neighboring countries as refugees” (Shahed, 2018, p.1). The latest intervention, by the United States after the terrorist attack of September 2001, has also been very costly in terms of death, destruction and suffering (Shahed, 2018). Yet, the US-led intervention has had little achievement in terms of safety and security for the Afghan people as it has left deep physical and emotional wounds on them (Shahed, 2018). According to a report by UNHCR in 2016, Afghans were second, (after Syria) in the largest number of refugees in 2015 (Devictor and Do, 2017, p.359). In addition, just in 2015, more than 120,000 Afghans left the conflict-ridden country to seek asylum in 44 countries (Shahed, 2018). Some of them never reach their destinations as conditions are dangerous and risky. Those who remain continue to fear for their lives as the insurgent groups recruit the youth for their extremist ideologies and encourage them to take part in violent acts against their fellow civilians.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this project is to understand women’s roles in preventing extremism in Afghanistan. Every year hundreds of Afghans lose their lives to suicide bomb attackers in different parts of Afghanistan due to religious extremist violence. There has been a lot of work done by women in different countries to counter religious extremism. However, there is no report or

literature on what Afghan women have done in regard to prevention of extremism. Thus, my overall research goal for this study and my objectives are:

- To understand the phenomenon of extremism in Afghanistan
- To identify existing practices in place that counter religious extremist ideologies through education
- Women's roles in preventing the development of these beliefs in schools, homes and communities.

The value of this research is that, it sheds light on women's roles in countering extremist ideologies, especially in the Afghan context, where women are often extremely marginalized in the male-dominated society. As such, this research is valuable also in the sense that it can give the Afghan women an opportunity to discuss their concerns that can be further looked into in future studies as well so as inform policy makers who directly work with women in Afghanistan.

1.4 Research Questions

Data was collected through 40-60-minute semi-structured interviews which were audio-recorded. A copy of the interview questions is listed below.

- 1) What is/was your job at the school where you work and how long have you done this work?
- 2) What is your perception of religious extremism?
- 3) How would you describe the surrounding of the school community? And inside the school?
- 4) What is the demographic description of the students in your school?

- 5) As an educator do you discuss current events related to extremism in class or outside class?
Why? Why not?
- 6) Do you think parents talk about these issues to the students you teach? Why? Why not?
- 7) How would you deal with a student who acts in a deviant way? What do you think other teachers at your school would do?
- 8) Do you think you can impact your students' understandings of extremism through your teachings?
- 9) Is there any detail that you want to share about religious extremism in general or about your specific school?

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, the thesis is divided into four chapters; literature review, methodology, findings and conclusion. In the literature review I will provide a background on violent extremism, its relation to women and a brief background on Afghanistan. I will also review how anti-colonial and intersectional feminist theories are used as frameworks for analysis of the data obtained. Throughout the methodology section, I will discuss the methods that I use for my study as well as analysis procedures and ethic's consideration. In the findings chapter, I showcase the responses of my interview participants. Finally, in the discussion and conclusion chapter, I will draw conclusions, and discuss directions for future research and will share the limitations of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Violent Extremism

Violent extremism has become a threat to many societies around the world. (“Preventing Violent”, 2017). It has jeopardized people’s security and well-being as well as disrupting peace in both developed and developing worlds. The involvement of women in extremism or radicalism is not a new phenomenon. Throughout history, women have been involved in radical groups (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). An example of this is the United States’ Ku Klux Klan (KKK) after the American Civil War emancipated slaves. These groups exist to this date, even in Canada, notably in Quebec (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). There are female branches of the KKK which are called the Women’s Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). Unlike their male counterparts, women tend to be active in recruiting propaganda and humanitarian engagement so that while men are often offered armed combat, women are offered actions associated with care (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016).

Extremism like most social phenomenon has a gendered perspective (“Preventing Violent”, 2017). Women are often mistakenly stereotyped as passive who do not join radical groups or engage in violence and are thought of as victims, but they are sometimes active participants in radicalism (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). It has been noted that many women play active roles as they support the fighters which are most often men (“Preventing Violent”, 2017), while as will be noted, sometimes they are the perpetrators of violence themselves. Women are also influential actors in preventing extremism. In this paper, I will look at women’s roles in preventing extremism. This chapter is divided into four sections. First, I will give a brief overview

of women's involvement in radical extremist groups in conflict zones, then I will cover the involvement of women in democratic and 'safe' zones. In the other half of the chapter, I will discuss the importance of education in countering extremism and in the last section, I will discuss why it's important to focus on women's roles specifically in countering extremism and will provide some suggestions on how these roles can be amplified.

2.1.1 Women and Violent Extremism

Involvement of Women in Conflict Zones: Women who live in conflict zones differ in their experiences from those who live in peace ("Women & Violent Radicalization", 2016). Although, there are different reasons for women's radicalization as it is a very complex and multi-dimensional process, some common factors are individual problems such as experiences of trauma in their lives, identity problems or other vulnerable issues ("Women & Violent Radicalization", 2016). As a result, they get encouraged and lured by propaganda of "total Islam" ("Women & Violent Radicalization", 2016). There is no one way people become radicalized. Ordinary people have the potential to become mobilized in the name of a cause or ideology or set of beliefs ("Women & Violent Radicalization", 2016). The elements that cause such mobilization are not always clear and not all of them lead to violence. This difference is very important, especially in regard to women who are only rarely are direct perpetrators of violent acts but can be important stakeholders in extremist views ("Women & Violent Radicalization", 2016).

Glazzard and colleagues' study examines conflict and countering violent extremism and addresses the different approaches in dealing with such conflicts. What drives people towards violence is controversial, yet many studies have proved that social aspects rather than ideological

factors are more important (Glazzard, Jespersen and Winterbotham, 2015). The literature has shown that some of women's motivations for violent extremism is manipulation by men as a result of patriarchy (Glazzard, Jespersen and Winterbotham, 2015), others have shown that revenge is a driving force for women who are victims of loss and violence themselves (Glazzard, Jespersen and Winterbotham, 2015).

According to Bloom, in the context of conflict and war, women's radicalization is dependent on 4Rs: *revenge, redemption, relationship and respect* (Bloom, 2011). Some women act in revenge, as suicide bombers to punish their enemies after they themselves have suffered direct violence or humiliation ("Women & Violent Radicalization", 2016). If the women are a social outcast, if they have been raped or it is sometimes seen that her death is a way "restore" her families honor ("Women & Violent Radicalization", 2016).

Hajer, a woman who had escaped from ISIS territory, said in an interview: "we, women, are oppressed wherever we go, as were lots of ISIS women" ("The story of Hajer", 2017). She also confessed that many fighters abused their wives with violence and there was nothing the women could do ("The story of Hajer", 2017). But this was not something women will hear in their meetings with their radical groups or in their online groups in the West.

Noor & Hussain argue that the more women are marginalized and exploited with no possible way of reaching their dreams, the more likely they are to form a negative identity and are at risk of joining radical groups (Noor & Hussain, 2009). Furthermore, they note that in conflict areas such as Pakistan, women don't have a lot of options, and as a result of rage and helplessness

for lack of alternatives, they turn to terrorism (Noor & Hussain, 2009). Women are often extremely marginalized and don't have many rights, especially in remote and rural areas which provides the ground for women's exploitation (Noor & Hussain, 2009). Another study cited by Noor and Hussain explained that the largest group of women who become radicalized in Pakistan are those that are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and are uneducated (Noor & Hussain, 2009). They are often, highly vulnerable as they are socially marginalized or displaced and sometimes, they form a negative identity which refers to negative feelings of failure that turn them to radicalism (Noor & Hussain, 2009).

In Pakistan, poor families send their daughters to madrasas, because they are free schools, but are mostly religious and those who attend these madrasas are more likely to hold extremist views (Noor & Hussain, 2009). Through indoctrination, women are used as an effective tool to spread radicalization in their distorted understandings of jihad messages to encourage their sons or other male members to join these groups (Noor & Hussain, 2009). In the name of religion, publications by militant organizations try to elicit sympathy from the women to support the militants (Noor & Hussain, 2009). Noor and Hussain's study found in their results that there is much ignorance on certain societal, political and religious levels which makes women vulnerable for both radicalization and exploitation in the name of religion (Noor & Hussain, 2009). In addition to that, there are no reliable sources for women to turn to for help or counselling and they are often manipulated (Noor & Hussain, 2009) into believing the dangerous discourses.

Involvement of Women in Democratic & 'Safe' zones: For women who live in peace and in democratic societies, radicalization is often the result of a different process ("Women & Violent

Radicalization”, 2016). Khosrokhovar (2014, p.19) calls it deinstitutionalization. This happens when institutions are weakened in people’s lives and social mobility becomes extremely difficult for the poor, for the less educated, immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). They are disillusioned and that is fertile ground for radicalization to occur. These women who are living in the West, their involvement is not a result of coercion, but it is entirely voluntary (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). Some patterns for explanation of their voluntary involvement are alienation from host society, marginalization, lack of positive identity, desire for adventure, or needing to purify as they perceive themselves to be corrupted (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). Also, in the West, there is no link to education or poverty for reasons of radicalization but those individuals or groups who experience trauma may be at more risk of involvement, and refugees along with internally displaced people are highly vulnerable (Glazzard, Jespersen and Winterbotham, 2015).

The misconception about young Western women who have been radicalized as noted by Navest, De Koning and Moors, is that they are naïve young girls who get brainwashed to work as sex slaves for the fighters (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). However, this takes away the agency of women and ignores the diversity of motives behind women who join jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). This simplistic understanding not only essentializes Arab-Muslim women but also as described by Huey and Witmer, depicts them as naïve women, followers and fan girls (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016).

While the women have agency by leaving their safe democratic homes to join jihadists in the country at war, the propaganda for jihadists is the discourse or psyche of Hijra, the idea that a

‘true Muslim’, man or woman, would leave, wherever they are to go help their Muslim brothers and sisters (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). Women are recruited and encouraged as companions or for logistical support and disseminating information (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). The jihadists’ propaganda uses imagery such as photos, montages and videos for women (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). They do this to gain the sympathy of Muslim women and awaken their conscious to go and “help.” With this the young women are encouraged to leave their lives behind in the West and the insurgent groups promise them a place in their jihadist project, though they are aware of sharia law and the restrictions that it brings (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016).

Most of the young people who have left Quebec to join war in Syria are youth under the age of 25 including the 7-10 women who have gone (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). In the interview with young women who attempted to leave Quebec to join Jihadists in Syria, the parents, more notably mothers disapproved their daughter’s choices of being extremely religious (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). They feared that they would become marginalized even more. However, the young girls rejected the Western values and didn’t accept the women’s role in it and they wanted a different identity (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016). When the opportunity arrived that offered them a comprehensible explanation for their identity crisis, the “total Islam” became the answer to resolve their conflicts at home with their mothers which isolated them and gave them space to be exposed to extreme views (“Women & Violent Radicalization”, 2016).

Most of the women in Western countries are influenced through online exposure to radical discourses. The internet has become an ideal medium for Muslim women's radicalization as it allows them to be exposed to radical material online at the comfort of their homes (Sanchez, 2014, p.21). They can support and encourage their husbands, brother and sons to take-up the Islamist jihad and indoctrinate them in radical interpretations of Islam (Sanchez, 2014, p.21).

Why Focus on Women? There is a lot of empirical evidence that show when women's empowerment and gender equality are attained there is more peace and stability in a society, especially when women are decision makers on war and peace and leaders against extremism in their communities (O'Reilly, 2015). The data on the status of women around the world shows that the more gender inequality exists in a country, the more likely it is that the country will be in war, in bad standing with the international community with more violence and crime within their society (O'Reilly, 2015).

In addition, in all societies but mostly in traditionally patriarchal societies, women are more likely to be drugged, raped or physically, emotionally or socially coerced into an act (Chowdhury Fink, Barakat and Shetret). In conflict zones, women are sometimes recruited to act as suicide bomb attackers which highlights the exploitation of them as their role is seen as a 'less expensive' alternative to their male counterparts (Sanchez, 2014). Also, women can be great influencers for their male family members and can have a motivation to become an ideological hero in order to revenge a personal or familial loss, or for being a victim of sexual violence (Chowdhury Fink, Barakat and Shetret, p. 3). Some other effective programming utilized by women can be their roles in "de-mystifying the life of a terrorist by speaking about the hardship involved" which can include

separation, insecurity, loss of income and anxiety (Carter, 2013, p.4). Women who are mothers and wives can often persuade their sons or husbands to stay with their family instead of joining wars. Women can be effective influencers of their family members even in male-dominated societies.

For further positive impact, women should be given more opportunities to voice their opinions in both private and public spheres. Additionally, support should be readily available if some young girls are themselves victims of violence when they were parts of such groups (“Preventing violent”, 2017). Giscard referred to an article called ‘*To Fight Extremism, the World Needs to Learn How to Talk to Women*’, which covers the importance of women as the main reason the world fails to counter extremism effectively (Giscard, 2017). The article notes that by not engaging with women in a conversation about violent extremism, a whole side of the story is being ignored. Women’s rights and peace activists are promoting peace, and engaging actively in countering extremism (Giscard, 2017).

These women are in the frontlines of wanting to build peace and challenging their state’s actions (Giscard, 2017). Giscard’s study also explored how women are stuck between repressive governments and extremist’s groups (Giscard, 2017). This creates a very dangerous situation for them where they have nowhere to turn. Giscard proposes full participation of women at all levels of decision-making in the design and implementation of preventing and countering violent extremism (PVE/CVE). She exerts that recognizing women’s agency, diversity in voices and experiences allows for fundamental ensuring of their rights as well as bringing sustainable peace (Giscard, 2017).

2.1.2 Preventative Initiatives and Approaches

Inclusive approaches in attaining security in international development has consistently shown that women have positive socioeconomic impacts, yet in terms of peace and security, despite the acknowledgement, women's participation and input has not been implemented (O'Reilly, 2015). For instance, women only made "two percent of mediators and nine percent of negotiators in official peace talks between 1992 and 2011" (O'Reilly, 2015, p.3). Despite the emphasis and call to include women in UN Security Council Resolutions and other Global or State initiatives, for peacebuilding and reconstruction purposes, women are still marginalized and excluded (Giscard, 2017). Even when they are included, they are a matter of discussion as subjects rather than agents of discussion or discussion making, thus their ways of being, seeing and knowing are repetitively ignored (Giscard, 2017). Giscard d'Estaing's study highlights how the existing approaches to security focus on women as their role of mothers and wives rather than as vehicles of programs and activists who operate in different public spheres (Giscard, 2017). As a result, by failing to acknowledge women's roles more holistically, governments fail to effectively prevent extremism (Giscard, 2017).

The traditional roles ascribed to women as mothers, wives, caregivers and nurturers, "empower them in some instances" in that they can become the "custodians of cultural, social, and religious values" (Chowdhury Fink, Barakat and Shetret, p. 4). Thus, women have the power to effectively transfer the ideals of terrorist groups to their children and support them to be a martyr (Chowdhury Fink, Barakat and Shetret, p. 4). Alternatively, women have the potential to be powerful preventers in that they can inform, shape, reshape and implement ideals that can counter

conflict and violent radicalization. Within their own families, women's traditional roles as mothers and wives allow them to teach about norms in society especially if they have been victims or survivors of terrorist attacks (Chowdhury Fink, Barakat and Shetret).

Peacebuilders and policy makers often struggle with concepts such as insecurity, extremism or violent extremism and when it's hard to grasp the meaning of something, it's even harder to effectively measure and counter them (Ahmadi and Urwin, 2018). As a result, the popular method from international initiatives to counter terrorism and militancy have been directed at the military aspects, while the specific context such as the "social, political, and regional dynamics" have been overlooked (Carter, 2013, p.4). Thus, a more holistic approach to understanding not only terrorism but also counter-terrorism policies which aims to focus on re-integration of "marginalized communities and locally-based-counter narratives, will be a better strategy (Carter, 2013, p.4). In a study conducted by Ahmadi and Urwin, Afghans in districts of Nangarhar and Kunar equated security to women's visibility and mobility, in particular seeing girls go to school and women being able to travel to the market meant their regions were considered safe and secure (Ahmadi and Urwin, 2018, p.3). This shows, the presence of women in a neighborhood or society is an indicator of peace as women are usually the primary caregivers of small children who are seen as vulnerable people. Villagers of this region of Afghanistan knew if they never see government officials or aid workers carrying out their work, it signaled a deteriorating security for their region (Ahmadi and Urwin, 2018, p.3), which meant more isolation and absence for women in that society.

In some countries, some initiatives that aim to support women's roles in the prevention of violent extremism include: SAVE: Sisters Against Violent Extremism, which is a platform for

women in Yemen, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Israel, Palestine, and Northern Ireland, to campaign against ideologies of violent extremism in their homes and communities (Carter, 2013, p.4). Another one is the Institute for Inclusive Security and the US Institute of Peace programmed to support Pakistani women (Carter, 2013, p.4). Recommendations for improving these interventions include focusing on supporting “women’s small grassroots organizations; providing safe spaces and platforms to share resources, experiences and tools for facing violent radicalization; and engaging women in all stages of counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization strategies, policies and measures, with impacts monitored through specific gender benchmarks” (Carter, 2013, p.4).

Another example of women involved in effective nonviolent approaches is the work of activists like Mossarat Qadeem in Pakistan whose approach is rooted in cooperation, trust and working with communities (O’Reilly, 2015, p.5). She has worked with “legislators, religious leaders, and schools to talk young men out of committing suicide attacks” (O’Reilly, 2015, p.5). Her organization, Paiman Alumni Trust, trains women to de-radicalize their sons and so far, her team has trained over “655 mothers to de-radicalize 1,024 young men and boys, rehabilitating them and reintegrating them into society” (O’Reilly, 2015, p.5). Another example is Alaa Murabit from Libya, who along with her colleagues founded ‘The Voice of Libyan Women’ who aim to “create a dialogue with those who feel they have no alternative, drawing on religious discourse” to campaign for and change their attitudes using education and media outlets (O’Reilly, 2015, p.5).

Faith-based organizations that condemn terrorism and suicide bombing are powerful tools to counter terror. As mentioned, there are many organizations that have been established to condemn radical groups’ growth. PAIMAN is a women’s organization for youth that teaches

transformation skills through the ‘Let’s live in Peace Project’ (Mirahmadi, Ziad, Farooq and Lamb, 2015, p. 7). Over the past few decades, this organization has successfully “impacted over 35,000 youth and 2,000 women through their centers for conflict prevention and peace building” (Mirahmadi, Ziad, Farooq and Lamb, 2015, p. 7).

The US Embassy’s CVE programming has supported vocational training for ‘at-risk youth’, “religious leader dialogue series and documentaries about victims of violence” (Mirahmadi, Ziad, Farooq and Lamb, 2015, p. 11). For instance, the Embassy has helped organize a women’s interfaith dialogue series in Rawalpindi in Pakistan where the center incorporates the input of over forty women religious leaders from different faiths and the programs include public service announcements, radio programs, lecture, performances and comics and animated serious for young youth (Mirahmadi, Ziad, Farooq and Lamb, 2015, p. 11).

Violent extremism has impacted many societies and has endangered many people around the globe. As such, the path from fundamentalism to extremism to radicalism and then terrorism should be stopped for everyone (Ghosh, Chan, Manuel & Dilimulati, 2017). And educators should have the tools to recognize and engage with social factors that hint to this process in order to ensure students do not follow this path (Ghosh, Chan, Manuel & Dilimulati, 2017). This paper focused on women since there is a lot of evidence that shows gender equality and women’s empowerment is correlated with security and stability in a country, especially if women hold leadership positions on war, extremism and peace.

In traditionally patriarchal societies, the role of women as mother, wives and nurturers

allows them to transfer peaceful ideologies to their sons, husbands and other male relatives. However, focusing on women as the “hearts” of families and influences of their families and communities should be carefully done as not to reinforce gender stereotypes (Kundnani and Hayes, 2018, p.16). By mobilizing gender in this way, gender inequalities should not be subsumed as a result (Kundnani and Hayes, 2018, p.16). By empowering women and promoting an equal voice in leadership and policy implementation, countering violence initiatives will be more effective in the long run as they will take a more diverse and holistic approach.

2.2 Background on Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in South and Central Asia. Afghanistan is bordered by Iran to the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to the north; China to the north east; and Pakistan to the east and south. According to the World Bank Afghanistan had a population of 35,530.80 in 2017 (World Bank, 2017). The country is made up of many different ethnic groups such as Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Aimaqs and other groups. Both spatial and ethnic impenetrability has prevented Afghanistan from forming or maintaining a consensual and coherent sense of nationalism (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003). Further, intervention from bordering countries as well as western countries has contributed to the fragmentation of Afghan polity (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003). To make matters worse, ethnic rivalries continues to plague Afghan culture and society.

Historically, Afghanistan has been famous for its reputed Khyber Pass which for centuries remained a vital artery joining western and eastern empires-traders and armies (Khan, 2002). The inhabitants of Afghanistan have met the forces of the Persians, Alexander the Great’s army, Genghis Khan and the British, the Soviets and now the United States’ occupation (Khan, 2002).

Afghanistan was founded on 1747, by Ahmed Shah Abdali who later renamed himself as Ahmad Shah Durrani (Khan, 2002). The Durrani rulers attempted to “Pashtunize” the minorities of Afghanistan (Khan, 2002). Eventually, the Durranis would yield power to the British until 1973, when Daoud Khan came after his cousin King Zahir Shah who ruled the country since 1933 (Khan, 2002). Daoud Khan’s leadership was opposed by Islamist movements. Islamicists' leadership composed of Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, Ahmad Shah Masoud, and Burnhaddin Rabbani who later lead the Mujahideen who fought the Soviet military (Khan, 2002).

After five years, in 1978 Daoud Khan was killed and Soviet occupied Afghanistan in 1979. This provoked in the United States an interest in the Afghan soil. The Mujahideen, were given military support from Pakistan, the United States, Saudi Arabia and others like China which led to Soviet’s eventual expulsion (Khan, 2002). This “Great Game” between Russia, Britain and The US left millions of Afghans dead and forced for exile (Khan, 2002).

After this, a series of civil wars imploded which were ethnically dividing and were either in favour or against the communist government ruled by president Najibullah (Khan, 2002). In 1992, the Mujahideen ruled by Ahmad Shah Masoud took over Kabul. Four years later the self-proclaimed Islamic warriors known as the ‘Taliban’ took power (Khan, 2002). The Taliban were extremely oppressive. With the arrival of US troops in Afghanistan and the bombings in attempt from ‘International Coalition against Terror’ or in other words, ‘Global war on terrorism’ have subsequently produced millions of refugees as well as casualties of war (Khan, 2002).

2.2.1 Violent Extremism in Afghanistan

Afghanistan has had two major foreign interventions during the last century (Shahed, 2018). The first one was the Soviet invasion which was very destructive and destabilizing – “over a million Afghans were killed and nearly five million crossed over to neighboring countries as refugees” (Shahed, 2018, p.1). The latest intervention, by the United States after the terrorist attack of September 2001, has also been very costly in terms of death, destruction and suffering (Shahed, 2018, p.1). Yet, the US-led intervention has had little achievement in terms of safety and security for the Afghan people as it has left deep physical and emotional wounds on them (Shahed, 2018, p.1). According to a report by UNHCR in 2016, Afghans were second, (after Syria) in the largest number of refugees in 2015 (Devictor and Do, 2017, p.359). In 2015 alone, more than 120,000 Afghans left the conflict-ridden country to seek asylum in 44 countries (Shahed, 2018). Some of them never reached their destinations as conditions are dangerous and risky.

Those who remain continue to fear for their lives as the insurgents recruit the youth for their extremist ideologies and encourage them to take part in violent acts against their fellow civilians. Every year, hundreds of Afghans lose their lives to suicide bomb attackers in different parts of Afghanistan. A recent attack was in July 2019, when a 13-year-old suicide bomber killed 5 people and injured 40 in a wedding (Popalzai, 2019). Another attack by Taliban just a few days ago killed 14 people and injured 145 (Popalzai, 2019).

The atrocities that take place are not random suicide attacks. Sometimes they are directed at specific individuals or minority groups. Sometimes, women and children are victims of such vicious acts of violence. In March 2015, Farkhunda Malikzada, a 27-year-old woman was publicly

beaten and slain by a mob in Kabul (Rubin, 2015). Farkhuda was a religious studies teacher and was accused by a Mula (religious leader) of burning the Quran when he got angry with her as she told him ‘selling charms’ is against religious teachings (Kargar, 2015). While, she was completely innocent (even if she wasn’t, she shouldn’t have been killed.), the angry mob did not listen to her; even the police did not intervene (Kargar, 2015).

Since the arrival of US troops in Afghanistan, suicide attacks increased by more than 400 percent (from 27 to 139), remotely detonated bombings more than doubled (from 783 to 1,677), and armed attacks nearly tripled (from 1,558 to 4,542) (Chishti, 2008). In particular violence in southern and eastern parts of the country between coalition forces and insurgent groups have deteriorated and lessened any hope for peace and security (Chishti, 2008). The U.S air strikes are killing hundreds of innocent Afghan civilians yearly and this is another reason for anger and resentment against foreign militaries that are present in the country (Chishti, 2008).

Fazli, Johnson and Cooke’s (2015) conducted a study in Afghanistan to understand and counteract violent extremism in Afghanistan. They asked local participants to identify the main drivers of radicalization and extremism in their communities, and survey respondents consistently emphasized the vital elements of push factors, mainly structural and social elements related to marginalization and poor governance. The respondents cited socioeconomic factors to be driving agents for violent extremism, for instance, they named *unemployment, poverty and lack of education* as the main sources (Fazli, Johnson & Cooke, 2015). The authors also noted that these characteristics are dimensions of marginalization and are applied to the rural poor who have limited access to services and regular employment opportunities (Fazli, Johnson & Cooke, 2015).

In Afghanistan, individuals are increasingly adopting extremist ideologies in opposition to the status quo, and radicalization often occurs after recruitment and sometimes it may not occur at all, though there is no evidence to support that nonviolent Islamist groups gradually become violent (Fazli, Johnson & Cooke, 2015). Fazli, Johnson & Cooke's study in Afghanistan noted that the Taliban use very traditional recruitment methods through local family, tribal, ethnic and local religious networks. Many of them are young uneducated men in their late teens or early twenties and are mainly from rural areas. Through research on Taliban recruitment specifically, they found that in many cases they skip the indoctrination or radicalization process all together, instead they mobilize fighters immediately by providing incentives such as protection, cash, cell phone credit, motorcycles and sometimes by use of coercions or threats (Fazli, Johnson & Cooke, 2015).

2.2.2 Women of Afghanistan

For decades the burqa-clad Afghan woman has been the symbol of oppressive political roles by the Taliban. This pervasive image has been used to bring international attention to the plight of the Afghan woman (Chishti & Farhoumand-Sims, 2008). Chishti and Farhoumand-Sims note that although these campaigns had good intentions in revealing the human rights violations to the international eye, they also invoked "an archetypal image of the downtrodden, oppressed, and veiled Afghan woman that very problematically muted the historical, sociocultural, religious, and political complexities that shape the lived realities of the majority of the Afghan women" (Chishti & Farhoumand-Sims, 2008). This representation in turn obstructed the Afghan women's resistance and resilience in the multiple ways across their divergent experiences.

The women's situation in Afghanistan has been center stage as Western military powers have looked for justification for war in Afghanistan in the name of freedom of its women (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003). Though women in Afghanistan didn't become oppressed overnight as a result of Taliban's misogynistic policies. Instead, there is a history of centuries of women's subjugation in Afghan society, including by the mujahedeen's which was worse than the Taliban era (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003).

As reported by Ahmadi and Lakhani, many women who are marginalized can be influenced by different motivating factors to partake in violent extremist groups. Reasons for this could be to seem powerful, to contribute to something others deem important and even to have the same rights and abilities as men can (Ahmadi &Lakhani, 2016). The authors also note the paradox in this kind of thinking, as these women may think they are powerful, but as soon as they are radicalized in supporting these violent insurgencies, they are denied decision-making and other equal opportunities reserved for men (Ahmadi &Lakhani, 2016). Although the women are promised empowerment, once the mobilization is successful, they are not given what they were promised (Ahmadi &Lakhani, 2016).

2.3 Feminist Approach to Research

This research focuses solely on women's roles, and as such it takes a feminist approach. Feminist approach to research is important as it implements the ideology of equality by creating a social system where everyone's voice is equally valid and heard (Parker & McFarlane, 1991). As such, feminist research empowers all women since it addresses issues that may be specific to them, and it can generate better quality of life for all humankind (Parker & McFarlane, 1991).

2.3.1 Intersectional Feminist Theory

Intersectional feminist theory highlights women of color's voices and looks at the intersections of oppression women of color may experience. Feminist theory for Black women for example, is diminished because it evolves from a white racial context that is never acknowledged (Crenshaw, 1989). Women of color are often overloaded, excluded and this exclusion is reinforced when white women speak for all women and simply as women, ignoring the complexities and intersections of subjugation different women's experiences based on their racial, ethnic and other social identities (Crenshaw, 1989).

Just as the authoritative universal subjective voice of the white male as non-racial and non-gendered is inaccurate and flawed, so is the discussion of gender without regard for culture, economic and social characteristics of the women it supposedly represents (Crenshaw, 1989). Thus, feminist theory is lacking the discussion of race in the process of analyzing patriarchy and sexuality which continues to perpetuate a white analysis which then contributes to domination over "other" non-white women by white women (Crenshaw, 1989).

2.4 Anti-Colonial Theory

Anti-colonial prisms offer a new philosophy where Eurocentric discourses are challenged and there is room for southern and indigenous intellectual and political thought (Dei & Kempf, 2006). Colonization is still well and alive and by the return of political sovereignty to many colonized peoples or nations it has not disappeared (Dei & Kempf, 2006). Instead colonialism and -neocolonialism show up in different ways through knowledge production, validation in schools, student experiences and other ways where some identities and experiences are recognized and

validated while others are disregarded. The anti-colonial prisms theorize the social domination, the multiple ways power, domination and subordination relate and work in society (Dei & Kempf, 2006).

Colonialism sustains hierarchies of power which uphold the colonizers' "sense of reason, authority and control" (Dei & Kempf, 2006). Thus, the image is flipped to show the colonized body as the "violent other" while the colonizer is "pitted as an innocent, benevolent and [imperial] savior" (Dei & Kempf, 2006). The history of colonizer and colonized relationship shapes contemporary knowledge productions, ideologies and mythologies (Dei & Kempf, 2006).

Dei & Asgharzadeh note that without acknowledging local experiences and practices of colonized bodies, decolonization processes will not succeed. As such it is important to envision knowledge as a form of power and resistance as essential requirements of decolonizing praxis (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). This will help bring forth the body of knowledge that lies within colonized people's history and in turn assist in shaking away the identities that have been constructed through Western ideologies (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). As such it is important to pay attention to and study local people's experiences and knowledge formations.

The anti-colonial framework allows for the theorizing of issues pertaining to both the colonized and the colonial by giving space for the indigenous standpoint (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Further, as a theoretical perspective, it interrogates power that is deeply engrained in ideas, cultures, histories and knowledge (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). The anti-colonial framework privileges locally produced knowledges and sees marginalized groups as agents of their own experiences and histories (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). It allows for questioning, interrogating and

challenging institutionalized power, privilege and dominance in social relations and in society (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001).

2.5 The Importance of Education

Education is one of the “most effective ways of strengthening values of peace, tolerance, pluralism, dialogue and human rights” all of which foster coexistence” (Abu-Nimer and Nasser, 2017, p.159). However, education should not be in the form of indoctrination, and must allow for criticality. Critical education would mean an enabling of “learners to engage in critical analysis of newspapers, TV reporting, and government information campaigns” (Davies, 2008, p.9) in order for students to gain essential skills in both individual, social and national levels. Yet, political and media literacy in many schools is not always a vital part of learning in many parts of the world. Therefore, it’s important to incorporate skill development in orientations towards teaching controversial issues and discourse analysis as key areas for teacher training (Davies, 2008, p.9).

A good practice report on women and countering violent extremism was prepared by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and was adopted in 2015 by the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). It is an effort to assist governments in incorporating gender in their policies. It discusses the exclusion of women, girls and gender both promoting and preventing extremism initiatives. (“Good Practices on Women”, 2015). Some of the good practices that are suggested are: include women and girls in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and laws, procedures and practices related to CVE. (“Good Practices on Women”, 2015). Since women are affected differently, and are involved in different forms, this allows for a unique and full view of what is needed to be done.

A second 'good practice' is to ensure there are efforts that discourage and counter women and girls from getting involved in extremist groups ("Good Practices on Women", 2015). Additionally, girls and women's' human rights should be protected in a non-discriminatory way ("Good Practices on Women", 2015). By ensuring that women and girls are not harassed, discriminated against or gender stereotyped, girls' full participation and engagement in preventative initiatives will not be hindered ("Good Practices on Women", 2015). Other good practices include, addressing the direct and indirect impacts of extremism on women and girls, ensuring the prosecution of violators such as those who attack girls' schools to stop their access to education, providing protection to girls, involving men and boys in issues of gender in regard to girls' participation in CVE ("Good Practices on Women", 2015). Engaging with men, will allow an area to be opened for girls and women to enter the space in an otherwise male dominated environment ("Good Practices on Women", 2015). Also, it is suggesting that girls and young women should engage through formal and informal education to build resilience to reduce recruitment to radicalized groups ("Good Practices on Women", 2015). In addition, having access to quality education, civic education, communality engagement, interfaith dialogue, tolerance and knowledge about human rights can be particularly important ("Good Practices on Women", 2015).

In her recent book, Keddie draws on stories of female educators and young Muslim women's experiences and explores "issues of identity, justice and education." The data draws from case study research of over ten years in Australia and England. Through her interviews with young Muslim women, and educators, Keddie found that despite the devastating impacts on Muslim women and girls because of Islamophobia, there were cases where Muslim girls felt empowered

and found their sense of agency through the support of their committed and passionate educators. In her interviews, she found about much Islamophobic hostilities in Australia (Keddie, 2017). The young Muslim women experienced racism on a daily basis and were deeply affected by it, as it produced sadness, anger, stress and exasperation and fear, as well as feelings of exclusions and unhappiness (Keddie, 2017). Unhappiness translates to fear sometimes, when even people who don't know these girls don't like them by their mere appearance (Keddie, 2017). Social inclusion and connectedness are important to all youth but especially to those who are socially and culturally marginalized such as these young Muslim women (Keddie, 2017). One of the services that helped these young Muslim women was a specialized music therapy program that the Muslim girls attended which made them feel 'empowered' as they shared songs from their countries of origin and told their stories to other young women (Keddie, 2017). Led by a Muslim educator, efforts were made to support these young girls in a holistic way (Keddie, 2017).

Ghosh and colleagues also criticize the way governments deal with counter terrorism policies with the use of "hard power" which is reactive and used for people who are already radicalized. They argue that education is an important tool and should be "incorporated into such policies as a preventative measure" where student's "psychological, emotional and intellectual" identities, their "soft powers" are protected from extremist ideologies by using a proactive approach (Ghosh, Chan, Manuel & Dilimulati, 2017). Young people are often susceptible to extremist ideologies as they seek for meanings and understanding of their own identities (Ghosh, Chan, Manuel & Dilimulati, 2017).

As such, education is an important anti-radicalization tool, which is emphasized greatly since it helps with the development of life-long values, skills and behavior which helps young

people be resilient and successful (Ghosh, Chan, Manuel & Dilimulati, 2017). They continue that education is proactive rather than reactive which are expensive surveillance and military efforts. It is concluded that it is more cost effect and practical to use education to promote critical and resilient citizenship in a democratic society, through education citizens should learn to critique all religious traditions that go against human rights and dignity (Ghosh, Chan, Manuel & Dilimulati, 2017). A study in the United Kingdom referred to in this article showed that, empowering young people through capacity building, education and training in theology was effective and successful (Ghosh, Chan, Manuel & Dilimulati, 2017).

Likewise, a workshop in Yemen (2010), called Women Without Borders/Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE), showed that women who participated in these workshops had the capacity to “spot and react” to extremism in their families, however it was dependent on their *levels of education*, local awareness as well their location in terms of remoteness of their region (Carter, 2013, p.4). This workshop also showed that women with less formal education lacked the skills to recognize the warning signs (Carter, 2013, p.4). As such, more research initiatives are needed to improve the understanding of the role of women in preventing violent extremism, as women are integral parts of communicating and transferring values (Carter, 2013, p.4).

What is needed is also understanding the cultural context and developing models that are more applicable to Muslim societies that can be backed by governments, policymakers and education experts (Abu-Nimer and Nasser, 2017). Such approaches will gain local acceptance and have shown to have more positive outcomes. They will be more effective and get less negative response as they are culturally sensitive. A ‘Futures without violence’ report (2017, p.5) noted that

“out of more than one thousand women interviewed throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, more than 80 percent said that what they needed most was education in how to detect warning signs and training in how to react appropriately” if they ever encounter their family member going towards the radicalization path.

Intervention efforts for countering extremism though education should be completed in partnership with community-based education, mental health professionals as well as local faith leaders (Levitt, 2015, p.53). In Montgomery County, the BRAVE model was established for “building resilience against violent extremism through engagement, education, and specialized interventions” and it has undergone an independent, scientific evaluation which is an evidence-based good practice for countering violent extremism and community policing (Mirahmadi, 2016, p.3). Further, by incorporating “feedback from partners and participants” WORDE, As Backbone Organization (following the collective impact model) has been able to improve its training to effectively engage and educate diverse audiences (Mirahmadi, 2016, p.12). The surveys indicate that WORDE’s “education and awareness-raising activities have made participants feel a greater connectivity to people of other faith communities and increased understanding of people who come from other traditions, and are more likely to engage in help- seeking behaviors to protect their community and loved ones” (Mirahmadi, 2016, p.12).

In 2015, *Prevent* which was a surveillance training program was launched in Britain where public services monitored young Muslims for signs of extremism and over 400,000 public sectors received this training in that year (Kundnani and Hayes, 2018). This resulted in almost 4000 reports of potential extremists whom one eighth were children under the age of eighteen years old

(Kundnani and Hayes, 2018, p.9). Another aspect of this program was “strategic communications,” or using the public to make culture changes in Muslim communities. In order for the program to be successful in strengthening “independent, free and protected media as a component of good governance strategies and in support of non-violent, free and inclusive dialogue,” it needed funding (Kundnani and Hayes, 2018).

Muslims worldwide condemn radical ideologies, but there have been groups that have been using the religion of Islam as a weapon of violence and war in the past century (Mirahmadi, Ziad, Farooq & Lamb, 2015). They are not an individual or a single group but rather a transnational network who use radical ideologies regardless of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or education and these people can endanger security no matter who they are (Mirahmadi, Ziad, Farooq & Lamb, 2015). Counter radicalization education should be made by Muslims who share the same values which are support for freedom of religion and conflict resolution without violence among others (Mirahmadi, Ziad, Farooq & Lamb, 2015). They should also reject religious intolerance, jihad as central practice as well as “imposition of Islamist law in the U.S. legal system” (Mirahmadi, Ziad, Farooq & Lamb, 2015).

A study by Buzdar and colleagues (2018) found that University professors in Pakistan identified the main reasons for young adults’ vulnerability towards radical groups as “unemployment, social injustice, sectarianism, religion-based emotional blackmailing, international agendas, foreign involvements, and government policies” among others. They also found that some Islamic Studies professors believed that the ‘global powers’ are targeting Muslims through anti-Islam propaganda which led to a hostile attitude towards Western countries (Buzdar,

Tariq and Ali, 2018). Buzdar (2018) concludes that their ‘abominating ideas’ can affect their capacity to transmit this ‘knowledge’ through a biased, partial and irrational manner. Just as the rise in Islamophobia in the West must be combated through public awareness education, Islamic extremism should also be countered in Muslim countries. The average person in the West should know the difference between a regular Muslim with an Islamist who has a political agenda (Mirahmadi, Ziad, Farooq & Lamb, 2015). Likewise, Muslim communities should create educational forums where local readers, academics and policymakers discuss de-radicalization efforts within their own communities and this information should be accessible to the public through internet, schools, colleges, campuses and online forums (Mirahmadi, Ziad, Farooq & Lamb, 2015). In addition, the educational reforms which encompass a de-radicalization approach and a focus on peace education should start at a young age (Hamid, 2011). The curricula should be structured to promote critical thinking, using cognitive psychology principles that promotes values of humanity and direct values to more peaceful sects such as Sufis, who completely reject violence (Hamid, 2011).

2.6 Chapter Summary

Violent extremism is a threat to all societies. Recently, there is special attention given to women in countering violent extremism, and there are reports that suggest adoptions of more holistic approaches to understanding both terrorism and counterterrorism by focusing on marginalized communities’ voices and counter narratives which are very effective (Carter, 2013). Women as policy shapers, educators and community members have an essential role in countering violent extremism.

Cooke notes that imperialistic logic uses gender binaries and separates them as two subjects. By making the woman as the civilizable and the man as the other, then the universal civilization would mean, someone should rescue the women (Cooke, 2002). To rescue the (brown) women, their men must be attacked (Cooke, 2002). Cooke continues on how the imperial rhetoric, conceals issues of race, ethnicity and class and clings to gender (Cooke, 2002). In the case of Afghan women, their gender becomes their main defining characteristic, and their veil is their main source of oppression (Cooke, 2002). As such, the historical, social and class characterizations all disappear and the only point that remain is the Afghan women's victimization. They become victims who need saving. Citizens of the 'civilized' world find themselves justifying their presence and involvement in their attack of the uncivilized brown men (Cooke, 2002).

In the context of Afghanistan, despite many restrictions, Afghan women are not mere victims and are active both individually and collectively not only in resisting oppression for freedom for girls and women but to all Afghans. During the past 30 years of war and civil unrest, countless Afghan women (& men) have been active promoting opportunities and providing education for girls and women (Brodsky, Portnoy, Scheibler, Welsh, Talwar & Carrillo, 2012). This study will examine four Afghan women's perception of extremism in Afghanistan and explore their roles in preventing extremism.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Qualitative Research Design

In this project, I took a qualitative research approach and used case studies as my methodology. The participants were (n:4) Afghan women. The participants were recruited through snowball sampling from my own personal network. This is justifiable since I'm a researcher from the same community that I studied. The data was obtained from semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants. In this section, I give the rationale behind my choices for the research approach and methodology and then explain how this methodology was appropriate for my research question.

3.1.1 The Research Paradigm

A paradigm “influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted”, and it further “sets down the intent, motivation and expectation for the research” (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). There are numerous theoretical paradigms in the literature, some of which are: positivist (and post-positivist), constructivist, interpretivist, transformative, emancipatory, critical, pragmatist and de-constructivist (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006). Among all these approaches, constructivist best fits my research topic. This approach looks at reality as it is socially constructed and relies on participant's views on the situation or topic that is being studied (Creswell, 2003, p.8). Individuals seek meanings and develop their subjective understandings of the world (Creswell, 2003, p.8). Since these meanings are varied and multiple, the interpretive approach allowed me to look at “the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas” (Creswell, 2003).

3.1.2 The Qualitative Approach

This research had an exploratory approach (Chen, 2012), as I seek to find answers on the roles of women in prevention of extremism through education. Thus, I interviewed women, who are educators of secondary and post-secondary schools. I, the researcher, have interpreted their experiences as they explained them in their interviews. The qualitative research approach was most appropriate to achieve this goal as it allowed me to inquire into the meanings that people make (participants and researcher) of the world around them as they understand contexts and settings (Creswell, 2003).

3.1.3 Multiple Case Study Design

In the case study, one or more cases can be investigated, since I wanted to examine more than a singular case, I used multiple case study design – to describe the examining of several cases (Starman, 2013, p.33). Using a case study design allowed me to “cover contextual conditions” as I believe they are highly pertinent to the phenomenon that I’m studying (Yin, 2003, p. 13). I believe that it is important to look at Afghan women in the context in which they live and work. This is important since Afghan women face unique obstacles that persist to disempower them every day. One of these is lack of safety and security in many parts of Afghanistan. Laws that are supposed to support and protect women are not always implemented if the criminals who jeopardize women’s safety have political affiliations with people who can easily dismiss their punishments (Alvi, 2012). It is very disturbing and difficult for girls and women when there is impunity of perpetrators of violence (Alvi, 2012). Where do women go when their rapists and murderers are set free without repercussions? At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the resistance and agency of Afghan women. As such, the multiple case studies methodology enabled the examining

of participants' unique views and understandings of extremism and education, and their roles in it.

For this research study, each person is a different case. As I interviewed four women; my research has four cases where I have explored each case in depth. I have taken the demographic information such as age, type of occupation and place of work of each participant and have taken these into account in the analysis of my data. This specific information from each case is relevant and important as they show how those factors influence the participants and their views in relation to this issue. Since case studies methodology is an “all- encompassing” method, it allowed me to look at each case from multiple angles (Yin, 2003, p. 13).

The few case studies that I've chosen are similar (Afghan women educators) as I drew inferences through “cross-case comparisons” (Given, 2008, p.70). After data collection, I've compared them and analyzed similarities and differences between the cases. Ultimately, I'm interested in the general population, not only few cases but exploring each case and concentrating on all its complexities will allow for better comparisons (Stake, 2003). Exploring more than one case study simultaneously enabled me to make a concentrated inquiry into a single case (Stake, 2003, p.136).

According to Stake, there are two types of case studies: intrinsic and instrumental. The intrinsic case study is to learn from it, while the instrumental category “focuses on learning about the issue” (Stake, 2003, p. 136). This study falls into the instrumental category. This is because I'm using cases to dig deep into each case, using them as instruments to understand the topic better from the women's perspectives. While, I am interested in each particular case, I mainly examine them to “provide insight into a bigger issue”, to generalize about the phenomenon in question

(Stake, 2003, p. 137). On the other hand, I am careful not to make very grand generalizations as each case has its unique characteristics. The use of multiple case studies allowed for multiple examinations and comparisons which gave a more reliable source for generalization.

Since Afghan women have been excluded from Islamic teachings, there hasn't been much conversation with them, therefore most of them have passively accepted their inferior position that was dictated by men. Inadvertently, Afghan women often participate in reproducing ideals that serve to disempower them (Hoodfar, 2007). Using case studies allowed me to investigate how women can impact the reshaping of cultural, social and political ideas that arise from within Islam (Hoodfar, 2007), and what these specific cases' views are on this topic. I have investigated questions such as what are the women's views on current opportunities for women in relation to acknowledging potential liberal interpretations of Islamic text and "re-examining what it means to be Muslim"? (Hoodfar, 2007) Do they think that such opportunities can potentially empower women to make choices that will change gender dynamics in their lives and create a more democratic society for them? (Hoodfar, 2007).

A study cited by Noor and Husain explained that the largest group of women who become radicalized in conflict zones such as Pakistan are those that are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and are uneducated (Noor & Hussain, 2009). They are often highly vulnerable as they are socially marginalized or displaced, and sometimes they form a negative identity which refers to negative feelings of failure and turning to radicalism (Noor & Hussain, 2009). In this study, it is argued that the more women are marginalized, exploited with no possible way of reaching their dreams, the more likely they are to form a negative identity and are at risk of joining

radical groups (Noor & Hussain, 2009). By using case studies, I was able to look at women's perception of negative identity, marginalization and exploitation of women and how that might be a potential precondition for radicalization. Respectively, the different traits and characteristics of each participant will be important as it reflects their marginality or lack thereof in terms of their position in Afghan society.

While previous research has shown some indication on how some women become radicalized in conflict zones, it is important to hear it from woman's perspectives, in order to examine the challenges for resisting dangerous ideologies. It is important to explore questions like: Are women joining radical groups out of necessity? Are they influenced or coerced because of patriarchy? How much agency do they have? How can their situations be improved? How are they positively resisting/countering these groups and ideologies? And how are they influencing their colleagues, students, families and children (if applicable)?

Women are used as an effective tool to spread radicalization by encouraging their sons or other male relatives to join these groups (Noor & Hussain, 2009). An example of this is in Pakistan, where poor families send their daughters to madrasas, which are religious in this specific country and free, and those who attend madrasas are more likely to hold extremist views (Noor & Hussain, 2009). In the name of religion, militant organizations, try to elicit sympathy from women to support the militants (Noor & Hussain, 2009). Noor and Hussain's study found that there is much ignorance on certain societal, political and religious levels which makes women vulnerable for both radicalization and exploitation (Noor & Hussain, 2009).

Using case studies allowed me to investigate the education levels, religiosity levels, societal and political levels of each woman to see how each of these components have a bearing on these women's views. Further, it has allowed me to look at whether there are any reliable sources and resources that the women educators and their students have access to, in order to avoid manipulation (Noor & Hussain, 2009).

This is important, since many resources are not easily available to women in Afghanistan. Today, while girls have more access to education compared to prior decades, they continue to be targets of attacks by insurgent groups (Kissane, 2012). In this situation, there is no doubt that not only parents would be hesitant to send their children, particularly girls, to schools but there won't be much investments in girls' schools, libraries and resources. Through multiple case studies, I will also be able to analyze the impacts of security and safety concerns (Kissane, 2012), from the educator's perspective who may also be a parent. Unfortunately, while many 'rights' have been granted to Afghan women and girls since the 2004 constitution, not only have they not been implemented fully, on the contrary, there have been other laws that have worsened the situation further for them (Ahmadi, 2015). These are some of the issues that I want to explore further, and this methodology will allow this study as it encompasses a holistic study of each case.

3.2 Data Collection Procedures

I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with Afghan women (n=4) who have been educators in Afghanistan after 2001. The number is limited to 4 as the scope of this research is feasible only as it enables the in-depth exploration of a few cases. The interviews were an appropriate method for my question and research topic because it "allows for the discovery or

elaboration of information that is important to the participants” (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008) that I may have not previously thought about. I started by asking a simple open-ended question and left it open for them to discuss what they thought was important and relevant. Also, I used technology such as applications similar to Skype (Viber) to interview some of the women. For some of the participants, I was able to visit them in person and conduct the interview in person. All of the interviews were conducted in the participants (& researcher’s) native language, Persian (Farsi). I recorded all of the interviews, since I needed to transcribe and translate them from Persian to English.

I chose the interview as a method of inquiry, since I was interested in other people’s stories, in particular the participants’ stories (Seidman, 2006). In interviews, people are able to symbolize their experiences through language (Seidman, 2006, p.8) and they can articulate their feelings, desires and worries. It is by conversing, about ourselves, beliefs and opinions that we make sense of these experiences in our lives, and the interview allows the researcher to inquire about these aspects of the lives of the participants.

Further, the semi-structured interview was most suitable for the case study methodology design of this research as it let participants answer questions to “aggregate perceptions or knowledge” from different respondents (Stake, 1995, p.65). This showed differences in the answers from each case and allowed for comparisons at the end of data collection. In addition, the semi-structured design of the interviews covered the researcher’s interests and allowed room for the “respondent’s more spontaneous descriptions” and responses (Given, 2008, p. 470). As such,

the interview was an excellent way to explore participants' perceptions on this topic, as they can freely discuss the topic.

The Case study methodology is an “in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular” person, in this case in real life (Starman, 2013, p.32). And in order to include the context of the individual cases, I should also focus on the environment of these cases (Starman, 2013, p.32). As such, I collected the demographic information of each participant upon their agreement to partake in the study. Further, since the case study methodology is a “comprehensive descriptions of an individual case and its analysis, the characterization of the case and the events” (Starman, 2013, p.31), I asked for the participants' age, ethnicity, specific jobs and responsibilities, education level and other information about their past. This was to get a holistic understanding about their lives and experiences in a general sense and to see how they may be important data in cross-case-comparisons in the analysis stage.

In addition, I used a journal in a notebook to keep track of my own thoughts and feelings in the process of recruiting and interviewing participants. This data was useful for my analysis as case studies could be informed further by the characterizations of each case, the events, the specific descriptions of the discovery process of these features which is also the process of research itself (Starman, 2013, p.31). The data helped me remember specific details such as tone, body language and my own feelings and thoughts.

3.2.1 Recruiting Participants

My research aim was to explore women's roles and involvement in the prevention of the

development of extremist views through education in Afghanistan. Correspondingly, participants were chosen based on their social groups or nationality (Afghans) and professions (educators). Since I am a researcher from this social group and have been involved in many cultural works, I have an extensive network both in Afghanistan and abroad. I reached out to people that I knew and sought their help in introducing me to people who may be interested to participate in this study. As a result, I was able to recruit 4 women who had taught as University professors and in-service teachers in Kabul between 2001-2017.

I chose Kabul since I have been there before and know many people who could potentially help me with recruiting potential participants. The views and perceptions of these women educators with regard to countering extremism in Afghanistan is invaluable as they will elucidate the initiatives in place as well as existing issues that need to be resolved. Although initially, I hoped to be able to recruit a diverse group, in terms of their ethnicity, age, level of experience as well as their education; unfortunately, due to the particular and specific characteristics that I was looking for, my resources were limited. As a result, the final research participants, although diverse in some respects, such as age and fields of study, they are not very diverse in terms of ethnicity and affiliation with a specific Islamic religious sect.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

First, I transcribed the audio files by hand. After reading the transcripts in its entirety several times, I immersed myself in the details and tried to make sense of the interviews as whole before breaking in into parts (Creswell, 2012). After that, I wrote notes, memos and ideas in the margins of the field-notes and transcriptions (Creswell, 2012). Doing this helped me organize the

data as I highlighted those parts that I felt were relevant to my research questions. Then I transcribed that data for the second time on my computer and then translated them from Persian to English. Following that, I started to analyze the data.

I used coding to analyze the data as I noticed broad themes and tried to label the codes and collect similar data under the same code (Creswell, 2012). By aggregating similar codes, certain categories or themes emerged for the findings chapter, of which then I tried make sense by connecting to the theoretical framework and the literature in the area (Creswell, 2012).

In this step, I interpreted the data and tried to draw “lessons learned” (Creswell, 2012) by looking at the data and the phenomenon based on my personal views as well as other studies (Creswell, 2012). Throughout the analysis, I made sure that my interpretations were accurate (Creswell, 2012). I ensured my findings were valid by re- checking with my participants to make sure that my own personal biases were not affecting the findings and that I understood and interpreted their points accurately (Creswell, 2012). I also had a third person read my translations as well as interpretations to check for accuracy of my understandings.

3.4 The Researcher’s Role

I am a Canadian woman of Afghan origin. Thus, in relation to this research, I act as both *an insider and an outsider* (Sikes & Potts, 2008). I am an insider because I am a woman, a researcher from the same cultural background of my participants and an educator. My position can be seen as both a privilege and challenge (Chen, 2012), which can affect my understanding, interpretation and analysis of the data as I may notice trivial points while ignoring others that may

be more significant since they are ‘common’ or ‘normal’ to me as an Afghan woman and as an educator.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

I am also an outsider to this research study. While I identify as an Afghan individual, I also identify as a Canadian. This distinguishes me from my participants, and it may affect our relationships and rapport. Because of this, perhaps the participants saw me differently in comparison to a local researcher who lives or has lived in Afghanistan. This may or may not have impacted the information they shared with me. Regardless, I tried to be reflective and mindful of this challenge as well as my position in this research and how I may impact the data, whether it is through my own subjective interpretations or the unintentional effect I might have had on the participants and their responses to the questions. In addition, I have never lived in Afghanistan although I have visited it for periods several times. Therefore, I’m not very familiar about living in Afghanistan, the cite for my participant’s experiences, and where my participants are from. As such, I may have not fully grasped the concepts or references that they made. Thus, I’ve tried to be conscious of my abilities and limitations in this research at all times.

Furthermore, evidently the participants who partook in this study were volunteers. My research is extremely transparent as it laid out all the information such as duration, benefits and potential risks of the study to participants from the beginning. After agreeing to participate in this study, I ensured that they were aware that if they change their mind at any time, they would certainly be able to discontinue their interviews. Furthermore, it was clearly communicated to them that they can refuse to answer particular questions or stop the study if they choose to do so and

they are not required to provide a reason for their choice. As well, for privacy concerns, pseudonyms were used to ensure participants' confidentiality throughout the study.

3.6 Chapter Summary

This research took the interpretive approach, using a qualitative method. I aimed to explore the roles of women in countering extremism in Afghanistan by interviewing a few women educators in Afghanistan using multiple case studies methodology. This research will fill gaps in the literature on the roles of women in extremism through education in the context of Afghanistan. There is little research to date that explores Afghan women's involvement and activism on this topic.

I used multiple case studies design to cover different aspects of each case very closely. It is important to explore the context in which the Afghan women live and work as they experience unique challenges in their lives. As they live in a male-dominated society, highlighting their agency through their actions in regard to countering extremism is important. Exploring their views and experiences can elucidate the possible challenges and obstacles they might face in future, and further research, programs or initiatives can potentially tackle those barriers. There are many Afghan women who challenge the dominant patriarchal discourse. I think their stories and voices deserve to be heard. With my research, I hope to be able to provide a small platform for Afghan women to voice their opinions, concerns and beliefs that are related to the issue of extremism as I think they are extremely significant and valuable.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1 Participant Demographics

Due to the sensitivity of this topic, it took me around six months to get approval for this research from the research ethics board at McGill University. The administrators were concerned that this research may be risky or even dangerous to my participants. At first, I aimed to interview educators who currently reside and work in Afghanistan. Today, there are many insurgent groups who are active in Afghanistan. In order to do this research as safely as possible due to the insecure situation in Afghanistan, I was not permitted to speak to women who reside in Afghanistan. Instead, I was asked to find participants who are in another country but who have worked in Afghanistan as educators in recent years.

Fortunately, through my network, I was able to invite four Afghan women to participate in this study. The women who took part in this study are not currently residing in Afghanistan, although the amount of years that they have worked in Afghanistan ranges from 2-10 years post 9/11. To safeguard the confidentiality of the participants, I am not able to disclose which countries the participants are currently residing in. However, three of them worked mainly in the capital city of Kabul, while one of them also worked in Herat. The table below shows some demographic characteristics of each participant, such as age, education, profession and parent's levels of education.

	Age	Level of Education	Profession	Father's Level of Education	Mother's Level of Education
Gulshan	35-40	Bachelor's Degree Secondary Education	Public Secondary School Teacher	Hawza (Seminary for Shi'a Muslim Clerics)	Unschool Housewife
Rudaba	45-50	Master's Degree Islamic Theology	Private University & Seminary Professor	Hawza (Seminary for Shi'a Muslim Clerics)	Unschool Housewife
Meena	30-35	Master's Degree, Hadith Studies	Private University Lecturer & Middle School Teacher	Unschool	Graduate degree Educator
Maheen	45-50	Master's Degree International Relations	Private University Professor	Hawza (Seminary for Shi'a Muslim Clerics)	Unschool Housewife

Participant Demographic

4.1.1 Gulshan

Gulshan is between 35-40 years old. She was born in Afghanistan, moved to Iran and lived there for a number of years before moving back to Afghanistan with her family. She has a bachelor's degree in Education with concentration in Mathematics. Her father was educated in Hawza which is a seminary for Shi'a Muslim clerics. Her mother is unschooled and a housewife. Gulshan was a girl's math teacher in a public secondary school in Kabul for ten years before settling in a Western country. I was able to interview Gulshan in person.

4.1.2 Rudaba

Rudaba is between 45-50 years old. She was born in Afghanistan, moved to Iran in her youth and has lived there for many years. Rudaba has a bachelor's degree in Culture and Education, a master's degree in Islamic Theology and is currently a doctoral student at an International

academy, Islamic and University-style Seminary institute also known as Shi'a Seminary or al-Hawza al-`Ilmīyya (in Farsi: حوزه علمیه) which is the title given to the Twelver Shi'a educational institutions which involves teaching religious ideas and educating religious students. Like Rudaba, her father was also educated in a Hawza (Seminary for Shi'a Muslim Clerics).

While Rudaba has extensive experience working in a variety of contexts in the country where she resides, I only focused on her experience in Afghanistan. She worked in different contexts in Afghanistan, both in Herat and in Kabul for three years. During this time, she taught as a professor in a private University in Herat and taught female students at a Hawza in Kabul. In these educational institutions, she mainly taught Religious Studies, General Philosophy and Philosophy of Islam. I was able to interview Rudaba in person.

4.1.3 Meena

Meena is between 30-35 years old. She is an Afghan refugee woman who was born in Iran. She has a master's degree in Hadith Studies (Statements of Muhammad, prophet of Islam). Like Rudaba, Meena is currently a doctoral student studying Women's Studies. Meena's father is Unschoolled, though her mother has a graduate degree. Aside from working in her country of residence, Meena worked in Afghanistan in different contexts for two and a half years. She taught at a private girls' middle school and lectured at a private University in History of Islam, Islamic Thought and English Grammar subjects. I was able to interview Meena in person.

4.1.4 Maheen

Maheen is between 45-50 years old. She was born in Afghanistan. Maheen has a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a master's degree in International Relations. Similar to Rudaba and Gulshan's fathers, Maheen's father was also a Shi'a Muslim Cleric educated at a Hawza. Maheen's mother was unschooled and a housewife. Maheen resides in a Western country, though I was unable to interview her in person. I used her choice of internet instant messaging application, Viber, to conduct the interview.

Maheen worked in Kabul as an author of social studies' secondary school textbooks as well as a private University professor for over ten years. At the University where she worked, Maheen taught in the department of International Relations, Political Science and the Faculty of Law. She mainly taught the following subjects: Theories of International Relations, Research Methods in Humanities, Democracy and History of International Relations.

4.2 Emerging Themes

The following part presents 7 emerging themes that I sorted out from the study. I organized the data in sections, where each section focuses on one theme. They are; inconsistency in defining extremism, no discussion of extremism in public secondary schools, no criticality in education system, families as a source of extremism, extremism not being related to religion, extremism is political, lack of access to quality education and lack of resources.

4.2.1 Inconsistency in Defining Extremism

One of the aims of this research is to understand extremism in Afghanistan. It was interesting to see that although all four participants agreed that there are many forms of extremism in Afghanistan, their definitions of extremism or religious extremism were not very consistent. As

it will be discussed in a later section, most of them rejected extremism in Afghanistan to be religious at all. For example, in this quote, Rudaba who is a University professor defined religious extremism in the following way:

“We can almost say religious extremism....is, the maximum conceptions of religion. In other words, religion affects the individual’s life in all aspects, that is, in absolutely all shades of life, a Muslim or non-Muslim (religious person), and his/her lifestyle is influenced by religion and religious concepts.” (Rudaba)

“بنیاد گرایی دینی را تقریباً میتوانیم بگوییم یعنی مفاهیم حداکثری دین. یعنی دین در تمام شعون زندگی انسان اثر بزاره ، دخیل بوده در زندگی انسان، یعنی در تمام سایه های زندگی انسان مسلمان یا غیر مسلمان (شخص متدین) را در بر بگیره و سبک زندگی متاثر از دین و مفاهیم دینی است.” (رودابه)

And Maheen, the other University professor defined religious extremism very differently:

“Religious extremism is, in fact, the most strict recitation of religion and the very strict interpretation and implementation of religious teachings, which is understood as religious extremism, and we have seen extremism in various religions, whether it’s Christianity, as in Islam, or in other religions, we have seen extremism. Sometimes it can, in fact, be its inherent in it to get disengaged with others, and because of the very reason of its strict and rigid understandings, and that sometimes leads to collision with other religions, religious sects and ideologies. And in Afghanistan we see religious extremism in the form of many different movements that have also been turned into political movements, such as the Taliban, and more recently in the form of ISIS.” (Maheen)

“افراط گرایی دینی در واقع سخت گیرانه ترین قرائت از دین است و آموزه های دین را بسیار سخت گیرانه تعبیر ، تفسیر و اجرا کردن است که به افراط گرایی دینی تعبیر میشه که ما در ادیان مختلف بحرحال افراط گرایی را داریم و شاهد آن بودیم، چه در مسیحیت ، چه در اسلام و حتی شاید در ادیان دیگر هم ما شاهد آن افراط گرایی بودیم گاهی که میثانه، چون ویژگی افراط گرایی در واقع عدم پذیرش دیگران است بدلیل همان سخت گیری که در ذات خود داره گاهی میثانه منجر به برخورد با آیین ها، مذاهب و ایدئولوژیهای دیگه بشه و خوب در افغانستان هم افراط گرایی دینی را ما در قالب جنبش هایی میبینیم که که حتی تبدیل به جنبش های سیاسی هم شدند، مثل طالبان، و در این اواخر به شکل داعش هم در آمدند.” (مهین)

It is apparent that these two perspectives are very different. Rudaba who has an educational background on Islamic Theology, noted that religious extremism is when religion affects all parts of one's life. She summarized extremism as an individual and personal act that seemed like it doesn't affect other people in society. Maheen on the other hand, who has an international relations and political science background connected religious extremism to people as they live in a society. She mentioned that because of the strict and rigid interpretations of the religious teachings, the religious extremist becomes "disengaged" with others and this creates conflict and tension in their interaction with other people of differing values and religions. She then concluded that this tension is very present in Afghanistan and has created insurgent groups such as the Taliban and ISIS. These two differing views show an inconsistent understanding of what extremism means among these educators and how it affects society.

4.2.2 No Discussion of Extremism in Public School -Secondary Level

Gulshan was the participant who had worked for 10 years as a secondary school teacher in a public girl's high school in Kabul. She gave an interesting insight into the public secondary curriculum and how the teachers are often discouraged to discuss political and religious matters. While she agreed that there is extremism in Afghanistan which mainly originates from families, there is no discussion of it (at least in her school) about these matters at all.

"Unfortunately, extremism in Afghanistan is very prevalent, and Generally, in the country of Afghanistan, the people are very extremist in the field of religious sciences, and this has affected many families." (Gulshan)

«متأسفانه افراط گرایی در افغانستان بسیار زیاد است و.... یا کشور افغانستان بسیار آدم های افراط گرا هستند. در زمینه علوم دینی و این کم کم انتقال پیدا کرده به فامیل ها و خانواده ها.» (گلشن)

Gulshan went on to explain how the insecurity and bomb attacks often put them under a lot of pressure, as their schools would close. As a result of this, the teachers get behind in their curriculum which would lead to no time to discuss current events. She also explained how the ethnic tensions in Afghanistan make it very difficult for teachers to comment on anything related to politics, especially during election season as people tend to follow politicians who are from their own ethnic group, and they completely disregard a candidate's qualifications, promises or personalities.

“During civil wars, suicide attacks or the parliamentary elections and the electoral processes of the Parliament, these were things that not that we were unaware...these were things that would affect the academic situation.... but because we are...people of Afghanistan are from different ethnic groups.... from different religious sects, it is very hard to discuss.... for example, whoever is candidate for presidency.... it's very hard because they are from a particular group of people then it causes.... if I'm a supporter, I might not have any motives.... for me the only thing that's important it's the way they deal with people, their level of education....but generally our people would say this candidate is from this group or from this religious sect, and that has a lot of effect, and if you are a supporter or talk about something, it would affect.. And they'd say she is supporter of this candidate.” (Gulshan)

“انتحاري يا جنگ هاي داخلي و پروسه هاي انتخابات رئيس جمهوري انتخابات پارلمان، اينها حوادثي بودند که نه اینکه ما بي خبر باشيم.... اينها حوادثي است که روي شرايط تحصيلي ... تاثير خاص داره ولي چون تماما مردم افغانستان از قوم هاي مختلف هستند.... و از مذاهب مختلف هستند اين بسيار سخت است در باره کدام.... مثلا کسي که کاندید رياست جمهوري ميشه اين بسيار سخت است بخاطريکه اين از يه گروه خاص مردم هست پس اين باعث ميشه که اگر من طرفدار اون باشم شايد من کدام منظوري نداشته باشم..... فقط براي من مردم داريش يا تحصيلاتش ... براي من مهم باشه ولي عموما مردم ما ميگن که فلان کاندید از اين گروه است يا از اين قوم است، از اين مذهب است و اين بسيار تاثير داره و اگر تو از يه نفر طرفداري کني يا چيزي صحبتي کني، طبعاً اين تاثير ميمانه، ميگن فلاني طرفدار اين کاندید است.” (گلشن)

Something else that Gulshan mentioned was interesting yet I think it may have negative consequences. She said that generally it is recommended not to discuss religion, ethnicity or one's religious sect. They do this because they want to promote a unified identity of being Afghan.

However, this may be further destructive as it disregards inequalities that are related to people's differences, in terms of ethnicity and belonging to a specific religious sect.

“We are generally encouraged to refrain from discussing religion or religious sect or one's ethnic identity. Because we are a nation, with people.... from different religious sects, different ethnicities and this can bring a duality in the students...., for this reason, so that students are coherent, it shouldn't be important to them, their ethnicity or religious sect, we are all Afghans, we live in one country, and because of this solidarity, we try to not speak of such things. In general, there is a lot of religious extremism in Afghanistan, but we do not speak too much of it.”(Gulshan)

“به ما توصیه داده میشه که عموماً از مذهب یا از دین کسی یا قومیت یا مذهب کسی صحبت نشو، بخاطریکه ما کشوری هستیم، مردمی هستیم که با تمام.... مذهب های مختلف و اقوام مختلف و این خود برای شاگردان یک نوع دوگانگی را پیش میاره. ، به همین خاطر، بخاطریکه که شاگردان منسجم باشند، برای آنها مهم نباشه، قومشان، مذهبشان، ما همه افغان هستیم ، در یک کشور زندگی میکنیم، و ما بخاطر این همبستگی کوشش میکنیم که این صحبت ها نباشه. یعنی عموماً افراط گرایی مذهبی یا دینی زیاد است در افغانستان. ولی صحبت زیاد نمیشه.”(گلشن)

4.2.3 No Criticality in Education System

Fazli and colleagues' study showed that illiteracy meant ignorance for many people in Afghanistan rather than being able to read & write. Often people can't distinguish potential extremist recruits as they don't have enough education to be able to recognize and distinguish right from wrong. They are unable to determine extremists who put forward inaccurate religious messages to them or their children (Fazli, Johnson & Cooke, 2015).

Many of the participants in this study also pointed out that there is no critical aspect to the education system in Afghanistan. Many students take what they learn as literal and they are not taught to think critically. For example, Meena who taught as a University lecturer and middle school teacher said:

“In other words, religious extremism has been implemented in Afghanistan, in a way that the religious concept is taken literally and there is no rational analysis, for example they don't see that robbery has other examples... for example, over there people might not outright steal from someone since stealing is very absence...but when you are faced with economic matters with them you see that somehow they've emptied your pocket that you didn't even notice... and in their opinion this is not stealing, for example when you go ride on a car and if you don't ask for the remaining for your change, they won't give it to you. In their opinion this is not stealing...but when there is tendency to benefit yourself at the expense of someone else, that is one way to steal.” (Meena)

“یعنی بنیاد گرایی دینی این جور ی توی افغانستان پیاده شده که صرفاً به همان مسأله دینی که اشاره شد حاضر ن پای بند باشند، ولی تحلیل عقلی نمیکنند که مثلاً دزدی مثال های دیگه هم داره... مثلاً اونجا ممکنه کسی دزدی علنی نکنه و دزدی توی دین قبیحه... اما تو مسائل اقتصادی که با آنها روبرو میشی میبینی که بحرحال از یه شیوه ای جیبیت را خالی کردند که خودت نفهمیدی. یا عملاً دزدی حساب نمیشه! واز نظر آنها این امر دزدی نیست که مثلاً میری سوار ماشین میشی و آگه بقیه پولت رو طلب نکردی اون هم بهت نمیده. این شاید خیلی کمه ولی این مورد رو مثلاً دزدی حساب نمیکنند... ولی خوب همین که تو اصرار میکنی که از یکی یه جور استفاده کنی که به نفع خودت باشه این یه نوع دزدیه...” (مینا)

Maheen also mentioned that sometimes students wouldn't accept something they thought to be negative about their religion Islam. For example, in one of her international relations courses they discussed democracy, and when students learned that democracy does not exist in political Islam, they had a hard time accepting that, and one student in particular showed great resistance and refused to engage further with the topic. This example shows that from a young age, students are discouraged from questioning what they are being taught. Since they receive uncritical religious teachings, many of them end up forming rigid understandings of religious teachings and texts. Once they arrive at University (if they do), they struggle to accept an alternative, more lenient interpretations about their religion. Maheen noted:

“ They couldn't accept that there is no equality in Islam in the face of the law and they resisted with comments such as: no, Islam is equal! And when I provided proof for them that especially in

political Islam there is no equality, not as there is in democracy, well, a number of them would get convinced while a number of them resisted...”(Maheen)

“نمی توانستند قبول کنند که برابری در اسلام نیست در مقابل قانون مقابله میکردند که نه برابری در اسلام هم وجود دارد و باز وقتی که به هر حال سند ارائه میشد که در اسلام بخصوص در اسلام سیاسی... برابری به اون معنایی که در دموکراسی است وجود ندارد در اسلام. خوب یک تعدادی قانع میشدند و یک عده مقاومت می کردند...”(مهین)

Many of the participants discussed the flaws in the education system in Afghanistan. In particular they pointed out the uncritical component of the education system where students are taught to take things at face value. They are rarely if ever are provided opportunities to analyze or critique what is taught to them.

“In Afghanistan, I think something that is very important in regard to extremism is lack of education. In Afghanistan, youth, children and families, in fact, the whole Afghan society were deprived of education, over the years...and now the more distant these areas are from the center, the more deprived they are. Therefore, they are like a sponge or a complete white sheet... and whatever they see that they can learn, they quickly absorb and learn it, so the grounds for extremism are also especially among young people or families living in the country side that are away from the center is very high.” (Maheen)

“من فکر میکنم در افغانستان نکته ای که بسیار مهم است، در بحث افراط گرایی بحث عدم آموزش کافی است. یعنی در افغانستان جوانان و اطفال و خانواده ها، در واقع کل جامعه افغانستان به نوعی از آموزش محروم بودند در طول سالها و حالا هر چه این مناطق از مرکز دورتر باشد به همان اندازه محرومیت بیشتر است. بنابراین اینها به صورت یک اسفنج یا ورق کاملاً سفید... هر چیزی را که اینها ببینند که امکان آموختن آن است را به سرعت جذب میکنند و می آموزند، بنابراین زمینه افراط گرایی هم بخصوص در بین جوانان یا خانواده هایی که در اطراف زندگی میکنند و از مرکز دورترند بسیار زیاد است.” (مهین)

Meena who is the youngest participant at 30-35 years of age noted that having more women professors in Universities could in itself be a form of preventing extremism as it challenges stereotypical notions in the patriarchal society where most people believe in strict gender roles.

“In the educational space, for example, this can count as a form of fighting extremist ideologies. The fact that a young woman is teaching men about these topics, is in fact getting further away from the bigoted and sexist ideologies in society, even religious bigotry, and in schools too, for example, we would say to students, that you should use more new resources, these are old....”(Meena)

“توي فضاي دانشگاه مثلا همين خودش به نوع مبارزه با بنياد گرایی حساب ميشه که يك خانم جوان بياد مثلا به يك آقايي مباحث را توضیح بده، همين به نوع فاصله گرفتن از تعصب هاي اجتماعيه، حتي تعصب هاي ديني و در مدرسه هم همين طور، مثلا ما به بچه ها ميگفتيم شما بايد از منابع جديد تري استفاده کنيد، اين منابع قديمي است..... ” (مينا)

Further, when I asked Maheen, the political science and international relations’ professor if she thinks she has influenced her student’s understandings of extremism, she said that she is still connected to her students via social networks. Sometimes, she sees and reads her student’s posts and can clearly see that the critical aspect of her classes has affected her students immensely, even though, many of them came from families with differing believes.

“Sometimes I read their writings and I see their positions in some cases. I see that to an extent they have been influenced by the teachings, and they came from families that perhaps had very different thinking than them because of the religious & traditional structure of Afghanistan, but the things they learned they were influenced and affected by them.” (Maheen)

“گاهی نوشته ها ایشان را که ميبينم و موضع گيريهایشان را در مورد بعضي موضوعات مي بينم که تا حدي را تحت تأثیر اون آموزشی که گرفتند بودند و اينها از خانواده هايي مي آمدند که شاید بسيار با اينها متفاوت بي انديشند به دليل ساختار سنتي مذهبي افغانستان، اما اينها چيز هايي را که آموخته بودند باور کردند و تحت تأثیر آن قرار گرفتند.” (مهين)

These sentiments are proof that if more Afghan youth had access to similar educational opportunities, that allowed them to think critically, the situation there could improve, especially for those youth who live in remote and isolated regions.

4.2.4 Families as a Source of Extremism

All of the participants mentioned that the structure of Afghan society is very traditional and as a result most families are very extremist. For example, Gulshan said families were one of the main sources for their children's extremist ideologies.

“I specially worked with youth and unfortunately I saw that extremism came from the families to the children, the girls, especially at the school that I was teaching, they were all girls, from the first to the twelfth grade, all of them were girls and this had a great impact on the girls, and for this reason, we tried to make sure that most religious subjects and religious issues were not discussed in the classroom.” (Gulshan)

“من مخصوصا با قشر نوجوان جامعه سر و کار داشتم، و متاسفانه میدیدم که این افراط‌گرایی از فامیل‌ها به بچه‌ها، به دخترها مخصوصا در لایسه‌ای که من تدریس میکردم تماما دخترها بودند یعنی از صنف اول تا صنف دوازده همه‌شان دخترها بودند و این تاثیر زیادی روی دخترها داشت و به همین دلیل کوشش میکردیم که بیشتر مسائل دینی و مباحث مذهبی مطرح نشده در صنف.” (گلشن)

Also, Rudaba mentioned that when families are extremists, and many teachers are also extremists, and many are not trained well, so at the end many students follow the same path.

“Families talk a bit, although some families themselves are also somewhat extremists...I do not want to say unfortunately or fortunately, but I want to say that they are extremist; and terrorism I would say are totally two different things... Families are extremists, maybe many teachers are also extremists, and that's why we see...what is happening is they become extremists!” (Rudaba)

“خانواده‌ها به مقداری صحبت میکنند اگر چه به عده از خانواده‌ها خودشان هم تا حدی بنیادگرا هستند...حالا نمیخوام بگم متاسفانه یا خوشبختانه اما میخوام بگم که بنیادگرا هستند و با تروریسم کاملا دو چیز متفاوت میدانم... خانواده‌ها بنیادگرا هستند، شاید خیلی معلم‌ها هم بنیادگرا باشند و اما این بنیادگرایی و روی همین جهت..... اون چیزی که بوجود می‌آید یک عده افراطی است!” (رودابه)

4.2.5 Extremism is Not Necessarily Religious

All the participants agreed that extremism in Afghanistan is not necessarily religious, at least they didn't think the violent perpetrators represented any religion, but they acted on their own will, while justifying their wrongdoings in the name of religion, more specifically Islam. In this example, Rudaba who taught as a University professor in Herat and Kabul opposed the way I framed my question as extremism being religious and whether she discusses this topic in her classes. She noted that she tries to unpack what religion really means and condemns the violence committed in the name of Islam.

“We sought our duty to show the reality of religion to them. Because if we do not... even you who name it religious extremism, or any other thing that destructs, terrors and the like.... I do not personally accept the only cause of it being religious really...” (Rudaba)

“ما تحت عنوان وظيفه خود مي دانستيم كه واقعيت دين را براي اينها بفهمانيم. چرا كه اگر ما حتى شما كه اسم اينها را بنياد گرايان ديني ميزارين يا هر چيز ديگر كه تحت تخریب، ترور و امثال اينها را ... كه فقط از جنبه ديني باشه را من خودم زياد اينو قبول ندارم.” (رودابه)

“But I would say that if they are behaving in these deviant ways, they don't know enough about the religion, and they are showing religion in a bad light, they are very ignorant, and they have a completely wrong and ignorant understanding of religion to be doing these things. First of all, we don't accept them, and their behavior is not religious, and we can't say they are religious extremists because they are ignorant extremists and the only way to define them is that they there are ignorant and that they are acting on their own thoughts. No religion would accept such behaviors, let alone the religion of Islam and none of Islam's sects accepts these either.” (Rudaba)

“بلکه من ميگم اون حرکات و رفتار هايي اگر داره يا اصلا نسبت به دين شناخت كافي نداره و اينها در حقيقت چهره دين را داره بد معرفي ميکنند چون خيلي جاهل هستند و برداشت شان كاملا نسبت به دين نا آگاهانه و جاهلانه است و آمدند دست به چنين اقداماتي مي زنند، و اينها اول از همه ما قبولش نداريم، و نمي پذيريم، رفتارشان متدينانه نيست و نميتوانيم اينها را جز بنياد گرايان ديني قرار بدهيم چون اينها افراطي هاي جاهل هستند و تنها اصطلاحي كه متوانيم براي اينها بكار ببريم اين است كه اينها جاهل هستند كه از جهل خودشان و اگر حركتي هم ميکنند بر اساس فكر خودشان است. هيچ ديني اين رانمي پذيره چه برسه به دين اسلام و هيچ يك از مذاهب اسلام هم اينها را قبول ندارند و نمي پذيرند.” (رودابه)

Mina also reflected the same thoughts, as she suggested that many extremists individuals did not have access to proper education, and that the only explanation for their extremist ideologies and behaviors can't be explained by religion alone, and it could have other influencers such as lack of quality in the educational system, the structure of society, the traditional and rigid thinking, etc...

“The sources that the extremists have had access to have not been enough, and then there is another issue that extremism cannot be based on religion alone and in Afghanistan, religious extremism has originated from the education system. For example, one of the educational resources in the schools in Afghanistan is a Mula (religious leader) who comes and speaks and has a prayer, and for example, the lecture that they give is not up to date. One reason could be this.” (Meena)

“منابعي که در دست قشر بنیاد گرا بود کافی نبود، وبعد مسأله دیگری هم که است این بود که بحث بنیاد گرایی را صرفاً نمیتوانیم بنیادگرایی دینی بدانیم و در افغانستان بنیاد گرایی دینی هم نشأت گرفته از سیستم آموزشی است که در آنجا وجود دارد، مثلاً یکی از منابع آموزشی که در مدرسه های افغانستان وجود دارد این است که ملاحی منبر می آیند و سخنرانی میکنند و نماز مثلاً دارند و اون سخنرانی که اونها میگویند مثلاً اصلاً به روز نیست. یک احتمالش این است.” (مینا)

Also, Maheen the other University professor reflected the same sentiments:

“In the at least ten years that I've taught in Universities, I have never come across anyone who would side with these terrorist actions in Afghanistan....or would agree or support them... Things like suicide bomb attacks. ... And other activities... Generally, all of the students who were from different ethnicities such as Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, from all of these groups, I've had students ... Everyone condemned them and called them terrorists and thought of them as working for foreigners. No one really connected them to religion or different religious sects. Everyone believed that they were not Islamic and were not related to Islam.” (Maheen)

“من حداقل در مدت ده سال که تدریس میکردم در دانشگاه ها من بر نخوردم با کسی که همدلی داشته باشه و یا جانب داری کنه از این اقدامات تروریستی در افغانستان، اقداماتی مثل انتحاری و اقداماتی دیگه ی که صورت میگیره.... عموماً همه دانشجویان که از همه قومیت ها هم بودند یعنی پشتون، تاجیک، هزاره، ازبک از همه این قومیت ها ما داشتیم.... همه محکوم میکردند، و ... آنها را تروریست هایی می دانستند که بحال برای بیگانه ها کار میکنند و خیلی اینها را ربطی به دین و مذهب و این نوع مسائل نمیدانند. و همه معتقد بودند که اینها کار های اسلامی نیستند و ربطی به اسلام ندارند.” (مهین)

Maheen continues, to reiterate a couple of times that most people in Afghanistan do not link the suicide bomb terrorists to religion at all.

4.2.6 Extremist is Political

According to Fatih, the insurgency in Afghanistan has many anti-government elements that are composed of both Taliban's leadership as well as the Haqqani Network that are the main local 'violent extremist groups (Fatih, 2017). Maheen whose background is in political science and international relations, mainly linked the terror attacks and in contemporary Afghanistan to political upheaval. (Maheen)

“I think... extremism... meaning things like terrorism and such that occurred in Afghanistan, or for example the kidnappings of travelers and these were generally attributed to those who fought against the government and the political system of Afghanistan, and sometimes they were linked to religion but many would not think of it as religious at all...”(Maheen)

“من فکر میکنم ... افراط گرایی... یعنی اعمالی مثل ترور و غیره که در افغانستان اتفاق می افتاد یا مثلاً اختطاف مسافرین و این مسائلی که بحال به نام عموم نسبت داده میشد به کسانی که علیه دولت و نظام سیاسی افغانستان می جنگیدند و گاهی نسبت میدادند به دین ولی خیلی کسی این را عمل دینی نمیدانست.” (مهین)

Maheen, continued to explain that although she knows that as an educator, she has affected her student's understandings, she also points out that she and other professors can only affect their students' thinking so much. The rest of the influence comes from student's environment in the society that they live in, their families and other factors which influence students.

She then gave the example of Afghan refugees in Iran who are encouraged to participate in the war in Syria and how Iran uses Afghan refugees to show its power in the region. But some

of her Shia¹ students disagreed with her and would argue that it's their duty as Shia Muslims to protect the shrines in Syria. These topics would give rise to debates in her classes which then many of her students would be convinced of the “political game” of such extremism propaganda that recruit Afghan youth.

She then went on to comment on a tragic reality about Afghan society which is the ethnic divide. She said that belonging in terms of ethnicity is much more powerful and stronger compared to feelings of belonging to specific religious sects.

“In fact, the tribal system that is governing the Afghan society is causing these differences.... That is why the ethnic gap in Afghanistan is much wider and deeper than the religious gap but if the ethnic gap gets narrower or filled, then the religious gap will get disabled even quicker.”(Maheen)

“در واقع همان سیستم قبیله ای که حاکم بر جامعه افغانستان است باعث این اختلافاتی.... به همین دلیل است که شکاف های قومی در افغانستان بسیار وسیع تر و عمیق تر است نسبت به شکاف مذهبی ولی اگر شکاف های قومی نزدیکتر شود و در واقع پر شود این شکاف ها، شکاف های مذهبی بسیار سریع غیر فعال میشه.” (مهین)

Another issue in Afghanistan in terms of extremism is foreign intervention. For four decades now, Afghanistan has not been left alone.

“One of the problems in Afghanistan is the issue of external interference and severe poverty in Afghanistan. In my opinion, if the government had a bit of loyalty to the Afghan society, to the country of Afghanistan, not easily but it could happen, but our problem is that the majority of our statesmen only have Afghan blood....otherwise, their interests are not in Afghanistan, nor the future of Afghanistan is important to them, nor do they care for its present situation. Because they are temporary, they are only there to make a living, gain prestige and nothing else matters to them. This is why the situation is becoming more and more turbulent every day.” (Maheen)

¹ Shia: Shias adhere to the teachings of Muhammad and the religious guidance of his family (who are referred to as the Ahl al-Bayt) or his descendants known as Shia Imams (Shi'a Islam- also known as Shi'ite Islam or Shi'ism, is the second largest branch of Islam after Sunni Islam.)

“يکي از مشکلاتي که در افغانستان است، مسأله دخالت هاي بيروني و فقر شديد جامع افغانستان است. به نظر ... به دولتي که حد اقل وفا داري را به جامعه افغانستان داشته باشه به کشور افغانستان داشته باشه، به راحتی که نه ولي مي تواند اينکار را بکنه ولي منتها مشکل ما اين است که دولت مرد هاي ما در صد بسيار بالايش فقط خون افغان دارند ... وگرنه عملا منافع شان در افغانستان نيست، نه آینده افغانستان برايشان اهميت داره و نه بحرحال حال افغانستان حتی، چون اونها يك چيز موقتي است که به نوعي براي کسب در آمد و کسب پرستیژ در افغانستان هستند و چيز ديگر برايشان اهميت نداره، به همون خاطر است که اوضاع روز به روز آشفته تر شده ميشه.” (مهين)

As reflected by Maheen, Fazli and colleague’s study found the second major push factor to be corruption within the Afghan state, as many of the participants had concerns about injustices perpetrated by the state and favoritism in government appointments as well as the ethnicization of the government (Fazli, Johnson & Cooke, 2015). Related to this corruption of the state was the presence of foreign forces, where many participants stated their anger towards civilian inflicted casualties for the sake of International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) (Fazli, Johnson & Cooke, 2015).

4.2.7 Lack of Resources

Fazli, Johnson and Cooke (2015) describe structural issues that families face. For instance, they found that limited resources for some families is a huge barrier, where families are forced to enroll their children in cheap *madrasas*, where there is a high risk of their children becoming radicalized. This problem was reflected in the participant’s responses as well. Recurring issues that almost all of the participants touched on was lack of resources in different areas throughout the years. Recently there has been great efforts to improve access to educational instructions to girls and women. Some women are attending schools, and seminaries for the first time in their lives. For instance, Rudaba noted that many students were eager to learn and show an overwhelming enthusiasm in attending class, completing assignments and participating in class

discussions. She relates this to their deprivation of such opportunities that women faced in the past years.

“Maybe, because it's a newfound opportunity for them. Women are now able to participate in the social scene and have a presence in these meetings. As such, they are in pursuit of science and knowledge, and this might have caused them to pursue this knowledge during the day and night.”
(Rudaba)

“شاید هم علتش این باشه که اینها تازه فرصت این را پیدا کردند و موقعیت بهشان داده شده که خانم ها هم بتوانند در صحنه های اجتماعی شرکت کنند و در جلسه ها حضور داشته باشند، در پی کسب علم و دانش باشند و همین ها شاید باعث شده بود که آنها مشتاقانه شب و روز شان را دنبال علم و معرفت و دنبال دانش بودند.” (رودابه)

Meena on the other hand, talked about how there may be many resources available but not everyone has access to the same material. Or the ones who do have access do not have the skills or ability to analyse and critique information correctly. Some of them just consume whatever comes their way without thinking about alternative possibilities to what they are exposed to.

“They probably use a variety of resources though these different sources are not necessarily useful for them.

For example, one of these resources is a Mullah (Islamic religious leader), one of these sources is satellite networks, and another is the books that are weak and old. Another of these sources is the daily newsletters that they have. Socially, that is, you can't say there is one source of extremism available to them... no they have many sources; however, sources of extremism are more prominent and so they have the highest effect...” (Meena)

“مطمئنا از منابع مختلفی استفاده می‌کردند ولی این منابع مختلف معنی اش این نیست که همه اون منابع، منابع مفیدی بوده باشه. مثلا یکی از این منابع ملای منبری هستش، یکی از این منابع شبکه های ماهواره ایی است، یکی دیگه کتاب های ضعیف و قدیمی است و یکی دیگه از این منابع بهرحال خبرگزاری روزی هستش که در اونجا وجود داره. ... از جهت اجتماعی، یعنی همیشه که بگی یک منبع یا سوره بنیاد گری فقط در اختیار آنها بوده، نه منابع دیگه ای هم در اختیارشان است ولی چون همان منابع بنیاد گری برای آنها حضور بیشتری داره، خوب بهرحال تاثیرات بیشتری هم از اون طرف داره.....” (مینا)

Meena gave the example of how some of her male students had access to mobile phones, and computers and had good knowledge of the political environment in their country and then also had many female students who neither had a cell phone, nor a satellite and the only source she had access to were the only books in the school library or the mullahs that gave lectures at the school, or the teachers. Many of the teachers, she argued were not educated enough about these topics.

“Even the teacher did not read often and was not very up to date. That is, I say that there is a variety of resources, but Not all people have the same access to educational facilities and scientific resources.” (Meena)

“معلم باز خودش مطالعه چندان نداشت يا به روز نبود. يعني ميگم منابع مختلف، تنوع منابع وجود داره ولي دسترسي..... يعني همه افراد به يك اندازه به امكانات آموزشي و منابع علمي دسترسي ندارند.” (مينا)

As it was mentioned before, many of the educators mentioned that students were eager, even enthusiastic to learn. Though many of them, particularly girls did not have access to quality information. This was because the traditional structure of many families in Afghanistan does not allow their female members to have cellphones, or access to the internet. The only source for them were books that were low quality and outdated. Meena then gave an example of one of her students who criticized her in class saying she read in a book that if a woman’s hair is showing, she will burn in hell on the judgement day! Meena asked the student to bring the book to class and they had a discussion about this issue in her class. She noted that the book was from twenty something years ago. While she acknowledged that there are many issues that affect the development of extremist ideologies such as believing in superstitions, the traditional structure, economic and social problems, she highlighted that the main problem is with the educational system in Afghanistan. That is, the lack of active libraries, access to modern, quality and academic books; lack of qualified and knowledgeable teachers has allowed extremist thinking to develop at the rate that it is in current Afghanistan. Noor and Hussain’s study introduced in earlier chapters highlight

the unavailability of reliable sources as one of the main issues. When young women need help or counselling, they can't find creditable resources and they are easily manipulated into believing dangerous and destructive discourses (Noor & Hussain, 2009).

Another resource that is very necessary but is non-existent in many Afghan public schools is a school psychologist or counsellor. Gulshan mentioned that mainly one teacher becomes the counsellor for a class. This means it's a huge responsibility to teach a class and also be their counsellor. Gulshan said usually they don't have time to attend to student's needs during school hours and often they would spend time outside teaching hours to talk to their students about their issues.

“Unfortunately, there is no special person, that is, there is no adviser because the state budget is not as big and it is difficult for any school that maybe has, two or three thousand students in that school. If there is one counsellor, she wouldn't be able to keep up ... each teacher is often responsible for one class....”(Gulshan)

متاسفانه يك نفر خاص يعني همان طور مخصوص وجود نداره كه مشاور باشه چون بودجه دولت به اين اندازه نيست كه براي هر مكنتي كه شايد دو سه هزار شاگرد در آن درس ميخوانه بسيار مشكل است. اگر يك تا هم مشاور باشه اون اصلا رسيدگي نميتانه....يك استاد مسئوليت شاگردا را دارد....(گلشن)

Having no school counsellor or psychologist is extremely harmful to students. If they have problems that they need to discuss, they might not feel comfortable to talk to their teachers. This can cause mental health problems in the students. Teachers also can get burnt out from acting both as educators and counsellors to their students.

4.3 Chapter Summary

This study aimed at understanding extremism in Afghanistan and identify female educators' roles in preventing extremism. The findings suggest there is inconsistency in defining extremism

among educators in Afghanistan. Although there was only one public secondary school teacher among the participants, she noted that topics about current events especially regarding extremism are never discussed. In fact, they are discouraged from discussing these topics. Almost all of the participants mentioned lack of critical ability among students and the education system in general.

Also, all of the participants noted that extremism in Afghanistan is multidimensional. Families were recognized as one of the main sources of extremism in students. They noted that extremism is not necessarily religious but could be political and driven by other push factors, such as poverty and opposition to foreign intervention. The Afghan women in the study also voiced their concerns such as lack of available quality and critical education, lack of resources such as counsellors, up to date and modern books, and active libraries.

Chapter 5. Discussions and Conclusion

5.1 Conclusions

In this chapter, firstly I will interpret the findings by linking them to the theories that I present in the literature in Chapter Two, to show how these models help in explaining my research objectives. Then I will take a closer look at the themes that have emerged from the data in order to answer my research questions, specifically women's roles as well as the challenges they face in preventing extremism. Finally, I will discuss the implications of the present study, recommend future research directions and discuss the limitations. I will end with a closing note.

5.1.1 Revisiting the Theoretical Frameworks

Assuming that Afghan women's inputs are often overlooked in preventative efforts for combating extremism in Afghanistan, and that solutions are imported from outside for social problems in Afghanistan, I reviewed intersectional feminist theory and anti-colonial frameworks for the study. In the following sections, I will apply the findings from the present study to these theoretical models.

5.1.2 Crenshaw's (1989) Intersectional feminist theory

Intersectionality is a lens in which allows us to see how power works in relation to race, gender, class and other identities (Crenshaw, 1989). This framework helps focus on those people who are affected by multiple inequalities. I used this framework for this study not only because I was focusing on Afghan women's views as educators but also because of their female students.

Intersectionality helps explain the important role that female Afghan educators can play in countering extremism but it also helps explain some of the causes of extremism, given that the populations marginalized by poverty and geography are the most at risk (in part due to lack of educational options outside of the free or inexpensive madrasas), and that for poor women their marginalization is compounded by their gender in a patriarchal culture. In addition, most secondary schools in Afghanistan are segregated by gender. Male teachers teach boys and female teachers teach girls. Also, there are many more men who are teachers and professors than women. Thus, I believed it was important to look at the intersections of identities in educators and how that shapes their perceptions and experiences (with female students).

The data from this study shows that the mere presence of female professors in co-ed institutions, traditional gender norms are challenged. For example, Meena also taught at college level where girls and boys are not segregated. She is 31 and is the youngest participant. She noted that although at times it was hard to gain respect from her male students who were sometimes older than her, it was still a very positive presence and most students liked having a female instructor. In particular, girls in a higher education setting respected and appreciated their female instructors. For example, Meena said that many of her female students would show up even hours before class started because they wanted to make sure nothing interfered with them arriving to their classes! She also added that having more female instructors would be helpful in breaking gender norms. Therefore, this theory is compatible with the findings in the study. Despite women's subjugated positions in Afghan society, and while they are resisted by some male students, their presence as educators is influential in preventing extremism through education, nonetheless.

5.1.3 Dei's (2006) anti colonial framework

Dei notes that it's an important strength to draw from multiple traditions to explain social and political phenomenon (Dei, 2006). Anti-colonial thinking and practice is to challenge and resist Eurocentric theorizing (Dei, 2006). This Eurocentric theorizing is captured well in representation of colonized bodies and their bodies of knowledge (Dei, 2006). By talking to Afghan women who worked in different educational institutions and exploring their perception of extremism as well as their views regarding challenges associated with preventing it, I tried to negate Eurocentric theorizing and instead illuminate Afghan women's knowledge as they shared them with me.

For example, the participants all rejected extremism in Afghanistan as being linked to religion, and they had a consensus about its multidimensionality rooted in political and socio-economic issues present in the country which affects both men and women. This is while much of Western media presents a monolithic view of issues and in particular, women's oppression in Afghanistan and how it is caused by male domination, ignorance, and hidebound religious belief. Thus, patronizing colonialist attitudes to "helping Afghan women" and fighting extremism is misplaced. As was noted among journalists, "no subject evoked so much compassionate concern as the need to emancipate Muslim women from their violent, irrational, domineering men", which is a classical Orientalist trope (NYR, 2019).

5.1.4 Revisiting Research Objectives

Since there is no data on women's roles in preventing extremism in Afghanistan, I started this study which three aims: First, to understand the phenomenon of extremism in Afghanistan,

second, to identify existing practices in place that counter religious extremist ideologies through education, and third to understand women's roles in preventing the development of these beliefs in schools, homes and communities. In the following sections, I will answer my research objectives by drawing from the study's findings.

5.1.5 Understanding Extremism in Afghanistan

One of the aims of this research was to understand extremism in Afghanistan. Therefore, a main takeaway from the data in this study was that there was no consistent understanding or definition of extremism among participants. The one consistent idea that was unexpected was that all of them thought religion had nothing to do with extremist thinking. Almost all of the participants attributed extremism to influencers other than religion, such as societal, economics or political. Yet in their definition of extremism, they all defined this word in relation to people's level of religiosity and their understanding of extremists being people who were not informed about their religion. Although I cannot make generalizations with my limited data, there is apparently a dichotomy in their thinking about the relationship between religion and extremism. Furthermore, if educators are not fully informed on the different kinds of extremism, where it originates and the issues that are associated with it, consequently they wouldn't be equipped to efficiently deal with a student who shows signs of extremist ideology or behavior.

Extremism in Afghanistan is political. All the participants agreed that extremism in Afghanistan is influenced by multiple factors and interestingly they all rejected the association of religion with extremists. Instead, they all noted that it mostly originates because of political motives and socio-economic challenges. Maheen, suggested that many terrorist activities occur as

a result of their concerns for corruption within the Afghan state, favouritism by ethnicity, as well as foreign presence.

5.1.6 Existing Practices in Place that Counter Religious Extremist Ideologies

The participants that taught in college and University, mentioned that they discuss extremism in relation to politics, current events, etc.... in class. Instead, Gulshan who taught in a secondary school in Kabul for ten years, noted that prior to the post-secondary level, teachers in high schools are discouraged to talk about religion and politics. In this stage, students get their information regarding these issues from other sources such as the media and their families. Media cannot be a reliable and comprehensive source. Gulshan also said that many families have rigid and strict understandings of their religion and they try to push their children to follow these same values. Often, they do not have opportunities to be critical of the religious education that they receive from their families and this can be very harmful for the students.

5.1.7 Women's Roles in Preventing the Development of Extremist Beliefs

Assuredly, all of the participants believed that they influenced their student's understandings about extremist ideologies. Gulshan in particular who was a high school teacher spoke very fondly of her students and mentioned that she never had major issues of delinquent behavior with her students. Gulshan and Maheen both mentioned that they are still connected to former students after many years of leaving the country via social media networks and are impressed and proud of their views and activities.

One of the main suggestions that all the participants mentioned is to provide religious literacy trainings for educators as participants noted a lack of quality and critical education. In particular, increasing the number of qualified female educators can help break the stereotype of gender norms in the traditional society. Also, having more credible and updated resources that are available widely throughout the education system can help students access more up to date information regarding their questions when they face dilemma's that may originate from their family teachings and their formal education.

5.2 Implications

This qualitative study outlined themes that have emerged from interviews with four Afghan women who were educators in secondary and post-secondary institutions in Afghanistan. The aim of this study was to highlight women's roles in preventing extremism through education in Afghanistan. The women educators shared their experiences as educators. The main themes of their discussion is the multidimensionality of extremism in Afghanistan, lack of quality education and lack of access to modern and academic resources. Other suggestions include increasing the number of female educators in educational institutions and providing equal access to educational material to students.

5.3 Directions for Future Research

This study showed important data on four Afghan women's perspectives about extremism in Afghanistan, ways it can be prevented, and the different ways female teachers can impact their students' understanding of extremist ideologies. However, almost all the participants mentioned the multiple sources for extremism and how students are influenced from different sources to

become extremists. For future studies, it is important to look at other dimensions that may affect developing extremist ideologies, such as families, socio-economic, socio-political and geographical locations of communities in Afghanistan.

Future studies could also expand this study by looking at a broader population such as speaking to students both male and female, school administrators and a larger and more diverse number of public secondary and post-secondary educators. In addition, teachers in rural areas and other less populated areas might have interesting insights that could help understand issues related to those specific regions or cities, given that most perpetrators tend to come from the surrounding areas rather than urban centres.

5.4 Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this small-scale research study. The present qualitative study aimed at bringing forth experiences of four Afghan women educators in Afghanistan in regard to their perspectives on extremism. Therefore, the intent of this research was not generalizability. Due to time constraints and physical distance, there was only one in-depth interview with each participant. Since the number of participants is very small, it is apparent that is not very representative of the diverse population of Afghan female educators. However, each woman's experience is unique and has its own different characteristics.

As well, only one of the participants was a public secondary school teacher (another one worked as an elementary school teacher for one year only). Two of the participants had limited experience working in Afghanistan (within two years), while only two of them had around ten years of experience (Gushan was an elementary school teacher for ten years and Maheen was a

private University professor for ten years), Meena and Rudaba both had less than three years' of experience working in Afghanistan. Their limited experience in Afghanistan may have affected their responses as they couldn't draw from years of experience when they spoke about their times in Afghanistan.

Due to the sensitivity of this topic, I was unable to recruit educators who currently work in Afghanistan. As such, since the participants had to refer to their past experiences, depending on how far ago those have been, they might not have clear memories of those experiences. Another limitation is that while most female educators in Afghanistan are not very highly educated, three out of four of my participants had master's degrees and one had a bachelor's degree. While recruiting educators with graduate degrees was not intentional, it is understandable that those who have access to more resources are often able to immigrate to another country or region.

Yet another limitation in this study is lack of diversity in my participants. Though I did not ask my participants about their ethnic identity or religious sects, I did recruit these women through my own personal, familial and community networks. Given that I myself come from a Shia Twelver Muslim background, in this respect, my participants were also homogenous and reflected this background. Thus, although I did not explicitly ask them whether they are Shia or not, their place of residence, their parents' educational backgrounds and other factors showed that they are also Shia Twelver Muslims. Further, as a novice researcher, in the analysis of the data my own assumptions and biases might have affected what I paid attention to in the data that I collected.

Other limitations could be using self-reports as data. Polkinghorne notes that the evidence that is derived from human experience can be more limiting compared to data about human

behaviour. This is because experience is not directly observable, and it depends on the participants' ability to reflect on those experiences and effectively communicate them through language (Polkinghorne, 2005). Translation in qualitative research can be inaccurate and often, something is lost in translation. Translating words and concepts from one language to another means the researcher should also discuss validity and 'correct' interpretations of words as sometimes there aren't exact words in both languages (Temple & Young, 2004). Since I acted both as researcher and translator, I asked two other native Persian speakers who are fluent in English to check my translations for accuracy.

5.5 Closing Notes

I often think and reflect on my privilege of being a citizen of Canada. I question what makes me different than my fellow Afghans who live in fear of their lives every day in Afghanistan. Acknowledging such privilege is deeply uncomfortable for me. I feel emotional and depressed when I hear about violent terror attacks in different parts of Afghanistan through my social media networks or on the news.

Although I think about injustice and war often, I don't let this darkness paralyze me. Also, I'm grateful that in my first term of graduate studies at McGill and generally throughout my studies, through conversing to some of my professors, I found ways to somewhat cope with this uneasiness and channel this energy to a better use. Those conversations were a motivating force for me to pursue this research study. I hope that through this study, I was able to provide a small platform for Afghan women educators to share their experiences and concerns about violent extremism that is plaguing Afghan society today. I hope that what I've found in this study can inform people who are working towards attaining peace by involving women and working closely with them in

Afghanistan or anywhere in the world. I dream of a day when there will be peace and prosperity in our fractured *وطن*, (homeland) and a day where instead of terror attacks, bombs and grenades, we hear laughter, music and poetry.

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Appendix A. Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans



Research Ethics Board Office

Tel: (514) 398-6831

James Administration Bldg.

845 Sherbrooke Street West, Rm 325

<https://www.mcgill.ca/research/research/compliance/human> Montreal, QC H3A 0G4

Research Ethics Board II

Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

REB File #: 91-0718

Project Title: Women's Roles in Preventing Extremism through Education in Afghanistan

Principal Investigator: Narjes Hashemi

Department: Integrated Studies of Education

Status: Master's Student

Supervisor: Professor Ratna Ghosh

Approval Period: December 11, 2018 – December 10, 2019

The REB-II reviewed and approved this project by delegated review in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

Georgia Kalavritinos

Ethics Review Administrator

*Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described.

* Modifications to the approved research must be reviewed and approved by the REB before they can be implemented.

* A Request for Renewal form must be submitted before the above expiry date. Research cannot be conducted without a current ethics approval. Submit 2-3 weeks ahead of the expiry date.

* When a project has been completed or terminated, a Study Closure form must be submitted.

* Unanticipated issues that may increase the risk level to participants or that may have other ethical implications must be promptly reported to the REB. Serious adverse events experienced by a participant in conjunction with the research must be reported to the REB without delay.

* The REB must be promptly notified of any new information that may affect the welfare or consent of participants.

* The REB must be notified of any suspension or cancellation imposed by a funding agency or regulatory body that is related to this study.

* The REB must be notified of any findings that may have ethical implications or may affect the decision of the REB.



Appendix B. Informed Consent Form for Participants

Project Title: Women’s Roles in Preventing Extremism through Education in Afghanistan

This is a letter inviting you to participate in a research project regarding women’s roles in countering religious extremism through education in Afghanistan. My name is Narjes Hashemi and I am a master’s student in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University. At this preliminary stage in my research, I will be exploring female educators’ perceptions of their roles in preventing the development of extremist ideologies and behaviors.

Your involvement in this study would include participating in a 30-40 minutes, audio-taped interview that will occur at a time convenient for you. The interview will include questions regarding your experience as teachers and educators and your perspectives on effective ways to prevent extremism. The audio recordings will be transcribed, translated and the data will be analyzed. Your specific responses will be kept confidential and your identity will remain anonymous as pseudonyms will be used in any written report or presentation which may arise from this study. Otherwise, during the course of this research, only I and my supervisor will have access to the identifiable data as it will be stored in a secure place. All audio-recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study.

Also, please be aware that while there are no anticipated risks to your participation, the topic of religious extremism may be upsetting to some people & discussing religious extremism given the opposition by religious extremists, could potentially put some people at risk. Participation in this project is voluntary & you can stop at any time for any reason. You do not have to answer any question you don’t want to. No one should participate if they feel participation may cause them to feel unsafe or put them at any risk. Depending on your location, the interview will be conducted in person, by phone or by using an online platform such as Skype. Please note that as with any information sent over the internet, there is a possibility of third-party interception.

The information gained from this study will help increase my knowledge as I progress in my research regarding preventing extremism in Afghanistan and women’s roles in it. Upon completion of this research project, I will write a paper on my results and translate it to Persian. I will then disseminate my findings in thesis, conference presentations, the internet, and to community members as well as through academic publications. A summary of my research results as well as the full report (if you would like a copy) will be sent to you via e-mail. Please feel free to contact either myself or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Ratna Ghosh, should you have any questions or require further information.

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, & want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca. Please retain a copy of this letter for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Narjes Hashemi
narjes.hashemi@mcgill.ca
Principal Investigator

Dr. Ratna Ghosh
ratna.ghosh@mcgill.ca
Research Supervisor

Consent to participate I wish to participate in this project as outlined above. []
Participant’s Printed Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C. Informed Consent Form for Participants in Persian

عنوان پروژه: نقش زنان در پیشگیری از افراط‌گرایی با آموزش در افغانستان

فرم اطلاعات و رضایت شرکت‌کننده

این نامه در خواست می‌کند از شما که شرکت کنید در پروژه تحقیقاتی من در مورد نقش زنان در مقابل افراط‌گرایان دینی از طریق تحصیلات در افغانستان. اسم من نرجس هاشمی است و من دانشجوی مقطع کارشناسی ارشد (ماستر) دپارتمنت مطالعات تلفیقی در آموزش در دانشگاه مک‌گیل هستم. در قدم نخست از تحقیق در پی یافتن زنان مربی و نیز دریافت آنان از قوانین در جلوگیری از گسترش باورها و رفتارهای افراطی هستم.

شرکت شما در این مطالعه حدود ۳۰ تا ۴۰ دقیقه مصاحبه ضبط صوت را در بر می‌گیرد و زمان مصاحبه در اختیار و انتخاب شما خواهد بود. این مصاحبه دربرگیرنده پرسشهای است ناظر به تجربیات شما از معلم بودن و مربی‌گری و چشم‌انداز شما هست از راه‌های موثر در پیشگیری از افراط‌گرایی. نوار ضبط شده نوشته و ترجمه و معلومات آن تحلیل خواهد شد. و جوابهای شما دقیق و محرمانه نگهداری و هویت شما پنهان خواهد بود. احيانا اگر اسمی در گزارش‌ها یا ارائه تحقیقات لازم شود آن اسم غیر واقعی خواهد بود. در غیر آن معلومات این مصاحبه در مکان کاملاً امن که فقط خودم و (استاد راهنما) دسترسی به آن دارم محفوظ خواهد بود و پس از تحلیل، متن مصاحبه نابود خواهد شد.

همچنین لطفاً توجه داشته باشید که در حالی که هیچ مشکلی پیش بینی شده برای مشارکت شما وجود ندارد، موضوع افراط‌گرایی دینی ممکن است برای برخی افراد ناراحت‌کننده باشد و در مورد افراط‌گرایی دینی با توجه به مخالفت افراط‌گرایان دینی، ممکن است بعضی افراد را در معرض خطر قرار دهد. مشارکت در این پروژه داوطلبانه است و شما مجازید از جواب دادن به پرسشها در مدت مصاحبه خودداری کنید و همچنین می‌توانید مصاحبه را بهر دلیلی در هر لحظه‌ی متوقف کنید. هیچ کس نباید مشارکت کند اگر احساس کند مشارکت ممکن است موجب نگرانی آنها شود یا آنها را در معرض خطر قرار دهد. بسته به موقعیت مکانی شما، مصاحبه به صورت شخصی، تلفن یا با استفاده از پلت فرم آنلاین مانند اسکایپ انجام خواهد شد. لطفاً توجه داشته باشید که همانطور که با هر گونه اطلاعات ارسال شده در اینترنت، احتمال ردگیری شخص ثالث وجود دارد.

معلومات بدست آمده از این تحقیق چنان که پیش می‌روم، دانش من را در پیشگیری از بنیادگرایی در افغانستان و نقش زنان در آن، بالا خواهد برد. پس از اتمام این پروژه تحقیقاتی، من مقاله‌ای در مورد نتایج می‌نویسم و آن را به فارسی ترجمه می‌کنم. سپس یافته‌هایم را در پایان‌نامه، سخنرانی‌های کنفرانس، اینترنت، و همچنین نشریات علمی منتشر خواهم کرد. یک نسخه از چکیده نتایج تحقیق پس از تهیه گزارش کامل (در صورت علاقمندی شما) به شما توسط ایمیل ارسال خواهد شد. لطفاً در تماس با من یا فرد ناظر در دانشکده دکتر رتنا گاش، Dr. Ratna Ghosh. برای پاسخ‌گویی به هر گونه سوال یا درخواستی جهت کسب اطلاعات بیشتر، راحت باشید.

اگر در مورد مشارکتتان در این مطالعه نگرانیها یا شکایات اخلاقی دارید، می‌خواهید با کسی که در تیم تحقیقاتی نیست تماس بگیرید، لطفاً با مدیر اخلاق تحقیقاتی در شمار ۶۸۳۱-۳۹۸-۵۱۴ یا lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca تماس بگیرید. لطفاً یک نسخه از این متن را پیش خود نگه دارید. از همکاری شما صمیمانه سپاسگذاری می‌شود.

دکتر رتنا گاش
ratna.ghosh@mcgill.ca
راهنما استاد

با احترام
نرجس هاشمی
narjes.hashemi@mcgill.ca
محقق

موافقت به مشارکت

من مایلم در این پروژه که در بالا ذکر شده است شرکت نمایم. []
نام شرکت‌کننده _____ امضاء شرکت‌کننده _____ تاریخ _____

Appendix D. Interview Questions

سوالات مصاحبه

Name of participant:

نام شرکت کننده

Please indicate your educational level:

لطفا سطح تحصیلات خود را مشخص کنید

Father's educational level and job:

سطح تحصیلات و شغل پدر

Mother's educational level and job:

سطح تحصیلات و شغل مادر

What is/was your job at the school where you work/ed & how long have done this work?

چه بوده یا چه هست شغل شما در مدرسه کجا کار کرده اید و برای چه مدتی در آن شغل بوده اید؟

What is your perception of religious extremism?

برداشت و شناخت شما از بنیاد گرایی یا افراط گرایی دینی چیست؟

How would you describe the surrounding of the school community? And inside the school?

چطوری توضیح خواهید داد محیط اجتماعی مدرسه و فضای مدرسه را؟

What is the *demographic* description of the students in your school?

برداشت و شناخت شما از
(ویژگی‌های) جمعیت‌شناسی (مانند طبقه‌بندی مردم از نظر سن و جنسیت و درآمد و انباشتگی و غیره)
در مدرسه شما چیست؟

As an educator do you discuss current events related to extremism in class or outside class?

Why? Why not?

به عنوان یک معلم حوادث جاری که مرتبط به بنیادگرایان هست را در کلاس با بیرون کلاس بحث میکنید یا خیر؟ چرا و چرا نه؟

Do you think parents talk about these issues to the students you teach? Why? Why not?

آیا فکر می کنید والدین صحبت می کنند در مورد این مساله با دانش آموزان شما؟ چرا بله و یا چرا نه؟

How would you deal with a student who acts in a deviant way? What do you think other teachers at your school would do?

چطور معامله می کنید با دانش آموزانی که کنشهای منحرفانه دارند؟ چه فکر می کنید در مورد کنش دیگر معلمانی که در مدرسه شماست؟

Do you think you can impact your students' understandings of extremism through your teachings?

آیا فکر می کنید که قادر هستید بر اجتماع فهم دانش آموزان در مورد بنیادگرایی از طریق تدریس تان؟

Is there any detail that you want to share about religious extremism in general or about your specific school?

آیا جزئیاتی دیگری شما دارید در مورد بنیادگرایی دینی در کل یا در خصوص مدرسه تان که بخواهید به اشتراک بگذارید؟