

# Preventing Violent Extremism in Kenya through Value Complexity: Assessment of Being Kenyan Being Muslim

Sara Savage

*Psychology and Religion Research Group, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, sbs21@cam.ac.uk*

Anjum Khan

*ICthinking® Research Group, anjumkhan@collaborativeventures.co.uk*

Dr. Jose Liht

*ICthinking® Research Group; Camfed, jliht@camfed.org*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss>  
pp. 1-26

## Recommended Citation

Savage, Sara; Khan, Anjum; and Liht, Dr. Jose. "Preventing Violent Extremism in Kenya through Value Complexity: Assessment of Being Kenyan Being Muslim." *Journal of Strategic Security* 7, no. 3 (2014): : 1-26.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.7.3.1>

Available at: <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol7/iss3/2>

---

# Preventing Violent Extremism in Kenya through Value Complexity: Assessment of Being Kenyan Being Muslim

## Author Biography

Dr. Sara Savage is a social psychologist based in the Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge. For the previous 15 years Sara worked as Senior Research Associate in the Psychology and Religion Research Group at Cambridge, during which she and her colleagues developed a unique intervention to address extremism. Sara continues to develop empirically based interventions to prevent extremism and inter-group violence through programmes that operationalise and measure the construct of Integrative Complexity (Suedfeld 2010), such as Being Muslim Being British, IC in Scotland (I SEE) and Conflict Transformation, published in a number of empirical articles and chapters. The IC model is now being extended to a range of countries, extremisms and inter-group conflicts, supported by continual empirical assessment and training ([www.ICTcambridge.org](http://www.ICTcambridge.org)).

## Abstract

*Being Kenyan Being Muslim* (BKBM) is an intervention that counters violent extremism and other forms of intergroup conflict through promoting value complexity. BKBM was trialled in Eastleigh, Nairobi, Kenya with a group of twenty-four participants of Kenyan and Somali ethnicities; eight participants were identified as vulnerable to extremism, six of these were former al Shabaab members. This article provides an empirical assessment of the effectiveness of the BKBM course. The new BKBM course follows the structure of the *Being Muslim Being British* course that exposes participants to the multiplicity of value priorities that influential Muslims embody, and structures group activities that allow participants to explore all value positions on issues central to extremist discourse and relevant to events in Kenya, free from criticism or social pressure. The intervention, a sixteen-contact-hour course using films and group activities that enable participants to problem solve on extremism-related topics according to a broad array of their own values, was pre and post tested with twenty-four participants (twenty-two of whom completed the full assessments), (mean age 29.6, SD = 6.27). As hypothesized, Integrative Complexity (IC) increased significantly by the end of the course in written verbal data, and there was clear evidence of ability to perceive some validity in different viewpoints (achieving differentiation) in all oral participant presentations at the end of the course.

## Acknowledgements

This project was funded by USAID and organized by the Kenya Transition Initiative. Sincere thanks go to USAID, the KTI staff and all the participants, and to Cambridge University Technical Services for their administrative support.

## Introduction

Our theoretic starting point is that the wider context for radicalisation and involvement in violent extremism (RIVE) is the interpenetration of cultures arising from globalization, which can increase a sense of threat to different cultural groups' value priorities. When groups feel that their values or worldview are threatened by the presence of other cultural worldviews, this can lead to a defensive retrenchment to a value monist position that conserves cultural or religious traditions.<sup>1</sup> This maintains markers of social identity with the effect of highlighting differences between social groups, in accordance with social identity theory and social identity complexity theory.<sup>2</sup> While this protects people from uncertainty about identity and behavioural norms in the face of the competing value priorities of different cultures, it also reduces their complexity of thinking concerning intergroup relations.<sup>3</sup> Groups that are already primed to see their social world with low complexity are more easily attracted to the very low complexity, black and white, us versus them, extremist ideologies that are undergirded by value monism: one value must be realized above all others (the value the radicalizers themselves define per issue).<sup>4</sup>

Radical groups ride on the normal defensive retrenchment to value monism and lowered complexity of thinking in the face of globalization threats, and work to intensify it through their ideology. The low complexity of extremist ideology has been substantiated by linguistic analysis (including integrative complexity analyses), with al-Qaida-related extremism showing the lowest complexity.<sup>5</sup> The normal tendency to prefer one's own ingroup, seen in social identity studies using the Minimal Group paradigm are further intensified through extremists' 'us versus them' binary constructions.<sup>6</sup> Extremist groups that employ a narrative explaining the social world as powerfully arrayed against the ingroup's interests can offer, for some, a pathway to belonging, significance and a purported means to address grievances. A period of sequestration from family and friends and total commitment to the extremist group is the usual further step that precedes involvement in violent strikes.<sup>7</sup>

Our recent assessment of the *Being Muslim Being British* intervention supports the idea that increasing the complexity with which people think about the issues that radicalizers exploit reduces vulnerability to extremist

---

<sup>1</sup> Inglehart, R. and C. Wezel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> S. Roccas and M.B. Breir, "Social Identity Complexity", *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 6:2 (2002): 88-106.

<sup>3</sup> Michael A. Hogg, "Uncertainty and extremism: Identification with high entitativity groups under conditions of uncertainty," in Vincent Yzerbyt, Charles M. Judd, and Olivier Corneille (eds.), *The psychology of group perception: Perceived variability, entitativity, and essentialism* (New York: Psychology Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Suedfeld, Peter, Ryan Cross, Ryan and Caron Logan. "Can Thematic Analysis Separate the Pyramid of Ideas from the Pyramid of Actions? A Comparison Among Different Degrees of Commitment to Violence," in Dr. Hriar Cabayan (JS/J-39), Dr. Valerie Sitterle (GTRI), and LTC Matt Yandura (JS/J-39) (eds.) *Looking Back, Looking Forward: Perspectives on Terrorism and Responses to It, Strategic Multi-layer Assessment White Paper* (Pentagon, September 2013), 61-68.

<sup>6</sup> Tajfel, Henri, *Human Groups and Social Categories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> J. Ginges, S. Atran, S. Sachdeva and D. Medin, "Psychology out of the Laboratory: The Challenge of Violent Extremism" *American Psychologist* 66 (2011): 507-519.

messages, as a broad-based form of primary prevention.<sup>8</sup> That method, which we have applied here to the *Being Kenyan Being Muslim* intervention operationalizes relevant value conflicts while providing the resources for people to apply a wider spread of their own values, which in turn promotes thinking complexity.<sup>9</sup> Our approach is inspired by Isaiah Berlin who posits that human values (e.g. freedom, equality, security, achievement, tradition, etc.) are all equally important and desirable. Values motivate behaviour and decisions; they organize cultural identity and bring significance to human life.<sup>10</sup> Yet, due to limited resources or cultural constraints, individuals have to make choices: they often have to prioritise one value over the other, as any life context makes it extremely difficult to maximize all human values equally. Differences in value hierarchies between individuals and groups can be a source of conflict unless people are able to perceive some validity in the different value priorities of others, even if those don't agree with their own value hierarchies.<sup>11</sup>

The role that complexity in thinking plays in prevention of RIVE is supported by the finding that engineers, graduates of a field centered on problems that have a single, clear-cut, black and white answer, are significantly over-represented among violent extremists.<sup>12</sup> Further, research based on extensive fieldwork with violent extremists shows that sacred values, defined structurally by the impossibility for any co-mingling with other values, play a key role in motivating the actions of extremists.<sup>13</sup> Our approach to primary prevention draws upon these lines of research and considers that, whatever pathway towards RIVE has been taken, what extremist ideologies have in common is a simple binary structure ('us versus them', 'right versus wrong') underpinned by value monism. This precise point of value monism is what we have targeted through our method of operationalizing value complexity in order to raise integrative complexity as a form of prevention in Kenya.

The above argument is in line with a comprehensive review commissioned by the United Kingdom (UK) government into prevention initiatives.<sup>14</sup> The report asserts that initiatives work best when they support open questioning in a peer group context and are focused on the harder skills such as critical thinking, appreciating different perspectives, developing a person's own worldview, learning to work well with others and appreciating tensions between different viewpoints. These enable people to critically examine extremist discourse. Long lasting benefits come through building resilience through affirming complex social identities and developing conflict management skills. These goals cohere with the value complexity approach to prevention discussed here.

---

<sup>8</sup> Jose Liht and Sara Savage. "Preventing Violent Extremism through Value Complexity: Being Muslim Being British," *Journal of Strategic Security* 6:4 (2013): 44-66.

<sup>9</sup> Funded by USAID, organized by the Kenya Transition Initiative.

<sup>10</sup> Berlin, Isaiah, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (London: John Murray, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Conway, Luke and K.R. Conway, *The terrorist rhetorical style and its consequences for understanding terrorist violence: Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2011); Suedfeld, Peter, Legkaia, K. and Brcic, J. "Changes in the hierarchy of value references associated with flying in space," *Journal of Personality* 78:5 (2010).

<sup>12</sup> Gambetta, Diego and Steffan Hertog, *Engineers of Jihad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> J. Ginges et al., "Psychology out of the Laboratory: The Challenge of Violent Extremism," *American Psychologist* 66 (2011).

<sup>14</sup> Department of Education, UK, "Teaching Approaches that Help Build Resilience Among Young People", OPM and National Research Foundation, 2010. available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/182675/1FE-RR119.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182675/1FE-RR119.pdf)

## Developing the Being Kenyan Being Muslim (BKBM) Intervention

BKBM aims to remove the obstacles to participants' normal cognitive development as it progresses from simplicity to complexity. A vast literature supports that complex information processing, undergirded by the attempt to maximize multiple competing values, is associated with non-violent strategies for conflict resolution.<sup>15</sup> A large body of cross-cultural research by Peter Suedfeld and colleagues shows that conflict is predicted when integrative complexity (IC, from henceforth) drops from its recent baseline (measured in the communication of political decision-makers); conversely when IC rises, peaceful solutions to conflict ensue.<sup>16</sup> Because individuals are more receptive to messages with a complexity level similar to their own when thinking about conflicted social issues, increasing complexity builds resilience to the low complexity communications and recruitment efforts of extremists.<sup>17</sup>

The pilot BKBM version (based on the structure of *Being Muslim Being British*) is a sixteen-contact-hour, multi-media course for people ages 16+ who are exposed to extremist discourse, as well as to train professionals who are seeking to counter extremism. BKBM was adapted to include relevant aspects of Kenyan culture, the impact of global terrorism on Kenyan society, and the consequences of the events of the Westgate terrorist attacks in Nairobi in 2013, followed by reprisals on the Somali community in Eastleigh, Nairobi, Mombasa and other areas of Kenya where there is a high Somali population. The intervention uses DVD films to represent an array of Muslim viewpoints from the extreme right to the extreme left including middle positions followed by group activities inspired by *Theatre of the Oppressed* pedagogy that help participants become aware of the value trade-offs in each position.<sup>18</sup> The original BMBB course materials were augmented with images and music from Kenyan society and popular culture, making the effects of poverty, politics, corruption and the development of the middle class within Kenya society explicit in the activities, as efforts to re-create the cultural milieu in which the social nature of thinking proceeds.<sup>19</sup>

We piloted BKBM in Eastleigh, Nairobi, Kenya in January 2014. Over four intense days, the schedule in Kenya comprised:

Day 1. Pre-testing; Session (1) Life in Kenya; Session (2) Relationships and values.

Day 2. Session (3) Equality; Session (4) Justice and money.

Day 3. Session (5) Science and religion; Session (6) Peace or *fitna*.

<sup>15</sup> P.E. Tetlock, Armor and Peterson, "The slavery debate in antebellum America: Cognitive style, value conflict, and the limits of compromise"; Carmit T. Tadmor, Philip E. Tetlock, and Kaiping Peng, "Biculturalism and integrative complexity: Testing the acculturation complexity model" (paper presented at the Academy of Management Proceedings, 2006/08).

<sup>16</sup> Peter Suedfeld, D.C. Leighton and Luke Conway, "Integrative Complexity and Cognitive Management in International Confrontations: Research and Potential Applications," in M. Fitzduff & C.E. Stout, (eds.), *The Psychology of War, Conflict Resolution, and Peace* (New York: Praeger, 2005); Peter Suedfeld, K. Legkaia and J. Brcic, "Changes in the Hierarchy of Value References Associated with Flying in Space," *Journal of Personality* 78:5 (2010).

<sup>17</sup> Peter Suedfeld and Alistair B. Wallbaum, "Modifying Integrative Complexity in Political Thought: Value Conflict and Audience Disagreement," *Revista Interamericana de Psicologia* 26:1 (1992).

<sup>18</sup> Boal, Augusto, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Vygostky, Luria S., *Mind in Society: the Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, Michael Cole, Vera John-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner, Ellen Soubberman (eds.) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1978).

Day 4. Session (7) Purity and Pleasure; Session (8) with participant presentations, and post-testing.

## BKBM's three steps of transformation

### *Transformation Step 1: Differentiation*

Like *Being Muslim Being British*, the explicit aim of BKBM is to increase thinking complexity promoted by value pluralism, measured by IC.<sup>20</sup> The first aspect of IC is differentiation, the ability to perceive multiple viewpoints or dimensions on an issue.<sup>21</sup> Eight topics used by radicalizers to increase cleavage between Muslim and Western-influenced worldviews and identities were selected, and each topic was presented from the differing perspectives of three to four well-known Muslim speakers via filmed interviews (on DVD) to promote differentiation. For example, in session 1, to address the topic "How should young Muslims should live in Kenya?" four influential speakers present their different viewpoints arguing for 1) an international Caliphate, 2) separatist (Salafist) personal piety, 3) integrating into society while maintaining Muslim identity and faith, and 4) support for jihadism. Through this, participants are motivated to make some sense of the variety of Muslim viewpoints, with group discussions relevant to tensions between Kenyans and ethnic Somalians, and are spurred to think afresh about the topic.

### *Transformation Step 2: Value Pluralism*

Step 2 involves enabling participants to discover some validity in the values that undergird each of the four viewpoints, even the extreme ones, but without having to sacrifice other competing values—which is implicit in adopting every aspect of extreme viewpoints. This second step of enabling value pluralism is operationalized through a dilemma structure for the session, and in which participants can find reasons to maximise a wider array of their *own* values in their moral reasoning. We draw on Philip Tetlock's Value Pluralism model<sup>22</sup> that argues that a motivating force for doing the extra cognitive work of integratively complex thinking comes from the desire to maximise more than one value when those values are in tension with each other and each has high importance in participants' personal hierarchies. While extremist ideologies concentrate, for example, on the magnetic pull of one value, such as 'justice for the community', to the exclusion of 'individual liberty', BKBM enables people to explore the importance of both ends of various value spectrums.

After positioning the four film speakers along the value spectrums, participants are next invited to 'vote with their feet' to show where they personally position themselves on that value spectrum, and to explore the pushes and pulls they experience in their lives in Kenya. Participants are encouraged to think about *both* value poles in a way consonant with their own value priorities and real life constraints, rather than remaining 'stuck' in the value monism of radical discourse. In this way, cultural differences, for example, between Kenyan and Somali cultures, between aspirations for

---

<sup>20</sup> Peter Suedfeld, K. Legkaia and J. Brcic, "Changes in the hierarchy of value references associated with flying in space."

<sup>21</sup> Suedfeld, Peter, Philip E. Tetlock and Siegfried Streufert, "Conceptual/Integrative Complexity" in *Motivation and Personality: Handbook of Thematic Content Analysis*, editors C.P. Smith, et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> Philip E. Tetlock, "A Value Pluralism Model of Ideological Reasoning," *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 50:4 (1986); Tetlock, Armor and Peterson, "The slavery debate in antebellum America: Cognitive style, value conflict, and the limits of compromise."

individual achievement versus loyalty to communitarian, traditional values, become easier to understand, and thus bridge, from a vantage point of value pluralism. This is done in the context of non-judgemental discussion of all the possible positions on the values continuum and the tensions between them.<sup>23</sup> Through these group-learning activities, the black and white categorizations resulting from increased cleavage between social groups begin to dissolve.

### *Transformation Step 3: Integration*

Integratively complex thinking requires the ability to find some linkages between the different viewpoints, or to perceive an overarching framework that makes sense of why reasonable people can maintain differing views.<sup>24</sup> Value-complex solutions protect both sacred and secular values of different groups, and this in turn enables peaceful and stable resolutions for inter-group conflict (of which violent extremisms are a particular type) in the context of globalization.

For example, a group activity to foster integration (the discovery of linkages or frameworks to make sense of different viewpoints) centers around a conflict of interests between two polarized ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ groups, role-played by participants taking either the role of wealthy suburban home owners living in Nairobi suburb, or the role of refugee dwellers in a shanty town close to the town’s borders. Participants experience how the conflict (physically, emotionally and cognitively) intensifies and polarizes perceptions of the ingroup and outgroup in the role play. As both groups’ demands calcify, they slide into creating an over-simplified ideology, which intensifies the inter-group conflict as people rally to their group’s slogans and group leader. Role playing enables participants to ‘see’ the polarization between groups intensifying in the room. ‘Mediators’ (role played by participants) are brought into the scene, and by focussing on the underlying human values of both groups’ demands, some value commonalities are discovered, as well as recognizing that some differences will continue to remain. Negotiation becomes possible, though not easy, once some common values are recognized in both groups. Thus, the practical side of problem solving can begin.

Building on experiential, embodied group learning such as this, participants reflect upon the various tensions, for example, between economic and political principles that promote the interests of the rich, in comparison with those that promote the interests of the poor, freed from value monism and the social pressure arising from extremist discourse that presents any Western economic principles and Islamic finance as completely alien to each other. The black and white communications of radicalizers come to appear less convincing, as trade-offs that respect participants’ own values are deemed possible, and are affirmed in a relevant peer group context.

These activities enable a further set of IC-related skills: meta-cognition, social intelligence and embodied cognition. Meta-cognition is supported by *Theatre of the Oppressed* pedagogy as physically enacted role-play enables participants to ‘see’ themselves, their reactions and perceptions of others, and to reflect on that through group discussion. For example, a role-play where a ‘stranger’ walks into the zone of an already established social group enabled participants to perceive the pervasive ingroup/outgroup dynamics between

<sup>23</sup>Tetlock, Armor Peterson, “The slavery debate...”

<sup>24</sup>Suedfeld, Tetlock and Streufert, "Conceptual/Integrative Complexity."

Kenyans and Somalis. Social intelligence skills are supported through empathy-fostering activities such as ‘active listening’ practiced through role play in trios of participants trying to reconcile a conflict that was once experienced by one of the trio members. Mixed groups of participants, as in this sample, where both sides of the countering violent extremism (CVE) divide are involved in the role plays promotes the capacity to perceive differing perspectives. Experiencing cognition as embodied and multi-sensory is encouraged through group activities involving movement and mime, and through the multi-sensory DVD input (music, symbols, images, and film clips) resourcing a broader focus of attention, assuaging the defensive ‘tunnel vision’ of rigid thinking that can arise from concentrating on words and conceptual systems only.<sup>25</sup> The educational process works with the dilemma structure in each session, using physical and interpersonal enactment through role plays, leading to a more complex narrative understanding of CVE related issues, with participants reflecting analytically upon their experiences through discussion. Together these comprise the steps to complex critical thinking which in turn enables people to ‘see through’ the strategies of radicalizers.

### Effectiveness Evaluation

We assessed the effectiveness of the eight session course through testing one main hypothesis and one exploratory hypothesis:

*As a result of the intervention, participants will think in more complex ways about social issues underpinned by conflicting values by showing an increase in the levels of IC (IC) when comparing verbal data gathered just before and after the course.*

The hypothesis was tested on two sets of verbal data: (Comparison 1) through the IC coding of written responses to Paragraph Completion Tests before and after the course, and (Comparison 2) through the qualitative analysis examining the presence of the two steps of IC (differentiation and integration) as applied by participants in the transcribed presentations each participant gave at the end of the course.

1. An exploratory hypothesis to examine whether participants’ conflict styles change in the Post test (according to a Conflict Styles Questionnaire).<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 1: Pre and post-test comparisons**

	Pre test	Post test	Participant Presentations
H1: Increase in IC	Comparison 1	Comparison 2	
H2: Change in conflict styles	Comparison 3		

## Method

### *Sample and Recruitment*

<sup>25</sup> Sara Savage, “Head and Heart in Preventing Religious Radicalization,” in F. Watts and G. Dumbreck (eds.), *Head and Heart: Perspectives from Religion and Psychology* (West Conshohoken, PA: Templeton Press, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Eolene Boyd-MacMillan, “Conflict Scenarios Questionnaire,” in Eolene Boyd-MacMillan and Sara Savage, Report on I SEE! Life Skills for a Changing Scotland, Empirical Effectiveness Report for the Scottish Government (2013).



Twenty-four participants participated, with twenty-two completing all aspects of the Pre and Post testing assessment. Questionnaire data revealed a mean age of 29.6 (SD=6.27) years. Sex of participants was 12 (52 percent) males and 11 (48 percent) females (one missing). Of 24 participants, 23 (96 percent) were born in Kenya; one (4 percent) was born in Somalia, 18 (92 percent) had secondary education, 12 (50 percent) had technical college education (mean 1.7 years), 9 (37 percent) had university education (mean 3.6 years), and 12 (50 percent) had Islamic religious education (mean 6.5 years). Eighteen (75 percent) participants reported being in work; 7 (29 percent) reported being unemployed/looking for new work.

Participants' group/community of identification, or ingroup (the term used henceforth to indicate participants' group/community with which they reported they strongly identified) were:

- 'Muslim' (5 participants), 'Kenyan Muslim' (4), 'Sunni Muslim' (1), 'Muslim Sunni in Africa' (1), 'Muslim/Christian' (1), 'Muslim 1st & my neighbour' (1)
- 'Christian' (3), 'Christian/Muslim' (1)
- 'Kenyan' (3)
- 'Somali' (2)
- 'Kamba' (1)
- 'People I live with in peace' (1).

Of the twenty-three participants, 14 (61 percent) report firstly a Muslim identity.

Participants' self-designated outgroup ('the group/community most different/opposed to my group') are listed below:

- Somalis (4), Somali & my own tribe (1)
- Islam (1), Shias (2), Muslim/Christian/Islam (1),
- Non-Somalis (1)
- Christians (2), White Christians (1),
- Western influenced (1), Secular (1), Secular & tribal (1)
- My tribe (2), Kikuyu (1), Luo tribe (1),
- Infidels & gangs (1), Terrorists (1), Al Shabaab (1), Radical Muslim youth (1), the inhumane (1)
- Arab (1), Arabs & rich people (1), Hindu & rich people (1), Dishonest/fake (1), Non-coastal (1), African Rastafarians (1)
- None/ I like everyone (2)

Based on information from Kenya Transition Initiative staff, the participants are assigned to subgroups for statistical analysis:

Subgroup 1 = Recent members of al Shabaab (n = 6)

Subgroup 2 = KTI staff (n = 4)

Subgroup 3 = Beneficiaries and grantees of KTI work (agencies and co-workers) (n = 10)

Subgroup 4 = Moderately vulnerable individuals but not linked with al Shabaab (n = 2) .

Of particular interest are the demographic characteristics of Subgroup 1 comprising recent al Shabaab members. Their profile is similar to the other

groups in terms of higher education (out of six, two attended technical college, one attended university) and regarding employment (four are in work involving sign writing, ‘mobilizer’, business and community work), with two participants unemployed/looking for work. Demographics that are distinctive for Subgroup 1 in comparison to the overall sample group concern gender balance (four males, two females), age (a higher mean age of 32), lower secondary education (four out of the six report having no secondary education (high school) whereas the rest of the sample have four years secondary and beyond), as well as fewer years in Islamic religious education (mean 4.8 years compared to 6.5 years). Subgroup 1 also showed slightly higher scores on the Social Identity & Power (SIP) Scale (mean = 20.3) compared to Subgroups 2 and 3 (mean = 17.15). The SIP Scale consists of five items concerning perceived power relations between participant’s designated ingroup and outgroup.<sup>27</sup> Higher mean scores indicate that the participant agrees or strongly agrees with statements that their ingroup is treated unfairly by a more powerful outgroup that does not allow ingroup upward mobility, and whose position of power is now possible to overturn—a set of social perceptions that maps onto the structure of radical narratives.<sup>28</sup> Subgroup 4 (moderately vulnerable participants, n =2) shows a similar pattern to Subgroup 1 with relatively higher SIP scores (mean = 20.0) and fewer years in Islamic education (mean = 1 year) in comparison to the wider sample.

### Sampling procedure

We were invited by the Kenya Transition Initiative (KTI), funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), to trial BKBM in Kenya. Participants known through KTI’s intensive fieldwork in the Eastleigh, Nairobi area were selected based upon recent activity or alignment with extremist groups or ideology, and were invited by KTI to participate in the pilot BKBM course. Subgroups 1 and 4 comprise the vulnerable-to-extremism participants with whom KTI has been working, and Subgroup 3 comprise co-workers in the field, organizations and individuals to whom KTI subcontract. Subgroup 2 comprise KTI staff. A balanced spread such as this, comprising targeted individuals and intervention providers in a single IC course, helps to engender perspective taking on both sides of the extremism divide, and brings alive the tensions relating to extremism, contributing to learning outcomes. The BKBM course was facilitated by an experienced *Being Muslim Being British* facilitator who was born and raised in Kenya.

### Instruments/measures

*Paragraph Completion Tests.* Two open ended paragraphs were presented during the Pre test and the Post test to elicit verbal data for IC coding. To elicit this data, participants were first asked to write down answers to items A and B:

---

**31 Jose Liht and Sara Savage, “Being Muslim Being British: A Multi-media Educational Resource for Young Muslims” in G. Joffe (ed) *Radicalisation* (IB Tauris, 2011).**

<sup>28</sup> Sara Savage and Jose Liht, “Radical Religious Speech: How to Assemble the Ingredients of a Binary world view.” in J. Weinstein (ed), *Extreme Speech and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

(A) The community (group) that I indentify strongly with  
is \_\_\_\_\_

(Examples: Kenyan... Muslim... Somali... Sufi... Islamic... African... my  
tribe ... African Muslim... Secular... Salafi...Arab... Western influenced  
...White... Christian... Other... Use any combination)

(B) The community (group) that is most unlike/ opposed to my group  
is \_\_\_\_\_

Next, the facilitator led the participants in a ‘Think Aloud’ group warm-up exercise using two topics unrelated to extremism (preferred colours and foods) to encourage people to express their thinking freely and fully when writing out their responses. ‘Think Aloud’ technique is standard practice when researchers are more interested in process of thinking, the ‘how’ of thinking, rather than in the content of thinking.<sup>29</sup>

Next, participants were asked to write as much as they can in the blank space provided to answer two open-ended questions:

1. When I think about MY community (group) ...
2. When I think about the OTHER group ...

Paragraph Completion Tests (PCTs) have established validity in eliciting responses that have an argument or evaluation structure and that can be coded for IC.<sup>30</sup>

*Participant presentations.* Recordings (video and audio, with participant permission) were taken throughout, including all participant presentations given at the end of the last session. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and labelled with the participant’s code.

Transcripts of participant presentations were coded qualitatively for evidence of learning concerning the two steps of IC (differentiation and integration), and for evidence of confidence to address extremist issues with IC skills, and for increases in social intelligence (such as empathy for the ‘other’).

*Integrative complexity (IC).* All IC coding for the Paragraph Completion Tests followed the standardized IC coding frame and protocol.<sup>31</sup> Inter-coder reliability criteria was assessed by calculating Kappa levels between two trained coders blind to the pre-intervention post-intervention conditions.

*Demographics and Social Identity & Power measures.* A short five-item demographics questionnaire was given at the end of the course, and the five-item Social Identity & Power (SIP) Scale (concerning perceived power relations relative to the participant’s ingroup and outgroup), was given during both Pre and Post testing. (See Appendix.)

---

<sup>29</sup> Erickson, K. A. and H.A. Simon, *Protocol Analysis: Verbal Reports as Data* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

<sup>30</sup> E. H. Bottenberg, “Instrumental Characteristics and Validity of the Paragraph Completion Test (PCT) as a Measure of Integrative Complexity,” *Psychological Reports* 24 (1969): 437-38.

<sup>31</sup> Gloria Baker-Brown, E.J. Ballard, S. Bluck, B. Vries de, P. Suedfeld and P.E. Tetlock, “The Conceptual/Integrative Complexity Scoring Manual,” in C.P. Smith (ed.), *Motivation and Personality: Handbook of Thematic Content Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

*Conflict styles questionnaire.* A conflict styles questionnaire with two scenarios for the Pre test, and two different scenarios for the Post test (see Appendix) was adapted to create Kenyan scenarios, and was used to assess pre-post changes in conflict style. Each scenario was followed by five response options that captured Kraybill's five empirically derived conflict style constructs.<sup>32</sup> Kraybill's five conflict style constructs differ on how much the issue in comparison to the persons/ relationships involved in the conflict are deemed important:

- 1. Direct.** The issue is deemed so important that a direct style of communication is used to address the conflict, if needed, at the expense of the relationship.
- 2. Avoid.** Neither the issue nor the relationships are deemed important, so avoiding the conflict is chosen.
- 3. Accommodate.** Preserving the relationship is deemed more important than the issue, so giving in to the other party is chosen in order to resolve the conflict.
- 4. Compromise.** Both the issue and relationships are deemed somewhat important. Giving away something in order to gain something is deemed the best way to resolve the conflict.
- 5. Collaborate.** Creative ways to maximise both the high importance of values and the high importance of relationships are found to resolve the conflict.

### *Procedure*

Eight two-hour BKBM sessions were completed over a period of four days, led by a trained course facilitator with the aid of a BKBM facilitator's manual. The venue for the course was a hotel conference suite in Nairobi, with breaks allocated for lunch, tea and prayers. Attendance records show full attendance across the four days for the twenty-two participants who completed the Pre and Post testing.

## Results

### *Intercoder Reliability*

In order to verify the reliability of IC scores across pre and post conditions, one researcher coded all the paragraphs from the Paragraph Completion Tests (4 x 22 = 88), blind to pre-post conditions. In accordance with accepted practice, a secondary scorer blind to the pre-post conditions, coded eight paragraphs (around 10 percent of a stratified random subsample, representing relevant subgroups and spread of IC).<sup>33</sup>

Cohen's Kappa index of reliability (which measures for exact correspondence, not just correlation) was calculated for the IC scores of the Paragraph Completion Tests. The result, Kappa = 0.89, indicated a very good intercoder reliability levels (93.3 percent agreement, SD= 0.20, Z = 4.43, p > 0.00001).

---

<sup>32</sup> Eolene Boyd-MacMillan, "Conflict Scenarios Questionnaire," in Eolene Boyd-MacMillan and Sara Savage, *Report on I SEE! Life Skills for a Changing Scotland, Empirical Effectiveness Report for the Scottish Government*; Ronald S. Kraybill and Evelyn Wright, *The Little Book of Cool Tools for Hot Topics: Group Tools to Facilitate Meetings When Things Are Hot* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> Baker-Brown, Ballard, Bluck, de Vries, Suedfeld, Tetlock, "The Conceptual/Integrative Complexity Scoring Manual."

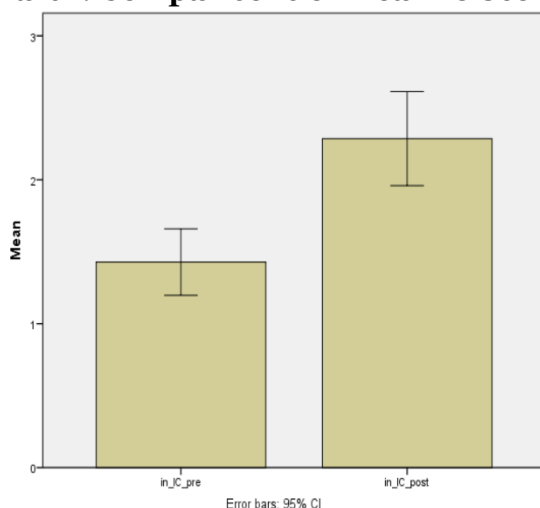
### *Comparison 1. Hypothesis 1: IC in Written Responses to Paragraph Completion Tests*

In order to test whether BKBM was effective in increasing the complexity with which participants think about conflicted social issues relevant to extremism, we coded the Paragraph Completion Tests (PCTs) for all twenty-two participants according to IC coding practice (measuring the underlying structure of thinking) and compared scores for participants' paragraphs at the beginning of Session 1 (Pre test) and at the end of Session 8 (Post test). All coding was performed under blind-to-group and condition, by two trained IC coders.

A paired samples t-test was carried out. Mean IC level for the pre-test was 1.32 (SD=0.29), the post-test was 1.95 (SD=0.53) and the mean gain in IC was 0.63 (SD=0.45). See Chart 1.

The statistical t-test of difference between pre-test and post-test (related samples) for IC ( $M=-0.625$ ,  $SD=0.45$ ,  $n = 22$ ,  $t(19) = -6.140$ ,  $p > 0.0001$ ) provided evidence for an increase in IC levels.

**Chart 1: Comparisons of Mean IC Scores in Pre and Post Test**



#### *IC Comparisons for Ingroup and Outgroup*

Mean IC level for the Pre-test participants' designated ingroup (the 'group/community with which I strongly identify') was 1.43 (SD=0.57), the post-test was 2.29 (SD=0.72) and the mean gain in IC was 0.86 (SD=0.45). The statistical t-test of difference between pre-test and post-test (paired samples) for IC was  $t(20) = -5.403$ ,  $p < 0.0001$  provided evidence for an increase in IC levels in regard to participants' ingroup.

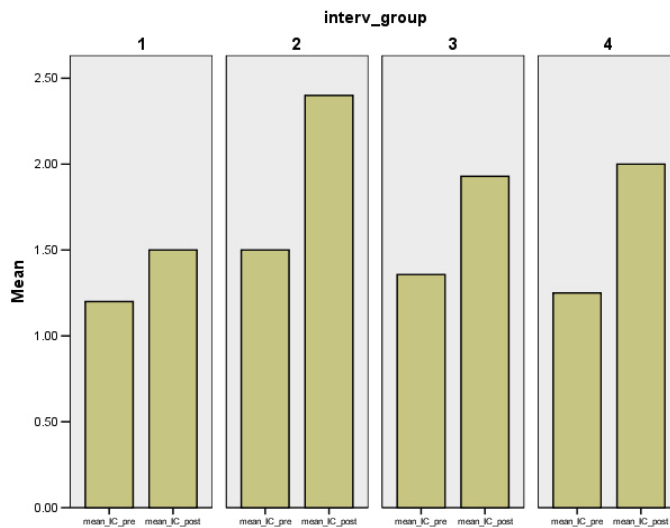
Mean IC level for the post-test outgroup (the 'group/community different/opposed to my group') was 1.19 (SD=0.41), the post-test was 1.57 (SD=0.81) and the mean gain in IC was 0.38 (SD=0.45). The statistical t-test of difference between pre-test and post-test (paired samples) for IC was  $t(20) = -2.169$ ,  $p < 0.042$  provided evidence for an increase in IC levels in regards to participants' outgroup.

Thus, IC gains were strongest concerning participants' self-designated ingroup, although both ingroup and outgroup IC gains are significant. All four subgroups showed a similar trend of higher IC gains for the ingroup.

### Subgroups

The four subgroups showed differences in overall IC gains. Subgroup 2 (KTI staff) showed the highest IC means in both Pre and Post tests. Subgroup 1 (former al Shabaab members) showed the lowest IC means in both Pre and Post test, with the smallest magnitude of change. See Chart 2. However, all groups showed IC gain, and there were no between groups differences according to a Oneway analysis of variance,  $F(2,22)=1.086$ ,  $p=0.167$ .

**Chart 2: IC Pre and Post Test Gains by Subgroups**



Hypothesis 1 was supported overall. Results indicate that the intervention had an effect of increasing the complexity with which participants think about social issues and social groups relevant to extremism as indicated by levels of IC.

### Comparison 2. Hypothesis 2: Evidence of Application of IC in Participants' Presentations

At the end of the final session, participants gave a presentation to the group. The facilitator had instructed participants in Session 5 that they will be asked to give a presentation at the end of Session 8 to share what they have learned through the course, and how they are applying, or wish to apply IC (or not) to specific situations relevant to their life. All twenty-two participants gave a presentation. These were tape recorded (yielding 1.5 hours of tape) and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were qualitatively analyzed for the presence of learning about and applying step 1 of IC, differentiation (the ability to perceive the validity of two or more dimensions, viewpoints or outcomes to temporal sequences) and step 2 of IC, integration (the ability to perceive underlying common values, linkages between, or overarching frameworks, that make sense of the differentiated array). Each 'chunk' of verbal data that fulfilled either of these criteria was given a score of 1, and these were summed for a final cumulative Participant Presentation Score. This is a qualitative measure of participants internalizing and applying IC constructs; it is not a coding of the structure of argumentation.

Participant Presentation Scores were correlated with the participants' Post test mean IC scores (paired samples). The Presentation Scores correlated significantly with participants' Post test mean IC scores (Spearman's  $\rho$  (21) = 0.81,  $p < 0.01$ , two tailed).

Qualitative analysis revealed evidences of understanding and applying *differentiation* in 100 percent (22 of 22) participant presentations. Evidence of understanding and applying *integration* were present in 50 percent (11 of 22) of participant presentations. Qualitative analysis showed that participants experienced an increase in *social intelligence* as a result of the course (for example, gaining insight into own and other people's views and experiences, particularly for those who are different, empathy for others, and new emotional control) were evident in 77 percent (17 of 22) of participant presentations. Evidence of *confidence* gained from applying the skills and principles of IC to conflicts relevant to extremism and in everyday life were evident in 100 percent of the presentations.

### Comparison 3. Conflict Styles Questionnaire

As increased value complexity and thinking complexity (IC) promotes resolution of conflict<sup>34</sup>, we explored whether conflict styles changed as a result of the course. Five conflict styles are empirically discriminated by Kraybill: *Direct*, *Accommodate*, *Avoid*, *Compromise* and *Collaborate*.<sup>35</sup> Results show that the *Direct* conflict style significantly increases and that *Avoid*, *Compromise* and *Collaborate* significantly decreased in the Post test. The Post test change in the *Direct* conflict style is of the greatest magnitude. See Table 1.

**Table 1. Conflict Styles Pre and Post Test**

	Pre mean	SD	Post mean	SD	t statistic	df	p
<b>Avoid</b>	6.29	1.51	4.33	2.01	4.254	23	.000
<b>Direct</b>	4.32	2.15	8.81	1.81	-9.160	21	.000
<b>Accommodate</b>	6.91	2.51	8.13	2.03	-1.719	22	Non sig
<b>Compromise</b>	6.09	1.94	4.17	2.79	2.244	22	0.035
<b>Collaborate</b>	7.52	1.38	4.86	1.63	6.388	22	0.000

### Correlations with SIP Scale and Demographics Questionnaire - Post Hoc Analysis

We explored the relationship of demographic characteristics and SIP Scale factors with IC and conflict styles (there was no difference between SIP scores Pre test compared with Post test, and this holds across all four Subgroups).

Years in Islamic religious education correlate negatively with IC regarding the ingroup, but positively (and significantly) for the outgroup in the Post condition (Pearsons  $r$  (20)=0.627,  $p=0.039$ . See Table 2, below.

Of interest are two trends: years in Technical College correlates negatively with IC, but years in University correlates positively with IC, particularly towards the ingroup; these are moderate but non-significant correlations. See Table 2.

<sup>34</sup> Suedfeld, Leighton and Conway, "Integrative Complexity and Cognitive Management..."

<sup>35</sup> Kraybill, Ronald S. and Wright, Evelyn, The little book of cool tools for hot topics : group tools to facilitate meetings when things are hot (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2006).

**Table 2. Parametric Correlations Between Education and IC Scores**

	Pre test		Post test	
	<i>Ingroup</i>	<i>Outgroup</i>	<i>Ingroup</i>	<i>Outgroup</i>
<b>Years in Islamic education</b>	-.125	.276	-.161	.627
<b>Significance</b>	ns	ns	ns	p=0.039
<b>Years in Technical College</b>	-.324	-.212	-.039	-.324
<b>Significance</b>	ns	ns	ns	ns
<b>Years in University</b>	.429	.364	.424	.335
<b>Significance</b>	ns	ns	ns	ns

The five-item SIP Scale, as explained earlier, measures perceptions of power relations concerning participants' self-identified ingroup and outgroup. High scores on the SIP Scale indicate perceptions of one's ingroup as unfairly treated by a more powerful outgroup that does not allow for ingroup upward mobility, and whose powerful position is likely to be overturned. SIP scores were slightly higher for Subgroups 1 and 4 (ex-al Shabaab and moderately vulnerable participants, respectively) in comparison with the wider sample. The Post test SIP scale correlated negatively with IC scores for the outgroup in the Post test (Pearsons  $r(20) = -.506$ ,  $p < 0.027$  two tailed).

Age correlated negatively with IC scores in the Pre test concerning participants' ingroup, (Pearsons  $r(20) = -0.477$ ,  $p = 0.029$ , two tailed).

#### *Correlations with conflict styles*

Years in Islamic religious education correlated negatively with the *Direct* conflict style in the Pre test (Pearsons  $r(20) = -.665$ ,  $p < 0.025$ , two tailed). In the Post test, the negative correlation is lower, and not significant ( $-.117$ , ns). This pattern of negative correlation was evident across all four Subgroups.

The *Avoid* conflict style Post test correlates negatively with mean IC in the Post test (Pearsons  $r(20) = -0.439$ ,  $p = 0.041$ , two tailed). There were no other significant correlations between conflict styles and IC.

#### Discussion

The BKBM course results shows overall significant gains in IC in written responses to Paragraph Completion tests, from a mean IC score of 1.3 in the Pre test to a score of 1.9 in the Post test. An IC score of 1 (from a scale of 1 to 7) indicates the lowest level of integrative: viewing, for example, social groups categorically (all good or all bad), dichotomising the social world into 'us versus them', judging the domain in question from a single evaluative viewpoint, rejecting other viewpoints or dimensions ('only my viewpoint is correct'), reducing ambiguity (no shades of grey, no mixture), with causation simply conceived as, for example, 'x causes y'.



As the complexity of extremist discourse decreases as commitment to violence increases, the very low IC level of AQ discourse inevitably precludes any other means to resolve conflict other than mobilisation to their cause.<sup>36</sup> As this constructed moral obligation to engage in violent conflict comes to be seen as unnecessary through the IC intervention, more productive means to resolve conflict become possible. New ways of resolving conflict are experienced within the course and validated within a relevant peer group.

An IC score of 2 (rounding up from 1.9) signifies emerging or conditional acceptance of other dimensions or viewpoints regarding the issue at hand, though this is not extensively developed. At an IC score of 2, rather than seeing the social world categorically and dichotomously, now multiple dimensions to an issue and exceptions to the rule are being acknowledged. Shades of grey, rather than black or white choices, are conditionally accepted, there is an increased tolerance for ambiguity, and an acceptance that others may hold different viewpoints from one's own. However, this is a transitional stage given that argumentation is not extensively elaborated. In this study, this significant increase to an IC score of 2, while not large numerically, is a meaningful change in regards to the diminishment of violent conflict: other ways of construing the social world are now made possible, the categorical, black and white structure of the extremist worldview is dissolving.

It is acknowledged that there are floor effects to measuring IC. It is quite hard to capture enough argumentation or evaluation in verbal data for IC to be scorable, and this is particularly hard under written 'test conditions' such as the written Pre and Post testing here. The advantage of measuring IC is that, as well as being predictive of the outcomes of conflict, the structure of thinking is relatively unfakable. When people think, their attention is focused on the content of their thinking, not its underlying structure. Thus, to capture a significant change in the structure of thinking represents data that is virtually unfakable on the part of participants, especially under test conditions where pre-planning is not possible. Whereas it is acknowledged that speakers can apply some 'impression management' in their verbalizations, for example, using lower IC when speaking to children, it would be very hard to fake a rise in IC concerning issues one feels strongly about.

In line with theories of individual cognitive development, and that of and early humans, change in the structure of argument (measured by IC) leveraged in the BKBM intervention represents the last stage of a series of deeper changes that firstly involve embodied enactment, then interpersonal, episodic learning, thirdly linking those earlier stages into a narrative, and finally reflecting upon that conceptually.<sup>37</sup> Thus, we argue that the changes that are visible through IC coding are in fact the tip of a deeper 'iceberg'. We are pleased that we were able to capture significant IC gain, given the known floor effects of IC and the challenge of eliciting verbal data showing argument or evaluation under test conditions. We also think that the simple, open-ended Paragraph Completion Test items were a better way to elicit IC codable data in comparison with the detailed moral dilemmas (with their greater

---

<sup>36</sup> Suedfeld, Cross, and Logan, "Can Thematic Analysis Separate the Pyramid of Ideas from the Pyramid of Actions?"

<sup>37</sup> Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 18:1(1991): 1-21; Vygotsky, Luria S., *Mind in Society*; Bellah, Robert, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

cognitive load) that we had used in the first assessment of *Being Muslim Being British*.<sup>38</sup>

Gains in IC are significant for participants' self-designated ingroup and outgroup, but are of greater magnitude for the ingroup. This may reflect that fact that information about one's own ingroup is more readily available to thinkers.<sup>39</sup> It also mirrors the process of de-radicalization described in autobiographical accounts of those who have exited extremist groups.<sup>40</sup> In these accounts, extremists de-covert from their former radical cause often through a growing awareness of the flaws and contradictions of the extremist ingroup, particularly the ingroup leaders. The growing perception that the extremist ingroup comprises variously motivated individuals who are mixture of both good and bad is a crucial step towards being able to critically analyse the ingroup's mission and methods. BKBM helps to bring about this awareness indirectly, as a direct frontal attack against a participant's ingroup and its ideology is likely to elicit defensiveness. Instead, our approach is to leverage the skills of complex thinking across a range of issues (some directly concerning extremism, others concern underlying issues, such as family relationships, gender equality and sex) and through increasing participants' recognition of their own spread of values.

A low complexity paragraph about a participants' ingroup is seen in this Pre-test paragraph:

“al Shabaab – the most important obligation for Muslims is to make kufirs suffer for what they have inflicted on Muslims living in that.”  
(IC score 1, former al Shabaab member, Pre test)

A higher complexity paragraph about another participants' ingroup is seen in this Post-test paragraph:

“I feel my group [Christians] deliberately misleads its members about what Muslims believe in. I feel there is a subtle hatred in a way. There is a feeling that their belief is not grounded in history and that is not true. There is a misunderstanding about what Muslims believe in simply because Christians do not know a lot about Muslims. I feel that some people (Christians) can not tell the difference between Somalis, Arabs and Muslims, and that makes it hard for them to differentiate between cultures and religion. I also wish this community should learn to be more accomodating as they have more power and the more extreme they get in thought, the more it is bad for reconciliation and finding a true understanding between Muslims and Christians.” (IC score 4, showing multiple dimensions and causality understood as implicitly involving mutual influence, Subgroup 3 participant, Post test).

We expected that the four Subgroups would show differences in IC gains, and this was the case. Nevertheless, there were no significant between-groups differences. The most professionally resourced group, Subgroup 2, (KTI

---

<sup>38</sup> Jose Liht and Sara Savage, “Preventing Violent Extremism through Value Complexity.”

<sup>39</sup> Tajfel, H. and Turner, J.C., “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict,” *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (1979): 33-47.

<sup>40</sup> Husein, Ed, *The Islamist: Why I Joined Radical Islam in Britain, What I Saw Inside and Why I Left* (Penguin 2007); Nawaz, Maajid, *Radical: My Journey from Extremist Islamism to a Democratic Awakening* (London: WH Allen, 2013).

staff), showed the highest mean IC in the Pre test, and the highest mean in the Post test. Subgroup 1 (former al Shabaab members) showed the lowest IC in the Pre test and Post test. Two factors seem relevant here: Subgroup 1 had four (of six) participants with no secondary (high school) education as well as less Islamic religious education, compared to the wider group. They also showed higher SIP scores, indicative of the influence of extremist narrative. These factors make it likely that Subgroup 1 faced a longer and harder journey in emerging from very low IC, although progress was made.

It is interesting that years in Islamic religious education correlates negatively with IC regarding the Pre test, but correlates positively (and significantly) for the outgroup in the Post test. The correlation between Islamic education and IC is the only correlation that shows significant reversal, comparing Pre to Post conditions. It seems that IC, as a result of the intervention, is acting as a moderator on the variable ‘years in Islamic religious education’, at least in regard to perceptions of the outgroup in the Post test. If this interpretation is correct, IC seems to ‘turbo charge’ traditional Islamic teaching regarding mercy and benevolence to the ‘other’ in the Post test. Years in university correlates moderately with IC gain (but not significantly so) towards the ingroup (only), whereas years in technical college correlates negatively with IC (also not significantly) in both Pre and Post tests, in line with research showing that those well trained to solve problems having a concrete ‘right answer’ (such as engineering problems) are over-represented among violent extremists.<sup>41</sup>

The negative correlation between SIP scores and IC provides a snapshot of the essence of the problem that all counter-extremism efforts face: those more deeply committed to an extremist narrative have a longer journey to emerge from it, and this is particularly so if the nature and length of education fails to resource the normal developmental pathway from simplicity to complexity. The results of this BKBM course show encouraging but realistic results in this regard: the IC approach does work with individuals at the ‘sharp end’ of prevention who are more closely aligned to the structure of the extremist narrative (and, here, who are also under-resourced through a lack of secondary education). However, the gains in IC for Subgroup 1 are more modest than with the other groups, and these participants would have benefitted from more time and personal mentoring, had the schedule allowed.

We originally developed *Being Muslim Being British* for primary prevention, for anyone potentially vulnerable to radicalization in the early stages. In this pilot of *Being Kenyan Being Muslim*, the stakes have been raised with the inclusion of participants who have been members of a terrorist group. We have recently argued in a U.S. State Department White Paper, that secondary and tertiary prevention needs to take a multi-agency approach, to which the IC method can bring an important contribution.<sup>42</sup> In a further roll-out of BKBM seeking to include violent extremists (as in this pilot), the IC intervention will need to be part of a joined-up strategy with other agencies for ongoing support. Recruiting a mixed group of participants including target audience and prevention workers, as in this project, works to kickstart a multi-agency approach, as well as eliciting intense discussion and involvement. We also advise that one-to-one IC mentoring is provided for extremely vulnerable participants in addition to the BKBM course to help them consolidate the gains that the IC sessions produce. Normal practice is to

<sup>41</sup> Gambetta, Diego and Steffen Hertog, *Engineers of Jihad*.

<sup>42</sup> Jose Liht and Sara Savage, “Preventing Violent Extremism with Value Complexity.”

run an IC intervention over a four to eight week duration (not over days as in this pilot, necessitated by schedule and budget constraints), and to assign practical weekly homework tasks. Longer periods for processing the material helps participants to reflect upon and integrate the new ways of thinking. It is also normal practice for group size to be capped at twelve to sixteen participants, rather than twenty-four as in this pilot. Despite these challenges, including the need for ongoing translations between English, Swahili and Somali during each session, it is encouraging that the BKBM intervention did show significant IC gains.

### *Participant Presentations*

Through empirical assessments of other IC courses (*I SEE* for Scotland, an anti-sectarian IC course, and Conflict Transformation, a course for various inter-group conflicts, and *Being Muslim Being British*), we have observed two kinds of effects: (1) changes to the less-than-conscious structure of thinking, measured by IC coding, and (2) learned cognitive, emotional and interpersonal skills.<sup>43</sup> To assess the latter effect, we analysed participant presentations for evidence of learning about and application of IC skills. The participant presentations at the end of the course make it easier for participants to reveal the extent of their IC learning as they have time to prepare what they want to share (prepared verbal data is similar to the speeches, letters, parliamentary proceedings that are usually used for integrative complexity research).<sup>44</sup>

We qualitatively analyzed the verbatim transcripts of twenty-two presentations for presence of understanding and application of (1) differentiation, (2) integration, (3) social intelligence (empathy for others, insight into self or others, greater emotional control) and (4) confidence in applying IC skills.

### *Differentiation*

All participant presentations showed instances of participants applying the construct of differentiation: the ability to perceive multiple dimensions to an issue and that there is some validity in different views, exceptions to the rule, and changes over time. Examples include:

“IC is about how we perceive the world. Seeing through our religious faith, not just blind faith, but using both head and heart. IC allows you to see the shadows, to see both points of view. Active listening helps you to interact well.” (Subgroup 3 participant)

“Religion leads us to the right path. Religion makes you strong. But there are situations where you should sidestep your religion. It doesn’t mean ... it doesn’t make you a real Muslim... its not just about wearing a hijab, covering yourself. Yes, you should do that but there are places where you shouldn’t walk with your hijab. You should balance your life and religion and other people’s culture.” (Subgroup 3 participant)

“I’ve learned to be an active listener, even with those whom I disagree. Understanding different community values and cultures. It will help

---

<sup>43</sup> For information about I SEE course, see: <http://iseeinscotland.org.uk> and [www.ICTcambridge.org](http://www.ICTcambridge.org), Conflict Transformation page.

<sup>44</sup> Suedfeld, Leighton and Conway, “Integrative Complexity and Cognitive Management...”

you avoid conflict. Thinking for yourself. I am the one who is doing the deciding.” (Subgroup 1 participant)

“In Kenya we have different community of different origins, different religious leaders. We need IC for Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jews so that religious leaders can understand among themselves and have common ground.” (Subgroup 2 participant)

“When we love Muslims we are not saying that what they are all doing is right. It is a sin to kill. It is a sin to do what they are doing, like Westgate.” (Subgroup 4 participant)

“We have to be able to evaluate what section we are in. Are we in low IC? - which is very difficult and dangerous, like black and white, about us and them, and it is so easy to create conflict. And that is where the world is at now.” (Subgroup 3 participant)

“IC is about how we see. It will differentiate depending on whether you are male or female and where you come from.” (Subgroup 3 participant)

### *Integration*

Fifty percent of participant presentations showed application of the construct of integration, suggesting more participants understood the higher levels of IC than was evident in the test conditions of the Pre and Post testing:

“How religion and science integrate. Some people believe religious is the only source. Some people say science is the source. Each see from a different perspective, from different directions.” (Subgroup 2 participant)

“Like thinking outside the box. Finding the deep values, principles, underlying each view. That is the time we can come to an integration. So that is the most time that came to me, like weaving [integrating] our thoughts together, weaving our thinking together, weaving our relationships and values together. It goes beyond our religion, goes beyond our relationships and our values and it helps me in our day to day life.” (Subgroup 3 participant)

“Science and the truth between the two. Which one is the truth? IC is about finding out how science and religion complement one another. The equal aspect between religion and science.” (Subgroup 4 participant)

“This IC, thinking beyond, this thinking about my religion that I just took for granted, like *halal*. You are just looking for the label halal on the packet of seed but you never know why, what is the criterion. Are they qualified to judge this? Then there is this thing about religion and the Western world – how do you view Islam from the Western world?” (Subgroup 3 participant)

“I just learned that you can integrate and explain the two worlds and come up with a better world.” (Subgroup 3 participant)

“I have learned a lot - how to solve interconnected problems and complex ideas. Before you impose, you listen first.” (Subgroup 2 participant)

Based on the number of instances of differentiation and integration per presentation, Participant Presentation Scores correlated highly and significantly with IC Post test scores, strengthening our confidence in the effectiveness of the course.

### *Social / Emotional Intelligence*

77 percent of participants evidenced felt they experienced increases in their social and emotional intelligence through the course:

“The first day I was scared but I’ve interacted with colleagues and become motivated. It taught me how to relate to society, how to relate to the rest of the public.” (Subgroup 1 participant, former al Shabaab member)

“It’s about why is this person doing this? Then you can try to calm the situation so that you can handle it better.” (Subgroup 4 participant)

“It taught me I can manage my anger.” (Subgroup 1 participant, former al Shabaab member)

“I learned about *Fitna* and Islam. *Fitna* is bad – it leads to hatred and its can spread in the community and lead to the dissolution of the community.” (Subgroup 1, former Al Shabaab member)

“IC gives me another eye opener, gives me more inspiration. Gives me knowledge to live with other people as Muslim, to live with my brothers who are Christian. How I can stay with them like brotherhood.” (Subgroup 3 participant)

“It taught me how to share ideas with people, how to live with different faiths and to overcome hatred.” (Subgroup 3 participant)

“We need to be together so that we love one another.” (Subgroup 1 participant, former al Shabaab member)

### *Confidence*

Confidence in addressing the conflicts and value tensions that underpin extremism through new skills and abilities was present in 100 percent of participant presentations, for example:

“Now I can handle any situation, to accept other’s culture knowing we are all different. We all have different perspectives. We shouldn’t judge each other but pick the good from each others’ perspective to make something good.” (Subgroup 2 participant)

“I think this program will help. It changed my life, *Ahumdulillah*. I want to change others who are out there. OK, they don’t know anything about Pleasure and Purity.” (Subgroup 3 participant)

“Listening to people who are fighting...Where I come from, we have these kinds of situations everyday. People attacking you from all sides. Not giving black and white in return. [This] gives me a feeling of belonging. Giving me more hope.” (Subgroup 3 participant)

“Going through mirroring, validating, empathizing. Where to use it? Where applicable? With friends. At work. Or when you are not able to understand your friend. At home, especially with siblings when they will not do as you say, voices are raised. With couples, it can work. Domination – men bossing women. Use it. This brings youth groups together, not polarizing.” (Subgroup 2 participant)

“If you can change one youth, and he changes two youth, and then he changes two youth, then a lot will change...I want to have a job in this.” (Subgroup 3 participant)

“...with this course I will use it in my community...I will give them the hope of that awareness to continue what IC teaches me and what I have learnt from that teaching...we are all human beings created together, this course has given me hope for life, I must listen when my temper is high...” (Subgroup 3)

### *Conflict Styles*

The conflict style *Avoid* decreased, as did *Compromise* and *Collaborate*, whereas *Direct* significantly increased. The previous conflict styles analysis for *Being Muslim Being British*<sup>45</sup> employed a qualitative coding frame based on Kraybill’s five empirically derived constructs, and that research on young British Muslims showed a significant increase in the combined scores of *Compromise* and *Collaboration* conflict styles.<sup>46</sup> The different patterns shown here with BKBM may be due to the different instruments used: a qualitative analysis of spontaneous group discussion data was employed for *Being Muslim Being British*; the Conflict Scenarios Questionnaire was used for BKBM. However, it does seem that differences between the UK and Kenyan cultural contexts also play a role here, impacting how conflict is perceived and what is deemed appropriate in the Kenyan context.

It may be that the *Collaboration* conflict style, which builds on the hope of win/win solutions achieved for both parties, seems unrealistic in the Eastleigh, Nairobi context given the widespread lack of trust between groups and potential danger in daily public life (all four conflict scenarios concerned events played out in public). The *Compromise* conflict style, giving away something in order to get something, may seem akin to the practice of resolving disputes through giving *baksheesh*, a problem that was discussed by large majority of participants, speaking of endemic corruption and the ubiquitous nature of the giving and receiving of bribes.

Another interpretation is suggested by the strong, negative correlation between years in Islamic religious education and the *Direct* conflict style in the Pre test. This relationship noticeably lessens in the Post test (though remains non significant). It may be that traditional Islamic teaching concerning submission to fate (Allah), conforming to duty and controlling self-expression, serves to ‘suppress’ the *Direct* pro-social conflict style in the

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ronald S. Kraybill and Wright, Evelyn *The Little Book of Cool Tools for Hot Topics*.

Pre test. It is arguable that values of traditional religious self-transcendence are in tension with the *Direct* conflict style in which the person clearly states their viewpoint regarding a conflict, and considers the issue important enough to stick their neck out, even if there is cost to the relationships involved.<sup>47</sup> It may be that the ethic of self-transcendence taught in Islamic education is moderated by the IC intervention, which then allowed participants in the Post-test to choose the *Direct* conflict style, perhaps because it was deemed more effective within the Kenyan context. If this interpretation is correct, this accords with participants' general sense of empowerment and confidence at the end of the course, as well as IC as a moderator of years in Islamic religious education.

The developers of the conflict styles constructs originally viewed *Collaborate* as the best, most adaptive conflict style, as it seeks win /win solutions using creative thinking.<sup>48</sup> (*Compromise* enables both parties to get some but not most of what they want.) The preference for *Collaboration* as the 'best' conflict style was later amended, as it became evident that all five conflict styles can be used positively for resolving conflict. What matters is the ability to choose the conflict style that best suits the situation (a form of meta-cognition), and having pro-social motivations and social intelligence in using the conflict styles. This parallels research that acknowledges that high levels of IC are not universal goods given the cognitive costs of highly complex thinking in certain situations.<sup>49</sup> For both conflict styles and IC, it seems what is needed is meta-cognition to enable flexibility and awareness of context. Because the IC of extremist ideology is so low, the first step in countering extremism is to enable participants to raise their IC. But thereafter, the more advanced skills of IC concern meta-cognition to assess the situation for the most appropriate level of IC.

For a future roll-out of the course, BKBM course gains can be strengthened, as argued above, through using the standard course run over weeks (not days) along with one-to-one mentoring for highly vulnerable participants. The final course version is planned to include tensions between Christians and Muslims, the gap between the (newly) rich and the poor, and lack of security, all of which are part of the context of radicalization. Community settings will continue to provide good contexts for disseminating BKBM, but we think that in the future the widest dissemination of IC courses will be through schools (for ages 11 and upwards). We are already working in schools in several countries, and early results show that the most disruptive students undergo significant behavioural changes (independently observed by teachers and head teachers). Our next project is taking place in a large number of schools in south Asia, and this provides an opportunity for control groups and longitudinal research.

## Conclusion

The positive participant response in conjunction with the empirical data indicates that BKBM was a success in Kenya. BKBM's method of exposing participants to a multiplicity of value priorities through group activities structured to enable participants to explore the implications of the whole of the value spectrum was measured through pre and post testing. The written

---

<sup>47</sup> Shalom H. Schwartz and Klaus Boehnke, "Evaluating the structure of human values with confirmatory factor analysis," *Journal of Research in Personality* 38:3 (2004).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Suedfeld, Leighton and Conway, "Integrative Complexity and Cognitive Management..."



data showed, as hypothesized, significant gains in IC, the ability to think in more complex ways about the issues relevant to extremism, measured by IC, followed by even greater IC understanding and application evident in the participant presentations. According to the integrative complexity literature, and in line with RIVE research and prevention initiatives, such changes predict pro-social rather than violent means to resolve conflict. Participants' significant shift towards *Direct* as a conflict style is in line with the new confidence and empowerment participants expressed. The overall picture supports the efficacy of this IC and values complexity based intervention, designed originally for broad-based primary prevention, but here also shown to be an effective model for former al Shabaab members as well.

## Appendix: Pre and Post Testing Instruments.

### Paragraph Completion Test

1. When I think about MY community (group) (see A, above)... *(fill in the large blank section)*
2. When I think about the OTHER group (see B, above)... *(fill in the large blank section)*

**SIP Scale** (Scale 1 - 5; Strongly Agree = 5, Strongly Disagree = 1; items balanced for order effects Pre and Post)

- a. My group often has to do what other more powerful groups want
- b. My group is often treated unfairly by more powerful groups
- c. Members of my group are easily accepted into influential or powerful groups in Kenya
- d. My group deserves to have a stronger position
- e. The strength of my group is increasing

### Conflict Scenarios Questionnaire

#### *Pre test*

#### Scenario 1:

You are walking down the street at night in Eastleigh and someone you don't like is on the other side of the street, walking towards you. You are alone. He is with a couple of other men. They are talking about you and looking in your direction. They get louder and shout insults at you. You can tell he is trying to get a reaction out of you. He and the other men are laughing. *What do you do?*

For each scenario, 5 options. Rank each option according to whether you would or would not react this way. (Scale 1 – 5; 1 = Yes, I would do this for sure, 5 = No, I would never do this)

- a. You look the other way (like, into a shop window) and hope they'll keep walking past you. Your goal is to avoid the situation and forget about it.
- b. You cross the street and confront them. They're being foolish and a pain. You tell them to stop now. Your goal is to solve the problem by being as direct as possible.
- c. You cross the street smiling, asking how they're doing. You want to be friends, not make a big deal of it. Your goal is to keep the peace and the relationship at all costs.
- d. You go up to them, smiling a little. You say, 'Yeah, that was a good joke — but I'm standing next to you, you don't have to shout'. You smile to break the tension. Your goal is to break the hostility by surprising them with friendliness but at the same time telling them to stop shouting.
- e. You don't like what they're saying, and you let them know that, but you keep walking on. They know that you could retaliate if you wanted to, but you don't. Your goal is to reach a compromise: everyone has freedom of expression – live and let live.

**Scenario 2:**

You are waiting in line to get on a bus, and there is an argument between the bus driver, a Kenyan, and a passenger whom you know from your community. The bus driver is angry and is making the Somali get off the bus. You wonder what the Somali did wrong, and yet you also know that there is often unfair prejudice against Somalians. *What do you do?*

- a. You decide that you should calm the situation by asking your fellow Somali to make peace with the bus driver and to comply.
- b. You intervene straight away to confront the bullying bus driver; meanwhile you call your Somali friends who are in line for the bus to give you back up.
- c. You don't want to inflame this trivial-looking situation, so you stay out of it. You wander off to catch another bus.
- d. You speak to the bus driver in Swahili and ask him what the problem is. Then you speak in Somali to the Somalian and ask him what the problem is. You offer to help both parties get what they need, with neither losing face.
- e. You think that maybe the bus driver is inflating the cost of the ticket because the Somali has a lot of luggage, so you suggest that the Somali should pay just a little bit more for his ticket, but not the full price the bus driver is demanding.

## Conflict Scenarios Questionnaire

*Post test*

**Scenario 1:**

It's the Africa Nations Cup game, and Somalia is playing against \_\_\_\_\_ team (you decide which team this is). You are in a bus full of supporters of your team. A bus from the rival team comes up alongside your bus. Everyone in both buses goes wild, shouting, pounding on the windows. Then someone throws something at the rival team bus. This is dangerous. *What do you do?*

- a. You say to the person, "Hey," throw something at me. Whatever they throw at you, you then quietly pass it to someone else and say- pass it on. Then you start passing something else. Several things are now being passed around the bus in a friendly way.
- b. You roll down the window and tell the fans in the other bus they can throw something back at your bus.
- c. You sink down in your seat and close your eyes. You don't want anything to do with this.
- d. You say directly to the man in your bus who is throwing things and tell him to stop it. Does he want to be responsible if the bus gets pulled over by the police?
- e. You put your arm around the man throwing things and tell him you don't want him to get in trouble. Looking around the bus, you say: We're all friends and we stick together.

**Scenario 2:**

Walking home, you see some young kids from your neighborhood hanging out on the street. You see them stopping another young kid – a youngster from another part of town, from a different background - and picking a fight with him. *What do you do?*

- a. You walk up to the kids and tell them to stop right now. They should be ashamed of themselves. They need to go home this instant.
- b. You walk past. It's none of your business. Their parents should sort them out. The kid will be okay.
- c. You say, 'Hey, Kid (getting beaten up), what are you getting beaten up for?' To the others you say: 'Have a go at me! Oh no, you don't know what you're doing, try this (showing them Aikido martial arts moves)!'
- d. You say, 'Come on kids. Say you're sorry. Shake hands. You're all friends now, right? No one is hurt, right? Go home'.
- e. You say, 'Okay, now this guy who's getting beaten up gets to have a punch at each of you. Who's first?'