Relating to Radicalism

Family and Upbringing Experiences
in Radicalization and De-radicalization

Elga Sikkens

Cover image: SENF Theaterpartners
Printed by: GVO drukkers & vormgevers, Ede
ISBN: 978-90-393-7043-8

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Relating to Radicalism

Family and Upbringing Experiences
in Radicalization and De-radicalization

In Relatie tot Radicalisme

Familie- en Opvoedingservaringen
in Radicalisering en Deradicalisering
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Utrecht
op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof. dr. H.R.B.M. Kummeling,
ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties in het openbaar
te verdedigen op 10 oktober 2018 des middags te 2.30 uur

door

Elga Marije Sikkens

geboren op 16 februari 1985 te Borger

Promotor:	Prof. dr. M. de Winter
Copromotoren:	Dr. M.R.P.J.R.S. van San Dr. S.M.A. Sieckelinck

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1 General Introduction

He also told my parents: "I'm going for the jihad". And we just answered "yeah sure." Because he was fifteen. When there were casualties in Palestine he would say: "I'm going there!" But how will you go there? Do you think it's easy to go there as a little boy? So yeah, no-one paid attention to it. We just thought "it's a phase, it will pass."

(Sister of Kharim)

When an adolescent or young adult radicalizes, and their family members do not support their extreme ideals or behavior, family members can go through difficult times. They have many questions, worries, and fears. Parents are struggling with the radicalization of their children, regardless of the extreme ideology the adolescent or young adult has embraced. Some parents fear that their child might leave for Syria or wonder if white shoe laces in black army boots are a bad sign. Other parents are confused about their daughter not shaking hands with male relatives anymore, or struggle with their children's extreme utterances about the meat industry, democracy, or multicultural society. A lot happens in families when radicalization takes place, but not many researchers have focused on these family experiences. Instead, research and policy have mainly focused on preventing and countering radicalization from a security perspective (Dullaert, 2015; Schmid & Price, 2011). The Netherlands' Ombudsman for Children showed that only a few measures in Dutch radicalization policy aimed for pedagogical prevention: so only a few measures aimed for including young people in society, making them resilient against radical ideologies, and protecting them from violence on social media and polarization in the current public debate (Dullaert, 2015). According to the Ombudsman (2015), this may lead to insecurity and fear in young people which, in turn, may lead to radicalization. Parents can play an important role in helping young people to become resilient and critical citizens and thereby prevent them from radicalizing (Dullaert, 2015; Sikkens, 2014). Consequently, apart from taking security measures, government should also focus on

the prevention of radicalization, preferably from a pedagogical[1] perspective. This dissertation focuses on what happens in families when radicalization and de-radicalization take place and gives insight into the processes that these young people and their family members go through. Understanding radicalization in the context of a family's experiences could contribute to our knowledge on how to prevent radicalization.

This chapter will first discuss the pedagogical perspective that was central to this study. Then, because radicalization and de-radicalization are such diffuse terms nowadays, we will clarify our definitions of radicalization and de-radicalization. Finally, an account of the research method is provided, and the aims and outline of the dissertation are presented.

From a security perspective to a pedagogical perspective

When this study started six years ago, there was little consideration of the potential influence of upbringing on radicalization. Instead, most research was conducted from a security perspective (Schmid & Price, 2011), trying to pinpoint causes and remedies for radicalization. Radicalism is often exclusively seen as a possible threat to society. But by perceiving adolescents exclusively as radicals and a threat to society, it is often forgotten that the development of ideals is characteristic of adolescence. Ideals can be seen as perfect pictures of a (perfect) situation that still has to be realized; such an ideal would motivate someone to strive after his or her ideal as a goal in life (Sieckelinck, 2009). During adolescence and emerging adulthood, all young people go through developmental stages, entailing transitions in which they address questions about who they are, about worldview and religion, and develop ideals (Arnett, 2014). Committing yourself to ideals is an important part of identity development, according to Erikson (1968). Adolescents commit themselves to idols and ideals to make sense

[1] The term 'pedagogical' in English has a classroom-bound meaning, but in Dutch, *pedagogisch* refers to "the entire business of rearing children – educational, cognitive, social, emotional – in family, school and society" (De Winter, 2012, 36-37). In this dissertation, we refer to the Dutch meaning when using the term pedagogical.

of the world around them. Ideals help to simplify their worldview and organize their life within a new social world of which they become a part (Erikson, 1968).

Gielen (2008) showed how the search for identity plays an important role in radicalization towards extreme rightwing and extreme Islamist ideologies. Negative experiences may lead young people to question who they are and where they are going in life. They themselves determine what their identity will look like, but this is also influenced by interpersonal contact, group processes, and sociological phenomena like polarization (Gielen, 2008). As adolescents are developing, they are more susceptible to influences from the outside world (Spee & Reitsma, 2010). When young people feel acknowledged, they experience their own identity to be positive. However, when they feel excluded or disrespected they may retreat to their own group, distancing themselves from the rest of society. "Superior" characteristics of the in-group like solidarity, discipline, purity, and tradition are then emphasized to support "a positive ethnic, political, or religious identity" (Verkuyten, 2006: 380). So feelings of exclusion in the search for identity may possibly lead to the development of a more radical body of thought and ideals (Buijs, Demant & Hamdy, 2006; Gielen, 2008).

To prevent ideals from becoming violent and immoral, harmful to other people's interests, harmful to him or herself, and at odds with the democratic constitutional state, ideal development may be in need of pedagogical guidance (Sieckelinck & De Ruyter, 2009; Sikkens, 2014). According to Bartlett and Birdwell (2010), it would be important for parents and teachers to listen to radical ideas of young people, so that they can be critiqued and subsided when needed. Educators could possibly help to build resilience to extreme ideologies (Davies, 2016). By educating in schools how to think critically, young people would perhaps be less susceptible to "simplistic black and white reasoning" that causes extremism and violence (Bartlett & Birdwell, 2010: 28). Therefore, the possible radicalization of adolescents could also be approached as an upbringing issue. Slowly, the role of parents and schools became more apparent in radicalization research, and this dissertation is a result of that development.

Defining radicalization

No agreement exists on the definition of radicalization (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). Some scholars even argue that radicalization does not exist, but is a term constructed by media, government, and security agencies (Neumann, 2013). However, most scholars distinguish between violent and cognitive radicalization (Bartlett, Birdwell & King, 2010; Vidino & Brandon, 2012). McCauley & Moskalenko (2008: 415), for example, define radicalization as a "dimension of increasing extremity of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in support of intergroup conflict and violence," while Vidino and Brandon (2012: 9), for example, define cognitive radicalization to be "the process through which an individual adopts ideas that are severely at odds with those of the mainstream, refutes the legitimacy of the existing social order, and seeks to replace it with a new structure based on a completely different belief system." Besides a violent and cognitive radicalization, an emotional component can also be identified. Sieckelinck and De Ruyter (2009) show that people can become too passionate in pursuing their ideals, and because of this passion, they try to achieve ideals by all means and at all costs. Moreover, radicalization would be a relative concept (Mandel, 2009). Mandel states that being radical is always in comparison to something else, for example, the law or tradition. Whether an action or an individual is called "radical" depends on these comparisons. Mandel (2009) argues that the term "radical" could be used (for example, by authorities) to refer to something that is undesired or is even a threat to the community. However, by simply considering adolescents and their ideals to be dangerous, one overlooks the fact that ideals—even radical ones—can exist in a democratic discourse, and that some idealistic young people simply want to be actively involved in their communities (Sikkens, 2014).

In order to do justice to the relative meaning of radicalization, we constructed the following definition, which is based on the existing definitions, but based foremost on the conversations we had with young people who have extreme ideals and their family members: *radicalization is the process through which an adolescent or young adult develops extreme political, societal, or religious ideals that are severely at odds with those of their family and/or the mainstream*. In our research, we consider the development of ideals to be a necessary part of identity development in adolescence,

influenced by interaction with the adolescent's social environment and socialization (Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010). As posed above, ideals—even extreme or radical ones—do not inherently have to be a danger to society, but could also help shape society (for example, the black power movement) and help shape identity. Moreover, Bartlett and Birdwell (2010) emphasize that people can proclaim extreme thoughts without becoming violent and that being extreme is both legitimate and a human right (Bartlett & Birdwell, 2010). However, it can be desirable for government, parents, and teachers to provide a counterbalance in case the extreme ideals become harmful or are at odds with the democratic constitutional state (Sikkens, 2014), for example, when violence is used to pursue ideals. Many of our respondents felt that violence would be justified to strive after their ideals, although this did not account for all respondents.

Defining de-radicalization

Another concept that needs clarification is our understanding of de-radicalization. To simplify an otherwise complex theoretical debate, this study has made a distinction between *disengagement* and *de-radicalization*. For *de-radicalization*, we applied the definition of Neumann (2010), who shows that de-radicalization signifies substantive changes in ideology. *Disengagement*, on the other hand, facilitates behavioral change such as rejection of violence (Horgan & Braddock, 2010). Therefore, disengagement does not require a change in radical ideas as such, yet it does require a change in one's readiness to use violence to effect change. Although this theoretical distinction was made by scholars, in practice the division between de-radicalization and disengagement seems to be less clear; the process is more gradual and ongoing (Clubb, 2015). This study, therefore, included *former* radicals who have distanced themselves from their extremist thinking (de-radicalized) or behavior (disengaged) by leaving a particular group or rejecting the violence that they once used or condoned. Some of the respondents were convicted for hate crimes or terrorism, but not all. All respondents, though, recognized themselves in the description of *formers* and their family members confirmed this description.

METHOD

An explorative qualitative research approach

This study has an explorative nature, as there is only little theoretical knowledge on family and upbringing dynamics within the radicalization and de-radicalization process. Due to this lack of knowledge and existing theories, we chose to use a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), aiming to generate theory from the qualitative data gathered. Qualitative research has the means to give rich descriptions about people and their way of interacting within their natural environment (Bryman, 2008). Moreover, it has the ability to reveal the complexity in a process like radicalization and de-radicalization, as these processes cannot be exclusively reduced to isolated variables (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It also gives voice to respondents who would not have been heard otherwise, which can contribute to their empowerment, and provides the opportunity to convey the story from the participants' perspective, rather than from the experts' point of view (Creswell, 1998; Goldring, 2010). There has been a lot of research on radicalization; however, not many researchers have spoken with people who are considered radical. This study gives voice to people who are passionate about their (sometimes very extreme) ideals.

The research sample

Ideals Adrift II

This dissertation is based upon two separate studies: *Ideals Adrift II* and *Formers and Families*. *Ideals Adrift II* is a follow-up study, following a small exploratory pilot study (Ideals Adrift I) that was conducted in 2010. The preceding pilot study focused on the influence of the home, school, and peers on the process of radicalization (Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010). In-depth interviews were held, departing from the young people's own narratives. Parents and siblings were also included in this study and a pedagogical view of radicalization was developed. In order to enhance our knowledge about the pedagogical influence on radicalization, a follow-up research project was designed (*Ideals Adrift II*), which aimed to include more interviews with young people who have extreme ideals and their parents. This follow-up project

provides empirical data on the radicalization process of respondents between 16 and 33 years old who have various extreme ideals and especially focuses on the role that parents play in the radicalization process of young people. *Ideals Adrift II* was funded by FORUM, the former Institute on Multicultural Affairs.

The fieldwork was conducted between 2012 and 2015 in the Netherlands and Belgium; in the study, a qualitative research design was used because of the explorative character of the study and the opportunity for participants to express their views and describe their experiences (Boeije, 2010). As there exists growing evidence that processes of radicalization among widely divergent groups show parallel developments (Gielen, 2008; Stern, 2003; Van San et al., 2010), this dissertation focuses on respondents with extreme-right, radical Islamic, and extreme left-wing ideals. The study included interviews with young people who perceived themselves as radical or were considered radical by their family members. Most young respondents used or condoned violence to achieve their ideals. However, a small minority pointed out that the use of violence or illegal actions was not acceptable; these interviews were included because they provided us with a unique insight into parental responses toward ideal development. For example, it showed us how a mother joined her converted daughter at gatherings in the mosque to monitor her child's ideal development and support her at the same time. These are pointers for useful parental responses, even though we cannot definitively conclude that it was the parental response that prevented radicalization toward violence.

In total, 56 case studies were completed, consisting of interviews with young people and (in most cases) at least one family member. In 14 cases, we were unable to speak to the adolescent or young adult because he or she had left for Syria, and in some cases, was deceased. In those case studies, we only interviewed the parents. The *Ideals Adrift II* study consists of interviews with 42 young people who strive after extreme ideals: 24 have extreme Islamist ideals, 9 are far-right adherents, 4 animal right activists, and 5 young people who have far-left ideals.

Besides interviewing young respondents with extreme ideals, 30 parents, 3 guardians, 3 teachers, and 7 siblings were included in the study. Both young respondents and

their family members were interviewed, as this study aimed to investigate the interaction between parent and child when radicalization takes place. Moreover, interviews with multiple respondents from the same family helped us to triangulate our data. By noting where memories converged, we were better able to identify which memories were valid and which may have been constructed (Conway & Williams, 2008). Most parents were approached via their son or daughter. This may have caused a selection bias, as it was often difficult to get the adolescents' or young adults' consent to speak to their parents. In case the parent and child did not agree on ideology, their relation was often troubled, and the young respondent would not permit us to speak with his/her parents. Moreover, young respondents from an Islamic background most often did not permit us to speak with their family members which also introduced possible selection bias.

Table 1 *Number of Interviewees and their (Child's/Siblings') Ideologies in the Ideals Adrift II study*

Ideology	Young respondents	Parents	Siblings	Teacher / Guardian
Extreme Islam	24	20	4	3
Extreme right-wing	9	5	2	2
Animal rights	4	2	0	0
Extreme left-wing	5	3	1	1
Total	42	30	7	6

Formers and Families

In 2014 and 2015, the research project called *Formers and Families* was conducted. In this study, researchers from Denmark, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands cooperated in studying former radicals and their family members. The main reason for this particular co-operation was the assumption that these countries differed in their abilities to guide and support families with children that radicalize. The study was funded by the European Commission.

As the family context of radicalization still is one of the remaining unknown factors in the radicalization process, our aim was to learn from *formers* and their relatives about their role in the process of radicalization and de-radicalization. Therefore, in each country, 10 case-studies were conducted. In this research, a case study is a combination of at least two in-depth interviews relating to the radicalization process of one former radical activist. One of the interviews was held with the former extremists. The age at which the formers became involved in extreme ideologies ranged from 12 to 16 years of age, with a mean of 14 years of age. The age that they desisted lies between 15 and 27 years of age, with a mean of 21 years of age. Most of the time, the formers functioned as a gateway to interview their family members. In case the parents were not available, due to refusal by the former radical or the parents, another close family member or close friend was elected as a suitable participant. This study aimed to include formers with different kinds of ideologies (e.g. extreme Islamist, far-right, far leftist, or animal rights activists), as it was expected to find similarities in their development and family context (see Van San et al., 2010; Lutzinger, 2012).

Before the field research started, it was expected to be fairly easy to contact formers, because they were no longer involved in an extreme ideology and would be able to share their "success story" with the interviewers. But the opposite appeared to be true: some formers struggled with feelings of shame and guilt, and/or did not feel like raking up the past. However, we succeeded in finding and speaking with 31 formers, of which the results can be read in this dissertation. In total, the study included 14 formers who used to have extreme Islamist ideals, 11 former far-right adherents, 4 former animal right activists, and 2 formers who used to have far-left ideals.

Table 2 *Number of Interviewees and their Ideologies in the Formers & Families study*

Ideology	Number of interviewees
Extreme Islam	14
Extreme right-wing	11
Animal rights	4
Extreme left-wing	2
Total	31

Besides former radicals, their parents, grandparents, siblings, partners, close friends, and teachers were interviewed. In the *Formers and Families* study, we spoke with 15 parents, 10 siblings, 6 spouses, 4 friends, 2 children, 1 grandparent, and 1 teacher.

Table 3 *Number of interviewed 'significant others' in the Formers & Families study*

Family member or significant other	Number of interviewees
Parents	15
Siblings	10
Partners	6
Friends	4
Children	2
Grand parents	1
Teachers	1
Total	39

The articles in this dissertation are based on the *Ideals Adrift II* and *Formers & Families* research samples. The fieldwork was ongoing, which is characteristic for explorative qualitative research. The number of interviewees in the articles throughout the dissertation often differ as the fieldwork was still ongoing, or articles were based on (part of) one research sample or both research samples together. Therefore, in each chapter, the method used and the dataset are described.

Exploring the research field

Empirical research *on* radicalization *with* radicals is not very common because many scholars experience difficulties in finding respondents willing to talk openly about their beliefs. As there was no written example on how to find and approach young people who have extreme ideals, several methods were explored during this study to get in touch with this target group. For example, several demonstrations and gatherings were joined in order to meet potential participants. However, how should a researcher present oneself at such an event without scaring potential participants off? Some target groups in research are, after all, very suspicious about research, as it might be initiated or financed by the government. People with extreme ideals, for example, are often distrustful of people outside of their own networks because they distrust the authorities and can, therefore, be difficult to find in radicalization research and also hard to approach (Berko, 2009; Juergensmeyer, 2003; Richardson, 2006; Stern, 2003). Moreover, at these gatherings, it was hard to assess whom to approach, because you cannot (always) tell ideals from someone's appearance.

We therefore searched for better ways to approach potential respondents. We looked for a place where we could be open about our research agenda, where it would be apparent which ideals a young person strives after, and where there would be a safe distance at first so that the potential participants could quietly contemplate whether they were willing to participate in an interview. The Internet, and more specifically social media, seemed to be the perfect place for that.

Social media was used in order to find and approach potential respondents. Research shows that people feel less restrained on the Internet to share intimate information with

strangers due to anonymity: the so called stranger-on-the-train phenomenon (Valkenburg, Schouten & Peter, 2006). A researcher can perhaps be that particular stranger, listening to their stories without judgement, and so the Internet seemed to be a good starting point for our fieldwork. Furthermore, the Internet seemed to be a good starting point as potential participants often stated their ideals on their Facebook[2] pages. How social media was used to find and approach potential respondents can be read in more detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. We did not use Facebook to interview respondents, but asked them via message to meet in person.

Interviews

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted. The interviews varied from open to semi-structured, guided by a topic list. Although the precise wording of questions varied each time, certain topics were prescribed and mandatory for the interviewer. The interviews were held between 2012 and 2015, in a societal atmosphere marked by considerable tensions around radicalization and the war in Syria. The length of the interviews varied from one hour to three hours.

We opted for face-to-face in-depth interviews, as radicalization enhances dynamics and unique processes which cannot be captured by surveys: Interviews gave the respondents the possibility to tell their unique stories from beginning to end. These stories gave a good impression of their lives before they became attracted to certain extreme ideals, such as their upbringing, possible radicalization factors, potential parental influence on the radicalization process and, in some cases, the factors that may have influenced de-radicalization. In-depth open interviewing gave us the opportunity to speak with "radicals" and their parents: people that are not often personally involved in radicalization research. It was a very rich experience to interview girls in niqab in a local shopping mall, conducting interviews on park benches with young activists, and visiting a variety of people at their homes. A handful of interviews were conducted through Skype. A webcam was then used instead of a

[2] We used Facebook during a time that most people were not as concerned about their privacy when using this website.

face-to-face setting. Most interviews were in a one-on-one setting. However, in some cases, family members were present during the interview and in the course of the conversation they were sometimes asked to comment on the statements made by the family member being interviewed.

During interviews with family members, parents were sometimes unnerved. Tears were shed during the interviews when they realized that their children, for instance, might not return from Syria. Alternatively, they asked for advice about how to deal with or relate to their children: questions a researcher cannot really answer, although we often tried. Talking about their, often difficult, experiences can make interviewees feel very vulnerable and thus puts a great responsibility on the researcher – not only in terms of protecting their informants' identities (which in this study was key), but also in terms of ensuring that the interview context in itself provided a "safe" environment to talk. By using a narrative approach in which participants could tell their story the way they wanted to, the interview was intended to be a rewarding, or at least neutral, experience for the interviewee, both during and after the interview.

If agreed, the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Almost all interviewees agreed to the recording, which aided the academic integrity and validity of the data. For reasons of privacy, every interview was immediately transcribed as an anonymous version: names of persons were altered, locations changed, and any detail that could lead to identification of the person involved is either blurred or removed. All these measures were taken, however, in a way that their stories, insights, and interpretations remain intact for further analysis and comparison. Participants were only included in the definite sample if there was consent. Due to the high security profile of our respondents, no interview was made available to third parties, and transcripts were only made for scientific purposes. However, if participants wanted to read their own transcripts, they were allowed to do so.

Aims and outline of the dissertation

Figure 1 provides a schematic overview of the dissertation:

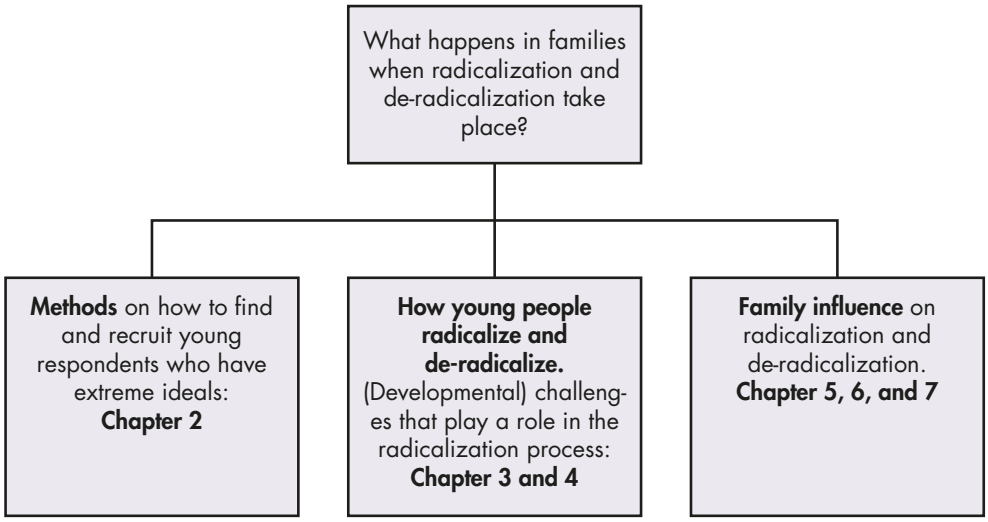

Figure 1. Schematic overview thesis

The central question in this research is *what happens in families when radicalization and de-radicalization take place?* The study focuses on the interaction between parent and child prior to and during the radicalization process and the de-radicalization process, and examines how, according to our respondents, this interaction may or may not have influenced those processes.

Methods

This study aims to contribute to the scientific knowledge on radicalization by including the voices of young radicals and their family members. Prior to the start of this research, most research in the radicalization field was based on secondary sources like autobiographies, newspapers, court documents, police records, and (jihadi) videos. Traditionally, researchers have put less effort into listening to what people with extreme ideals themselves have to say (Horgan, 2014). Empirical data, consisting of interviews with people who pursue extreme ideals, former radicals, and their family

members who experienced the radicalization process from up-close, are scarce in radicalization research, or consist of a relative small-N. This study aims to contribute to the existing studies on radicalization by systematically analyzing interviews with 155 respondents (adolescents/young adults who have extreme ideals, parents, siblings, care givers, and teachers). However, as it can be difficult in radicalization research to find respondents and win their trust, this dissertation starts with the following research question:

> Ch. 2: How can we find and approach young respondents who have extreme ideals?

Chapter 2 reports on the method that was used to find respondents who have extreme ideals. The chapter recounts our experiences of using Facebook as a tool for finding young respondents who do not trust researchers and discusses the benefits and limitations of Facebook when searching for and approaching populations that are difficult to reach.

What factors lead young people to radicalize and de-radicalize

By the means of interviews, the radicalization and de-radicalization processes of adolescents and young adults were studied. The study aimed to assess why young people feel that they radicalized and de-radicalized, as seen from a pedagogical perspective. Prior research has looked into factors that may influence the radicalization and de-radicalization processes, but these studies did not visibly focus on pedagogical aspects, like transition into adulthood, identity and ideal development, and the possible influence of parents and/or teachers. Moreover, most research focused on radicalization toward a specific ideology, whereas in this study, it is hypothesized that the radicalization process toward different extreme ideologies could be very similar. The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

> Ch. 3: What factors led young people with various ideals to radicalize?
>
> Ch. 4: What do pathways in and out of radicalization look like according to former radicals and their family members?

Chapter 3 reports on the push- and pull- factors that, according to our respondents, play a role in the radicalization process of young people with different extreme ideologies. By the means of 93 interviews with extreme leftwing, extreme rightwing, and extreme Islamic youth and their pedagogical environment, we studied whether the push- and pull- factors were similar for the different ideological groups.

Chapter 4 explores what pathways in and out of extremism look like based on accounts by former radicals and their families. This chapter will report on several possible journeys in and out of radical ideology or engagement, illustrated by rich descriptive case material. This chapter shows that radicalization is related to challenges that young people face in the transition from youth to adulthood.

Family influence on radicalization and de-radicalization

This dissertation also aims to study the potential influence that family may have on the radicalization and de-radicalization processes. It is often thought that radicalization finds its origin within the home, and policy makers aim anti-radicalization programs partly at families (Ministry of Security and Justice, NCTV & Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2014). But prior research has hardly focused on the role that families play within the radicalization and de-radicalization processes. Therefore, the following research questions are addressed:

> Ch. 5 + 6: How do parents respond toward the (extreme) ideals of their children, and why do they respond in this way?
>
> Ch. 7: How do former radicals and their family members perceive, in their own words, the potential parental influence on radicalization and de-radicalization?

Chapter 5 explores how parents react to the development of extreme ideals and why they respond in the way that they do. This chapter aims to gain knowledge about the influence of parents on adolescents who develop extreme ideals.

Chapter 6 expands on the previous chapter and explores whether the parental response is consistent throughout the radicalization process and whether it is similar to the general parenting style used by parents in different upbringing situations.

Chapter 7 describes a study into the possible role played by family members in processes of radicalization and de-radicalization of young people. Former radicals and their family members were interviewed to find an answer to the question of whether the radicalization and de-radicalization processes are influenced by the (upbringing climate in the) family and by the responses of parents and other educators.

General discussion

Finally, in **Chapter 8**, we recapitulate and reflect upon the findings of the empirical studies. Furthermore, several implications for policy and practice will be discussed, along with suggestions for future research.

2 Participant Recruitment through Social Media: Lessons Learned from a Qualitative Radicalization Study Using Facebook

Social media are useful facilitators when recruiting hidden populations for research. In our research on youth and radicalization, we were able to find and contact young people with extreme ideals through Facebook. In this chapter, we discuss our experiences using Facebook as a tool for finding respondents who do not trust researchers. Facebook helped us recruit youths with extreme Islamic and extreme left-wing ideals. We conclude by discussing the benefits and limitations of using Facebook when searching for and approaching populations who are difficult to reach.

This chapter was published as:

Sikkens, E., Van San, M., Sieckelinck, S., Boeije, H., & De Winter, M. (2017). Participant recruitment through social media: lessons learned from a qualitative radicalization study using Facebook. Field Methods, 29(2), 130-139.

ES and MvS conducted the field research; ES, MvS, SS, HB, and MdW wrote the paper.

How do you approach potential respondents who do not trust you? Some target groups are, after all, very suspicious about research that might be initiated or financed by the government. For example, people with extreme ideals often distrust people outside their own networks because they distrust the authorities and can, therefore, be difficult to find in radicalization research and hard to approach (Berko, 2009; Juergensmeyer, 2003; Richardson, 2006; Stern, 2003). Social media have turned out to be useful facilitators when trying to recruit hidden populations for research. The purpose of this article is to discuss our experiences of using Facebook as a tool for finding respondents with extreme ideals who do not trust researchers.

In our research on parental influence on radicalization, we tried to recruit adolescents and young adults with extreme ideals. However, the often-used snowball sampling in fieldwork did not work for our research population. The young people with extreme ideals were very protective of their own group; passing on names of group members was not acceptable. We therefore searched for other methods to find potential respondents. Many researchers have found that the use of social network sites can be a useful method to recruit a difficult-to-reach population (Barratt et al., 2015; Masson, et al., 2013; Palys & Atchinson, 2012; Parkinson & Bromfield, 2013; Seltzer et al., 2014). Still, to our knowledge, little is known about the use of social networking sites for the recruitment of adolescents and young adults with extreme ideals. However, as young people are very active on social media and the Internet is often used for propagating radical ideologies (Prucha & Fisher, 2013), the Internet seemed to be a good place to start our field research and to find respondents.

We focused on Facebook because it is where people present themselves in their profiles, share their opinions, meet other users, and join groups with shared interests (Leung, 2013). Since the personal profiles often reveal what is on a person's mind, this seems to be a place where people with extreme ideologies could be found (Van San, 2015). Social networking sites would be particularly useful when searching for respondents who are stigmatized or marginalized in the off-line world as their isolation would push them toward social contacts in the virtual world (Palys & Atchinson, 2012). Thus, due to their marginalized position in society—caused by their radical views—respondents with extreme ideals are possibly found online more easily as they prefer

to stay under the radar in the off-line world. Furthermore, approaching respondents online could help in building trust because the younger generation tends to prefer online messages as these give people ''just the right amount of access, just the right amount of control'' (Turkle, 2011, p. 15).

In this article, we share our experiences of using Facebook as a tool for recruiting respondents who do not easily trust researchers. We address the question as to how Facebook can help the search for and approach to respondents who are difficult to reach due to a lack of trust. In the first section of this article, we discuss the method we used to find and approach our respondents. Second, we elaborate on the results of using Facebook to recruit young research participants with extreme ideals. In the concluding section, we discuss the pros and cons of using social networking sites in searching for respondents who do not trust you.

The current study

The fieldwork described in this article is part of a follow-up study on the development of extreme ideals in adolescents and young adults (Van San et al., 2013). Our aim was to study parental influence on radicalization, and we therefore sought to interview a minimum of 50 young people with extreme ideals as well as their parents. In our research, we understand extreme ideals to be ''ideals that are severely at odds with those of their family and/or the mainstream'' (Sieckelinck et al., 2015, p. 330).

The research was conducted in Flanders (Belgium) and the Netherlands between January 2012 and March 2015. We used Facebook to find and approach the research population, and we recruited young respondents online between February 2012 and July 2013.

Method

Recruitment and Inclusion Criteria

We searched Facebook to find young people between 15 and 30 years old who showed extreme ideals on their profile. We interviewed adolescents and young adults

with extreme right, radical Islamic, or extreme left-wing ideals. Our research focused on people with various types of extreme ideals, as growing evidence reveals that the processes of radicalization among widely divergent groups show parallel developments (Gielen, 2008; Van San et al., 2013).

Procedure

Many researchers feel uncomfortable about revealing private information, especially when the research concerns people in the fields of radical politics or criminality. It may be tempting to use anonymous Facebook profiles to observe and contact potential respondents, but this goes against the ethical guidelines of research. Also, transparency is essential in building trust. A possible solution to proceed on Facebook would be to create a neutral researcher Facebook profile. We created three of these Facebook accounts in which we presented ourselves as researchers. We chose neutral but explanatory names: For example, a name on one of our profiles was ''PhD-student Utrecht.'' On our profiles, we explained who we were and what our research was about. We generated separate profiles to approach different ideological groups. A single Facebook account would not have been sufficient because right-wing oriented people would certainly not trust a person who also shows interest in Islamists and has anarchistic Facebook friends. However, when we met the respondent face-to-face for an interview, we were open about our approach to people from a range of different ideologies.

Subsequently, we searched Facebook for respondents. We traced potential respondents by visiting relevant group pages. We found these group pages by using the following example key words in our search: Groene Vogels [Green birds], Shariah4Belgium, Shariah4Holland, Dutch Oi, Fitna, Anarchistische groep Amsterdam [Anarchistic group Amsterdam], Anti Dierproeven coalitie [Anti Animal Testing Coalition], Kraken gaat door [Squatting goes on]. We then visited these pages and selected people who posted messages on the group page or who ''liked'' extreme posts. We then looked at these people's personal profiles and checked whether they were explicit about their ideals on their profile. For example, the adolescents and

young adults were approached if their profiles showed adulation of martyrdom, white supremacy, or antigovernment claims.

Next, we sent potential respondents a private Facebook message to ask them for an interview. In this message, we explained who we were and the purpose of our study. Rather than using terms such as ''radical ideals'' (which might imply a security perspective that considered their ideals as unwanted and dangerous), we asked the potential participants about their ''strong ideals.''

We had two reasons for using this approach: a theoretical one and a practical one. The theoretical reason was that a lot of research on radicalization is conducted from a security perspective (Schmid & Price, 2011), in which scholars try to find ways of counteracting radicalization. From this perspective, young people who develop strong or extreme ideals are often considered to be radicals and are thought of as potential dangers to society. However, by simply considering adolescents and their ideals to be dangerous, one overlooks the fact that ideals, even radical ones, are part of a democratic discourse, and that some idealistic young people simply want to be actively involved in their communities (Van San et al., 2013). We therefore chose to approach our respondents as young people with strong ideals, rather than as radicals.

A practical reason for this approach was that we learned from previous research (Van San et al., 2013) that words like ''radicalization'' can stand in the way of finding respondents. However, our respondents were eager to talk to us when we told them about our parenting perspective and asked them about their strong ideals. The online use of words such as radicalization could also put the respondent at risk, as some may be monitored by security services.

Delicacy of wording in the recruitment message was important for obtaining trust. We stressed to our respondents that we are working for a university, as universities are usually perceived as neutral institutions. Moreover, we communicated that we are writing a book instead of doing research. We did not use the Dutch word for research, *onderzoek*, because it could also mean ''investigation,'' which has strong connotations with police and security services. In the text, we tried to avoid any

normative judgments toward their ideologies and chose an open-minded approach. Moreover, we promised the respondents confidentiality and anonymity (see Figure 1).

The people we interviewed were quite suspicious about the government, institutions, and researchers. It was therefore impractical to ask them to complete a written informed consent form. However, all our respondents gave verbal consent to participate in our research. We also received parental consent for participants who were between 16 and 18 years old. We anonymized all interviews to reduce any possible harm to the respondents by changing the interviewees' names and leaving out details that could identify them. Furthermore, all participants were informed that they could contact us at any time for further questions and could terminate their participation in the research whenever they pleased. Two respondents did this.

> The Utrecht University is writing a book about young people and their strong ideals. We are looking for people between 15 and 30 years old who would like to share why they put themselves into action for people, animals and/or the environment, and how this has developed over time. We want to know how adolescents and young adults develop their ideals and what role (if any) parents, teachers, or friends play within this development. We are therefore looking for people who give 100% for their ideals and are not scared to proclaim their strong ideas. Do you often clash with others over ideology? Are you proud of what you stand for, no matter what your parents, teachers, or friends think? Are you an assertive activist and would you like to participate in an interview for our book (of course anonymous), send us a message!

Figure 1. Recruitment text used in our research

Results

Between February 2012 and July 2013, we recruited over 80 respondents. Fifty-one of the respondents we interviewed were adolescents and young adults with extreme ideals, 33 of whom were recruited through Facebook. The other 18 young respondents

were recruited in traditional ways at demonstrations or gatherings. We also interviewed 30 parents, foster parents, and siblings whom, in general, we approached through the young respondents.

Through Facebook, we were able to recruit 19 young people with extreme Islamic beliefs, seven people who sympathized with extreme right-wing ideas, and seven people who were involved in animal activism or who supported anarchism. The age of the respondents we recruited through Facebook ranged from 16 to 31 years, with a mean age of 20.5 years. Twenty-one of these respondents were male and 12 were female.

Making Contact

When approaching a potential respondent, we usually sent one invitation message and after receiving a positive reply, one or two more messages were sent to arrange a time and place to meet for an interview. We found that it took far fewer messages to convince people with extreme Islamic ideals to participate in the research (usually just one), and a lot more messages if we approached young people with extreme left-wing ideals. In general, approximately four out of 10 messages were answered.

Although Facebook was very useful in helping us approach respondents with strong ideals, it did not enable us to approach all groups. Young people with extreme right-wing sympathies were, for example, difficult to find on Facebook. They seemed to prefer their own closed and anonymous community forums, such as Stormfront, rather than Facebook. When we tried to approach extreme right-wing respondents on Stormfront, all members were warned within the hour that researchers had tried to contact members. As noted in the forum, ''Or maybe it was the Secret Service?'' We found that Facebook is a more open medium than group forums such as Stormfront in that all layers of society and different generations use Facebook. Adolescents and young adults with left-wing ideals and (converted) young Muslims were easy to find on Facebook. One might imagine that people with extreme ideals would keep their profiles private so as not to be discovered by the police or secret services, leaving the researcher with the less extreme public Facebook profiles. Contrary to this assumption,

we found that a considerable number of the people with extreme left-wing and Islamic ideals had made their Facebook profiles public.

Convincing Respondents to Participate

One extreme left-wing female respondent we were trying to convince to participate in our research refused because she had seen our LinkedIn pages and found that one of our team members used to work for the local police as an administrator. So it is important to consider your online persona when approaching respondents who do not trust you. Furthermore, we found that Islamic young people were especially enthusiastic about participating in our research when we approached them through Facebook. Their enthusiasm was possibly driven by their desire to perform Dawah (to spread the word of Allah) but possibly also by the sincere interest that the researchers showed in their ideals. Left-wing-oriented idealists, however, were easy to find but hard to convince to participate in our research. Afraid that it would be government-led research, they often refused involvement. However, in a few cases, the person was eventually persuaded to meet us after extensive messaging and chatting on Facebook. Despite the use of social media, fieldwork within radicalization research remains a long-term effort; a researcher has to be persistent.

Discussion

In this article, we have shared our experiences of using Facebook as a tool for finding and approaching respondents who do not trust researchers. In keeping with Barratt et al. (2015) and Masson et al. (2013), we found that the use of social network sites can help in the recruitment of a hard-to-reach research population. A first major benefit was that Facebook profiles gave us a clear idea about people's ideals, so we had a better notion of who to invite for interview: Facebook made a hidden population visible. We did not use advertisement banners that are common in online fieldwork, but rather chose a personal approach. We used private messages to recruit people with extreme ideals because there exist strong privacy concerns among this population, as having extreme ideals usually involves membership of stigmatized or illegal groups. We therefore assumed that the chances of these respondents voluntarily

replying to an advertisement were small. Instead, to engage with respondents from the very beginning of the process, we contacted them personally.

A second benefit we found was that an approach via a private Facebook message gave respondents the power to open, ignore, delete, or contemplate the request in their own time. Potential participants could then quietly consider whether they were willing to participate in an interview and they were able to leave ''the field'' at any time, making the approach less intrusive.

A third benefit was that the potential respondent did not have to worry about group members who might be negative about their participation in research. When the researcher approaches potential respondents during a demonstration or event, others might notice them talking to a researcher. In contrast, when he or she is approached by private Facebook message, participation is more likely to be anonymous, which is important for respondents who are distrustful of people outside their own network.

However, a concern that scholars need to take into account when using Facebook for respondent recruitment is their own online persona, as every researcher is traceable on the Internet. Palys and Atchinson (2012, p. 357) also warned that ''the door to the Internet opens both ways,'' so when recruiting people who are very distrustful, researchers should consider their online persona before writing to respondents.

A final possible limitation is that in cases where you are not friends on Facebook, messages are sent to the ''other folder.'' Potential respondents are then not signaled that they have e-mail. However, by paying $1, you can send your message directly to someone's inbox. In Table 1, we have summarized some guidelines for approaching respondents who do not trust people outside of their own networks.

Table 1 *Guidelines for approaching respondents who do not trust you*
Create a researchers' Facebook page in order to be transparent
To build trust use a positive approach towards the research topic
To build trust use a personal approach instead of an advertisement
Show sincere interest
Be persistent
Researchers should be aware that their online persona is traceable on the internet

Conclusion

This study provides additional evidence that Facebook can be a facilitator in finding and approaching potential respondents who are hard to find in the off-line world because they do not trust anybody outside of their own networks. Finding potential interviewees through relevant group pages that they ''liked'' on Facebook and subsequently sending them a private recruitment message through Facebook turned out to be effective. The identified guidelines may benefit the future recruitment of respondents who do not trust researchers.

3 Different Ideology, same Radicalization Factors? Push- and Pull Factors according to Young People with Extreme Leftwing, Rightwing, and Islamic Ideologies

Several scholars have researched push and pull factors that may lead to radicalization. However, most of these studies have focused on radicalization toward a single extreme ideology; it has hardly been investigated whether radicalization factors toward different ideologies are comparable. This article focuses on the question of whether push and pull factors are similar for radicalization toward different extreme ideologies. This was done by means of 87 interviews with young people who have extreme left-wing, extreme right-wing, and extreme Islamic ideals, along with their family members and pedagogical network. The research shows that there are push and pull factors that are specific for certain ideologies, but that parallels between radicalization processes exist as well.

This chapter was published as:

Sikkens, E., Van San, M., De Winter, M., & Sieckelinck, S. (2017). Verschillende ideologie, dezelfde radicaliseringsfactoren? Push- en pullfactoren volgens jongeren met extreemlinkse-, extreemrechtse- en extreem Islamitische idealen. *Pedagogiek, 37*(2), 157-172.

ES designed and executed the fieldwork and data analyses, and wrote the paper. MvS: collaborated with the fieldwork and writing of the study. MdW: collaborated in the writing and editing of the final manuscript. SS: collaborated with the design and writing of the study.

Introduction

Many researchers have studied radicalization and its causal factors from the perspective of different scientific disciplines (Horgan, 2014; Merkl & Weinberg, 2003; Ranstorp, 2010; Sageman, 2004, 2008; Stern, 2003). In the current debate on radicalization, a dichotomy starts to exist: some experts argue that radicalization is prompted by a psychological process, while others believe that radicalization is impelled by the ideology itself. For example, in a newspaper interview Kenning contends that psychological push factors that move young people toward the Islamic caliphate are much stronger than pull factors rooted in the ideology (Kouwenhoven & Blokker, 2015). But is that indeed the case? And would that also account for young people who strive after extreme right or extreme left ideals? Most research has focused on a single type of ideology, but a research deficit is apparent for the issue of whether push and pull factors that lead to radicalization are similar for people drawn to different ideologies or subject to developmental influence in similar ways (Benhold, 2015; Rabasa et al., 2010; Schmid, 2013). Prior research hints that radicalization toward the extreme right and extreme Islam may show similar characteristics. After many years of research, Sageman (2004), for example, sees similarities between Nazis and Salafi terrorists in their moral willingness to use violence. Gielen (2008) also showed in one of her studies that the causes of radicalization toward extreme right-wing and extreme Islamic groups may exhibit few differences. Finally, Van San, Sieckelinck, and De Winter (2010) notice that the development of young people toward different extreme ideologies broadly corresponds. The adolescents and young adults whom they studied seemed to have been driven by worldly injustice, no matter what ideology they adhered to. However, up until now no systematic research has been conducted on radicalization factors that influenced people with different extreme ideologies.

The central question in this article is: *which push- and pull factors have led to radicalization, according to young respondents who endorse extreme ideologies and their family members, and are these factors similar for radicalization toward different ideologies or do they differ?* In other words, to what extent do the developmental trajectories of young people with extreme left-wing, extreme right-wing, and extreme

Islamic ideals show similarities? To answer this question, we will first give a short overview of the main *push* and *pull* factors that, according to the existing literature, play a role in the radicalization process. Next, we will show which push and pull factors have contributed to the radicalization of our respondents, based on interviews with them. We will then evaluate whether these factors show similarities or differences for the different ideological groups we have interviewed.

Many definitions exist for radicalization, but here we chose a definition that is useful from a pedagogical[3] perspective, as this study presumes that the development of extreme ideals is also influenced by interaction with the adolescent's social environment and socialization (Van San, Sieckelinck, & De Winter, 2010). Besides, according to Mandel (2009), being radical is relative; it is always in comparison to something else. In order to do justice to the relative meanings of radicalization, we define radicalization as *the process through which adolescents or young adults develop ideals that are severely at odds with those of their families and/or the mainstream culture.*

Push and pull factors

Previous research shows that there is no single cause for radicalization; it is rather caused by a complex mix of push and pull factors leading individuals to join radical groups (Korteweg et al., 2010; Schmid, 2013). *Push* factors can be seen as underlying triggers and incentives moving people toward radical groups (Schmid, 2013). Although a necessary condition, push factors in themselves do not cause radicalization. People are also attracted toward the positive features and benefits of a radical group, the so-called *pull* factors (Hassan, 2012). Or, as Borum (2011) puts it, "Radicalization […] is driven and sustained by multiple causes, rather than a single cause. Causal factors often include broad grievances that 'push' individuals toward a radical ideology and narrower, more specific 'pull' factors that attract them" (p. 57).

[3] The term "pedagogical" in English has a classroom-bound meaning, but in Dutch, pedagogisch refers to "the entire business of rearing children—educational, cognitive, social, emotional—in family, school and society" (De Winter, 2012, 36–37). In this article, we refer to the Dutch meaning when using the term pedagogical.

Push factors that were found in prior research include exclusion, social isolation, discrimination, problems at home, problems at school, a search for identity, and perceived and/or experienced injustices in the world (Borum, 2003; Cragin, 2014; DeMause, 2002; Ezekiel, 2002; Feddes et al., 2015; Gielen, 2008; Koomen & Van der Pligt, 2009; Meeus, 2015; Moghaddam, 2005; Sageman, 2008; Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2015; Silke, 2008; Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010).

Pull factors identified by previous research are the presence of radical groups or networks within the community, the presence of radical groups on the Internet, family members or friends who are already part of a radical group, and the tangible or imagined rewards that come with membership, such as status, excitement, and social bonds (Bakker, 2006; Cragin, 2014; Ezekiel, 2002; Gielen, 2008; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Sageman, 2008; Silke, 2008; Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010; Veldhuis & Staun, 2009; Venhaus, 2010).

In most of these studies, no explicit interest was shown in differences and similarities in radicalization factors leading to different ideological groups. Instead, in the existing literature the push and pull factors are described per group. What is striking is that these factors seem to have marginal differences. Ezekiel (2002), Gielen (2008), and Van der Valk and Wagenaar (2010) all describe radicalization factors for people adhering to extreme right-wing groups. They point out that exclusion, discrimination, problems at home, experiencing injustices, and contact with radical groups were all important push and pull factors leading young people to join extreme right-wing groups. The same factors have been found by researchers who studied radicalization factors among Islamic youth (Borum, 2003; Cragin, 2014; DeMause, 2002; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Moghaddam, 2005; Sageman, 2008; Silke, 2008; Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). Still, systematic knowledge on this subject is lacking; therefore, this study will further focus on this matter.

Method

This qualitative research is based on interviews with young people who have extreme ideals and individuals who represent the young people's pedagogical environment.

The study consists of interviews with 50 adolescents and young adults who endorsed extreme ideologies and 43 parents, siblings, social workers, and teachers. We spoke with both young people and their pedagogical environment to obtain a better picture of the radicalization process that the youngsters went through.

Adolescents and young adults

Of the 50 young people we interviewed, 26 had extreme Islamic ideals, of whom 16 were converts. Converts, in this study, were young people who changed from one tradition (in this case secular or Christian) to another (here Islam). Thirteen participants had extreme right-wing ideals or believed in the ideals of National Socialism. Six participants were involved in radical environmental or activist animal-rights movements, and five young respondents adhered to extreme left-wing ideologies. The age of the participants varied from 16 to 33 years.

Table 1 *Number of participant and their (child/brother/sister's/pupil/clients') ideology*

Ideology	Young respondents	Pedagogical network
Extreme Islamic (convert)	16	12
Extreme Islamic (not converted)	10	9
Extreme rightwing	13	13
Extreme leftwing	11	9
Total	50	43

The pedagogical network

Interviews were held with 31 parents, six siblings, three social workers, and three teachers. It was sometimes difficult to get consent from the adolescents and young adults to interview their parents; therefore, we also approached brothers and sisters in some cases. Furthermore, we were able to speak with 10 parents whose children

had left for Syria to join the Jihad.[4] In those cases it was not possible to speak with the adolescents or young adults themselves, but by interviewing the parents, the pedagogical context in which the radicalization had taken place could be reconstructed.

Recruitment and fieldwork

The majority of our participants were found and approached through Facebook (Sikkens, Van San, Sieckelinck, Boeije, & De Winter, 2017). For this purpose, three Facebook researcher accounts were created. On our profiles, we explained who we were and what our research was about. We then searched for young people who showed extreme ideals in their profile. For example, adolescents and young adults were approached if their profiles showed adulation of martyrdom, profession of white supremacy, or anti-government claims. We also joined relevant ideological group pages on Facebook and approached active members via private message. In this message, we explained who we were and the purpose of our study and invited the young people to participate in our research through an interview. If they accepted, we would make an appointment at a location of their choice. However, young people with extreme right-wing sympathies were difficult to find on Facebook. In light of this, we found the majority of our respondents through the networks of coworkers who studied radicalization previously and through our own networks.

Our research consisted of semi-structured interviews that were conducted in Dutch between January 2012 and April 2015 in Belgium and the Netherlands. We asked questions about how the young people had come into contact with their ideals, why these ideals and no others, and what was especially appealing about these ideals. The interviewers did not explicitly ask about push and pull factors. On average, each interview lasted 1.5 hours. Most interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. In one case, the participant did not give permission to record the interview, and instead the answers were written down. We anonymized all

[4] This concerned parents of five converted and five non-converted youngsters.

interviews to reduce any possible harm to the respondents by changing the interviewees' names and leaving out details that could identify them.

Qualitative analysis

To analyze the interview data, NVivo10 software was used. A coding system was designed, and four interviews were separately coded by two researchers until consensus was reached. By coding the interviews, several "incentives" were discerned as to why the participants had joined a radical group. These incentives were then labeled as various push and pull factors. In this way, a list of push and pull codes was derived that was used to code the remaining interviews. In case a new push or pull factor was mentioned, it was added to the coding scheme (Boeije, 2005). Next, we explored whether the mentioned push and pull factors showed similarities or differences for the various studied ideologies.

Results

Similarities in push factors

In this research, we aimed to study whether push factors that led young people to radicalize toward various ideologies showed similarities or differences. Young people with extreme left-wing, extreme right-wing, and extreme Islamic ideals and their family members mentioned the same push factors in the interviews. According to most interviewees, *(experiencing) injustice* played an important role in the radicalization process, regardless of the ideology they adhered to. Of course, the various groups mentioned different kinds of injustices: animal-rights activists worried about the maltreatment of animals, youth with extreme right-wing ideals sided against sheltering asylum seekers while "their own people are living in poverty," and young people who left for Syria to join the jihad often felt that Muslims in the Netherlands were being discriminated against or were frustrated that the world does not intervene in Syria's civil war.

> Andre (extreme right-wing ideals): *The moment that our elderly are abandoned in nursing homes, but there is space for building a mega*

> *mosque… Heaps of money are spent on anything that isn't Dutch, and the Dutch people are deserted by their own government!*
>
> Daniel (extreme Islamic ideals): *You are confronted with injustice in the world. For example, when you see pictures on the Internet of people who are tortured maliciously, those images cannot lie. [Pictures] of mass slaughtering in Palestine for example.*

Participants with different ideologies also mentioned *personal problems*, which we interpreted as a push factor in their radicalization process. The adolescent or young adult or their parents then indicated that the youngster was dealing with depression, illness, disorders, addiction, and/or problematic behavior.

> Yusuf (extreme Islamic ideals): *If you have a life that isn't all right or you aren't pleased with, you start searching. You start searching how you can improve your life. I suffered from severe ADHD and I had many behavioral problems.*

However, for some push factors we discovered differences in the degree they were mentioned by the various groups. These differences are described next.

Differences in push factors

Although young people with different ideologies pointed out that *problems at home* caused them to search for a religion or ideology, it was especially converts who mentioned a problematic home situation. Problems like addiction, mental health problems, problematic divorce of parents, (domestic) violence, unemployment, and debts were brought up.

> Mother of Murat (extreme Islamic ideals): *His father is depressed and on top of that ill. So he sleeps a lot. So at the age of 16, he [Murat] was actually on his own.*

The push factor *existential questions* about life seems to have played a more important role in the radicalization process of young people who have extreme Islamic ideals than for others. It concerned existential questions like "who am I?", "what do I want?" and "is there a God?", or questions about the meaning of life.

> Mother of Maura (extreme Islamic ideals): *Maura started to look for her identity, let's put it that way. First she was part of some sort of beauty context, and she constructed an online identity of beauty, nails, and that sort of things. Then she dated an Antillean guy who was a bit on the Catholic side, so then she posted all these biblical texts on Facebook and Twitter. And in 2014 she came into contact with Islam.*

Participants with various extreme ideologies pointed out that *personal exclusion*, like being bullied, not having many friends, and/or feeling lonely, played a role in their radicalization process. It was striking that exclusion was mentioned far more by young people who adhered to extreme right-wing ideologies than by young people who had other extreme ideals.

> Father of Rowan (extreme right-wing ideals): *But then they ended up at a school, and that was a so-called black school, and there they were horribly bullied and tormented. And in that lies the cause of the whole thing [radicalization] with him [Rowan].*

Problems at school or work were mentioned by young people with various ideals. But here we can also perceive a difference between the groups. It appears that especially young people who have extreme left-wing ideals and converts mentioned problems at school or work as a reason to engage more in their ideology.

> Joost (anarchistic ideals): *I was kicked off school in 4th grade, I was 17 at that time. I repeated a class twice so I couldn't stay in school. So practically I was just dismissed. But back then I wasn't that explicit about anarchism or anything, but later on I started to realize that it was the reason that I couldn't settle down at school because of the [anarchistic] way I think about hierarchy.*

Similarities in pull factors

Besides *push* factors, we also studied which *pull* factors were mentioned by the participants. Because existing research pointed out that *the presence of radical groups in the neighborhood or on the Internet*, and *family members or friends who are already a member of a radical group*, would be important pull factors, we first examined how

the young respondents came across their ideology. Participants reported that they mostly learned about a certain ideology through *peers* and through *media*. This did not differ per ideology. The young people would especially be influenced by what they saw on the Internet and television. Just watching the news and seeing images of Gaza would be sufficient to "make people pick up their weapons," according to a participant. Furthermore, it is striking that just a few respondents pointed to *family members* as a source for their ideology.

> Mark (extreme right-wing ideals): *My father votes VVD [conservative-liberal party] I think and my mother as well I think, or CDA [Christian Democrats]. Let's say a bit mainstream.*
> Interviewer: *And then they have a son who is a National Socialist!*
> Mark: *Yeah, that's what I said, they didn't influence that. That [learning about ideology] happened through my friends and Internet because that's where you find a lot of information you cannot find in the library.*

The young people and their parents also suggested in the interviews that the following other pull factors have influenced the radicalization process: finding a goal in life, support, answers to existential questions, and belonging. These four pull factors were mentioned by respondents with extreme left-wing, extreme right-wing, and extreme Islamic ideals. Similar to the push factors, differences were identifiable in the degree that these pull factors were mentioned. These differences will be explicated below.

Differences in pull factors

A pull factor that was mainly mentioned by converted and nonconverted Islamists, and by young people with extreme left-wing ideals, was obtaining a *goal in life* thanks to the ideology. A believe in an afterlife helped the religious youth to aim their lives, while young people with extreme left-wing ideals instead spoke about the goal to improve society.

> *Fatima (extreme Islamic ideals): Our goal, and accounts for every religious person, is that this life just is a pre-life. It's all a test, a worldly temptation. True life will only begin after you die.*

The young respondents and individuals from their pedagogical environment also named *support* as a pull factor in ideologies. The ideology provides support as it usually has clear regimens and ways of thought. This clarity, and the fact that ideologies often *provide answers to questions* that young people struggle with, makes a radical ideology very appealing. So the ideology itself also seems to play a role within the radicalization process. *Support* and *answers* were mainly pointed out by young people with an extreme Islamic ideology.

> Cassandra (extreme Islamic ideals): *Muslims are certain that this is the truth. So Islam is not so much a belief, it is rather a way of living. That is what attracted me in Islam, it has sort of a solution for everything.*

Both converts and young people with extreme right-wing ideals stated that they were looking for belonging with a group: participants mentioned comradeship, brother- or sisterhood, and being part of a community as important allurements.

> Dean (extreme right-wing ideals): *What spoke to me? The comradeship. We share the same ideology so we are comrades.*

> Francis (extreme Islamic ideals): *You feel that brotherhood. Because if you have problems as an individual Muslim or you worry about something, then the rest of the Muslim community is concerned about you. Why? Because you're all one people.*

Conclusion and discussion

The underlying causes of radicalization (push factors) and the allure of radical groups (pull factors) have been studied many times. Radicalization researchers usually focus on a single ideology, possibly because they presume that radicalization is triggered by the ideology itself. Therefore, it remains unclear whether push and pull factors are similar for young people with extreme right-wing, extreme left-wing, and extreme Islamic ideals.

To study the possible similarities and differences, this research focused on radicalization factors mentioned by young people with various extreme ideals and

individuals from their pedagogical environment. The research shows that young people with various ideologies seem to radicalize by both similar and also by group-specific push and pull factors. For example, all participants seem to have been driven by *injustices* that they have seen in the world, regardless of their ideology. And even though *personal problems* were less often mentioned as a push factor, they were mentioned by participants with various extreme ideals. When considering the existing literature, we expected that the push and pull factors toward different ideological groups would indeed correspond. A pilot study by Van San, Sieckelinck, and De Winter (2013) already showed that the experience of injustices was mentioned by youth with various extreme ideals; this is confirmed by this new field research.

Even though various push and pull factors were mentioned by all groups, we recognize some variety in emphasis in the factors that they mentioned. Our data, for example, shows that young people with extreme right-wing ideals feel that they were pushed by *personal exclusion* and their search for *belonging*. Possibly these youngsters join extreme right-wing groups because precisely these groups actively recruit young people who are socially isolated or feel emotionally down (Ezekiel, 2002; Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010). It is often only after joining the group that these lonely young people delve into the associated extreme ideology.

Furthermore, the interviews show that, according to the respondents, most young people did not learn about the radical ideologies through their parents, but came across these ideologies through peers or media. Prior research has shown that most parents do not teach their children extreme ideals (Van San & Sikkens, 2015). Still, some young people had ideals that were in line with the ideals of their parents, although more extreme. Research by Buurman and De Graaff (2009) also showed that young radical Muslims do not learn their ideals through their parents; these adolescents and young adults are far more orthodox than their parents and disassociate from the "ignorance" of those from their upbringing.

Finally, this study shows that besides differences in push and pull factors, clear parallels exist between the radicalization processes toward various extreme ideologies. These young people are entangled in a similar developmental process

searching for identity, and they come across a certain ideology during that search. The role that ideology plays within the radicalization process is not always clear; just like Borum (2011), we see that some young people delve into an ideology only after joining a group in their search for friendship. In their recruitment, extremist groups make use of people's need for belonging, search for identity, and search for answers to complicated existential questions. These psychological factors seem to be push factors that move someone toward extremist groups and therefore determine whether extremist groups will be successful in their recruitment (DeJacimo, 2015).

Further research is necessary to be able to make more well-founded assertions about the similarities and differences between push and pull factors that play a role within the radicalization processes of the various groups. Moreover, this research was based on a relatively small sample (87 interviews). This needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results. But if it is proven that radicalization factors are indeed group-specific in some cases, a conclusion for which this study shows indications, this would have potential consequences for countering and preventing radicalization.

4 Transitional Journeys in and out of Extremisms: A Biographical Approach

This paper describes an empirical study into processes of homegrown radicalization and de-radicalization of young people. Researchers in Denmark and the Netherlands set out to answer the question regarding what pathways in and out of extremism (mainly far-right or Islamist) look like 'from the inside'. The analysis is informed by grounded theory, based on interviews (N=34 in total) with 'formers' and their family members on their life courses. The study shows that radicalization often concurs with distinct social-emotional developmental challenges that young people face in the transition between youth and adulthood. A practical implication of the marked transitional sequences in these processes is that each type of radical journey may call for a different type of (re)action.

This chapter was published as:

Sieckelinck, S., Sikkens, E., Van San, M., Kotnis, S., & De Winter, M. (2017). Formers & families: Transitional journeys in and out of extremisms in Denmark and the Netherlands. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1407075

SS designed the study, executed the data-analyses, and wrote the paper. ES executed the fieldwork and collaborated with the design and writing of the study MvS: collaborated with the fieldwork of the study in the Netherlands and Belgium. SK: conducted the fieldwork in Denmark. MdW: collaborated in the writing and editing of the final manuscript.

Introduction

What do pathways into and out of extremism look like based on accounts by former homegrown radicals and their families? Although many books and articles cover the problems of radicalization, extremism and terrorism (See, for example, Silke in Chen et al., 2008), there is a lack of empirical studies on radicalization that start from the information by persons who hold or held radical violent views themselves and their relatives. Therefore, this study approached formers and their families in Denmark and the Netherlands to discuss their journey into and out of extremism.[5]

Radicalization is understood by many as the process by which a person becomes increasingly hateful towards a part of society and anyone who defends the status quo (Wilner & Dubouloz, 2009). It is a process by which people increasingly adopt more extreme attitudes and behavior that might involve approval of the use of violence by others or displaying this violence themselves to stimulate fear in the general population in an attempt to instigate changes in a society. Some scholars notice that no universally accepted definition exists, even though radicalization has been subjected to many scientific studies (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). In order to account for the relative meaning of radicalization, the definition used in this research was based on existing definitions and on the conversations we had with our respondents. In this study, radicalization is considered to occur when a child or adolescent starts to develop political or religious ideas and agency that are so fundamentally at odds with the upbringing environment's or mainstream's expectations that the relationship with the upbringers or educators becomes at stake. Again, this definition is not exhausting, neither is it universal, but it became clear that parents, practitioners, and social workers welcome this definition as it adds a pedagogical element to the existing –mainly security driven- definitions of radicalization.

Another central concept in this particular study is de-radicalization. John Horgan, who conducted a lot of research in this field, regards de-radicalization as a social and psychological process whereby an individual's commitment to- and involvement in

[5] This chapter is based on the 2015 Policy Report 'Formers & Families. Transitional Journeys into and out of Extremisms' (Sieckelinck & De Winter, Eds.) commissioned by the European Union.

violent radicalization is reduced to the extent that they are no longer at risk of involvement and engagement in violent activity (Horgan, 2009). As Rabasa et al. (2010, xiii) note in the context of their study on Islamist terrorist rehabilitation programs, 'there is a view in the scholarly community that de-radicalization may not be a realistic objective and that the goal of [these programs] should be disengagement'. This discussion is important for (research on) intervention programs, but was not central to our study. In our study a *former* (extremist) is defined as a person who has left a political or religious group with a violent agenda or someone who has sworn off ideological violence that one once used or condoned. Some of the respondents were convicted for hate crime or terrorism, but not all. All respondents, though, recognized themselves in the description of *formers* and their family members confirmed this description.

This article centers on personal life stories and will try to answer the question regarding what their pathways into and out of radical membership looked like, and the role transitions into adulthood played in these journeys. The first section provides a brief overview of existing literature on factors that lead young people into and out of extremism. Then, the methodology, based on grounded theory, is presented. The results section will present three ideal-typical journeys into and out of radical ideology or membership, and illustrate these using thick description case material. The next section will analyze the journeys into and out of radicalization, and discuss the role that transitions into adulthood play in these journeys. Lastly, the article will consider some important limitations to the research and formulate some careful conclusions and recommendations.

Factors that lead towards extremism

Prior research shows that radicalization could be caused by a complex mix of push and pull factors (Korteweg et al., 2010; Schmid, 2013). *Push* factors can be seen as underlying causes of radicalization, pushing people towards radical groups. *Pull* factors are positive characteristics and benefits of belonging to a radical group, which make people feel attracted to these groups (Hassan, 2012).

There exists a high volume of research that focuses on push and pull factors, all from different perspectives. Some researchers name *personal exclusion* and *social isolation* as important push factors in radicalization (Ezekiel, 2002; Moghaddam, 2005; Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). Others point towards *discrimination* (Crenshaw, 1981; Koomen & Van der Pligt, 2009; Silke, 2008; Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010). Again others consider a *problematic home situation* and *problems in school* to be important push factors (DeMause, 2002; Ezekiel, 2002; Feddes, Nickolson & Doosje, 2015; Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010), while there are also researchers who see *a search for identity* and *injustice in the world* to be key push factors (Borum, 2003; Cragin, 2014; Feddes et al., 2015; Gielen, 2008; Meeus, 2015; Moghaddam, 2005; Sageman, 2008; Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2015; Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010).

Pull factors that came forward in prior research are the *presence of radical groups or networks* (Cragin, 2014; Ezekiel, 2002; Silke, 2008), *presence of radical groups on the Internet* (Sageman, 2008; Veldhuis & Staun, 2010), *family members or friends that are already members of a radical group* (Gielen, 2008; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010), and *rewards* that are part of the membership like status, adventure or social inclusion (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Silke, 2008; Venhaus, 2010). Some authors point out that push and pull factors that lead to radicalization never come alone: it is the combination of factors that leads to radicalization. Moreover, push and pull factors differ per individual (Ranstorp, 2010).

Factors that lead away from extremism

Researchers also found push and pull factors for disengaging from radical groups. Here, push factors are negative aspects of being part of a radical group that make members turn away from the group. Pull factors are external influences that attract people outside the radical group. Altier et al. (2014) give an excellent review of research on push and pull factors that lead people away from terrorist groups. *Unmet expectations* (Horgan, 2009), *disillusionment with strategy/actions of the radical group* (Alonso, 2011; Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; Reinares, 2011), *disillusionment with*

members of the group (Bjørgo, 2011; Reinares, 2011), *difficulty adapting to underground lifestyle* (Horgan, 2006), *inability to cope with effects of violence* (Alonso, 2011; Bjørgo, 2011; Reinares, 2011), *loss of faith in ideology* (Alonso, 2011) and *burnout symptoms* (Bjørgo, 2011; Della Porta, 2009; Reinares, 2011) are push factors found in prior research (Altier, Thoroughgood & Horgan, 2014).

Furthermore, the following pull factors come forward in previous research: *competing loyalties*, when people leave radical groups because they become loyal to people outside the group (Demant & De Graaf, 2010; Bjørgo, 2011; Reinares, 2011). *New employment or educational opportunities* (Altier, Thoroughgood & Horgan, 2014), *marriage or starting a family* (Alonso, 2011; Reinares, 2011) and *positive interactions with moderates like family members* (Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; El-Said, 2015; Jacobson, 2008; Reinares, 2011) were also found to pull people away from radical groups.

Transitions

The push and pull factors are well-known factors in radicalization research and previous research showed that it usually is a complex mix of factors that lead to radicalization and away from it (Horgan, 2005; Korteweg et al., 2010; Schmid, 2013). Moreover, determining isolated background variables (such as ethnicity, level of education, socio-economic status) seems not always sufficient for understanding the radicalization process. In previous research, the helpful terminology of 'pathways' and 'routes' was introduced to go beyond the idea that static variables cause radicalization (Horgan 2002, 2008). This study builds upon Horgans psychological work[6] in which radicalization is rather to be seen as pathways in which people develop radical ideals, influenced by various push and pull factors and the interaction between them. More specifically, the aim here was to see what role the upbringing climate and developmental challenges played within these pathways. Therefore, a biographical approach was introduced in which the radicalization and de-radicalization (or

[6] Instead of a focus on attempts to profile terrorists Horgan argues that concentrating on the processes of involvement in terrorism is more productive, with a particular focus on three distinct phrases: (i) becoming involved, (ii) being involved (seen as involvement with unambiguous terrorist activity) and (iii) disengaging (not necessarily involving de-radicalization).

disengagement) processes are seen as different stages in the same developmental journey. A biographical approach focuses on the life courses of respondents and 'seeks to understand the changing experiences and outlooks of individuals in their daily lives, what they see as important, and how to provide interpretations of the accounts they give of their past, present and future' (Roberts, 2002).

Moreover, the grounded-theory methodology implied attention to the meanings and categorizations used by the subjects involved in the study. Where the majority of studies on radicalization seems to adopt mainly an outsider research perspective (Roy, 2007), also called an 'etic' perspective[7], the few existing empirical studies with (former) extremists defend a rather emic perspective (Beuving & De Vries, 2015), in which the meanings given by the respondents are central. An emic perspective to radicalized individuals reveals social-emotional developmental stages[8] in which they can encounter difficulties like financial problems, serious family conflict, social exclusion, cultural humiliation, feelings of uselessness, confrontation with death et cetera, which they have to overcome. During this journey, parents and social practitioners may either exacerbate these predicaments or be able to assist young people to navigate these transitions and prevent them from going down a path of radicalization or from developing otherwise troublesome identities.

Transition entails change and adaptation. However, transition is not a different word for change, but refers to the psychological processes involved in adaptation and how people cope with it, and within that process the reconstruction of a valued identity is essential (Kralik, Visentin & Van Loon, 2006). These transitions are not solely major life events but can also be more gradual transitions that are common while growing up, which can be considered similar to the turning points that are described in developmental criminology (Laub & Sampson, 1993). Therefore the concepts of

[7] In philosophy of science, 'etic' categories and descriptions, refer to research using a vocabulary produced by scientists and not the objects of research themselves. In contrast, 'emic' descriptions refer to sociological and ethnographic virtues of understanding: the study and description of cultural practices from the point of view of the insider, not using an external, scientific vocabulary and categorization.
[8] This term refers to social-emotional tasks, i.e. emotions that depend upon the actions of other people, such as shame, pride, envy. It also includes the moral-emotional development of the feelings about righteousness, social justice, and about Good and Evil that often make up a person's strong ideals.

journeys and transitions seem helpful in making sense of the radicalization process from within.

Method

This study was explorative, as there is only little theoretical knowledge based on empirical biographical research about family and upbringing dynamics within the radicalisation and de-radicalisation process. Due to this lack of knowledge and existing theories, we chose to use a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), aiming to generate theory from our gathered qualitative data.

Sampling and recruitment

The study consisted of 34 interviews with formers and their family members. In this study formers who used to act upon extreme-right, Islamic extremist, animal or extreme left-wing ideals were contacted. Research focused on people with various types of former extreme ideals, as there exists growing evidence that processes of radicalization among widely divergent groups show parallel developments (Gielen, 2008, 133; Stern, 2003, xviii-xxii; Sageman, 2009, viii). Stern (2003) for example, notes that Jewish, Christian and Islamic extremists show a similar motivation and resentment causing their ideals to become extreme. Sageman (2009) sees similarities in the moral willingness to use violence in both Nazis and Salafi terrorists. And Gielen (2008) shows that the search for identity plays an important role in the radicalization process of both extreme right-wing as well as extreme Islamic young people. She suggests that the causes for radicalization in both groups do not differ greatly. Young people with different –even antagonist- extreme ideals often named the same push- and pull factors that led to their radicalization. They seemed to be entangled in a similar search for belonging, identity, and answers to complicated existential questions, and came across different ideologies during their quest (Sikkens, Van San, De Winter & Sieckelinck, 2017). It was therefore assumed that, although the de-radicalization process cannot be understood as a radicalization process in reverse, the same would account for the process of de-radicalization. Furthermore, the study contained both male and female respondents, to create a more representative study.

Due to the nature of the data material required for this study, an application of statistically representative sampling methods was not possible. Denmark and the Netherlands do not have unlimited numbers of potential interviewees with 'extremist' backgrounds and experiences. Informants who fit the profile for interviewees and were willing to participate in the study, ideally with some of their family members, turned out to be quite a small group. In Denmark, contact with the interviewees were largely obtained through snowball sampling, starting with contacts mediated through former research acquaintances of the Danish researcher at universities, the Danish Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, and various exit programmes and think tanks. In the Netherlands the respondents were successfully found with the help of professionals who work in the radicalization field: access to the research group was gained through trusted contacts and specialist organizations working in the field. Also, respondents were approached that had been part of a previous pilot study on radicalization as some of them had disengaged or de-radicalized since their interview (Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010).

In order to build trust, private electronic messages were utilized for recruitment. Among this population there exist strong privacy concerns, as having extreme ideals usually involves membership of stigmatised or illegal groups. An approach via email gave respondents the power to open, ignore, delete or contemplate the request in their own time. Potential participants could then quietly contemplate whether they were willing to participate in an interview and leave 'the field' at any time, which made the approach less intrusive (Sikkens, Van San, Sieckelinck, Boeije & De Winter, 2017). When approaching a potential respondent, usually one invitation message was sent via email. In this message the research team was introduced along with the purpose of the research. In the research and the recruitment email a positive approach was taken towards the research topic. Potential participants were invited to talk about their former strong ideals, rather than using terms like 'violent ideas' or 'extremist ideology' implying a security perspective, in which their ideals are considered unwanted and dangerous beforehand. In the invitation message, confidentiality throughout the study was guaranteed. After receiving a positive reply, one or two more messages were sent to arrange a time and place to meet for an interview.

Interview specifics

Interviews were conducted using prepared topic lists. The majority of the interviews were conducted in a face-to-face setting. Most conversations took place in the privacy of their homes, which gave extra insight in the settings our respondents grew up in. Other respondents were interviewed in public places like parks or cafes, or our university office. Four interviews were conducted through Skype. A webcam was then used to simulate the face-to-face setting. The interviews lasted between one and two hours. Twenty-one formers (fifteen males and six females) were interviewed. Eight respondents used to have extreme-right ideals, four used to be active animal activists, two were former extreme left-wing activists and seven respondents were former Islamic extremists.

Table 1 *Overview respondents from the Netherlands and Denmark*

Country	Right-wing	Left-wing	Islam	Animal rights	Male	Female
NL	5	0	3	3	8	3
DK	3	2	4	1	7	3
Total	8	2	7	4	15	6

In order to raise the level of validity of the data, both formers and their family members were interviewed regarding the same family-historical events: besides 21 formers, 13 parents, nine siblings, one grandparent, one teacher and three partners completed the case studies. The study also focused on the family context, as journeys into and out of radicalization do not exist in a vacuum. Family members were approached through their children because the formers were easier to find than their family members and/or significant others.

Interview questions centred on the following topics: ideal development, radicalization, parental reaction, family climate, general upbringing and de-radicalization. To obtain information about their personal pathways into radicalization, we asked the formers and their family members how they came into contact with the extremist group, whether the parents knew about their ideals, and with what kind of ideals they were

brought up with. We also asked about the home situation growing up and how the parent/child relationship was during the radicalization. Furthermore, young respondents and their parents were asked why de-radicalization or disengagement had set in, about parental support during the de-radicalization process, and about the parent/child relationship at that stage.

Furthermore, formers and their family members were asked for suggestions on how to prevent radicalization and how to stimulate de-radicalization. Finally, they were asked about the kind of support (if any) they would have wished to have during the radicalization and de-radicalization processes (see also the Appendix).

Analysis

Analysis was done separately in both countries as interviews were conducted in two different languages (Dutch and Danish). However, the researchers in both countries used the same research questions and topic schemes to direct the analysis. NVivo10 software was used to analyse the interview data. To obtain researcher triangulation, two researchers conducted the interviews and analyzed the data. One researcher started the analysis by openly coding two interviews with a former and a family member. The themes and topics from the interviews provided areas of focus for the researchers during the analysis. The second researcher tried to code the interviews using the same labels, resulting in a more reliable list of open codes. Axial coding was accomplished for further analysis of the journeys into and out of extremism.

Ethics

In the Netherlands, all interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. In Denmark most interviewees would solely participate in the research if no audio recordings were made. In order to guarantee anonymity, all information that could lead to a participant's identity was altered or deleted. Due to the high security profile of our respondents, confidentiality was promised to the participants and none of the interviews was made available to third parties: transcriptions have only been made for scientific purposes. Based on the principle of confidentiality, participants

were only included in the definite sample if there was consent. The research received ethical approval from the Faculty Ethics Review Committee of the Utrecht University.

The target groups' stories are varied regarding the background of the formers, the way they came into contact with their ideals, and the manner in which they radicalized and de-radicalized. Nevertheless, it was expected that several stories show recurrent biographical themes or crises that shape the way they perceive their radicalization and de-radicalization processes, and present their narrative about their journeys (Geerdink, 2008; Kelchterman, 1999).

Results

This section presents the findings from the interviews. As was to be expected, the 34 interviews with 48 respondents each revealed uniqueness. Therefore, one could argue that the 21 cases produced 21 answers to the research question. Every story into and out of radicalisation is truly unique and there is not one decision or action of which the motives are completely retrievable. Having said that, in both countries a number of pathways can be discerned that cut across adhered ideologies. Overall, three main journeys towards and away from radicalism can be inductively proposed. Grouped by their prevailing leitmotiv, the three most important journeys are: 1.) a journey triggered by a problematic family climate; 2.) a journey stimulated by the intellectual appeal of a radical milieu; and 3.) a journey triggered by a passionate personality. Firstly, the three journeys are demonstrated and illustrated through case studies.

Note that these journeys are ideal types, i.e. empirically funded abstractions that help us to establish a relationship between data or events that could be left unrelated (Weber, 1968). It should be highlighted that these journeys have been carved out of a much more detailed and diversified reality. They are in every sense of the word 'ideal-typical' journeys, of which a variety of configurations and combinations are to be expected. In real life, elements of the described journeys will interweave.

JOURNEY 1 – *A problematic family situation*

About half of the respondents situate their upbringing in a family context characterized by turbulence and instability. Some families were too busy making ends meet to monitor their children's activities, others did not succeed in offering the youth the necessary emotional support and boundaries, others lost dear family members to illness or divorce. The youth, often triggered by these events of loss or turmoil, found it hard to cope with the situation, some experienced a lack of authority and/or emotional support (mainly from the father's side) and consequently turned their back on the family before resorting to an extreme group, where – at first glance – coherent rules and support appear to be much more available. In these biographies, de-radicalization mostly comes with the realization that one's persona is full of hate and negativity. The everyday violent character of many radical movements becomes unbearable and unlivable. In Journey 1 young people distance themselves from the problems encountered in their original family life. The main force for this move is a push away from the family environment and in this process the political direction seems somewhat secondary.

Take the example of Rowan and Nick. Rowan and Nick had turbulent childhoods while growing up. Their parents divorced when Nick was still a baby and though the children would have preferred to live with their father, they were not allowed to see him. When Rowan was 12 years old, his mother was badly injured in a car crash and had to stay in a rehabilitation center for over a year. At that point Rowan and Nick felt that they had lost contact with their mother definitely and they recall their upbringing as 'unrestrained'. Rowan points at his brother: 'When he was 13, he only slept at home like three times a week or so'. His brother confirms: 'I would just come home at 4 AM'. According to their stepfather, the safety network failed when their mother was injured and that is 'where things went wrong':

Stepfather: If you separate a family consisting of young people in the most vulnerable period of their lives, that leaves its marks. It causes you to look for warmth, for friends, for all these things you don't have but really need at that age.

Radicalization

Half a year after the car accident, Rowan moved to the Danish capital to live with his dad. He struggled with the move and Rowan was 'in shock': suddenly he was one of the few white children in his class and he was bullied terribly according to his father. Rowan recalled that he channeled his anger about the move and the bullying in the wrong way, because from that point on, he started to be interested in extreme right-wing ideology. He joined a group of hardcore music fans at his new school and in his residential area he mostly hung out with older right-wing boys who he wanted to impress. Rowan stated that he wanted to be 'the toughest and the most brazen'. As a 13-year old he did not hide his new ideology: he called himself a national socialist who agitated against Jews, anti-fascists and race mixing. When he was just 14 years old he started his own skinhead movement with friends.

Rowan's parents were not restrictive in their upbringing, however, the extreme right-wing ideas were considered unwanted and were banned. Father:

> *Look, by the time Hitler was painted on the wall in graffiti and the swastika flag came in, yes then I lost it. I ripped it right off the wall and burnt that flag, and I also removed the graffiti from the wall and told him "if you start with that, I'll kick you out and then we're finished".*

Major fights followed between Rowan and his father and when Rowan was 15 years old he left the parental home, quit school and lived in a house with likeminded people. From that moment on he no longer had contact with his parents. According to Rowan, no authorities interfered because 'I always managed to withdraw myself from the sight of childcare, compulsory education, probation and after-care services'.

De-radicalization

Rowan points out that his de-radicalization was a process that took three to four years. For a long time, he had serious doubts about his ideology. Someone gave him books about Marxism, which raised questions regarding his own ideology, until he found National Socialism truly implausible. Moreover, he really liked his brother's new girlfriend, who came from a migrant background. When the extreme left-wing groups

started to notice that Rowan maybe wanted to exit, they started to interfere against Rowan's will: 'they hinted to my movement that I wanted to quit, just to push me to cut the knot'. But according to Rowan he cut the knot by himself because his journey into and out of radicalization was led by *human agency*. Rowan:

> *I've been influenced by a lot of things but I've always thought about everything myself. I've always made my own choices I think.*

After we spoke to Rowan about his radicalization and de-radicalization journey, something unexpected occurred: his brother Nick had converted to Islam and joined the jihad in Syria. Suddenly the history of radicalization within this family was being repeated.

JOURNEY 2 – *An attractive ideological environment*

While many of the respondents grew up in a challenging family context, one third of the respondents situated their upbringing in a fully functioning family context characterized by stability, emotional support and clear boundaries. However, they too were one day lured towards an extreme group. The child is often smart and ambitious, but confronted with injustice, one may not be able to address their emotions in the institutions they are raised in. They then adopt a radical frame as an alternative framework. The main motivation seems to be the desperate need for justice and purpose in life. So the second journey starts in a family context that is more stable and nourishing than in Journey 1, but somehow does not manage to address the youth's particular feelings of discontent around political topics that relate to injustice.

De-radicalization is mostly triggered by a sudden awareness of hypocrisy and/or boredom. The everyday violence characteristic of many radical movements becomes unbearable and unlivable. Journey 2 describes the transition from ambitious pupil to critical citizen, in which the youth are attracted by alternative frameworks to make sense of the world's insensibilities. Illustrative is Andrew's journey. Andrew is of second-generation Palestinian origin with an Islamic background. He was born and grew up in a larger Dutch city with his parents and younger sister; both parents spoke

Dutch and had steady, well-paid middle-class jobs. He was a clever child and did well in school, was popular and happy and had lots of friends. His parents were 'there for him and his sister'.

Andrew had always been aware of his eloquence and the ease with which he would usually 'win' a discussion – even when discussing grown-up topics with people much older than himself. He was interested in politics, religion and philosophy and with time, this intellectual drive became an ingrained part of his identity, as a tool to search for meaning and also a way of showing off. He was becoming a 'real' teenager. It was at this time, at age 14, he was first acquainted with an extreme Islamic organization.

Radicalization

Through an acquaintance a few years older than Andrew, Andrew was invited to some meetings and introductory 'open discussion nights'. He went 'just to see what it was like', but quite immediately met some very interesting people with the intellectual capacity to discuss even the heaviest topics in a qualified and resourceful way, which triggered Andrew's respect and curiosity. Soon he invested all his time and energy in meeting and debating with his new acquaintances.

During this period, Andrew's parents were well aware what was happening. Dinners at home were often transformed into lectures or inflammatory speeches, where he enthusiastically pontificated on topics like Islam, Christianity, falsification of history, world poverty and the spirit of capitalism. After a while his sister began to join the meetings too. Later, his mother started to frequent a discussion group for women related to the same extreme Islamic organization.

After just a few years, Andrew was well on his way to the very top of the organization. He felt he got wiser and wiser all the time:

> *But the horrible thing is – of course – that I wasn't! It was the exact opposite! I had really begun to think in this – system – and it had completely taken over everything I did!*

De-radicalization

Andrew started university where he studied theology and Arabic Studies. By reading many books, he started to develop doubts about his organisation. The push to de-radicalization came a 100% from within, according to Andrew. It was not something sudden but a long-coming process:

> *I had seen it coming for a long time, but tried to keep believing what I had invested so, so much in for so long. But it was impossible. I came to discuss some of these problems and incommensurability's with my wife. And to my great surprise, she agreed and said that she had had some of the same thoughts herself!*

Andrew and his wife decided to quit their membership and after that day Andrew completely cut off what had been at the center of his life for almost ten years. Today, Andrew is ashamed about his recruitment and in hindsight wished he had not wasted time on the organization. Other respondents, who took journey 3, however, look back at their radical boyhood more positively as if these experiences were conditional to their social-emotional development: 'It was necessary to become who I am now'.

JOURNEY 3 – *Passionate personalities*

While the majority of respondents seem to be triggered by a problematic family situation or persuaded by radical groups, some interviews reveal a personality attracted to extremes that leads to an extreme political or religious path. From their relatives, it is learned that these young people attracted attention during their childhood. They may grow up in all types of familial contexts as there is no indication that these personalities are triggered by a certain upbringing.

Some are from fairly well off, middle-class nuclear families with resources and a situated place in their respective local communities, although the parent–child relations may not be unproblematic. Many had a need to be at the center stage, obtaining attention, dominating and showing off, intellectually as well as physically.

Coming of age, these children express a need for challenge, excitement and/or focus. Some prove capable of learning almost entire religious or ideological books by heart. However, there comes a moment when these books are no longer sufficient and they become deeply bored and unsatisfied with the content. In Journey 3 young people push boundaries and go to lengths for everything they encounter in an all or nothing lifestyle. The main force is personal character and agency, like in Daniel's story.

Daniel grew up in Denmark as the youngest son in a Christian family of five. When Daniel was ten years old, his parents divorced. His mother struggled on her own, living on benefits, and taking care of three children. His father struggled as well, being addicted to alcohol. After the divorce, Daniel's father moved away to a suburb where many migrant families also lived: here, Daniel was introduced to Islam. When he was 13 years old, he converted from Christianity to Islam, as Christianity 'did not provide a clear rule of life'.

Daniel sees himself as an *einzelgänger:* someone who did not have many friends and rather spent time by himself playing video games or reading books in his room. However, Islam offered him a sense of meaning and belonging, and helped him to structure his life.

Radicalization

After his conversion to Islam, Daniel started to read a lot of books about his new religion:

> *Because I was so passionate and wanted to know everything there is to know about Islam, I skipped classes and was reading about Islam all day in my room. I didn't care anymore about all the rest.*

His mother had no control over him and his father was absent:

> *If my father had been there, maybe I could have talked to him. When you're young, you're looking for people who are at the same level, who think in similar ways. In the mosque there were peers I could talk to and who knew exactly the way I thought.*

Daniel pinpoints a clear breaking point within his radicalization process. After the 9/11 attacks, when Daniel was 16 years old, he started to look for information on the Internet about the war in Afghanistan. Here, he saw images of the war that he had not seen on the evening news: he was confronted with the injustices that exist in the world. From that moment on he only wanted to find the truth. And 'pictures of tortured people in Palestine cannot lie'.

After the deadly terrorist attacks in Madrid, Daniel was banned from his local mosque because they did not want to be associated with Daniel's extremist views which he had now developed. After his high school graduation Daniel travelled to Pakistan to join a terrorist training camp. Daniel dreamed of going to Afghanistan to join the jihad and fight. Daniel: 'if you're not prepared to die for your ideals, you don't have ideals'.

Daniel's sister describes her brother as an extreme personality who always is a 100% persistent. Her mother tried to talk to Daniel, but he was so convinced of his own truth and so intimidating, that his mother was scared to argue. Daniel became so extreme, that his mother, brother and sister decided to move away and break off all contact. In the meantime, Daniel radicalized further and with likeminded people he had met on the Internet, he was planning a terrorist attack. Police interfered and Daniel was arrested and charged with participation in a terrorist organization, then sent to prison.

De-radicalization

Prison has been an important breaking point in the de-radicalization process of Daniel, though this has been a process of years. Multiple factors helped Daniel to de-radicalize but he emphasizes that it was a fully autonomous process. Firstly, he started to have doubts when considering all the violence in Iraq, like suicide bombings victimizing the local citizens. Secondly, he believes that his de-radicalization was a matter of ageing: 'testosterone levels drop, the aggression lowers, and you become more down to earth, more rational'. The slogans that inflamed him when he was 18 years old, simply did not have the same effect on him when he was 24. Thirdly, there was no intellectual challenge left for him in the Quran. He knew the Quran by heart and was no longer challenged by it:

> *It was yesterdays' knowledge so to say. It was time to open the intellectual window and let in some fresh air.*

He then discovered scientific and philosophical books, to which he 'totally got addicted'. Daniel now feels that Islam is evil and brainwashes people to become hateful. His sister feels that Daniel, again, became quite extreme in his views:

> *If Daniel starts something, he immediately has to be extreme. First he was an extreme Muslim and now he is not and he is posting anti-Muslim articles on his Facebook page every day. He's just not stable and I'm worried about him.*

Analysis

The conversations held with formers and their families help us to (re)construct their pathways into and away from extremism from an insider perspective. Of course, a lot of what we found, is also found in existing literature. Similar to prior research (Borum, 2003; Cragin, 2014; DeMause, 2002; Ezekiel, 2002; Feddes, Nickolson & Doosje, 2015; Sageman, 2008; Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010), *a problematic home situation*, *a search for identity* and *injustice in the world* were found to be important push factors for driving young people into the arms of extremism. Moreover, as the qualitative data show, factors interact and mesh together in a complex manner that can often be very difficult to disentangle or differentiate in the case of any one person. The non-linear and complex nature of the radicalization process, then, requires a dynamic mode of analysis. In the journey metaphor, radicalization and de-radicalization are connected as two stages of the same developmental process. Transcending the determination of singular factors, the biographical approach evokes certain insights and impressions rather than fixed variables, let alone causes. The individuals react to a complex situational setting or a sequence of (critical life) events. For example, in the cases of Rowan, Nick and Daniel it involved dealing with their parents' divorce. In other cases: what sense was made of the illness occurring in the family? In Daniel's case: how was the political situation in which the world reacted? The interviews indicate that, unless these matters and their interactions are properly dealt with, the questions are intensified and raised to an existential level: what does

my life mean? How can I claim my place in this society? Who is there not only to console me, but also to offer me an outlook on the world that makes sense? These findings concur with Kruglanski et al. (2014: 69, 80): "The quest for personal significance constitutes a major motivational force that may push individuals towards violent extremism. The road to radicalization begins with arousal of the quest for significance . . ."

In this sample, the moment these kind of fundamental questions were evoked, the first place to look for credible answers was in the traditional institutions, be it the family, the political landscape or the spiritual organizations. For the far-right formers this was the tradition of their parent's protest groups or their activism with the unions. For the Islamists, the first place to look for answers is in the religion of their parents, an Islamic perspective of the world. In both groups, a very similar dissatisfaction can be seen when it turns out that the traditional answers from their parents or the established institutions fall short of explaining the questions raised. So a common element in these accounts is a troubled search for one's place in society and for the meaning in life, and a great deal of radicalization can be understood as being a result of the young people's disappointment in society's institutions.

The journeys that many respondents took, show a succession of certain transitional challenges, exacerbated by unresponsive reactions in their upbringing or from representatives of the societal institutions. The interviews reveal stories about a number of social-emotional strategies for coping with troublesome transitions from childhood to adulthood. One of these strategies is, unfortunately, violent radicalization. Although the stories are very different, they nevertheless revolve around common themes like 'identity/being somebody', 'exclusion', 'a sense of belonging', 'recognition and understanding', 'meaning' and the like. This study, thus, offers empirical indications that the radicalization process can be characterized as a journey in which the transitional social-emotional tasks of adolescence are ineffectively taken care of.

Regarding the part where people exit radical groups, the case studies show us that disengagement and certainly de-radicalization is usually a process that takes years. Furthermore, it is confirmed that no single factors produce de-radicalization, but

multiple factors seem to play a role in the process. Daniel, for example, mentioned his time in prison, coming of age, and discovering scientific and philosophical books as factors influencing his journey away from extremism. In general, young people from Journey 1 (problematic family) were positively influenced by people outside of the extreme groups, which helped them to exit through material and mental support (rather than via argumentation). People from Journey 2 (attractive ideological environment) often de-radicalized under influence of incarceration, but also maturation and personal human agency were mentioned by this group as a main reason for de-radicalization. This is illustrated by Andrew, who emphasized that his (wish for) de-radicalization came from within. And people from Journey 3 (passionate personality), de-radicalized most often because they lost interest in their extreme ideology and found something new to focus on.

Discussion and conclusion

This study looked into the most intimate sphere of the radicalization process: the household. The research question inspired a qualitative research study resulting in 34 interviews with former radicals and their families from the Netherlands and Denmark, a group that previously had been exceptionally difficult to gain access to. This study shows that the radicalization process can be characterized as a journey marked by a sequence of troubled social-emotional transitions from childhood to adulthood. The concepts of journeys and transitions are helpful in making sense of the radicalization process and fit well with the biographical approach chosen in this study. From the case studies it becomes clear that isolated background variables are not always sufficient for understanding the radicalization process. This may explain why radicalization studies that look for a combination of statistical variables from population databases rarely reveal patterns. As Kralik et al. (2006) note: 'to further develop understandings, research must extend beyond single events or single responses.' Speaking of social-emotional transitions through the life course seems to offer opportunities for enhancing knowledge of the radicalization process.

An important implication is that each journey probably implies a different type of support or policy. If a problematic home situation raises social-emotional tension and pushes a young person towards a radical group, one may be best served by mainly practical support with the aim of helping repair the strength of the household. If the family is present but the adolescent is attracted towards an extreme ideology, the focus of support may better shift away from family to the youth themselves, and aim to create alternative channels to direct the emerging political agency and release moral-emotional tension. Both strategies may also be helpful for a passionate personality, but he or she may also benefit from tailor-made psychological counselling.

These interviews show that underneath the radicalization process, there are universal needs that involve navigating the transition from childhood to adulthood. In the data, radicalization emerges as a coping mechanism, as a way to explore the world, as means of resistance, as a manner to ban existential uncertainties, as a way to be guided, as a mode to acquire answers and as a stronghold in difficult times. Moreover, the journey metaphor connects the radicalization and de-radicalization processes as two aspects of the same journey: a rite of passage into and out of a radical group as they are in search of their place in society.

At the same time, there are some limitations that may have influenced the team's ability to effectively answer the research questions. The main limitation concerns generalization of the findings. Only a limited number of interviews was conducted and the research team was not able to speak with every respondent's parents, siblings, peers or other significant persons. Lifting more general patterns, couplings and tendencies from qualitative material of this kind is quite possible though, but demands a truly qualitative approach and hermeneutical sensitivity. 'Thick description' was used to give profound details about the participants and settings, so that generalizations to other participants and situations can be carefully made.

Another potential pitfall involves all the respondents who were not included in the research. In a population such as formers, where it was often difficult to locate and obtain consent from potential interviewees to talk with them and their families, there is reason to believe that whoever agreed to participate, may represent a less conflicted,

more socially well-functioning subgroup than a hypothetical, largely undefined total of formers, a group that is hardly known.

It is clear to see that participants did not necessarily have a coherent set of causes that led to their radicalization. It is important to acknowledge the inconsistencies in their stories, but biographical research shows that lives are not consistent and constructed life narratives represent no single truth. As one member of the research team said about the findings, one should be more sceptical of a story that is entirely coherent than of a story that shows inconsistencies. The data material collected is very heterogeneous. In many ways, the real value of the case studies lies in reading them as unique narratives contextualised on their own terms.

Finally, if this study was to be replicated, it is likely to produce similar results under the same circumstances. Its reliability depends largely on the systematic way in which the data were recorded, transcribed and analyzed so that another person could understand the themes and arrive at similar conclusions. However, given the historicity of the subject, the same circumstances are not expected and will be really hard to reproduce in the future. As this sample contributes to the knowledge of the radical careers of people some ten or fifteen years ago, this knowledge serves our understanding of the past, and cannot easily be extrapolated to the present or future. In this day and age, youth are taking – also literally – different journeys to those taken before, and therefore partly different outcomes from different journeys should be expected from follow-up research into the role of families in more recent forms and shapes of radicalism.

5 Parents' Perspectives on Radicalization: a Qualitative Study

Radicalization of young people might be influenced by the way parents react towards the development of political or religious ideals. However, these reactions have hardly been explored. This study aimed to discover how parents reacted to the development of extreme ideals, and why they responded in the way that they did. To gain knowledge about the influence of parents on adolescents who developed extreme ideals, 83 in-depth interviews were held with adolescents and young adults who held extreme ideals. Interviews were also held with the parents or siblings of each adolescent and young adult. In line with parenting style theory, it was found that parents react in four possible ways: (1) by rejecting, (2) applauding, (3) ignoring, or (4) discussing the (extreme) ideals of their children. Few parents discuss ideals and values with their child, and this paper tries to show why (e.g., powerlessness, disassociation, occupation with other problems, believing it to be a phase that will pass, or that their reaction would not help). Most parents struggle to cope with radicalization and do not know how to react. Support and control are potentially important tools for parents to use to combat the development of extreme ideology.

This chapter was published as:

Sikkens, E., Van San, M., Sieckelinck, S., & De Winter, M. (2018). Parents' perspectives on radicalization: a qualitative study. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 27*(7), 2276-2284.

ES designed and executed the fieldwork and data analyses, and wrote the paper. MvS: collaborated with the fieldwork and writing of the study. SS: collaborated with the design and writing of the study. MdW: collaborated in the writing and editing of the final manuscript.

Introduction

Every so often our societies are confronted with terrorist violence as a result of radicalization: the Paris bombings; Anders Breivik's attack on Utøya; or the recent flow of young people that join the jihad, led by the Islamic State. Many scholars have searched for motives and causes of radicalization (Borum, 2004; Moghaddam, 2005; Sageman, 2004; Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). However, identifying radicalization is difficult, partly because no agreement exists on how to define radicalization. Some scholars define radicalization as a cognitive process; whereas, others consider it to be a process of increased violence (Bartlett, Birdwell, & King, 2010; Vidino & Brandon, 2012). For the purpose of this discussion we will use the definition of McCauley and Moskalenko (2011). They defined radicalization as, "changes in beliefs, feelings and behavior in the direction of increased support for a political conflict. Radicalization can involve the movement of individuals and groups to legal and nonviolent political action (activism) or to illegal and violent political action (radicalism)" (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2011, p. 82). Mandel (2009) noticed that being radical only exists in comparison with others. Considering this relative meaning of radicalization, we would like to add to the definition that radicalization is the process through which an adolescent or young adult develops ideals that are severely at odds with those of their family or the mainstream.

Radicalization is often seen as a single event, but it is possibly more valuable to approach radicalization as a transitional process, influenced by multiple life experiences. These processes are often marked by a sequence of childhood to adulthood transitions, consisting not just of major life events, but also of the more gradual transitions that are common to growing up (Sieckelinck, Sikkens, Van San, & De Winter, 2017). Transition can be described as the process by which people cope with change, and the reconstruction of a positive identity is then an essential component of this process (Kralik, Visentin, & Van Loon, 2006). During adolescence and emerging adulthood, all young people go through developmental stages, entailing transitions in which they, for example, address questions about who they are, about detachment from their parents, and about worldview and religion (Arnett, 2014). This development also includes the development of moral principles, guiding

decision-making in daily life. During these developmental stages young people may also encounter difficulties, such as financial problems, conflict with a parent, social exclusion, cultural humiliation, feelings of uselessness, etc., which they have to overcome (Sieckelinck et al., 2017). These difficulties could be seen as underlying causes of radicalization; which have been described as "push factors", pushing adolescents towards radical groups (Schmid, 2013). Although they are a necessary condition, push factors do not cause radicalization directly. People are also attracted to radical groups by the positive features and benefits of membership—the so-called "pull factors" (Hassan, 2012). For example, various studies have shown that young people who are experiencing uncertainty are attracted to highly-structured, supportive groups with clear boundaries that they can identify with (Hogg, 2014; Kotnis, 2015).

Although emerging adults try to develop their identity apart from their parents in order to become independent (Arnett, 2014), perhaps parents can influence the development of their adolescent so that their transition into adulthood will not lead to radicalization. Smith, Christoffersen, Davidson, and Herzog (2011) found that emerging adults are often deprived of moral formation, because parents and teachers avoid talking about controversial moral issues. They recommend that schools offer classes in basic moral reasoning to help young people address moral issues and challenges. Moreover, classic research on parenting styles has shown that the best child outcomes, in terms of health and social development, are produced by a combination of parental warmth and control (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Both affectionate parent-child interaction and parental discipline possibly have a beneficial effect on children's moral development (Hoffman, 2000; Smetana, 1999). In contrast, lack of warmth, lack of support, lack of supervision, and harsh parenting may increase the chances that children will become delinquent (Hoeve et al., 2008). Of course, the parental role changes as children grow older: earlier research has shown that, in late adolescence and early adulthood, support from parents matters more than control and supervision (Johnson, Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2011). Although young peoples' independence increases as they grow older, emerging adults remain closely connected to their parents throughout their twenties (Arnett, 2014). Emotional attachment to parents remain important and has a positive influence on identity

development and the overall well-being of young adults, which also leads to lower rates of delinquency (Johnson et al., 2011).

Although it is possible that lack of support and control leads to deviant behavior, Kerr, Stattin, and Pakalniskiene (2009) found that parents often disengage when their adolescent starts to display problematic behavior. They found that rather than increasing their monitoring of their child when they noticed that he or she was involved in deviant behavior, parents tended to give the child more autonomy (Kerr et al., 2009). Kerr et al.'s (2009) data suggest that parents reduce their monitoring, because they are intimidated by their child's behavior, or because they are emotionally excluded by the child. This confirmed earlier research suggesting that parents become less supportive and controlling of their children, because they are scared by their aggressive behavior and antisocial identity (Baumrind & Moselle, 1985; Stice & Barrera, 1995). Thus, it seems plausible that parents would react to radicalization in similar ways.

Becker (2008, pp. 342-348) explored the family dynamics within the radicalization process. He focused on the interaction between young people that endorsed extreme-right ideals and their parents. Becker differentiated between four types of interaction within "rightwing families": (1) the *protected ("geschützte")* family, (2) the *threatened ("gefährdete")* family, (3) the *settled ("eingerichtete")* family, and (4) the *abandoned ("verlassene")* family. In a protective ("geschützte") family, the parents would talk substantively to their children about their ideology, without ever withdrawing support. In a threatened ("gefährdete") family, the parents and their child talk about politics and ideology, but the communication is mainly unilateral, as the child tries to convert the parent towards his ideals. In Becker's (2008, pp. 342-348) *settling* ("eingerichtete") family, the parent agrees with the right-wing ideology of the child to a certain extent and, therefore, does not intervene. Parents and the child do not discuss politics and ideology substantively, but the parents might try to reduce the ideology when right-wing behavior becomes too apparent. In abandoning ("verlassene") families, political and ideological issues are not discussed; and the parental response can be described as indifferent: parents have trouble controlling the behavior of their children.

Sikkens, Sieckelinck, Van San, and De Winter (2017) focused on the reactions of parents when they were confronted with radicalization. They found that parents' reactions to extreme ideology often changed as their children became radical. At first, parents were pleased by their child's new or renewed interest in religion or politics; however, when they noticed their child's fanaticism, they would reject or ignore his or her beliefs. Also, parents' response to radicalization was sometimes different from what one would expect from their general parenting style. This is probably because parents do not know how to cope with a child's endorsement of extreme ideas or the creeping process of radicalization; thus, it seems that there is a degree of parental uncertainty about how to handle the (potential) radicalization of a child (Pels & De Ruyter, 2011; Slootman & Tillie, 2006; Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010, 2013).

Lobermeier (2006) observed the same uncertainty in parents who were confronted with their child's radicalization into right-wing extremism. His empirical study on right-wing extremism and upbringing has shown that, usually, parents initially try to talk reason into their children; however, when reason fails, many parents feel that it is no use to respond to their child's ideology and behavior. In favor of a good relationship, parents then decide to ignore it (Lobermeier, 2006). Other reactions found by Lobermeier (2006) were acceptance, tolerance, and prohibition of interference with extreme right-wing ideology. Parents' responses were determined by their desire to stay in touch with or reconnect with their son or daughter.

The above-mentioned studies were based on small field samples, and the studies of Lobermeier (2006) and Becker (2008, 2010) solely focused on young people with right-wing ideals. This article is based on a much larger field study than the previous research: 83 in-depth interviews were held in Belgium and the Netherlands with adolescents and young adults who hold (extreme) ideals. Interviews were also held with the parents or siblings of each adolescent and young adult. Furthermore, as distinct from the research of Lobermeier (2006) and Becker (2008), this research included young people from various groups: right-wing extremists; Muslim radicals; and ultra-left-wing groups, such as animal rights activists, anarchists, and antifascists. We included such different groups, because research shows that the radicalization

process of these adherents of widely divergent ideologies occurs in similar ways (Gielen, 2008; Stern, 2003). Our study focuses on the family dynamics within the radicalization process and explores how parents react to the development of extreme ideals. The article will try to answer the questions: How do parents respond towards the (extreme) ideals of their children, and why do they respond in this way? It is important to explore the parental reaction, as the influence of the parent on the development of the child is crucial; however, it is not exclusive (Borkowski, Landesman, Ramey, & Bristol-Power, 2009; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Guajardo, Snyder, & Petersen, 2009; Meadows, 1996).

Method

Participants - Adolescents and young adults

Forty interviewees were still involved with radical groups, and eight interviewees were former radicals. In this research, we define a former radical as someone who once had extremist ideas or carried out extremist behavior but has been de-radicalized or has disengaged from radical groups. Neumann (2010) defined *de-radicalization* as a substantive change in ideology. *Disengagement* facilitates behavioral change, such as rejection of violence (Horgan & Braddock, 2010). It follows that disengagement does not require a change in the radical ideas as such, although it does require renouncement of violence as a method of striving for change. As for the former radicals we interviewed, they have been de-radicalized from 1 to 9 years.

The age of our young respondents ranged from 16 to 33 years, with a mean of 22.06 years. Their ideological search commenced between 10 and 19 years old, and radicalization took place at an average age of 16.7 years. People were eligible for inclusion in this study if they (had) pursued ideals that harmed the democratic rights of others, used or condoned violence in pursuit of their ideals, or if they or their parents indicated that they (had) held radical beliefs.

Twenty-six out of the forty-eight young respondents held, or previously held, extreme Islamic beliefs; sixteen of them are converts. Thirteen respondents sympathize(d) with extreme right-wing or national socialist ideologies. Six respondents are, or were,

involved in violent animal rights activism, and three respondents supported extreme left-wing ideologies, like anarchism and antifascism. Twenty-nine of the young respondents were men, and nineteen were women (see also Table 1).

Participants - Family members

Twenty-eight parents and six siblings were interviewed. By including parents and siblings in the research, we aimed for triangulation. We spoke with eighteen mothers, eight fathers, and two stepfathers. Six parents were still married to the other parent, twenty parents were divorced, and two mothers were single mothers. The siblings were all sisters: two younger and four older.

Table 1 *Number of Interviewees and their (Child's/Siblings') Ideologies*

Ideology	Total - young respondents	Involved in ideology[9]	Former radicals	Male	Female	Parents	Siblings
Extreme Islam	26	24	2	13	13	14	3
Extreme right-wing	13	8	5	12	1	8	3
Animal rights	6	5	1	2	4	4	0
Extreme left-wing	3	3	0	2	1	2	0
Total	48	40	8	29	19	28	6

Procedure

The research took place in Belgium and the Netherlands. The fieldwork was conducted between January 2012 and May 2015, in a time that polarization was increasing in both societies, but before the terror attacks that took place later that year in Belgium. The majority of our respondents were recruited on Facebook, via the creation of a

[9] At the time of the interview.

neutral researcher Facebook account. On our profile we explicated our research and goals. Next, we searched Facebook for adolescents and young adults (between 15 and 30 years of age) who explicitly displayed their ideals on their profile pages. We approached potential respondents if their profiles, for example, disclosed admiration of martyrs or white supremacists, or displayed anti-government statements. We also joined ideological groups on Facebook and approached active members for an interview.

Via a private Facebook message, we asked potential respondents to participate in an interview about their ideals. In this message, we introduced and clarified the research. Because Facebook has ownership over all sent messages, we did not conduct interviews online; instead, we invited people for a face-to-face interview. We interviewed our respondents offline so that no one would have ownership of the interview data, which could potentially harm our interviewees. All our respondents gave verbal consent to participate in our research and to audio record the interview. We also received verbal parental consent for the included participants who were between 16 and 18 years old.

For this study, in-depth interviews were conducted, using prepared topic lists. To obtain information about parental reactions, we asked young people and their parents how the father, mother, or both reacted when the child became involved with extreme ideals. They were also asked about the parental sentiments towards the ideals and whether any boundaries were set regarding the pursuit of the ideals. The face-to-face interviews were held at locations favored by the respondents, for example, in local shopping malls, public libraries, on park benches, or at their homes. We audio recorded the interviews and then made a verbatim transcription. All information that could lead to our participants was deleted and pseudonyms were used, in order to guarantee anonymity. The research received ethical approval from the Faculty Ethics Review Committee of Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

Interviews with family members

In our pilot study (Van San et al., 2010), we found that parents of young people with extreme ideals were difficult to find; therefore, most parents were approached through their children. We found that we were often able to speak with the parents in cases where the child and his or her parents shared their ideological views. On the other hand, in cases where the parents and the child disagreed on the ideals, this often meant that the parent and child had a difficult relationship, and the young respondent would then forbid us from contacting the parent. As it was sometimes difficult to gain consent from the young respondents to contact their parents, we interviewed siblings as well. We asked the siblings about the home situation, why their brother or sister radicalized, and how their parents reacted upon the radicalization. Furthermore, we were able to speak to some parents whose child had left the country to fight for his or her ideals in Syria. In those cases, we did not speak to the child, but the parents were able to teach us more about the pedagogical context of their child's radicalization.

Data Analyses

We used NVivo10 software to analyze our interview data. To obtain researcher triangulation, two researchers conducted the analysis. We started our open coding by labeling four interviews. One researcher began the analysis by openly coding four interviews with adolescents and their parents. What helped us to focus were the themes and topics we asked about during the interviews. The second researcher tried to code the interviews using the same labels, resulting in a more reliable list of open codes. One of the most apparent labels was the reaction of parents to their children's ideology. Axial coding was accomplished for further analysis of the different kinds of reactions.

Analyst triangulation was obtained by peer debriefing: a research group that consisted of five co-researchers provided the authors with feedback on their analysis. Furthermore, inter-rater reliability was obtained through the repeated coding of the interviews by another researcher (kappa was 0.93 after disagreements in coding were discussed and consensus was reached), and through individual classification of the parental reactions by the two researchers.

Results

Differences in parental reaction emerged from the accounts of adolescents and their parents. Four parental reactions to radicalization could be discerned: reject, ignore, applaud, and discuss. Parents who rejected their child's extremist ideals were unsupportive of his or her ideological position and tried to control it. Parents who ignored their child's ideology did not support their child in his or her beliefs nor did they impose limits on their child's behavior. Parents applaud in cases where the parent supported the child's extreme ideas and did not enforce any limits. Parents' reactions were scored as *discuss* when parents reacted in a supportive yet controlling way. These four reactions are illustrated below.

Reject

Many parents responded with rejection towards their children's ideals: they were unsupportive of the ideals and, moreover, tried to control the ideals. These rejective reactions of parents were coded into three different types: (1) a rejective reaction in which the parent disagreed with the child; (2) a rejective reaction in which the parent would forbid the ideals; and (3) a rejective reaction that was led by incomprehension (see Table 2).

A reaction was scored as a "disagreement" if the parent explicitly disagreed with or part of their child's ideology. If, for example, the adolescent notes that his or her ideals had led to an enormous dispute with his parents, this was scored as parents who disagree. Or, if, for example, parents proclaimed that they detested their child's ideology or that they hated the way their child was dressed, this was coded as a disagreement. Some parents disagreed with the ideal in itself; other parents were fine with the ideals but thought that the way the child declared his or her beliefs was too extreme. These parents disagreed with the extent that their children wished to live up to their ideals, and they responded by rejecting the intensity. The parents of the converted girls, Samira (18 years old) and Sophie (19 years old), for example, had no problems with the fact that their daughters became religious, but they felt that their daughters overacted.

> *She found it hard to tell me, because she also wanted to wear a headscarf. Well . . . I needed a minute to digest that [laughs]. I thought, 'If you really want that . . . a nice little headscarf isn't that bad'. But it has become more and more strict because the curtains in the house should now be closed when she walks around without a [headscarf]. And no, we don't want that, so she wears a headscarf when she's here, because it's possible that a man looks into the house [laughs]. It's all very extreme.* (Mother of Sophie)

This did not solely apply to converts. The mother of Khadija is Muslim, but she disagreed with the way her daughter put her beliefs into practice. Khadija (18 years old) preferred to wear a dark colored *khimar* and *jellaba* (i.e., long clothing); whereas, her mother believed a colorful headscarf would be sufficient. In some cases, the fights became so intense that they caused a break-up between parent and child. This was especially the case when parents forbade the ideals. For example, Jelmer (28 years old), who was banned from his mother's house after converting to Islam said,

> *I told my mum: well, I became Muslim. My mum then was like: no, you can't be serious. She was really angry. We got into a fight and she kicked me out. She also said: you're no longer my son . . . Well, so be it.*

A rejective reaction was scored, as caused by incomprehension, if the parent or the child stated that the parent was unhappy about the ideals, because they did not understand the ideals or did not have any substantive knowledge about the ideals. Yusuf (23 years old), for example, converted to Islam and felt that his parents did not understand his new beliefs:

> *I often talk to my parents about these matters, but Allah said that non-believers have a hijaab [veil] in front of their eyes. So, even if they want to understand it, they cannot. Even if you rub someone's nose in it, they would still not see it. Why? Because their heart is closed to Islam.*

Ignore

In our interviews, we found that many parents reacted by "ignoring" the ideals of the child: these parents did not support the ideals of the child nor did they put up boundaries. We distinguished six different kinds of ignoring reactions (see Table 2). These reactions do not mean that a parent just neglects the child and his or her ideology, but, for example, they imply that parents think it might simply be a phase that will pass. Another ignoring response was that parents considered it to be their child's own choice, and so they did not interfere. Other parents disassociated from the child, because they did not want or know how to handle the ideology of the child. From our study it appeared that parents sometimes disassociated themselves from the child and his or her ideas, because they struggled with problems of their own (e.g., alcoholism, loss of partner, depression, divorce, etc.) and were unable to devote attention to understanding the ideals of their child. In at least 18 families, there were severe problems with alcohol, drugs, sickness or depression. Some were caused by divorce or by the death of a family member. Twenty-eight of the fifty young respondents we interviewed had lost a parent due to divorce or death. Bas (22 years old), an animal activist, told us that his mother did not know everything he had been up to, because after his father died, "the parenting stopped". "Since puberty, I wasn't really [being] parented anymore, because everyone was mourning of course." The mother of Nabil (18 years old), a young Muslim who left to fight in Syria, also pointed out that, due to several problems, there was not a lot of reaction at home: "His father is very depressed, and he is also physically ill, so he sleeps a lot. He has to take his medicines four times a day. So, at the age of 16, he [Nabil] was basically all on his own." Other parents chose to ignore the ideals more intentionally. Evelyn (19 years old), for example, is a small-town girl who converted to Islam when she was 17 years old. Her father was not fond of her being Muslim; and apart from setting some limits, he reacted by ignoring the ideals, because he believes it is his daughters' own choice. He explained,

> *You get used to it. Except for that burka, that was the limit, but other than that she can do whatever she wants. If only she doesn't bother me with it. She shouldn't say things like, 'dad, Allah does not allow you to do that', because*

then I would say, 'there's the door from which you can leave'. That's not how we're going to do it here. You don't interfere with my life and I'll stay out of yours.

We saw similar ignoring reactions in other parents: "it's [his or her] life; they should see it for themselves", was a very common reaction amongst parents. Furthermore, there were parents who did not react, because they believed that it was just a phase, something that would subside after late adolescence. As Albert (18 years old), a national socialist, said of his parents: "back then they didn't mind so much. They thought it was a phase."

Another ignoring reaction seemed to be caused by a sense of powerlessness: parents did not have "the tools" to respond to the radicalization of the child. Both Sophie's father and Sylvia's (22 years old) mother did not know what to look out for; thus, they stood on the sidelines:

I should have supported her more, like 'to which mosque are you actually going?' But I didn't know shit about it myself either. There are many moderate mosques, but also many rigid mosques, and she ended up with one of these Sunni mosques. But if she, for example, went to one of those moderate mosques, she would have kept much more connection with Western society. (Father of Sophie)

I was tackled about it at school as well, because at school they thought it was abnormal. And I said, "well yes, what am I supposed to do? What am I supposed to think about her rolling up her jeans and wearing those army boots?" See, if you don't know! Because at that time I wasn't even aware of that. (Mother of Sylvia)

Furthermore, there were parents who considered that responding to, or prohibiting, certain ideas would be useless. According to the mother of Sophie, a girl who converted to Islam, it would be no use to try to forbid her child from engaging with certain ideals. She felt that her daughter would go along with it anyway and would leave home if she prohibited her ideals and would lose contact. The mother of Thijs

(18 years old) also felt that she could not stop her son from proclaiming his right-wing ideals, as he would go on doing it anyway, and there would be no way to prevent that. "So now I just think, 'okay Thijs, if that's your idea, then fine'. I don't feel like stressing about it anymore". The mother of Dylan (16 years old) felt the same way. She let her son say whatever he wanted. "The more you ignore him, the less he talks about [National Socialism]. Because if he knows he is getting to you, he will talk like that on purpose."

Table 2 *Different Types of Parental Reactions towards extreme ideals as found in the Ideals Adrift II study*

Type of reaction	Number of interviewees that mentioned this reaction	Number of times that the reaction was mentioned
Reject	45	115
- disagreement	39	64
- forbid	15	25
- incomprehension	22	27
Ignore	51	162
- disassociate	14	21
- own choice	20	30
- it will pass	17	22
- powerlessness	18	41
- reaction or ban does not help	17	23
- other	20	33
Applaud	37	55
Discuss	23	45

Applaud

In many interviews an applauding reaction was mentioned (see Table 2). Parental reactions were scored as applauding in cases where the parent or child indicated that the parent supported the ideals and did not put up any boundaries. Parents responded in an applauding manner towards their children's choice of religion, because they supported the idea of their children searching for meaning in life. They found it positive that the child was trying to develop his or her spiritually. The mother of the converted Leonie (17 years old) said in her interview:

> *What I especially like about it is that she's looking for deeper understanding and, apparently, doesn't want to live a superficial life. That's what I like about it. She's not just after money or aiming for a career.*

Other parents reacted with applause towards their children's ideology, because they admired their ideas, or because they shared their ideas. When young people from Muslim families, for example, decided to practice the Islamic religion, they usually found no resistance. Most Muslim parents supported their children in their search for Islam and let them develop freely, as is demonstrated in the interview with Hossain (20 years old): "They don't think . . . they think it's good, right. They are Muslims too, it makes them happy."

It was only after the ideals became extreme, that the parents changed their initial applauding in rejection. The mother of Tarik (25 years old) recalls how she liked the religious involvement of her son at first as she did not know that Shariah4Belgium was a radical Salafist organization:

> *It was not until Tarik left [to travel to Syria] that I noticed what a negative influence they [Shariah4Belgium] had on young people. But at the time that this organization came to exist, I didn't think badly about them.*

Discuss

There were several parents in our study that reacted in a supportive and controlling way towards the development of ideals in their children. These parents stated that they handled the new situation by discussing the ideals with their child; by monitoring their

child's whereabouts or thought patterns through regular communication; or by attending ideology-related gatherings with him or her (see Table 2). The mother of Leonie (17 years old), for example, joined her daughter in visits to the mosque to show interest in her daughter's religion and to find out what was preached. The mother of Patrick (17 years old) tried to keep a finger on the pulse as well:

> Interviewer: *But as a mother, how do you make sure that such a radical statement does not change into action?*
> Mother: *Well . . . how do you make sure? You cannot really. You can try to talk about it at the very most, and check regularly, 'what about now? How do you feel about it now?' So, by those means you can keep your finger on the pulse.*

Discussion

This study found that parents respond in different ways toward extreme ideals in their children: by rejecting, applauding, discussing, or ignoring the ideals. The study shows that many parents did not support the ideals of their child nor put up any boundaries. Parents who responded without support or control seemed to have been led by a sense of powerlessness: they did not have "the tools" to respond to the radicalization of the child. Similar to the previous research of Kerr et al. (2009), we found that parents often disengage when their children begin to radicalize. Most parents in our research struggled to cope with radicalization and were unsure of how to respond: they were unaware that some ideals need a parental reaction, instead of simply assuming this is a phase in adolescence. Other parents felt powerless and did not know how to respond. A parental uncertainty exists within these parents, and parents do not know whom to turn to for support. In our pilot study (Van San et al., 2010) we found the same lack of responsiveness: most parents did not respond to or intervene in the radical behavior of the child. The dominant reaction in parents was from a relativistic approach to parenting, as the parent considered the ideals to be the child's own choice. Becker (2008) and Lobermeier (2006) came to the same conclusion. The findings of this systematic qualitative research are in keeping with the previous research and reinforce their findings.

Strengths and Limitations

An important strength of this study was the establishment of categories for parents' reactions toward radicalization in a Western European context. The study was able to show that multiple reactions toward radicalization exist, and parents have different reasons for responding the way they do. However, when considering the categories of parental reactions, the selection bias in the parents we interviewed has to be taken into account. It was often challenging to gain consent from the young respondents to speak to their parents and, therefore, we came across certain difficulties. In cases where the respondent and his or her parents agreed on the ideology that he or she strived for, we were often able to speak to the parents. However, in cases where the parents and the child disagreed on the ideals, this often meant that they had a difficult relationship, which made it impossible for us to contact the parent. In these cases, we only know how the parents responded and socialized from the perspective of the young respondent.

A further important point that needs to be addressed is that parenting is, of course, never the only factor that influences the radicalization process. Feelings of relative deprivation, powerlessness, the influence of peers, the use of the internet, and even, simply, maturation, are said to relate to radicalism as well (Adelson, 1975; Benschop, 2006; Buijs, Demant, & Hamdy, 2006; Helmus, 2009; Pels & De Ruyter, 2012). Individuals can also feel attracted to certain ideologies in their search for excitement (i.e., novelty-seeking) or in their search for belonging, because a shared ideological commitment is a typical group activity (Crenshaw, 2000; Fermin, 2009; Noppe, Ponsaers, Verhage, De Ruyver, & Easton, 2010; Van der Pligt & Koomen, 2009). Parental reactions towards radicalization, on the other hand, are hardly ever mentioned but should be considered as important possible influences.

Future Directions

A few of the parents involved in our research reacted in a supportive yet controlling way. We tentatively suggest that their children were developing strong ideals, but they kept within the law. It would be interesting to explore whether support and control do indeed have a de-radicalizing effect. As previous research showed that parental

warmth, combined with control, produces the best child outcomes in terms of health and social development (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parents who want to prevent radicalization should not react simply by forbidding extreme behavior, as a democratic society asks more of its citizens (De Winter, 2016). Establishing and enforcing limits should be part of the response, but it is more important to teach young people that there are non-violent ways to change society and get one's voice heard. Young people's energy and willingness to change the world should be tempered by instruction in how to achieve goals by arguing, lobbying, and organizing; thus, by channeling their youthful energy and willpower constructively (Davies, 2016).

Our research confirmed, however, that parents feel uncertain about how to react when their children move toward extreme ideologies and would like to have tools to prevent radicalization. The interviews, for example, showed that parents often had no knowledge about the religious or political views that their child is developing; therefore, it was hard for them to discuss these ideals or set boundaries when needed. Moreover, when their children go through a transition in moving from adolescence to adulthood, parents seem to struggle to guide them through this transition. Parents need information about different kinds of extreme ideology, the process of radicalization, how to respond to radicalization, and how to guide their children's identity development and transition to adulthood (Sikkens et al., 2017). Also, the forces that influence young people are often too big and complex for parents to counter alone. Earlier research showed that when young people are at risk of radicalization, it is helpful to provide parents with professional support for helping them to discuss extreme ideas with their children and offer alternative perspectives (Gielen, 2015). Future research could explore how professionals could support parents to enable them to react constructively when children show an interest in extreme political and religious ideals, help them discuss complicated political issues and existential questions, and guide them through the child's transition from adolescence to adulthood.

6

Parental Reaction towards Radicalization in Young People

This paper focuses on radicalization from a parenting perspective; we propose an approach that sees radicalization as a possibility in adolescent development, and as part of the interaction with the adolescent's social environment and socialization. The aim of the study is to discover how parents react when their adolescent develops extreme ideals. Using 55 in-depth interviews with young people who have extreme ideals and their parents, the parental reactions towards these ideals are explored. Subsequently, the reactions are categorized according to two dimensions (control and support). This study shows how parents struggle when confronted with radicalization and shift to less demanding responses due to powerlessness, dissociation, and parental uncertainty.

This chapter was published as:

Sikkens, E., Sieckelinck, S., Van San, M., & De Winter, M. (2017). Parental reaction towards radicalization in young people. *Child & Family Social Work, 22*(2), 1044-1053.

ES designed and executed the fieldwork and data analyses, and wrote the paper. SS: constructed the theoretical model and collaborated in writing the paper. MvS: collaborated with the fieldwork and writing of the study. MdW: collaborated in the writing and editing of the final manuscript.

Introduction

In *Young People's Perspectives of being Parented in Critical Situations*, Murray (2013) considers how parents respond in a critical situation as when children violate the law. A different critical and very topical situation that parents can encounter during the upbringing of their children is radicalization. How do parents react to the radicalization process of their child which touches upon their family life as well? Do parents try to influence the radicalization process their children are undergoing, and is that even possible? Parents have a certain parenting style (Maccoby & Martin, 1983), but it is debatable whether this style is (still) sufficient and advisable when radicalization causes a rift between the parent and child. In this study we use interviews with young people who have extreme ideals and their parents in order to explore what happens within families and to the parenting when a family is confronted with radicalization.

The research took place in Belgium and the Netherlands. After the 9/11 attacks, the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a young Muslim, and the murder of right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn by an animal activist, polarization increased in both of these countries. Feelings of relative deprivation, injustice, and exclusion may have led young people to radicalize (Moghaddam, 2005; Borum, 2004; Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). The Dutch and Belgian governments aimed to identify radicalization and reduce the risks associated with it. However, identifying radicalization is hard, partly because no agreement exists on how to define radicalization.

Scholars often distinguish between violent and cognitive radicalization (Bartlett, Birdwell & King, 2010; Vidino & Brandon, 2012). McCauley & Moskalenko (2008, p. 415), for example, define radicalization as a "dimension of increasing extremity of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in support of intergroup conflict and violence" while Vidino and Brandon (2012, p. 9), for example, define cognitive radicalization to be "the process through which an individual adopts ideas that are severely at odds with those of the mainstream, refutes the legitimacy of the existing social order, and seeks to replace it with a new structure based on a completely different belief system." Veldhuis and Staun (2009, p. 4) notice that "although radicalisation has increasingly

been subjected to scientific studies, a universally accepted definition of the concept is still to be developed." Some scholars even argue that radicalization does not exist, but is a term constructed by media, government, and security agencies (Neumann, 2013). According to Mandel (2009), radicalization is "relative, evaluative, and subjective". He states that being radical is always in comparison with something else, for example the law or tradition, and therefore is subordinate to an individual's perspective. Whether an action or an individual is called "radical" depends on these comparisons. Mandel (2009) argues that the term radical could be used (for example by authorities) to refer to something that is undesired or is even a threat to the community. However, by simply considering adolescents and their ideals to be dangerous, one overlooks that ideals—even radical ones—are part of a democratic discourse, and that some idealistic young people simply want to be actively involved in their communities (Sikkens, 2014).

In order to do justice to the relative meanings of radicalization, we constructed the following definition: *radicalization is the process through which an adolescent or young adult develops ideals that are severely at odds with those of their family and/or the mainstream*. In our research we consider the development of extreme ideals to be part of the (normal) development in adolescence, influenced by interaction with the adolescent's social environment and socialization (Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010). Ideals—even extreme or radical ones—do not inherently have to be a danger to society, but could also help to shape society (for example, the black power movement) and help shape identity. Extreme ideals by themselves do not pose a threat, but an obsessive passion for ideals may do. Someone with extreme passion is often not critical towards his or her own ideas and does not reconsider his or her thoughts, even when there is reason to do so. In the most extreme cases the too-passionate idealist becomes immoral, blind to other people's interests, and harmful to him or herself. It could therefore be desirable that a counterbalance be provided by parents or teachers in case the extreme ideals are at odds with the democratic constitutional state (Sikkens, 2014).

Substantial literature exists on the influence of parents and parenting on radicalization (Duriez & Soenens, 2009; Epstein, 2007; Hopf, 1993; Post, 1984). But how does

radicalization affect parenting? The vast majority of studies in the literature on parenting and radicalization have focused on trying to show how parenting shapes children's (extreme) ideals, but it is likely that parents also change their behavior in response to the radicalization of their children. Little attention has been given to these reciprocal dynamics within families when they are confronted with radicalization. This study's objective is to answer the question of how parents respond to the radicalization process of their children. Furthermore, two sub-questions will be answered: 1) Does the parental reaction towards the development of ideals change during the radicalization process? This question is posed because we would like to explore whether the radicalization process influences parental reaction. 2) Do parents react to radicalization in accordance with the general parenting style they used prior to the radicalization? This question is posed because one would expect a permissive parent, for example, to respond in a supportive and non-controlling manner towards the development of extreme ideals, and a parent with an authoritarian parenting style to respond in a controlling way.

This paper is based on explorative qualitative research and aims to generate hypotheses about the dynamics within upbringing when families are confronted with radicalization. To achieve this goal, we will first discuss some previous research on parenting styles and the reactions of parents towards problem behavior in general and radicalization in particular. Then, in the methodology, we will discuss how we categorized the different parental reactions towards radicalization. What these reactions entail is presented in the results section. The discussion section deals with some remaining thoughts.

Previous research

Parenting styles

In the existing literature four different parenting styles are often distinguished: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritarian parenting is described as being a restrictive, punitive style. Permissive parents are warm and nurturing, and, as opposed to authoritarian parents, place few

limits or controls on their children. Authoritative parenting is a style that encourages adolescents to be independent but still places limits and controls on their actions. Neglectful parenting is a style in which parents are scarcely involved with their children and place few demands or controls on them (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritative parents are both strict and nurturing towards their child. This combination of warmth and connectivity between parent and child, and also the acts of setting boundaries and giving instructions would be the most optimal in upbringing (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). An affective parental interaction with the child would help their (moral) development (Smetana, 1999). Moreover, it is through discipline encounters that parents help their children to establish prosocial moral internalization (Hoffman, 2000).

Parental reactions

Not a lot is known about the reactions of parents towards radicalization, but quite a body of research has been conducted on the reactions of parents towards adolescents who show deviant behavior. Murray (2013), for example, shows that parents can change to a more punitive parenting style when confronted with offending behavior by their child. Yet, Kerr et al. (2009) found that parents often disengage when their adolescent starts to show problem behavior. One would expect parents to increase their monitoring as soon as they notice that their child is involved in deviant behavior, but instead, Kerr et al. (2009) showed that most parents give the child more autonomy. They explored whether parents monitor their adolescents less because they feel that their children have reached a certain age where they need to be more autonomous. However, their data suggested that it is more likely that parents decrease their monitoring because they are intimidated by the behavior of their child or because they are emotionally excluded by the child. This is in accordance with earlier research on parental responses towards deviant behavior. Stice and Barrera (1995), for example, found that parents might become less supportive and controlling towards their children because they are scared of their aggressive behavior. Baumrind and Moselle (1985) suggest that parents might disengage from their deviant children because of their antisocial identities. This study will explore how parents respond to radicalization.

Perhaps parents respond in a similar manner towards radicalization as they do towards deviant behavior.

Van San et al. (2010, 2013) interviewed approximately 20 radicalized adolescents and young adults in the Netherlands about their ideals. Their research showed that most parents in this study did not respond to or intervene in the radical behavior of the child. The dominant reaction was an indifferent one, in which the parents considered the ideals to be the child's own choice. Yet, the moral development of ideals requires monitoring and debate (Smetana, 1999; Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010, 2013), but many parents do not know how to handle strong ideals and potential radicalization: a so-called "parental uncertainty" seems to exist (Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010).

Becker (2008) found the same uncertainty and lack of response in *abandoned ("verlassene")* families [translated by the authors]. Becker's study focused on the interaction and communication between young people that have extreme-right ideals and their parents. In *abandoning ("verlassene")* families, politics and ideology are not discussed and the parenting style can be characterized as indifferent; parents have trouble with setting boundaries. Similar to the findings of Van San et al. (2010), in this type of family, the parent holds the child responsible for his or her own choices. Lobermeier (2006, p. 67) found comparable parenting practices within the families of right-wing youngsters: their upbringing could be characterized by a lack of control and permissiveness ("*Konsequenzenlosigkeit*").

Method

This section will firstly discuss the way the data was collected. Secondly, it will give insight into our analysis and the way we categorized the parental reactions. The sample included both young people with extreme ideals and their parents, because we were interested in the interaction between parent and child during the radicalization process. Moreover, in our pilot study we found that parents of young people with extreme ideals were difficult to find, but could be contacted through their children (Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010). The study consists of thirty-five

cases in total, consisting of thirty-two interviews with adolescents and young adults, twenty interviews with parents, and three interviews with siblings.

Respondents – Adolescents and young adults

This qualitative field research consists of interviews with thirty-two adolescents and young adults. Twenty-five adolescents or young adults had ideals that were at odds with the ideals of their families and/or the mainstream in society at the time of the interview. The other seven interviewees were former radicals, which meant that they no longer had ideals that clashed with the ideals of their parents or the mainstream. It should be noted that the research was not limited to individuals who engaged in violent radicalization, but extended to groups and individuals who have yet remained (and will remain in most instances) non-violent in their radicalization process.

The age of the respondents we interviewed ranged from 16 to 33 years old, with a mean of 21.8 years old. As there exists growing evidence that processes of radicalization among widely divergent groups show parallel developments (Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010; Gielen, 2008; Stern, 2003), this study focuses on respondents with extreme-right, radical Islamic, and extreme left-wing ideals. Sixteen out of the thirty-two young people had strong Islamic beliefs, with eleven of them being converts. Six respondents sympathized with right-wing or national socialist ideologies. Five respondents are or were involved in environmental or animal rights activism and five respondents supported anarchism or socialism (for an overview, see Table 1). Eighteen of the adolescents and young adults were male and fourteen were female.

Table 1 *Overview ideologies young respondents*

Ideology	Number of young respondents
Islam	16
(of which converted to Islam)	(11)
Right-Wing	6
Environment / Animal Activism	5
Anarchism / Socialism	5

Respondents – Parents and Siblings

We interviewed twenty parents and three siblings. Siblings were interviewed in the cases that we were not permitted to speak to the parents. Most parents were approached through their children because the adolescents and young adults were easier to find than their parents.

The parents we interviewed came from different backgrounds. The research included both low-income and high-income families, and married and divorced parents. In some families there were problems with alcohol, drugs, sickness, and/or depression. In twenty cases the parents had different ideals than their children. This, for example, could mean that the parent was an atheist while the adolescent converted to Islam. In fifteen cases the parents had ideals that were in line with the ideals of the child, though usually more moderate. The parents of extreme right-wingers would in some cases, for example, vote for right-wing parties.

Process

For this study, in-depth interviews were conducted using prepared topic lists. The majority of our respondents were recruited on Facebook: we created a neutral "researcher Facebook account." On our profile, we explained our roles as researchers and overtly described what the study was about. Subsequently we searched Facebook to find young people (between 15 and 30 years old) who were very explicit on their profile about their ideals. The adolescents and young adults were approached if their

profiles, for example, showed adulation of martyrdom, white supremacy, or anti-government claims. We also joined ideological groups on Facebook and approached active members in order to recruit participants for this study.

Next, we sent potential respondents a private Facebook message to ask them for an interview about their ideals. In this message we explained who we were and the purpose of our research. We did not use Facebook to interview the respondents, but asked them via private Facebook messages to meet in person because of the lack of privacy that Facebook offers; everything that is posted on the website is subsequently owned by Facebook or could be read by a third-party. By interviewing our respondents offline, we made sure that no one would have ownership of the interviews which could lead to our interviewees being harmed.

The interviews were held in a face-to-face setting and took place at locations chosen by the respondents. All of the interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. In order to guarantee anonymity, all information that could lead to a participant's identification was deleted.

Constraints of sample selection

As we found our young respondents through social media, most parents were approached via their son or daughter. This may have caused a selection bias as it was often difficult to get the adolescent or young adults' consent to speak to their parents. We were more often able to speak to the parents when the child and the parents agreed on the ideology. However, if they disagreed, this often meant that the parent and child had a troubled relationship, which made it difficult for us to contact the parent because the young respondent would not permit it. Sometimes we solely spoke with the parent because the child, for example, had left the country to fight in Syria.

Another potential bias in the research group was caused by using Facebook for recruitment: only potential respondents who had a public Facebook profile could be found. People who kept their profiles private, ensured that their profiles could only be seen by friends. A researcher who does not belong to the circle of friends, could not

see such a profile page and therefore could not see what, if any, ideals are being propagated on a particular Facebook page. One would imagine that people with extreme ideals would keep their profiles private, so as not to be discovered by the police or secret services, leaving the researcher with less extreme public Facebook profiles. However, we found the contrary to be true; we found that the majority of the radical left-wing and Muslim youth had made their Facebook profiles public.

Moreover, in almost half of our sample it was reported that there were problems at home like alcoholism, loss of a spouse/parent, sickness, depression, divorce, etc. This percentage seems rather high compared to the general population and a selection bias might be at stake. However, a problematic home situation might be conducive to radicalization in some cases.

Ethics

The people we interviewed were quite suspicious about the government, institutions, and researchers. It was therefore impracticable to let them fill out a written informed consent form. However, all our respondents gave verbal consent to participate in our research and to audio record the interview. We anonymized all interviews in order to reduce any possible harm to the respondents by changing the interviewees names and leaving out details that could identify them. Furthermore, all participants were informed that they could contact us at any time for further questions and could terminate their participation in the research whenever they pleased. Two respondents made use of this possibility. The research received ethical approval from the Faculty Ethics Review Committee of the Utrecht University.

Steps taken during analysis

To obtain researcher triangulation, two researchers conducted the interviews and analyzed the data. One researcher started the analysis by openly coding four interviews with adolescents and their parents. The themes and topics we asked about provided areas of focus for the researchers during the interviews. The second researcher tried to code the interviews with the same labels, resulting in a more reliable list of open codes. Some of the most obvious labels were the reactions of parents to

their children's ideologies. Axial coding was performed for further analysis of the different kinds of reactions. Subsequently, in 55 interviews (both with adolescents and parents) we coded all remarks that related to parents, parenting, and the reactions of parents to their children's ideals.

Inter-rater reliability was obtained through the repeated coding of the interviews by a second researcher (kappa was 0.89 after disagreements in coding were discussed and consensus was reached), and by individual classification of the parental reactions by the two researchers.

Categorization of reactions

In previous studies, scholars have explored the use of two dimensions to categorize their research findings on parenting (Baldwin, 1948; Baumrind, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). In this study, we used the two dimensions "control" and "support" to categorize the parental reactions towards radicalization that we found in our interviews (see Figure 1). Control in this research means: the amount of rules, monitoring, and control that the parent displays (Schaffer, 2009). We define support as follows: the amount of support, warmth, and affection that the parent displays, and whether the parent tries to see things from the perspective of the adolescent (Schaffer, 2009; Bonnet, Goossens & Schuengel, 2012).

We emphasize four different parental reactions towards radicalization: *discuss* (high control and high support), *reject* (high control but no support), *applaud* (high support but no control), and *ignore* (no control and no support). *Ignoring* the ideals of the adolescent implies that parents do not set any boundaries or exercise any control, even though they do not support the ideologies of their children. Reacting with *applause* means that parents support the ideals and do not set any boundaries with regard to the ideals. *Rejecting* the ideals means that parents are unsupportive of their children's ideas or actions and are not open to dialogue about the ideals of their children. A reaction is labeled as *discuss* if the parent is open to dialogue about the ideals of their children (supportive), but still sets boundaries regarding their children's idealism.

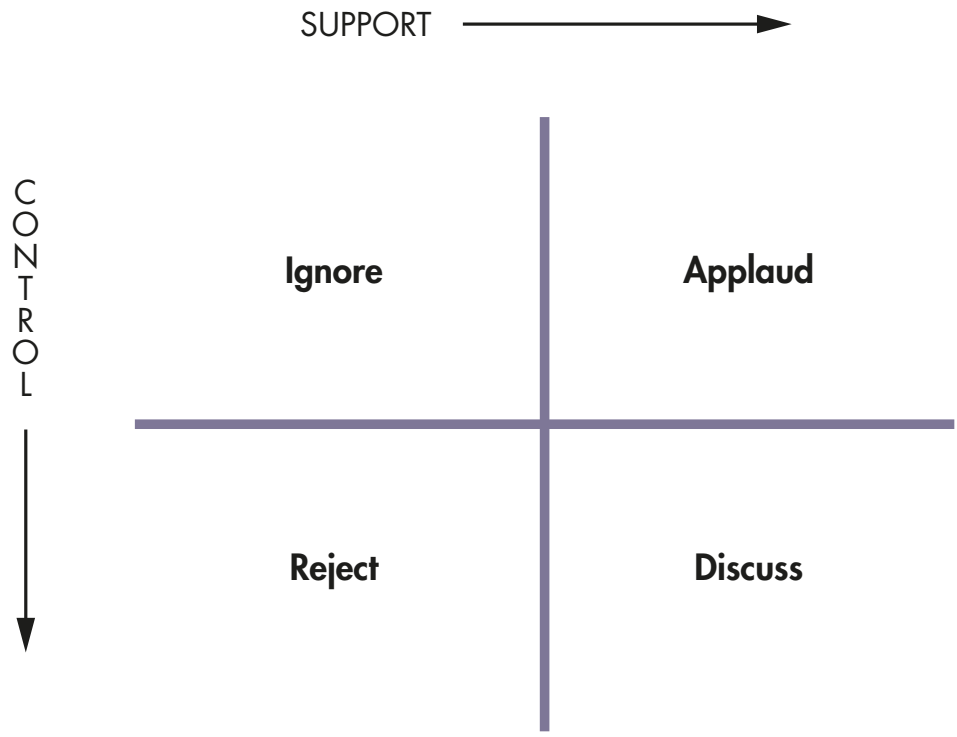

Figure 1. *Model on parental reactions towards radicalization*

To obtain information about the reactions of parents towards radicalization, we asked the young people and their parents about how the father and/or mother reacted when the child expressed his or her ideals for the first time. We also asked how the parents reacted towards the ideals now, at the time of the interview. Furthermore, young respondents and their parents were asked about the parental sentiments towards the ideals and whether any boundaries were set regarding the pursuit of those ideals. We used their answers to categorize the parents' reactions according to the two dimensions: "control" and "support." If, for example, parents proclaimed that they detested their child's ideology or that they hated the way their child was dressed, this

was categorized as *reject* by the researcher. A second researcher categorized the parental reactions again, to obtain inter-rater reliability.

The classification stemmed from both the young respondents' and parents' narratives in cases where we interviewed both. In most cases, their narratives tallied and the researchers categorized their answers into the four categories. In a few cases, the stories of the young respondent and his or her parent did not match. In those cases, the full family context brought forward in the interviews was considered, and the researchers independently categorized the answers into the four reaction categories and discussed any differences in categorization until agreement was reached.

Categorization of Parenting Styles

In order to compare the reactions of parents with the parents' parenting style, we operationalized parenting styles by categorizing the interview data into the following dimensions: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). To establish the parenting style of the parents, we asked the young respondents and their parents about the quality of the relationship between parent and child, rules and boundaries that applied in their households, parental support, and parental monitoring. We also asked whether the parents were strict or permissive and whether the young people and their parents discussed ideals and other topics. We then coded all remarks on upbringing under the following codes: rules (remarks on rules that apply in the household and on parents being strict or non-strict), relationship (remarks on the relationship between parent and child), support (remarks on parental support), monitoring (parents being informed about the adolescents' whereabouts), discussion (ability to talk to parents). We then used the coded data to analyze whether the parents were controlling/non-controlling and responsive/non-responsive as defined by Maccoby and Martin (1983) and accordingly classified their parenting style as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful.

Results

This section will present how parents responded to radicalization according to the young respondents and their parents. During the study, we found that parents can react in multiple ways, and their reactions can change over time. Some parents' initial reaction would, for example, be to discuss the ideals, but they then would start ignoring the ideals when the ideals became more extreme. Moreover, the parents we interviewed did not always react towards the ideals of their children in a way that corresponded with their previous parenting styles. Parents possibly change their reactions because they feel that their usual parenting styles are not sufficient to cope with radicalization.

Shifts in Parental Reactions

During our interviews, we found that parents can react in multiple ways, and their reactions can change over time; a shift in parental reactions seems to take place within many families that are confronted with radicalization.

In our sample, the respondents were between 10 and 19 years old (average 15) when they first engaged in their chosen ideology. Radicalization took place at an average age of 16.7. Roughly three different timescales can be distinguished in the radicalization process. In some cases, the radicalization was immediate and the young person became extreme within weeks. In other cases the radicalization was a step-by-step process that lasted for years. A third timescale we came across in our study shows that some people became engaged in an ideology, gained in-depth information for years, and after a sudden turning point in their lives radicalized quickly. Parents usually changed their reaction towards the ideal development of their child as soon as they noticed their son or daughter becoming more extreme. The stories of Chiara and Redouan below illustrate this: their parents initially applauded their embracement of Islam, but as soon as they noticed their child becoming extreme in his/her beliefs they changed their reaction. Parents also changed their reaction when they noticed that their reaction did not have the desired effect. The mother of Tijmen (see below), for example, tried to discuss her son's views at first but noticed that he would only retort more strongly. She then ignored his extreme right proclamations.

It appears that many parents, just like Tijmen's mother, move away from discussing the ideals and start to ignore the ideals. There were also parents who shifted from applauding or rejecting the ideals to ignoring, as seen in the case studies of Chiara and Redouan. Apparently, parents become less demanding towards their children, as the parental reactions move to a less controlling, ignoring reaction. Parents who shifted to ignoring their children's ideals were often led by *powerlessness*: parents did not have "the tools" to respond to the radicalization of the child. These mothers and fathers were not unresponsive towards their children's ideals, but they did not know what to look out for or how to handle (control) these ideals, and stood on the sidelines when their children became more and more fanatical, as illustrated by Tijmen's case study. Moreover, from our study, it appeared that parents sometimes *dissociate* themselves consciously or unconsciously from the child and his or her ideas and actions. Chiara's mother, for example, consciously dissociated herself from the radicalization of her daughter because she feared conflict. In other case studies, parents struggled with problems of their own (alcoholism, loss of a spouse, depression, divorce, etc.) and may have unconsciously dissociated themselves by losing sight of their child and his/her ideals due to struggling with these troubles.

Evidently, the parents in our study struggled with the radicalization of their children. This becomes even clearer when we consider their parenting styles together with their parental reactions, as these do not always match.

Parental Reactions Compared with Parenting Styles

The parents we interviewed did not always react towards the ideals of their children in a way that corresponded with their general parenting styles. Parents possibly change their reaction because they feel that their usual parenting styles are not sufficient to cope with radicalization. The parenting style that we, for example, noted in Redouan's family seemed to be at odds with their response to their son's ideal development. Their general parenting style used to be permissive, but they rejected Redouan's ideals as soon as his ideals no longer matched their own. Moreover, they avoided discussions with Redouan about his ideology. This case study shows that the parenting style and the parental reaction towards extreme ideals do not always

correspond. We also found a pattern which shows that especially authoritative parents do not react towards radicalization the way one would expect (namely, by discussing the ideals with the child). The case study of Tijmen illustrates this, as he could discuss anything with his parents except for his extreme right ideals.

Three illustrative case studies

Using three case studies, we will illustrate how parents may respond to the radicalization process, how this reaction can change over time, and how the parental reaction does not always match the general parenting style. All the names have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

REDOUAN

Parenting style

When Redouan (16) turned 16 years old, he developed a renewed interest in Islam. Within the following six months he became more and more extreme. His parents raised him according to Islam, but Redouan felt that he did not live according to Islamic rules as he was more interested in "music and girls and stuff". Redouan grew up in a Dutch-Moroccan family of eight. He felt that he was spoiled by his parents as there were no rules he had to comply with. Doing well in school and being polite were the only two conditions for being allowed to go out wherever and whenever he wanted.

Radicalization process

Redouan's sudden return to Islam was prompted by the guilt he felt towards Allah. He claimed not to have been influenced by peers, though Redouan is part of a large Salafi network. He started to read books about Islam and visited lectures in the mosque. His parents, friends, and people in the mosque responded with applause to Redouan's return to religion. It did not take long before Redouan started to give lectures in mosques and through the Internet. Redouan accepted the Salafi ideology and now feels that the 9/11 attacks were "American and Zionist propaganda" and that he would like to be part of an Islamic State (IS).

Parental response

Redouan's parents were happy with the renewed interest of their son in their religion and responded with applause. However, the support subsided as soon as his parents noticed that their son proclaimed a different ideology. Redouan's father is a practising Muslim but keeps away from Salafism and extremism. His parents rejected his interactions with Salafi youth who support the jihad in Syria. His parents were afraid that Redouan would end up in jail and prohibited him from being in touch with his Salafi contacts. However, Redouan kept contacting them online through his lectures because, according to Redouan, "they can kill the messenger, but they can never kill the message".

Communication between Redouan and his parents became difficult. Redouan tried to explain his beliefs to his parents but they had no sympathy for the ideals and avoided any discussions. They tried to ignore his ideology.

CHIARA

Parenting style

Chiara (19) was raised by her mother. Her father beat her mother, and they fled to a women's shelter when she was two years old. Chiara showed problematic behavior as a child. She could not be kept in check at school and was referred to special education. Youth Care was also involved with the family because Chiara's behavior became more and more problematic. "I couldn't get her to go to school. She just did as she pleased," said her Mother, who did not dare to confront Chiara. "I was always very careful because she could easily get mad". When Chiara was 11 years old she started to hang out with the crowd and would sometimes stay away an entire night without her mother's knowledge. Chiara was diagnosed with a borderline personality disorder. At the same time, her mother was struggling with her own health and depression. Chiara was referred to surrogate family homes several times, but her mother would always retrieve her after a few days.

Radicalization process and parental response

When Chiara was 18 she converted to Islam. At first her mother was pleased because the problematic behavior ceased: she quit drinking and smoking and her mother did not have to worry about her daughter going out at night. Shortly after the conversion, Chiara started to wear a veil and these veils quickly became longer. Three months after her conversion, Chiara started to wear a niqab. Her mother was frantic and tried to convince her daughter that she could also be a good Muslim without a niqab, but she did not prohibit it. Her mother said, "I thought the more I go against it, the worse it'll get". Her mother worried because she noticed that her daughter was becoming more extreme, for example, openly supporting the jihad in Syria. Her mother heard that Chiara was in touch with a Syrian fighter and started to get scared. However, she did not contact the police because she did not want to cause a scene, and feared a fight. "What do you do? And I still feel guilty about that... I trivialized it." Although her daughter became more extreme in her beliefs and she knew that her daughter was easily influenced by men, she trivialized the situation. Her mother believed that Chiara would never leave her, until she suddenly disappeared to Syria.

TIJMEN

Parenting style

Tijmen (26) grew up with his mother and two sisters in a multicultural neighborhood. He only saw his father at weekends. Tijmen's sister Marloes described their upbringing as balanced. Their mother gave them confidence by stimulating them a lot, and their parents "were there for us". Tijmen recalls their upbringing as permissive, with his parents being "ex-hippies". Nonetheless, there were rules in the home.

Radicalization process

At high school Tijmen and his friends were a minority and they were bullied for being "kaaskoppen" [cheese heads: an ethnic slur directed at Dutch people]. When Tijmen was 15, he saw African children scare away a white child from the playground he used to play at, and Tijmen started to search for "white power" on the Internet. He

joined an online right-wing forum, and eventually met some forum members in real life at a gathering. His mother and sisters noticed that Tijmen had changed. He would utter his frustration during dinner about being the only white person on the tram, views that his mother and sisters did not share.

Then Tijmen was suspended from high school for proclaiming Nazi beliefs, and he continued his far-right activities against his parents' wishes. The situation became unbearable and Tijmen left home when he was 17. He gradually climbed up the ladder in the Neo-Nazi world and became an active member of Blood & Honour and Combat18.

Parental response

According to Marloes, she and Tijmen could talk to their parents about anything. However, Tijmen could not talk about his extreme right-wing ideals with his mother as it was not something that his mother could relate to. When Tijmen started to proclaim his extreme right views at home, Tijmen's mother tried to explain to Tijmen that you cannot denigrate a whole group; however, this transpired to be counterproductive as it caused Tijmen to proclaim his views even more strongly. According to Tijmen, his mother and sisters then held their tongue when he started talking about his ideology. Tijmen feels that this may have been part of the problem as he felt he could not share his frustrations with anyone.

When Tijmen was suspended from school for proclaiming Nazi beliefs, Tijmen's mother called her ex-husband for help. Tijmen's father forbade Tijmen to visit any more extreme right-wing webpages, threatening to close down the Internet connection. After that, everything happened very quickly. Marloes found out that her brother was still an active member on extreme right-wing forums and her mother gave Tijmen a choice: to quit or leave the house. Marloes said, "I think she expected Tijmen to stop. But he left." After that, there was hardly any contact.

Marloes explains that her parents did not know what to do or how to handle the situation. They felt powerless. "What can you say? You can't just keep someone like my brother at home."

Conclusion and discussion

In this study young people with extreme ideals and their parents were asked how parents reacted when they were confronted with radicalization. It is important to note that the study was based on a relatively small sample (55 interviews), and one should be careful before generalizing these first findings. Yet, these case studies could feed into new theory, and could help the direction of future research. The main finding in this study is that parents often change their reactions towards extremist ideals during the radicalization process and respond differently than one would expect from their general parenting style. We argue that this is the case because parents struggle with the radicalization and do not know how to handle the new situation.

This study shows that most parents shift to ignoring the extreme ideals of their children, which seems to support the findings of Van San, Sieckelinck and De Winter (2010, 2013) and also corresponds with the studies on responses towards deviant behavior (Baumrind & Moselle, 1985; Kerr et al., 2009; Stice & Barrera, 1995). According to Van San et al. (2013), this lack of response could possibly lead to radicalization, because an adolescent's search for meaning in life should be guided by a parent.

Of course it is understandable that parents do not know how to react, as they are struggling with the radicalization of their children. It is also possible that parents change their reactions because they feel that the situations need different approaches to their normal child-rearing styles. Just as Murray (2013) found in her research on parental responses towards offending behavior, our study demonstrates that parents sometimes react in a different manner than one would expect from their general parenting styles. It also shows that parents sometimes change their reactions during the radicalization process. It is important to consider these dynamics within families if we want to learn more about how parenting and radicalization possibly intertwine.

The findings of powerlessness and dissociation indicate an uncertainty within these parents who do not know whom to turn to for support. It is important to overcome this uncertainty because earlier research by our research group shows that to prevent young people from becoming extreme in their ideals, caring educators are needed who are genuinely interested in the adolescents' views, but who also provide the

necessary counterweight by setting boundaries when needed and showing alternative perspectives (Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2013).

To overcome parental uncertainty towards approaching extreme ideals, (professional) support must be in place. Many parental support groups already exist in Germany (e.g., Recall – mit Eltern gegen rechts!; Die Berliner Elterninitiative; and Die EXIT-Elterninitiative), providing information and resources to families. Preliminary evaluations exist on these programs and the support groups seem helpful, but more research is needed to pinpoint the best practices among these support groups. This research is urgent, as many support programs for parents are currently being developed due to the rise of IS and the increase in young people leaving for Syria to join the jihad. It would therefore be fruitful to explore best practices among existing support groups to find the best possibilities to help parents overcome their uncertainties when confronted with children who hold extreme ideals.

7 Parental Influence on Radicalization and De-radicalization according to the Lived Experiences of Former Extremists and their Families

EU member-states target families in order to prevent or counter radicalization. However, there is little empirical knowledge to confirm that parents influence the radicalization and de-radicalization process. Because there is little known about the role that parents play in radicalization and de-radicalization, this qualitative study explored the family dynamics in these processes together with 11 former radicals and their families. The study consists of 21 in-depth interviews with Dutch former radicals and their family members and it was found that formers and their families do not recognize a direct influence of parents on radicalization and de-radicalization. However, a more indirect influence seems to be in place: a (problematic) family situation may influence the radicalization process and family support can possibly play a role in de-radicalization. It is also stressed that parents have need for knowledge about the different ideologies and for tools on how to respond to their children's radicalization. Family support programs could focus on these lacunas in order to help families counter radicalization.

This chapter was published as:

Sikkens, E., Van San, M., Sieckelinck, S., & De Winter, M. (2017). Parental influence on radicalization and de radicalization according to the lived experiences of former extremists and their families. *Journal for Deradicalization, 12*, 192-226.

ES designed and executed the fieldwork and data analyses, and wrote the paper. MvS: collaborated with the fieldwork and writing of the study. SS: collaborated with the design and writing of the study. MdW: collaborated in the writing and editing of the final manuscript.

Introduction

Following the Arab Spring which caused destabilization in many countries of the Maghreb and the Levant, and the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011, we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of young Muslims who leave their countries to fight in foreign battles. Also, polarization has increased in other political spectrums, leading, for example, to right-wing extremism. This has ignited the debate about radicalization amongst young people and in particular the question of whether parents could have prevented them from becoming radicalized. For example, from the summer of 2012 up until now, European authorities have seen thousands of young Muslims leave their cities and countries behind and move to the Syrian (and later Iraqi) battlegrounds (Neumann, 2015). Some EU member states have responded by targeting families to prevent or counter radicalization (Gielen, 2014, 2015). By improving parents' knowledge about radicalization, parents could possibly recognize and act upon this process better. By improving contact between parent and child, the parent may be able to influence the de-radicalization process, and de-radicalized youth would have a stable home base to return to (Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; Gielen, 2014; Weggemans & De Graaf, 2015).

In the Netherlands, the government has started to involve parents in their approach to radicalization by developing an action plan to counter jihadism. Support groups, for example, were founded for parents whose child radicalized, and professional upbringing support is to be implemented to help parents raise resilient citizens and prevent them from radicalizing (Ministry of Security and Justice, National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism & Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2014). However, these measures have not yet been supported by empirical research on the actual influence parents may have on the radicalization- and de-radicalization process. This qualitative empirical study about former extremists and their family members was conducted in the Netherlands and is part of a larger European research study (Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2015). The study will explore *how former radicals and their family members perceive the potential parental influence on radicalization and de-radicalization.*

To answer this question, we will consider the stories of eleven Dutch former radicals and eleven family members about their radicalization- and de-radicalization. The formers and their families were asked how they *perceived* the role of parents in the radicalization and de-radicalization process. No agreement exists on the definition of radicalization (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). Some scholars even argue that radicalization does not exist, but is a term constructed by media, government, and security agencies (Neumann, 2013). However, most scholars distinguish between violent and cognitive radicalization (Bartlett, Birdwell & King, 2010; Vidino & Brandon, 2012). McCauley & Moskalenko (2008, p. 415), for example, define radicalization as a "dimension of increasing extremity of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in support of intergroup conflict and violence" while Vidino and Brandon (2012, p. 9), for example, define cognitive radicalization to be "the process through which an individual adopts ideas that are severely at odds with those of the mainstream, refutes the legitimacy of the existing social order, and seeks to replace it with a new structure based on a completely different belief system." Moreover, radicalization would be relative (Mandel, 2009). Mandel states that being radical is always in comparison with something else, for example the law or tradition. Whether an action or an individual is called "radical" depends on these comparisons.

In order to do justice to the relative meaning of radicalization, we constructed the following definition, based on the existing definitions but foremost based on the conversations we had with young people who have extreme ideals and their family members: *radicalization* is considered to occur when a child or adolescent starts to develop political or religious ideas and agency that are so fundamentally at odds with the upbringing environment's or mainstream's expectations that the relationship with the upbringers is at stake. Again, this definition is neither exhaustive nor universal, but we found that parents, practitioners, and social workers felt that it is very useful, as it adds a pedagogical element to the existing definitions of radicalization.

Furthermore, we define a *former* to be a person who once had extremist ideas or performed extremist behavior: this person ought to be de-radicalized *or* disengaged. Participating respondents have distanced themselves from their extremist thinking or behavior by leaving a particular group *or* swearing off violence that one once used

or condoned. *De-radicalization*, according to Neumann (2010), signifies substantive changes in ideology. *Disengagement* facilitates behavioral change such as rejection of violence (Horgan & Braddock, 2010). Ergo disengagement does not require a change in the radical ideas as such, yet it does require a change in readiness to use violence in striving for change.

We interviewed both formers and their families because we believe that they could reflect on their radicalization- and disengagement or de-radicalization process. In this article, we will keep in mind that parents may both influence and are being influenced by the radicalization of their children. We will therefore demonstrate how these parents interacted with their children during the radicalization and de-radicalization process, and examine how this may or may not have influenced the process. Our research focused on people with various types of former extreme ideals, as growing evidence reveals that processes of radicalization among widely divergent groups show parallel developments (Gielen, 2008; Sikkens, Van San, De Winter & Sieckelinck, 2017; Stern, 2003; Van San, Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2010). Previous research has shown that clear parallels exist in the radicalization processes toward various extreme ideologies: it has been found that young people with different extreme ideals have often identified the same push- and pull factors that led to their radicalization. These young people seem to have been entangled in a similar search for belonging, identity, and answers to complicated existential questions, encountering different ideologies during their quests (Sikkens et al., 2017).

This paper will first describe how the research was conducted. Next, we will discuss some previous research on family, radicalization, and de-radicalization. Given the relative infancy of the concepts of disengagement and de-radicalization within the field of radicalization studies, the current article also seeks to explore what can be learned about family influence from the more established literature on desistance from crime. How formers and their families feel about the potential parental influence on radicalization and de-radicalization is presented in the results section. The discussion deals with answering the question of what parental influence on radicalization and de-radicalization looks like according to formers and their family and how this

knowledge can benefit further research and current policy on preventing and countering radicalization.

Method

Recruitment and sampling

In this study, a case-study approach was used to gain a detailed understanding of the potential family influence on de-radicalization and disengagement in a Western upbringing context. The study consisted of interviews with eleven formers and eleven family members from the Netherlands. The formers used to act upon extreme-right, radical Islamic, or extreme left-wing ideals. Furthermore, we made sure that our study contained both male and female respondents, to create a more representative study.

Before we started our field research, we expected it to be easy to contact formers, because they were no longer involved in an extreme ideology, and could therefore share their stories with us. But the opposite appeared to be true: some formers struggle with feelings of shame and guilt, and/or do not feel like raking up the past. Furthermore, it was especially difficult for us to find and contact former Muslim radicals. This is possibly caused by the fact that they became less extreme in avowing their beliefs, but do not recognize themselves to be a *former*, as they are still Muslim and may believe in similar ideals. Another possible explanation would be the current political climate, in which (radical) Muslims are under severe scrutiny due to the perceived terrorism threat. Formers may therefore not be willing to participate in research on this topic.

Most of our respondents were contacted through gate keepers in the radicalization field. We also approached respondents we had spoken to during our pilot study in 2009 as some of them had disengaged or de-radicalized since their interview. Parents were approached through their children because the formers were easier to find than their parents. Siblings were interviewed in case the former did not permit us to speak to his or her parents. The interviews were conducted in Dutch and for the purpose of this article translated to English.

It should be noted that due to the nature of the data sought for the study, an application of statistically representative sampling methods was not possible. The Netherlands is a small country and does not have unlimited numbers of potential interviewees with 'extremist' backgrounds and experiences. Informants who fit the profile for interviewees and were willing to participate in the study, ideally with some of their family members, turned out to be quite a scarce population.

Interview specifics

Owing to the efforts of multiple key figures, we were able to contact eleven formers (eight males and three females), eight parents and three siblings. Five of the formers we interviewed used to have extreme-right ideals, three used to be active animal activists, and three respondents were former Islamic extremists, of which two were involved in violent jihad.

The age that the formers got involved in these extreme ideologies ranged from 12 years old to 16 years old, with a mean age of 14 years old. The age that they desisted was between 15 and 27 years old, with a mean of 21 years old.

Besides eleven formers, we interviewed eight parents and three siblings for triangulation. Most family members confirmed the stories told by the formers. However, in a few cases tension exists between the different storylines. These differences and the possible implications of these differences are considered in the results section.

Process

During this research, in-depth interviews were held with 22 respondents using prepared topic lists. The majority of the interviews were conducted in a face-to-face setting. We spoke to most of our respondents in the privacy of their own home, which gave insight into the settings our respondents grew up in. Three respondents were interviewed in a public place upon their request. Four interviews were conducted through Skype. A webcam was then used instead of a face-to-face setting.

All our respondents gave written and/or verbal consent to participate in our research and the interviews were audio recorded with permission of the respondents plus

subsequently transcribed verbatim. In order to guarantee confidentiality, all information that could lead to a participant's identity was deleted. The research had ethical approval from the Faculty Ethics Review Committee of the Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

Analytical framework

This study was explorative, as there is little theoretical knowledge based on empirical data about the family and upbringing dynamics within the radicalization and de-radicalization process. Due to this lack of knowledge and existing theories, we chose to use a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), aiming to generate theory from the qualitative data we gathered. We do take into account existing research on parenting styles that acknowledges a combination of warmth and control as generating the best outcomes for children (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). We will therefore explore the family climate during the maturation of the young people, as it may have influenced the radicalization process. To obtain information about the potential influence of parents on the radicalization and de-radicalization processes, we asked the young respondents and their parents how they came into contact with the radical group, whether the parents knew about their ideals, and the kind of ideals with which they were reared. We also asked about the home situation as they grew up and about the nature of the parent/child relationship during the "radicalized period". Furthermore, the young respondents and their parents were asked why de-radicalization had begun, about parental support during the de-radicalization process, and about the parent/child relationship at that time (see also the Appendix).

Theoretical background

This article explores *how former radicals and their family members perceive the potential parental influence on radicalization and de-radicalization*. To answer this question, we will consider scholarly work that has recognized a direct parental influence, work suggesting that there is an indirect parental influence, and literature arguing that parents may not have any influence at all. Subsequently, the existing literature on parental influence and de-radicalization will be explored. As there are a

limited number of studies on this topic, the current article also seeks to explore what can be learned about parental influence from the more established literature on desistance from crime.

Direct parental influence on radicalization

A growing body of literature exists on the influence of parents and parenting on radicalization (Bakker, 2006; Duriez & Soenens, 2009; Epstein, 2007; Hopf, 1993; Post, 1984; Sageman, 2004), and previous research shows that there is no unambiguous answer to the question of how parents influence radicalization. A large body of research indicates that parental warmth combined with control would produce the most positive child outcomes (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). An affective parental interaction with the child would help their (moral) development (Smetana, 1999). Moreover, it is through discipline encounters that parents help their children to establish prosocial moral internalization (Hoffman, 2000). Furthermore, literature shows that a lack of support, supervision, harsh disciplining, inconsistent parenting, delinquent family members, and problems within the family would enhance the chances of young people developing deviant behavior (Hoeve et al., 2008). Would the same account for radicalization?

Scholars have demonstrated that parents may influence the radicalization process of their children directly or indirectly. Parents influence their children directly by means of their genetic makeup, "beliefs, and behaviors as well as indirectly by means of their influences on one another and the multiple contexts in which they live" (Bornstein, 2002, p. 24). In general, a more fundamental intergenerational transmission of ideology would exist, which includes the intergenerational transmission of racism and prejudice (Duriez & Soenens, 2009). Pels and De Ruyter (2012) also found that there exists a significant concordance in racism between parents and their children; especially in the extreme-right scene parents would have a direct influence on their children as they act as role models. Radicals often share the extreme views of their parents (Duriez & Soenens, 2009; Gielen, 2008; Van Donselaar, 2005). Gielen (2008) has shown that extreme right-wing people often share the xenophobic and nationalist views of their parents. A similar conclusion emerges from research by Van

Donselaar (2005), who found that young people often pick up anti-immigrant feelings from their parents. In the Islamic context, Asal, Fair and Shellman (2008) state that family would play an important role within recruitment for jihad. A recurrent finding in the existing literature is that young people often join gangs, cults, and extremist groups because they have family members or friends who are already members of these groups (Hafez & Mullins, 2015). Bakker (2006), McCauley and Moskalenko (2010), and Sageman (2004) showed that social affiliation may play a role in the recruitment of jihadist groups, as a person is more likely to radicalize if a close friend or family member has already joined a terrorist group. Bakker's (2006) total sample of 242 jihadists included 50 persons who were related through kinship. However, these family relationships mostly consisted of siblings, cousins, and kinship through marriage – and only in a few cases parent/child relationships.

Post, Sprinzak and Denny (2003) found that amongst 35 incarcerated Middle-Eastern terrorists, most had no family member who was a member of the same terrorist organization. Still, the parents of these incarcerated respondents in general supported their children's cause or did not dissuade their sons from active involvement. The sample also included parents that socialized their children in favor of the extremist groups from an early age (Post et al., 2003).

Indirect parental influence on radicalization

Alongside the above mentioned direct influence of socialization, a more indirect socialization influence is mentioned in the existing literature (Bigo, Bonelli, Guittet, & Ragazzi, 2014). According to Bornstein (2002), indirect parental influence is more subtle than direct parenting. Conflict between parents, for example, could influence the quality of interaction with their children (Cowan & Cowan, 1992). If conflicts at home become severe, it could lead to a decreased availability towards the child: parents could miss out on signals their children send because they are caught up in different matters (Bornstein, 2002). According to Bigo et al. (2014), unstable family situations may fortify the radicalization process. The Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation, established by the European Commission in 2006, mentions broken families, substance abuse within the family, family violence, and loss of family

members as part of these problematic family backgrounds (Coolsaet, 2011). Of course, the loss of a family member does not directly lead to radicalization, but it may prompt an individual to become receptive to radical groups (Borum, 2011). According to Bjørgo and Carlsson (2005) and Lützinger (2012), many young people are lured into radical groups in their search for substitute families and father figures: many young members of extremist groups have less-than-ideal relationships with their families and with their fathers in particular. Provocations like joining a racist group can be a child's way of getting attention from their family, and older members of the group often fill the void of the missing father-figure (Bjørgo & Carlsson, 2005).

Moreover, in prior research it was concluded that parents often did not seem to be aware of their children's increased susceptibility to radicalism (Van San et al., 2010, 2013; El-Said, 2015). There was also a general lack of response among parents towards their children's ideas (Sikkens, Sieckelinck, Van San & De Winter, 2017; Van San et al., 2013). The dominant reaction was an indifferent one, in which the parents considered the ideals to be the child's own choice. This seems remarkable as the moral development of ideals requires monitoring and debate (Van San et al., 2013). But many parents do not know how to handle strong ideals and potential radicalization: a so-called "parental uncertainty" seems to exist (Van San et al., 2010).

No parental influence on radicalization

There are also scholars that claim that parents do not influence the radicalization process at all: in the works of Maleckova (2005) and Silke (2008), both very influential in the field of terrorism studies, no clear link was found between a family background marked by poverty or deprivation and membership in extremist organizations. A review by Christmann (2012) also found little on family influence, except to confirm that Muslim extremists and terrorists – violent or otherwise – came from a wide range of family backgrounds. More scholars claim that parents usually do not serve as an example (Botha, 2014; Buurman & De Graaff, 2009; Linden, 2009; Stern, 2010). All over Europe, testimonials have emerged from parents who do not support their children's decision to fight in Syria (Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2015). Buurman and De Graaff (2009) demonstrate that young Muslims often would try to increase their

knowledge about "pure Islam," freed from non-Islamic traditions they learned from their parents. Additionally, Linden (2009) shows that many adolescents and young adults with radical opinions mentioned that their parents taught them that discrimination is unacceptable and that all people should be treated with equal respect. Botha's (2014) research shows that most young people who joined the extreme al-Shabaab group were not directly influenced by their parents: these particular parents would have hardly played a role in "transferring their political orientations through socialization to their children" (Botha, 2014, p. 899).

Parental influence on de-radicalization

Regarding the move away from radical groups or ideas, most people who join extremist groups eventually leave them (Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009). However, according to Dalgaard-Nielsen (2013), in 2013 there were less than 20 empirically-based publications on disengagement in a Western democratic context – a precariously thin evidence base for understanding this phenomenon (see also Barelle, 2015). According to this prior research, family may play a role in de-radicalization: there are scholars who suggest that family can move people away from radical groups (Altier, Thoroughgood, & Horgan, 2014; Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009; El-Said, 2015; Reinares, 2011). Altier et al. (2014) show that positive ties with family members who do not have extreme ideals, may cause radicals to rethink their beliefs. Jacobson (2008, p. 3) demonstrates similar findings: terrorists "who maintained contact with family and friends outside the organization were more likely to withdraw." Bjørgo (2009) pleads the same as he showed that it can be difficult for extreme-right members to exit the scene because they no longer have contact with their family and therefore have no one outside the extreme-right scene to fall back on. Support from their family would help them to disengage or de-radicalize (Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009). A research project conducted by Dutch colleagues among former Jihadis of the so-called Hofstad group (Weggemans & De Graaf, 2015) also concluded that the individuals who had "gone straight" again, were often back on track thanks to their families. In recent years, family counseling programs have therefore been developed to counter violent extremism (CVE). The aim of these family counseling programs is to "affect the

radicalization process of their family member through strategic strengthening of positive, pro-social relationships" (Koehler, 2016, p. 156). Specialized counselors help the family of a radicalized person to provide alternatives to involvement in radical groups and to alter the person's affective commitment to the radical environment, aiming at the discontinuation of their involvement in the extremist groups (Koehler, 2016). Moreover, parents and other family members could mediate between the official exit programs and the potential exiters (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2013). Mobilizing parents in order to reach out and influence radical youngsters would be a particularly effective approach "in societies where families and elders enjoy a great measure of authority" (Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009, p. 251).

Contrarily, the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD, 2002) reports that parents hardly play a role in countering radicalization because their children find their parents too passive in how they respond to Western standards that are in conflict with Islam. However, up until now, the empirical evidence on family influence and de-radicalization remains scarce.

De-radicalization and desistance

As research on disengagement and de-radicalization is relatively new, the current article seeks to explore what can be learned from the more established literature on desistance from crime. Desistance from crime is sometimes defined as the moment that someone stops his or her criminal activities (Nuytiens, Christiaens, & Eliaerts, 2008). However, most scholars prefer to define desistance as an ongoing process (Kazemian, 2007). Therefore, Laub and Sampson (2003) distinguish between *termination* and *desistance*: *termination* is the moment in time that an offender quits crime. *Desistance*, on the other hand, is the causal process that precedes termination and still continues after the termination. Desistance, then, is the process of quitting, which termination is part of (Laub & Sampson, 2003).

Research on desistance from crime shows that people (eventually) quit crime under the influence of different life events like marriage, military service, or serving time in prison (Farrall, 2004; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Nuytiens et al., 2008). Nuytiens et al. (2008) describe these life events as possible catalyzers leading to desistance. However, an

offender first has to recognize such a life event as a possibility for change and, autonomously, seize this opportunity to desist. Human agency would be leading in the process of desistance (Laub & Sampson, 2003).

According to Sampson and Laub (1993), strong family ties are related to desistance. Both material and emotional support by partners, family, and friends can indirectly influence the motivation to quit crime (Farrall, 2002; Graham & Bowling, 1995). Also, Disley et al. (2011) pointed out that positive social ties to family members or friends outside of gangs, religious cults, or extreme right-wing groups are associated with exiting from these groups.

As can be seen, the previous research has shown that there is no unambiguous answer to the question of if and how parents influence radicalization and de-radicalization. Also, to our knowledge, former extremists and their parents have not been previously consulted about how they experienced parental influence during the processes of radicalization and de-radicalization. Therefore, this study explores their experiences and findings.

Results

Family climate

The families that our respondents grew up in were very different from each other. In some families, the situation seemed to be warm and stable. Other families went through turbulent times prior to the radicalization of the child. Divorce, health problems, mental health problems, and financial problems afflicted these families. In seven out of eleven families, the parents were divorced; three of the respondents grew up without knowing their father. The large number of absent fathers due to divorce or work is striking: in seven cases the formers describe that they could not see their father as much as they would have liked. In five families one or more family members struggled with mental health issues like personality disorder, autism, anorexia, and depression. The problematic family climate may have played a part in the radicalization process of the child: parents struggled with all sorts problems, therefore they might have lost sight of their child and his/her ideals. In the case study of **Daniel**, a former Muslim extremist, his brother for example stresses:

My mother has had psychological problems all her life, and my sister required a lot of attention and care. She had to run the household all by herself, and so she was hardly able to get a handle on the situation.

This indirect influence of (a lack of) parenting was found in several of our case studies. We will further address the possible role of the parent on radicalization in the next paragraph. Still, it is important to address that not every respondent grew up in a troubled family: not all families in the study were characterized by multiple problems and malfunctioning. For some, radicalization was rather set in motion by contacts or influences from the surrounding environment like school or peers.

Role of the parent in radicalization

According to our respondents, family and parents in particular had little direct influence on their radicalization process. Most of the formers we interviewed did not learn their ideals from their parents. On the other hand, some had ideals that were in line with the ideals of their parents, though usually more extreme. The parent of an extreme right-winger would then, for example, vote for a political party on the right political spectrum. Like the father of **Tijmen**:

My dad basically agrees with the somewhat political right views, but he's more of a Fortuyn [former Dutch right-wing politician] voter.

Only one respondent answered that she was directly influenced by her mother. **Katie**'s mother was involved in animal activism, and brought her daughter up with the same ideals:

I can be short and clear about that: I got my ideals from my mother. It can't be any other way: you learn your ideals from your parents. First you have them [ideals] as a child, but over the years I discovered that they are ideals that I 100% agree with. And I just got involved, especially when my mother joined a group of animal activists. In the beginning, I was too young and stayed at home, but I knew that my mum was carrying out actions, and later on I joined her.

Except for Katie and her mother, the remaining respondents did not mention a direct influence by their parents on the development of their extreme ideals. Alternatively, an indirect influence of parents on the radicalization process seems to exist.

Other respondents address that they could not talk to their parents about their ideals. Because their parents were unable or unwilling to talk about politics and/or religion, these young people tried to find answers themselves. Like **Laura**, a former animal activist, who was interested in social and political issues at a very young age:

> *Kids in my class were interested in other things while I was worrying about the war or about Chernobyl. Back then I was 7 years old, and I asked my parents what was going on over there, and I had nightmares about it. When I was reading about the Holocaust, I would ask my parents questions about it, and adults would always answer "you're too young for that!" And if you keep hearing that, you start interpreting things the wrong way. If you keep hearing that you're too young for that and you should play with your dolls… but I didn't care about my dolls! So I had all this information, all by myself, and I started interpreting it in my own way. Now I can make sense of it, but back then…*

Our interviews also showed that parents often had no knowledge about the religious or political views of their child, so it was hard for them to discuss these ideals, or to set boundaries. The mother of former right-wing extremist **Sylvia**, for example, reminisces that she was clueless about the signals that showed that her daughter was involved with the extreme right-wing ideology:

> *And then she got more of those right-wing… more of those t-shirts with…well name it… swastikas and such. I thought that was really… And then I was called by the school, because the school thought it wasn't normal. I said "well, what am I supposed to do? How should I interpret her rolled up jeans and army boots?" See, if I don't know! Because I wasn't occupied with that at the time. She was.*

Sometimes the parents severely rejected their children's ideals, causing a break-up between the parent and child. Due to this break-up, parents no longer were able to monitor the ideal development of the child, and no longer had influence on the radicalization process. **Rowan**, for example, fled the house when he and his father kept fighting about his far-right ideas. Rowan wanted to hang a flag with swastikas:

> *Yeah of course my dad would become furious, and he would pull that flag right off the wall. And that was something you shouldn't do, because then you'd come between me and my ideals. So a couple of times we fought each other over this.*
> Interviewer*: So what happened to this flag in the end? Did you hang it or not?*
> Rowan: *In the end, I gathered up all my stuff and left for like-minded people. And that's how I left home when I was 15. I went my own way, apart from everything and everyone.*

It was also difficult for the parents to monitor the radicalization process of their child or to intervene in this process once the child was radicalized. **Daniel**, a former Islamic extremist, illustrates this as follows:

> *What can parents do? You don't share anything with them [parents], you don't talk to them, you don't tell them what you're doing, so you keep them out very consciously. Your life is outside, in the mosque, with people on the Internet, so she [mother] has no insight into those matters and so she doesn't know. She only realizes it when you get caught for what you've done.*

Most formers and their families did not receive any professional help when the radicalization occurred. It also seems that parents usually did not ask for help to confront the radicalization: possibly because they feared it would worsen the situation, or because they were ashamed of the situation. Laura's parents said:

> *When you notice it [radicalization], you don't show anyone. It was hard as it was, trying to manage it, so you don't spill the beans. And you get isolated as a family. We tried to take the necessary steps like going to a child psychiatrist, but after a while you just don't know where else to look for help.*

One mother argued that the authorities were aware of the situation, but did not intervene:

> Mother: *She was under probation. They came over every once in a while and blabbered for a bit and that was that.*
> Interviewer: *And did you speak to them about your right-wing ideas?*
> Mother and Sylvia: *Yes.*
> Sylvia: *It is written in all the reports but they didn't do anything about it.*
> Mother: *They didn't do anything about it.*

More parents asked for help: For example, they turned to a local police officer or to Youth Care, but were turned away because their child had not (yet) violated any laws. Other professionals replied that they lacked expertise on the subject. Our respondents radicalized and de-radicalized before 2012. At that time, in the Netherlands, few professionals knew how to respond to radicalization.

Rowan stated that the involvement of authorities was not helpful because soon he was radicalized beyond the point that anyone could have influenced him. **Francis**, a former radical Muslim, confirms this as he claimed that no one could have de-radicalized him at that point in time:

> *What would have worked? Nothing I think. I wasn't open to different ideas or ideologies. My teacher asked me many times "you're an intelligent boy, you have straight A's in Philosophy… why do you believe in this?" That didn't influence me. Me and some other orthodox Muslims had discussions with Christians, but we just tried to convert each other. So that didn't influence me. More than that: such attacks only made me more convinced!*

Role of the parent in de-radicalization

Our interviewees stress that they disengaged or de-radicalized because they were caught by the police and/or were incarcerated, that they were positively influenced by a peer or life partner, or that they disengaged or de-radicalized because they entered a new phase in life (for example by starting a family or a new education). Katie, for example, says:

The fact that I have children now is one of the reasons that I don't join those kinds of actions anymore.

Animal activist **Jean-Paul**, who got arrested after he broke into a mink farm and assaulted a man, no longer participates in these kinds of actions either. He explains that the legal consequences of former actions made him rethink his strategy:

But when you've done things, and you experienced the legal consequences of it, you'll think "what shall I do now?". And then you'll go from there. It hasn't been an intentional choice. Actually, I'm still doing exactly the same, but with a different sort of methodology.

Some of our respondents state that they disengaged or de-radicalized under influence of their partner or a friend. Tijmen's best friend, for example, confronted him with the intolerability of his far-right ideals. And Sylvia de-radicalized with the support of her new boyfriend:

I think it really helped us that he was able to support me and I was able to support him. Because getting out all by yourself, that's quite difficult.

Other factors that might have influenced the disengagement and de-radicalization of our respondents are sheer maturation and human agency, defined as intentionally influencing one's functioning and life circumstances (Bandura, 2005, p. 9). Francis stresses that he basically de-radicalized all by himself:

Because again, this [de-radicalization] was mainly a rational process, nourished by doubts that came from my moral dilemma. And eh… I didn't need help with that. I really think that this is something you have to do by yourself.

According to most of our respondents, parents would have had little influence on the de-radicalization or disengagement process. The sister of Tijmen, for example, claims that they did not have any influence at all:

Interviewer: *But did you or your parents influence his desistance?*
Sister: *No, I don't think so. No, absolutely not. It started apart from us and it disappeared apart from us as well.*

Few of our respondents believe that parents influence the disengagement or de-radicalization process, though Francis feels that his father played a role in his de-radicalization process in an indirect way. When his father confronted him with a different perspective on his religious views, this did not immediately change the way Francis avowed his extreme beliefs. But his father's words indirectly worked as a catalyst, and played a role once the de-radicalization process started:

> *Well, it wasn't really a reason, it was more like a possible catalyst: I got back in touch with my dad and the things he told me… he plainly confronted me with things I already had doubts about, but which I tried not to think about. I didn't really embrace what he told me, but I remembered it. And afterwards, when I gave way to my own doubts, it played an important role.*

Furthermore, some respondents experienced support from their parents during the disengagement or de-radicalization process, of which they described as indispensable. Laura was incarcerated for years after she had planned and executed multiple attacks in order to safeguard animals. She started disengaging while imprisoned, and feels that her parents played a supportive role in her disengagement process after she got released:

> *I think after my release, I've known so many women who got out, and who stood at the gate with their carton box without knowing where to go, and without any guidance. My parents were there for me when I got out, and when I just got out I lived with them as well. If I hadn't had my parents, I wouldn't have known where to go with my carton box either.*

Formers versus Family

During this research, we have interviewed both formers and their families in order to obtain triangulated data. In most cases, the formers and their family members had similar accounts on the radicalization and de-radicalization process. However, it was interesting to see that both groups sometimes mentioned the same facts but interpreted them differently. Daniel's mother, for example, did not interfere when Daniel radicalized. According to Daniel, his mother reconciled herself with the situation

because her children should be free to choose their religion. However, according to Daniel's brother, their mother was too scared to interfere. He recalls:

> *Daniel was big and strong and quite intimidating. In the end, my mom didn't dare to interfere anymore.*

Another example of different accounts between the former and the family is the interview with **Andre**, a former extreme-right sympathizer and his parents. The parents of Andre bought a guitar in an effort to keep Andre's mind off extreme right-wing politics. Though his parents believe that the guitar indeed influenced the de-radicalization process, Andre laughs and says:

> *Yes they tried, they offered me some distraction: they gave me a guitar so I could play. Really liked that. They hoped that I would decrease my political involvement but that didn't work. I still was politically involved. I loved the fact that they gave me a guitar, absolutely! [laughs] I really wanted a guitar, but it didn't have the effect that they wished for.*

The differences in accounts between the formers and their family members perhaps suggest that a distance exists between family members and radical youngsters, as they no longer are on the same page. It also shows that it is not easy for a family member to reach out to the radical child during the process of radicalization and de-radicalization.

Discussion and conclusion

Existing literature does not provide a univocal answer to the question of what role parents play in the radicalization and de-radicalization process of their children. Since so many young people have left for Syria, public opinion seems to be rather certain about the importance of the role that parents play within the radicalization process. However, it begs the question of whether this is justified. Furthermore, up until now the empirical evidence about the role that parents play in the process of disengagement and de-radicalization of their children is still scarce. This study, though small, has systematically researched this role in the Netherlands. The strength of this study is that

it was based upon interviews with both formers and family members and therefore contributes to our knowledge of the role that family plays in radicalization. Yet, the study was based upon a limited number of case studies which has to be considered when reading the conclusions. Moreover, the respondents were asked about their perception of a potential parental influence: it should be taken into account that the respondents and their family members are not objective observers, but are active agents whose interpretation of their lived experiences may be biased.

Parental influence on radicalization

Previous research has been ambivalent about whether young people learn extreme ideals, prejudice, and racism through their parents or elsewhere. Although some formers developed an extreme version of their parents' ideals, most parents in this study did not share or teach their children any extreme ideals. Consistent with the work of Christmann (2012) and Silke (2008), this study reveals no direct link between family and the development of extreme ideals: both formers and their family members gave little weight to the influence of parents on their radicalization. This study confirms that most parents felt they could not influence their children's ideal development. Instead, parents were not aware of the child's activities, or they were effectively incapable of doing something, due to other troubles, or because the parents were simply not around.

Thus, according to our respondents, parents usually do not play a direct role in the radicalization process. However, whether parents indeed played no role in the radicalization remains uncertain. Perhaps parents played down their influence on the radicalization process in order not to appear culpable. Or, perhaps the respondents did not want to jeopardize their (renewed) positive relationship with their parents by suggesting any blame.

A latent role, on the other hand, seems to exist. Consistent with Bigo et al. (2014), Bjørgo and Carlsson (2005), Hoeve et al. (2008) and Lützinger (2012), this study shows that some family climates may indirectly offer a fertile ground for radicalization, as some formers came from turbulent family situations. The parents may have been struggling with different matters, which potentially led to not recognizing the

radicalization process, and less monitoring. Primary factors that may have an indirect link with radicalization are experiences of painful loss, in combination with a difficulty to offer emotional support or clear boundaries. About two thirds of the families we have interviewed coped with divorce, an absent father, lack of emotional support, psychiatric issues, illness or death, similar to the families that can lead young people to develop other kinds of deviant behavior (Hoeve et al., 2008). Risk factors like these may feed an adolescent's unrest and anger, and some families may find it hard to cope with these intense feelings due to a lack of parental authority or support. Such circumstances do not in themselves explain the process of radicalization, but can form a fertile breeding ground for it (Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2015). However, fertile ground does not automatically lead to radicalization: there are many children from broken homes that do not become radical. To radicalize, the young person has to come into contact with the ideology first: a seed must be planted. The turbulent family factor probably comes into play when radical groups prey on the uncertain youth who has no alternative safety net.

Furthermore, it should be emphasized that even outstanding parental qualities are no guarantee against radicalization. Some functioning families in the sample, who offered their children a warm emotional climate in combination with clear rules, were confronted with the sudden radicalization of their offspring and struggled (Sikkens et al., 2017). These parents often did not interfere in the radicalization process because they did not recognize the signals, or did not know how to handle them. A parental uncertainty existed within these parents and they did not know whom to turn to for support. It also shows that the general climate of upbringing is one among other important factors that may have contributed to radicalization. Moreover, it shows that, just like the families that experience multiple problems, these parents could use professional family support in confronting radicalization as they feel uncertain about how to handle the development of ideals.

Parental influence on de-radicalization

Previous research has not yet answered the question of whether parents can influence the de-radicalization process of their children. In this study, the interviewees placed

very little weight on the influence of parents in their decision to turn away from the radical narrative: almost all informants describe their parent's role in the de-radicalization process as non-existent. Any importance of a family member in this process was hesitantly mentioned and most of the time in combination with more influential factors outside the family such as agency (self-initiation), detention (isolation), and study (education). This is consistent with the existing literature on crime and desistance. In this literature, it is stated that human agency or a major event in the life of a recidivist (for example a marriage, military service, or an imprisonment) can lead to the desistance from crime (Farrall, 2004; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Nuytiens et al., 2008). However, it remains uncertain whether human agency indeed played a more important role in de-radicalization than family, as was stated by our respondents. Perhaps our respondents pointed out de-radicalization factors such as human agency or education as more influential than family influence because this makes them active actors within their own de-radicalization process. This would enhance their self-esteem and would add to their new (positive) identity.

But again a more latent influence seems to be at play: the formers mentioned that the counterarguments that were given by their parents were memorized, and were used once they started their de-radicalization process. Moreover, family members were available to support the change that came from the individuals themselves and formers stated that the support that their parents gave during the de-radicalization was indeed helpful. This confirms the earlier finding of Bjørgo and Horgan (2009) that mobilizing family members may make the process of disengagement easier, as there would be someone to fall back on outside the radical scene. It is also consistent with research on desistance from crime, which also showed that support from family members helps people to quit deviant behavior (Farrall, 2002).

Implications for future research

A better understanding of the underlying processes causing radicalization, disengagement and de-radicalization may offer possibilities for countering and reinforcing these processes. The empirical data in this research show that parents can play a latent role in both the radicalization and de-radicalization process. Future

research could take these findings into account in further exploration of the complex dynamics of radicalization and de-radicalization. For example, this study points towards parental support, not as a main cause, but as an important condition for de-radicalization. This raises the question of whether people without any support also de-radicalized. Or, perhaps the support could also come from different significant relationships such as those with friends, siblings, or a partner. Further research could explore this issue.

Another track in the research could be a further examination of the answers of our respondents. Most of the respondents replied that they perceived no parental influence on the radicalization or de-radicalization processes. However, it remains uncertain whether the respondents and their family members perhaps downplayed parental influence out of embarrassment, protection, pride, or other reasons.

Practical implications

The government in the Netherlands has started to involve parents in their approach to radicalization by developing an action plan to counter jihadism. Support groups, for example, exist for parents whose child radicalized, and professional upbringing support is to be implemented to help parents raise resilient citizens and prevent them from radicalizing (Ministry of Security and Justice, NCTV & Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2014). However, this research suggests that parents do not have a direct influence on radicalization and de-radicalization. Still, governmental interference could be appropriate and desirable.

This study suggests that parents have need for knowledge about the different ideologies, and for tools on how to respond to the radicalization in their children, while formers recall that they wanted to be heard and to be taken seriously. Parents in this research felt that they could not counter the ideas of their child without knowledge about the topic. The ideology of young people is usually led by a search for purpose in life, a search for identity and for belonging, and an urge to improve the world. These needs and moral questions are to be addressed and steered in the right direction in order to prevent adolescents and young adults from becoming extreme in their ideology (Van San et al., 2013); our respondents feel that adolescents

will search for answers by themselves if there is no one to discuss their ideas and questions with. Bartlett and Birdwell (2010) also affirm that it is important to listen to young people and their extreme ideas, so that they can be critiqued and subsided. Debating their ideas would be a good method to subside extreme ideals, as through debate the adolescents could possibly find out that their ideals do not match reality (Bartlett & Birdwell, 2010). A lack of debate about and attention to these issues may have severe consequences for the influence that parents can have at a later stage (Sieckelinck & De Ruyter, 2009; Van San et al., 2013). Governmental family support in radicalization should therefore perhaps focus on empowering parents to take on their children's moral quest, so that they can provide the necessary support (someone who listens) but also control (e.g., provide counterarguments, show alternative perspectives, and preserve boundaries when needed). All in all, our findings do not suggest that parents cannot play a role in preventing radicalization or in contributing to the de-radicalization process. Our respondents pointed out that parental support and parental advice indirectly influenced their de-radicalization. Moreover, the involvement of parents could consist of listening and talking to their children, educating them, and helping them to find their way toward a meaningful life (Sikkens, 2014).

8 Summary and General Discussion

Research on radicalization was dominated by a security perspective for a long time (Schmid & Price, 2011). However, this perspective did not provide us with insights into family dynamics when a child radicalizes. In the last six years, the pedagogical perspective became more known within research and policy-making. Scholars and policy makers embraced the idea that, in addition to a security perspective, radicalization can also be seen as a matter of adolescent development that perhaps could be influenced by socialization (Aasgaard, 2014; Gielen, 2015; Hermens, Van Kapel, Van Wonderen & Booijink, 2016; Pels, 2014). This new and alternative perspective on studying radicalization processes provided us with new insights into young people's development of ideals, radicalization, and de-radicalization, and the potential influence of parents on these processes that may benefit further scientific research, policy on preventing radicalization, and social work on this highly difficult subject matter. This concluding chapter will share insights that this study provided.

To obtain knowledge about the radicalization process and the potential role parents play within it, an empirical explorative study was conducted. Traditionally, most research is based on secondary sources such as autobiographies, newspapers, court documents, police records, and (jihadi) videos (Borum, 2011; Neumann & Kleinmann, 2013) and less on conversations with people who have extreme ideals (Horgan, 2014). This dissertation contributed to existing studies on radicalization by including in-depth interviews with people who pursue extreme ideals, former radicals, and their family members who experienced the radicalization process from up-close. Still, it was challenging to find and get in touch with adolescents and young adults who have extreme ideals (as defined in Chapter 1). Social media, and more specifically Facebook, were explored as a means to find and approach potential respondents. **Chapter 2** provided us with evidence that Facebook can be a facilitator in finding and approaching potential respondents who are hard to find in the offline world because such persons do not trust anybody outside their own networks. Facebook made a hidden population visible; as well, this chapter showed that an approach via private Facebook message gave respondents the power to open, ignore, delete, or contemplate the request in their own time, making the approach anonymous and less

intrusive. Facebook could therefore be a useful tool in research when searching and approaching hidden populations.

After using Facebook for finding and approaching potential respondents, interviews were conducted with 155 people: 73 Dutch, Belgian, Danish, and British youth with (former) extreme left-wing, extreme right-wing, and extreme Islamic ideologies, 71 family members, 4 friends, and 7 teachers and youth care professionals. In the interviews we searched for factors that play a possible role in radicalization. Radicalization factors have often been researched, but scholars usually focus on a single ideology infused by the presumption that radicalization is triggered by the ideology itself. Consequently, it remained unclear whether push and pull factors are similar for youth with divergent ideologies. In **Chapter 3** we looked for parallels in the radicalization processes toward various ideologies, and found that young people with extreme left-, right-, and Islamic ideals named similar push and pull factors that, in their view, caused them to radicalize. Apparently parallels in the radicalization process toward different extreme ideologies exist. The respondents also pointed out group-specific push and pull factors. *Personal exclusion*, for example, seemed to play a bigger role in radicalization toward extreme rightwing groups than toward other ideologies.

Apart from the factors that play a possible role in radicalization, this dissertation focused on de-radicalization. De-radicalization remained theoretically underdeveloped, as few empirical insights are available. **Chapter 4** therefore explored what pathways in and out of radicalization look like according to former radicals and their family members. The chapter showed that the radicalization process can be characterized as a journey marked by a sequence of transitions from child- to adulthood. The concepts of journeys and transitions were helpful in making sense of the radicalization process. The journey metaphor connects the radicalization and de-radicalization processes as two aspects of the same journey: a rite of passage into and out of a radical group as young people search for their place in society.

As this research also aimed to provide insights into the role that parents may play in radicalization and de-radicalization processes, **Chapter 5** explored how parents

responded when their children started to develop extreme ideals. According to our respondents, many parents did not react upon the radicalization of their child because they did not recognize the signals or did not know how to handle them. An uncertainty existed within these parents, and they did not know to whom to turn for support. **Chapter 6** elaborated on these findings and explored the parental response further. It was found that parents often change their reactions toward extremist ideals during the radicalization process, and respond differently than one would expect from their general parenting style, because they do not know how to handle the situation.

Chapter 7 explored how formers and their family perceived the potential parental influence on radicalization and de-radicalization. The study showed that both formers and their family members gave little weight to the influence of parents: Most parents felt they were not able to influence their children's ideal development. Does this mean that parents do not play any role? Chapter 7 showed that family climate may indirectly offer a fertile ground for radicalization, as some formers came from turbulent family backgrounds. Parents were then often not aware of the child's whereabouts, they were incapable of interfering due to their own troubles, or parents were absent. Moreover, Chapter 7 showed that parents could indirectly influence the de-radicalization process by supporting their children and providing them with counterarguments and alternative perspectives.

The importance of relating to others

This study aimed to assess why young people feel that they radicalized and de-radicalized. In the current debate on radicalization, a dichotomy has come to exist: Some experts argue that radicalization is prompted by a psychological process (DeJacimo, 2015; Kouwenhoven & Blokker, 2015; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2010; Weenink, 2015), while others believe that radicalization is impelled by the ideology itself (Francis, 2015; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Spencer, 2008). This dichotomy seems rather counterproductive, as our research found evidence that both psychological and ideological factors are at play. Moreover, psychological and ideological frameworks both approach radicalization as an individual quest, while this study shows that a third factor plays an important role in radicalization and de-radicalization processes.

This third factor would be *relational*: Apart from personal quests, grievances, and alluring ideologies, the process of radicalization also seems to be a quest for belonging. It is about who these young people relate to, who influences them, and how they relate to and are influenced by their friends and family. Where psychological factors refer to individual internal factors, the relational factor addresses the interaction between the individual and the social context in which a young person radicalizes. For example, when young people develop their ideals solely in correlation with their friends, this also tells us something about the relationship they have with their parents and the (lack of) influence parents may have. Young people who grow up in a family context where they feel they cannot turn to or relate to their parents, may search for answers and belonging outside the home.

No direct parental influence – radicalization

This dissertation aimed to study the potential influence that family has on radicalization and de-radicalization. Chapter 7 shows that, according to former radicals and their family members, parents do not have a direct influence on radicalization and de-radicalization. This finding contrasts with the belief of some politicians and policymakers who consider parents to be blamed for their children's' radicalization. Former Mayor of London Boris Johnson (2014), for example, stated that young people were being radicalized in the home by their parents or stepparents. Nowadays, parents more often are considered to be victims of their children's radicalization, mourning the loss of a child who left for an extremist group and unable to prevent this (Gielen, 2015). According to our respondents, parents indeed do not often play an active part in the radicalization of their children: In only two cases we saw parents who educated their children in extreme beliefs. However, similar to previous findings (Buurman & De Graaff, 2009; Gielen, 2008; Vollebergh, 1995), this study found that the ideals of the adolescents and young adults sometimes were a derivative of their parents' ideology or religion, though adhered to and disseminated much more strongly. Parents then liked the political or religious interest of their child initially, but showed dismay as soon as they realized their child had become extreme in his/her ideals. There were also cases in which the adolescent or young adult adhered to an

ideology that was completely at odds with his/her parents' ideals. This finding suggests that parents in Belgium and the Netherlands most often do not directly influence the radicalization of their child. Still, this research shows that in many cases there was a problematic family situation, providing fertile ground for radicalization. In these families we saw a lack of stability, warmth, and support, which led these young people to look for support elsewhere, outside of the home. Extremist groups welcomed them with open arms and provided them with a surrogate family (Ezekiel, 2002).

No direct parental influence – de-radicalization

Policymakers in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs often include family members as an important "tool" to de-radicalize young people who have extreme ideals (Gielen, 2015; Koehler, 2013). However, according to our once radicalized respondents, they were the ones who quit the extremist groups, and no one else would have influenced this exiting process. It remains uncertain whether, indeed, individual agency played a major role in de-radicalization and family, as stated by our respondents, did not. Perhaps our respondents pointed out de-radicalization factors such as agency or education to be more influential than family, because it makes them active actors within their own de-radicalization process. This would enhance their self-esteem and add to their new (positive) identity as a former (Maruna & Immarigeon, 2004; Laub & Sampson, 2003). However, it is questionable whether individual agency would be possible if there is no plausible alternative to (re)turn to. Variables such as family, friends, a job, education, or a relationship provide a context which makes it possible to turn in a new direction. Without a support system in place, chances are slim that people de-radicalize. In this research, formers stated that family members supported the change that came from within themselves. This confirms the earlier finding of Bjørgo and Horgan (2009) that mobilizing family members would make disengagement easier, as there would be someone to fall back on outside of the radical scene. And so it seems that the previously mentioned *relational factor* also plays an important role in the de-radicalization process, as again the possibility to belong and relate to others seems to be key.

The essence of this dissertation is that the development of (extreme) ideals should not only be seen as a security issue, but also as a matter of upbringing in a social context. This study found that relating to others is an important contextual factor in radicalization and de-radicalization. An adolescent or young adult who is sensitive to a radical ideology is not only a potential threat to society, but also someone who wishes to belong to others, and to be part of a "better world"[10] in which he or she is willing to play an active role. Of course, we must remember that ideals have the potential to become violent and consequently at odds with the democratic constitutional state. It is therefore important to listen to the ideas of young people, even if these are extreme or radical, and thereafter discuss the ideas so that these can be countered and by such means mitigated (Bartlett & Birdwell, 2010). There is an important role for parents and teachers to discuss ideals and teach young people moral rules and principles. These moral principles would teach young people that they can strive after their ideals but not at the expense of others (Sieckelinck & De Ruyter, 2009).

However, this study shows that parents are often uncertain how to react to or handle radicalization, or whom to turn to for advice and/or support. It is important to counter this uncertainty because, in times of radicalization, parents are required who can relate to their children and are interested in their ideals, but who can also provide a counterweight if needed and show alternative ideas (Van San et al., 2013). By approaching families in which children are (at risk of) radicalizing solely from a security perspective, it is possible that these families feel rejected and will move away (further) from society. Instead, our society would have to invest in the relationship with these families to help them shape, foster, and curb the ideals of their children toward democratic citizenship. These young people want to be included; Relating to them and to their parents seems crucial in countering radicalization.

[10] It is of course arguable whether it truly will be a better world. Moreover, not all young people that radicalize are driven by ideals (see also the paragraph 'extend fieldwork').

Future perspectives for research

This dissertation departed from a pedagogical perspective on radicalization; It was found that relating to others is key in the processes of radicalization and de-radicalization. The approach we adopted provides directions for potentially interesting avenues to explore in future research, some of which are needed to address limitations of the studies that were performed.

Extend fieldwork

In the preceding years the radicalization field has changed. When this research project commenced, the civil war in Syria had not yet started. Then the Arab Spring occurred and the war in Syria evolved. Some of our respondents left for Syria to join the jihad. After our field work had finished, a new group of Dutch Syrian fighters seems to have risen that was not included in our research. This group, in general, were young boys with criminal records who came from Islamic family backgrounds but who had never practiced religion (Roy, 2014; Van Ginkel & Entenman, 2016; Weijers, 2016; Wiegel, 2016). These youngsters seemed to radicalize within very short amounts of time: Some became practicing Muslims and left for Syria overnight. This group appears to be driven by fear and hatred rather than ideology, and they are used to violence as they had often been involved in robberies and violent street culture. It would be worth researching whether this new group of jihadists are led by the same push and pull factors as our current respondents.

Moreover, since the start of our research in 2011 polarization grew stronger. For example, groups like Alt-right developed and extreme rightwing ideals normalized (NCTV, 2018). As society changes constantly and radical groups develop accordingly, it is recommended to include upcoming radical groups into future research to study whether members feel that their radicalization process was influenced by similar factors.

Furthermore, this study hardly included parents who taught their children extreme ideals within their upbringing. The conclusions and future perspectives for practice in this dissertation therefore solely apply to families in which parents did not teach

extreme ideals to their child. It would be challenging but valuable to focus future research on families with extreme ideals (for example, by including parents who decided to leave for Syria with their children and live under the flag of IS).

Confront the selection bias

As pointed out in the limitations (see Introduction), a selection bias may exist because parents were approached through their children. An alternative line of research could therefore start from the parents of young people with extreme ideals to assure more parents are included in the research. This could teach us even more about the actual family dynamics when radicalization takes place. Furthermore, it would be desirable to include more parents from an Islamic background, as it now sometimes remains uncertain whether family has played the actual role the way it was stated by the young respondents. As it turned out to be very challenging to include these parents in research, it is recommended they be included early on within the research process. Perhaps by consulting Islamic parents about the research design and asking them which conditions are important to consider in research, they can help lower the threshold for participation in research.

Research best practices in parental support programs

After the rise of IS and the increase in young people leaving for Syria to join the jihad, many support programs for parents have been developed and implemented (Gielen, 2015). By conducting scientific research on best practices among existing support groups, "tools" could be identified that can help parents overcome their uncertainties when confronted with children who hold extreme ideals. In Germany there is experience with support programs for parents of children who have extreme right-wing ideals (e.g. Exit-Germany) and extreme Islamic ideals (e.g. Hayat, Vaja Kitab, and IFAK). It could be useful to study these established programs and, for example, examine if different ideologies require different support programs. Or, as Chapter 6 has shown, do parents struggle in similar ways with confronting and countering radicalization in their children, no matter their ideology? The insights from research

on best practices may help support parents who struggle with the radicalization of their children.

Future perspectives for practice

Originally, this study was conducted to provide FORUM (Institute for Multicultural Affairs) input for policy on prevention of radicalization. FORUM was closed in 2015; still, our research continued. This dissertation now provides insights that may be of use to other policymakers, teachers, parents, and social workers.

Include all types of ideologies in counter-radicalization policy

Nowadays, radicalization policy mainly focuses on Islamic parents to prevent and counter radicalization. The research findings in Chapters 5 and 6, on the other hand, showed that non-Islamic parents also struggle with (potential) radicalization of their children: parents of converts who become more extreme in their beliefs, for example, or parents of extreme left wing or extreme right-wing participants. Moreover, the study presented in Chapter 3 showed us that the radicalization processes toward different ideologies are often quite similar. Instead of focusing policy solely on family members of young people who have extreme Islamic ideals (Ministry of Security and Justice, National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism & Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2014), policymakers could aim for parents that are confronted with radicalization toward any kind of extreme ideology. That way, no struggling parents are left to fend for themselves; furthermore, by such means Islamic parents are not singled out as parents in need for support. Singling out Muslim parents (or any other group) could increase feelings of scapegoating and unintentionally provoke further radicalization.

Discuss ideology and radicalization with young people

Policy that tries to counter radicalization often aims at helping parents, teachers, and practitioners to recognize and distinguish signs of radicalization in young people (Verhagen, Reitsma & Spee, 2010; Zannoni et al., 2008). However, it would possibly be more fruitful to help parents discuss different kinds of (extreme) ideologies and

religions, as part of the normal upbringing, to guide children in their moral (ideal) development. Previous research showed that the moral development of ideals requires monitoring and debate (Smetana, 1999; Van San, Sieckelinck, & De Winter, 2010, 2013), but research findings in Chapters 5 and 6 showed that many parents mention that they do not know how to handle strong ideals and potential radicalization. Policy that aims to counter radicalization should therefore focus on the question of whether parents are capable of discussing issues that happen outside their homes. A Canadian NGO, for example, created an information guide for parents on how they could talk about radicalization and violent extremism with their children (Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence, 2017). Parents do not need to have straight answers, but they can talk to their children about complicated issues such as terrorist attacks, discrimination and extremism, and reassure them (Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence, 2017; Spee & Reitsma, 2010). Moreover, speaking openly with children about ideologies and radicalization could perhaps benefit an open and trustful relationship (Van San et al., 2010). Pinpointing signs of radicalization in the adolescent or young adult could oppose this open communication with them. The tool (signaling radicalization) then seems counterproductive as it opposes a warm relationship which—from the research presented in Chapters 5 and 6—appears to be an important means of preventing radicalization.

Provide boundaries and democratic alternatives

How should parents, teachers and youth workers handle extreme ideals? Chapter 5 showed that young people have a need for structure, monitoring, and support. Moreover, it is important to listen to their frustrations, show interest in their ideas, discuss injustice and existential questions, and offer counterweight when needed (De Winter, 2012; Sikkens, 2014; Van San et al., 2010). Parents can channel their discontentment and ideas on how to alter society into positive actions they can pursue within a democratic society (Sieckelinck, 2017). Various studies show that uncertain young people are looking for well-structured groups with clear boundaries with which to identify (Hogg, 2014; Kotnis, 2015). Parents and other educators could, as an

alternative to extremist groups, provide such boundaries. Still, parents who want to prevent radicalization should not solely forbid extreme behavior, as a democratic society asks more of its citizens (De Winter, 2016). Apart from setting boundaries, it is important to teach young people that there are nonviolent ways to change society. Adolescents are not easily persuaded by moral arguments; thus, it is not a simple matter of urging them not to join extremist groups (Bovenkerk, 2010; Davies, 2016). Instead, parents and teachers should discuss these highly complicated issues with their children and students and build their knowledge, values, attitudes, and behavior on these topics (Davies, 2016). As not all parents are able to conduct these kinds of discussions, the role of professional educators can be crucial. Prior research (Bartlett & Birdwell, 2010) shows that teachers can instruct about unpopular ideologies such as right-wing extremism or extreme Islam without worrying that their students will become extreme. Teaching about these ideologies and debating them would help young people realize that such ideas, and what they propagate, usually do not concur with reality (Bartlett & Birdwell, 2010). Moreover, the energy and willingness of young people to change the world should be canalized by teaching them how to achieve goals by the means of argumentation, lobbying and organization (Davies, 2016). Sieckelinck (2017) refers to this process as re-radicalization. By providing them with democratic alternatives such as volunteering, fundraising and campaigning, young people can have a meaningful influence on the social system of which they are a part (Rappaport & Seidman, 2000).

Construct authoritative pedagogical coalitions

The research in Chapters 3 to 7 showed that many families in which radicalization takes place had problematic backgrounds: In these families there was not always space to offer a warm and stable home. Moreover, the forces that influence young people are often too big and complex for parents to counter individually. Therefore, parents, teachers, youth workers, Youth Care and religious workers could assemble in "authoritative pedagogical coalitions" (Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2015). Together, adults surrounding the adolescent or young adult could offer the moral authority that these young people need and guide them in their democratic development. Moreover,

people often join extremist groups to get a sense of belonging, in search for "a new family" that cares for them and appreciates them (Ezekiel, 2002). Ideally, authoritative pedagogical coalitions should try to give this same feeling of belonging, as a sense of being recognised is the first step to resilience against extreme groups and their propaganda (Davies, 2016).

When to intervene?

Once adolescents or young adults are radicalized and are fully part of an extreme ideological group, it is difficult to reach out to them. The abovementioned interventions are all aimed at preventing radicalization. Does this mean that parents or teachers cannot intercede once the adolescent or young adult is radicalized? The study in Chapter 7 contends that parents can still play an important role by providing their children with alternative knowledge and counterarguments, and above all, emotional support. According to the participants it is unlikely that the counterarguments will immediately lead to de-radicalization: At the time of radicalization, these counterarguments were usually rejected. However, the alternative knowledge provided by parents and teachers usually "sticks" and is remembered by the young radical once he or she chooses to de-radicalize. Moreover, the ongoing support (not for their acts but for their being)—or a place to return to once the child chooses to exit—helps the young radical in his or her de-radicalization process (Gielen, 2015).

A final word

Many EU-countries are trying to counter and prevent radicalization. This study showed that we need to consider the experiences and views of young people and their family members to determine the best means for preventing radicalization. I would like to finish this dissertation with some of their remarks. Their insights were central to this study, and I believe we can learn most from their experiences. Therefore, our respondents have the final word. During the interviews with former radicals, we asked them what they would do if their own children radicalized:

What would you do if your own child radicalizes?

Francis (former extreme Islamist): I'm so tempted to say, "oh no he won't!" But that's not fair. It wouldn't work either, as it would only make things worse. I think I would set clear boundaries and I would keep a close eye on him. I think that's what you do whenever your child starts something new that could potentially lead to problems. Increase monitoring. And not immediately trying to dismiss his ideas but also offer him different knowledge. I hope that would initiate the same process as I went through, as alternative knowledge will stick in the end.

Laura (former extreme animal activist): She wouldn't have an easy time, I would ground her a lot [laughs]. I would tell the same as I now teach in schools: I would explain to my daughter that I went down that same road and where it has led me.

Sylvia (former extreme-right): I wouldn't become mad, but I would try to talk to my child. Like… this is what I went through, and it's not as great as it seems. They're not your friends, even though they pretend that they are. It's all about luring in new members.

Tijmen (former extreme-right): Well, in any case not waive it away as if… not ignoring or waive away like it was just rubbish. Because I mean: it has an origin and if you would respond to it immediately, and listen, you'll keep updated and would sooner be able to alter it [ideas].

Hamid (former extreme Islamist): This ideology is such a complicated matter; it takes somebody who has really been there to explain its flaws. I think that's perhaps the most important thing. I wish I had me to explain it to me ten years ago!

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Appendix

Topic list Formers and Families Study

Age
Occupation
Marital status
With/without children

Ideals
Which ideals / ideology?
When was the first time you came into contact with these ideals?
How? Any role model?
What was so appealing about these ideals?
How did these ideals develop?
How come you became so involved?
How far were you willing to go to fulfill your ideals?

Household
In what kind of household did you grow up?
- facts: one/two parents; siblings; living standard; neighbourhood
- feelings: comfort; happy?; religious/spiritual?
Before you got radical, would you say your family life was on the right track?

Parent(s)
Did your parent(s) know about your passion for these ideals?
Their (his/her) opinion? Their (his/her) reaction?
Did you discuss your ideals with your parents?
Where did your parent(s) draw the line?
Did you keep in contact with them?
How was your relationship with them (him/her) during your 'radicalized' period?
Ideals parent(s)?
With what ideals were you raised by your parent(s)?
If you were a parent, how would you react upon your child's ideals or radicalization? / Now you are a parent, how do you react …

Upbringing

Attachment → How was the relationship with your parents? Did you spend a lot of time together?
Support → Could you talk to your parents about problems, worries, uncertainties?
Control → Did you normally tell your parents about your whereabouts? Did friends visit you at your house? Did your parents know, who your friends were? Were your parents at home a lot?
Rules and regulations → Did you find your parents strict? Or easy? Were there many rules at your house? What kind of rules?

De-radicalization

When did you start changing your mind?
How did you become less radical / less engaged?
How did you experience this process? How long did it take?
Who was the most important person, influencing your route to de-radicalization?

Family

How did your parents, and other family members, react upon you becoming less radical / engaged?
Did this process change your relationship with your parents? In what way?
What kind of support did they offer you during this process? (emotional, practical etc.)
What role did this support play in your de-radicalization?

Safety net

Did you or your parents seek professional help?
Were you offered any professional help during your process of radicalization- and/or de-radicalization?
How did you experience this (lack of) support?
Were there any others who have supported you during your de-radicalization or disengagement?
What role did this support play in your decision to disengage?

Samenvatting

Radicalisering werd in het verleden vooral onderzocht vanuit een veiligheidsperspectief: hoe kunnen we radicalisering herkennen en, liever nog, tegengaan? Echter, een dergelijk perspectief laat niet zien wat er gebeurt in een gezin wanneer een kind radicaliseert. In dit onderzoek is daarom vanuit een pedagogisch perspectief naar radicalisering gekeken en onderzocht wat er gebeurt in een gezin waarin radicalisering plaatsvindt, als aanvulling op het veiligheidsperspectief.

Door middel van kwalitatief empirisch onderzoek is onderzocht wat de mogelijke rol van ouders is in het radicaliserings- en de-radicaliseringsproces. Eerder radicaliseringsonderzoek baseerde zich voornamelijk op secundaire bronnen zoals boeken, krantenartikelen, rechtbank- of politiedossiers en (jihad)video's. Dit proefschrift beoogde bij te dragen aan bestaand radicaliseringsonderzoek door diepte-interviews te houden met jongeren die extreme idealen nastreven, met voormalige radicalen en met familieleden die het radicaliseringsproces van dichtbij meemaakten. Echter, het bleek lastig om met adolescenten en jongvolwassenen in contact te komen die extreme idealen nastreven. Er is daarom gekeken of sociale media zoals Facebook konden helpen bij het vinden en benaderen van respondenten. **Hoofdstuk 2** van dit proefschrift laat zien dat Facebook een goede hulpbron kan zijn bij het vinden en benaderen van respondenten die in de offline wereld moeilijk te vinden zijn omdat ze mensen buiten hun eigen netwerk vaak niet vertrouwen. Facebook maakte hiermee een verborgen populatie zichtbaar. Bovendien liet hoofdstuk 2 zien dat een interviewverzoek via een privébericht op Facebook de respondent de mogelijkheid gaf om dit bericht te openen, te negeren, weg te gooien of uitvoerig na te denken over het interviewverzoek. Dit maakte de benadering meer anoniem alsook minder opdringerig. Facebook zou daarom ook in ander onderzoek als middel gebruikt kunnen worden om meer verborgen populaties te vinden en te benaderen.

In totaal zijn er voor dit onderzoek diepte-interviews gehouden met 155 personen: 73 Nederlands, Belgische, Deense en Britse jongeren met (voormalige) extreem linkse, extreem rechtse en extreem Islamitische ideologieën, 71 familieleden, 4 vrienden en 7 docenten en Jeugdzorg medewerkers. In deze interviews zochten we naar factoren die een mogelijke rol spelen bij radicalisering. Er is al veel onderzoek gedaan naar

radicaliseringsfactoren maar wetenschappers focussen daarbij vaak slechts op één ideologie vanuit de gedachte dat radicalisering wordt ingegeven door de ideologie zelf. Daardoor blijft het onduidelijk of push- en pull factoren mogelijk gelijk zijn voor jongeren die radicaliseren richting verschillende ideologieën. In **Hoofdstuk 3** hebben we daarom gezocht naar mogelijke parallellen in radicaliseringsprocessen richting verschillende ideologieën, en bleek dat jongeren met extreem-linkse, -rechtse, en -Islamitische idealen dezelfde push- en pullfactoren noemden waardoor zij geradicaliseerd zouden zijn. Blijkbaar bestaan er dus parallellen in de radicaliseringsprocessen richting verschillende extreme idealen.

Dit proefschrift richtte zich ook op de-radicalisering. De-radicalisering bleef tot nu toe vaak onderbelicht in wetenschappelijk onderzoek omdat empirische inzichten ontbreken. In **Hoofdstuk 4** werd daarom onderzocht hoe levenspaden in en uit radicalisering eruit zien. Het hoofdstuk laat zien dat een radicaliseringsproces gekarakteriseerd kan worden als een reis [*journey*], gemarkeerd door een aantal transities van kind-zijn naar volwassenheid. De concepten *reis* en *transities* die jongeren doormaken hielpen ons om het radicaliseringsproces beter te begrijpen. De reismetafoor verbindt radicalisering en de-radicalisering als twee aspecten aan dezelfde reis: een rite de passage in en uit een radicale groep wanneer jongeren op zoek zijn naar hun plek in de samenleving.

Omdat dit onderzoek ook tot doel had de mogelijke rol van ouders in het radicaliserings- en de-radicaliseringsproces inzichtelijk te maken, werd in **Hoofdstuk 5** onderzocht hoe ouders reageerden zodra hun kind extreme idealen ontwikkelde. Veel ouders bleken niet te reageren op de radicalisering van hun kind omdat ze de signalen niet herkenden of omdat ze niet wisten hoe ze met deze signalen om moesten gaan. Een handelingsverlegenheid lijkt te bestaan en ook wisten deze ouders niet bij wie zij konden aankloppen voor hulp. **Hoofdstuk 6** zoomt verder in op deze bevindingen: het blijkt dat ouders hun reactie vaak gaandeweg het radicaliseringsproces veranderden: ze reageerden bijvoorbeeld eerst afwijzend maar trokken zich gaandeweg terug en reageerden niet meer. Ook reageerden ouders vaak anders dan dat je zou verwachten op basis van hun gewoonlijke opvoedingsstijl omdat ze niet wisten hoe ze met de radicalisering moesten omgaan.

In **Hoofdstuk 7** werd onderzocht hoe ex-radicalen en hun familieleden de invloed van ouders op het radicaliseringsproces en de-radicaliseringsproces hebben ervaren. De studie laat zien dat zowel voormalig radicalen als hun familieleden het gevoel hebben dat ouders de (extreme) ideaalontwikkeling van het kind niet hebben beïnvloed. Dit betekent niet dat ouders helemaal geen invloed kunnen hebben. Hoofdstuk 7 laat zien dat het gezinsklimaat indirect een voedingsbodem kan vormen voor radicalisering, aangezien sommige ex-radicalen opgroeiden in turbulente gezinssituaties. Ouders waren dan vaak niet op de hoogte van de bezigheden van het kind, waren niet in staat om in te grijpen doordat zij worstelden met andere problemen, of waren geheel afwezig. In deze gezinnen zagen we weinig stabiliteit, warmte en steun, wat ertoe heeft geleid dat deze jongeren steun zochten buiten het gezin. Extreme groepering lijken hen met open armen te hebben verwelkomd en boden hen een surrogaatfamilie (Ezekiel, 2002). Daarnaast laat hoofdstuk 7 zien dat ouders indirect het de-radicaliseringsproces kunnen beïnvloeden door hun kind te blijven steunen en te voeden met tegenargumenten en andere zienswijzen.

Het belang van relaties

Dit onderzoek had tot doel inzichtelijk te maken waarom jongeren denken dat zij radicaliseren en deradicaliseren. In het huidige radicaliseringsdebat is ondertussen een tweedeling ontstaan: sommige experts beargumenteren dat radicalisering wordt ingegeven door psychologische factoren (DeJacimo, 2015; Kouwenhoven & Blokker, 2015; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2010; Weenink, 2015). Anderen, daarentegen, geloven dat radicalisering wordt ingegeven door de ideologie zelf (Francis, 2015; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Spencer, 2008). Deze tweedeling is weinig vruchtbaar en bovendien laat dit proefschrift zien dat zowel psychologische als ideologische factoren een rol spelen bij radicalisering. Daarnaast benaderen het psychologische en ideologische perspectief radicalisering vooral als een individuele zoektocht, terwijl ons onderzoek laat zien dat nog een derde factor een belangrijke rol kan spelen bij radicalisering en de-radicalisering, namelijk een relationele. Naast persoonlijke zoektochten en worstelingen, en aantrekkelijke ideologieën, is een radicaliseringsproces vooral ook een zoektocht naar waar iemand bij hoort. De

sociale context waarin iemand radicaliseert lijkt centraal te staan: door wie wordt een jongere beïnvloed en bij wie wil hij/zij horen? Jonge mensen die opgroeien in een familiecontext waar zij niet bij hun ouders terecht kunnen, zoeken mogelijk "een thuis" en mensen om bij te horen buiten het gezin.

Centraal in dit proefschrift staat dat de ontwikkeling van (extreme) idealen niet alleen als veiligheidsvraagstuk moet worden beschouwd maar ook als opvoedingsvraagstuk. Dit onderzoek laat zien dat relaties met anderen een belangrijke factor is in radicalisering en de-radicalisering. Een adolescent of jongvolwassene die gevoelig is voor een radicale ideologie, is niet alleen een mogelijke dreiging voor een samenleving maar ook iemand die graag ergens bij wil horen, deel uit wil maken van een "betere wereld"[11] en bereid is om hier een actieve rol in te spelen. Natuurlijk moeten we onthouden dat idealen de potentie hebben om te slaan naar extreme idealen die op gespannen voet staan met de democratische rechtsstaat. Het is daarom belangrijk om naar de ideeën van jongeren te luisteren, zelfs als deze ideeën extreem zijn of radicaal, zodat deze besproken en tegengesproken kunnen worden en op die manier worden afgezwakt (Bartlett & Birdwell, 2010). Er is daarbij een belangrijke rol weggelegd voor ouders en docenten om idealen te bespreken en jongeren morele regels en waarden bij te brengen. Die morele waarden zouden ervoor zorgen dat jongeren wel idealen nastreven maar niet ten koste van alles of anderen (Sieckelinck & De Ruyter, 2009).

Echter, dit onderzoek laat ook zien dat een zogenoemde handelingsverlegenheid bestaat bij ouders: ouders weten vaak niet wat zij moeten doen of hoe zij moeten reageren wanneer hun kind radicaliseert en bij wie ze terecht kunnen voor hulp en ondersteuning. Het is daarom belangrijk om deze handelingsverlegenheid in ouders het hoofd te bieden, omdat er ouders nodig zijn die kunnen relateren aan hun kinderen, interesse tonen in hun idealen, maar ook tegenwicht kunnen bieden en alternatieve ideeën kunnen aandragen (Van San et al., 2013). Door families waarvan de kinderen (het risico lopen te) radicaliseren uitsluitend te benaderen vanuit een

[11] Het is natuurlijk discutabel of hun idealen ook echt leiden tot een betere wereld. Bovendien worden sommige radicale jongeren niet gedreven door idealen maar door status, avontuur, geweld en macht.

veiligheidsperspectief, loop je het risico dat deze families zich miskend voelen en (verder) wegdrijven van de samenleving. In plaats daarvan zou onze samenleving moeten investeren in de relaties met deze families zodat zij geholpen kunnen worden bij het vormen en beteugelen van de idealen van hun kinderen in de richting van democratisch burgerschap. Deze jongeren willen graag ergens bij horen. Het aangaan van een goede relatie met deze jongeren en hun ouders lijkt daarom cruciaal in het tegengaan van radicalisering in onze samenleving.

Dankwoord

En dan ben je opeens toe aan het dankwoord. Na 6 jaar schrijven, schaven en zweten is mijn proefschrift af! Dit proefschrift was er nooit gekomen zonder de inzet van mijn promotoren Micha de Winter, Marion van San en Stijn Sieckelinck, die ik daarvoor hartelijk wil bedanken. Marion, ras veldonderzoekster, van wie ik veel heb geleerd tijdens ons veldwerk en dankzij wie ik kon aansluiten bij Idealen op Drift. We delen onze passie voor kwalitatief onderzoek en criminologische thema's en ik ben trots op ons werk van de afgelopen jaren. Stijn, onze theoreticus, die mij volledig aanvulde daar waar ik vaak het spoor bijster raakte. En bovenal een warm persoon bij wie ik soms even durfde te klagen. En Micha, die al die jaren tijd voor me heeft gemaakt en zijn geduld met me bewaarde. Jij zorgde ervoor, als ware projectmanager, dat alle voorwaarden er waren om dit traject tot een goed einde te brengen. Bovendien ben je een inspiratiebron en hoop ik ooit mijn ideeën zo goed te kunnen verwoorden als jij.

In het dankwoord schrijft iedereen vol opluchting dat het een moeilijke maar mooie tijd was. En dat klopt helemaal. Onderzoek doen is een prachtig vak en nergens krijg je zoveel tijd en ruimte om je te verdiepen en in vrijheid 'te knutselen' aan je eigen project. Maar de wetenschappelijke wereld kan tegelijkertijd ongelooflijk hard zijn. Er zijn dan ook momenten geweest dat ik dacht dat het proefschrift er niet zou komen, bijvoorbeeld wanneer er een artikel na maanden wachten terugkwam van een wetenschappelijk tijdschrift met afwijzingen als: "At this stage it reads like a first draft", "There is little new in this paper" en "The expression, grammar and structure of sentences is poor." En laten we zeggen dat dit slechts een snelle greep is uit vele commentaren. Het zal u dan ook niet verbazen dat het me soms moeite heeft gekost om in het proefschrift en in mezelf te blijven geloven. Mijn dank gaat daarom ook uit naar Sanne en Paul die samen met mij hard gewerkt hebben om het vertrouwen in mezelf en in het promotietraject te bewaren.

Ik begon dit avontuur in samenwerking met FORUM, het Instituut voor Multiculturele Vraagstukken. Sinds 1 januari 2015 bestaat FORUM niet meer maar ik hoop dat dit proefschrift bijdraagt aan het oorspronkelijke gedachtengoed en aan het werk van mijn oud-collega's van FORUM die zich nog steeds met het thema bezighouden. Onderzoek naar de ontwikkeling van extreme idealen blijft lastig en dit onderzoek

had niet uitgevoerd kunnen worden zonder de mensen om wie het gaat. Ik wil dan ook alle respondenten hartelijk bedanken: het is heel bijzonder dat zowel de jongeren als hun ouders bereid waren mij inzage te geven in hun idealen en in hun levens en ik ben hen daar zeer erkentelijk voor. Het was de basis van dit proefschrift dus zonder deze verhalen had dit werk er niet gelegen. Verder wil ik de bekeerlingengroep Zusters4Zusters bedanken dat ik bij hun bijeenkomsten mocht aansluiten en van wie ik veel geleerd heb over de Islam.

Daarnaast zijn er tijdens het schrijven van dit proefschrift veel mensen op mijn pad gekomen die me met raad en daad hebben bijgestaan. Zo wil ik Ineke Roex, Medea van Schijndel, Allard Feddes en Willem Wagenaar bedanken voor het delen van hun ervaringen en het op weg helpen van mijn veldonderzoek. Hennie Boeije wil ik bedanken voor het meedenken en schrijven aan het methodologische hoofdstuk. Ik vond het een eer om van je te leren en met je te werken! Esther en Mirjam wil ik bedanken voor het uitwerken van interviews, Catherine en Saloua voor het tolken, en Endy voor het analyseren van veel interviews. Jullie maakten een grote klus weer behapbaar! Daarnaast heb ik veel mogen leren van collega-wetenschappers: dank bijvoorbeeld aan het Platform Radicalisering Onderzoekers voor alle inspirerende bijeenkomsten and thank you Sita Kotnis for all your work, energy and great humor! En ook wil ik mijn collega's van het Werkverband en de collega's van de afdeling Pedagogiek bedanken met wie ik meerdere schrijfweken heb gehouden en die mij van goede feedback konden voorzien.

Ook gaat mijn dank uit naar de mensen die het praktisch mogelijk maakten dat ik kon promoveren: dank aan Politie Midden-Nederland en het Instituut Fysieke Veiligheid voor de ruimte die ik kreeg om mijn proefschrift af te maken en de UU voor het lange gedogen van mijn aanwezigheid, waardoor ik altijd een fijne plek had om in alle rust aan mijn onderzoek te werken. Ook wil ik het Faculteitsbestuur en de Decaan bedanken voor hun vertrouwen in mij en in mijn onderzoek toen het ingewikkeld werd.

Als laatste, maar niet minder belangrijk, wil ik de mensen noemen die er de afgelopen 6 jaar altijd bij waren tijdens het proces dat een promotietraject is: heel belangrijk was daarin de Feestkamer(aanhang). Bedankt dat jullie altijd klaar stonden om al mijn

‘domme vragen’ te beantwoorden. Onze gezamenlijke tradities zoals cola-momenten en collectieve knappers zorgden ervoor dat ik het promoveren nooit als een eenzaam proces heb ervaren. Dank dat jullie zulke fijne collega’s en vrienden zijn geweest, zelfs als ik mij niet op mijn best liet zien op hartvochtige maandagen.

Daarnaast al mijn lieve vriendinnen en vrienden. Dankbaar dat ik jullie in verschillende fases in mijn leven heb mogen ontmoeten en dat jullie al die tijd al meegaan. Mijn lieve (schoon)familie die, jaar in jaar uit, bleven informeren hoe het ‘met de studie ging’ en mijn zus, zo’n ander leven maar toch ook hetzelfde. En vooral mijn ouders, die ervoor zorgden dat ik sta waar ik nu sta. Eigenlijk wilde ik naar de theaterschool of de politieacademie maar mijn vader zag mij liever studeren aan een universiteit, omdat de mogelijkheid er was. Mijn liefde voor het politievak is gebleven maar ik had het studeren voor geen goud willen missen. Dank lieve P&M dat jullie mij daartoe de mogelijkheid hebben gegeven!

En als laatste mijn Tim, die het allemaal heeft moeten ondergaan. Dankjewel dat je er altijd voor me bent, me vaak helpt te relativeren en me het vertrouwen geeft dat ik goed genoeg ben.

About the author

Elga Sikkens was born on February 16, 1985 in Borger, the Netherlands. After completing high school (Gymnasium) at R.S.G. de Borgen in Leek, she started her Bachelor's Degree in General Social Sciences (in Dutch: Algemene Sociale Wetenschappen) in 2004 at Utrecht University. In 2007, Elga spent part of her study at the University of Calgary in Canada. That same year she graduated with a thesis examining future dreams of second generation migrant youth. After an internship at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Ankara, Turkey in 2008, she started her Master's Degree in Youth, Education and Society (in Dutch: Maatschappelijke Opvoedingsvraagstukken) at the Utrecht University. During this Master's Degree, Elga completed an internship with the Amsterdam Police and wrote a thesis on the role that friends may play in desistance from crime. In 2009 she started a second Master's Degree in Criminology at the Utrecht University. Here, she conducted research in Peruvian female prisons and graduated in December 2010 with a thesis studying Dutch women imprisoned abroad. After graduating, Elga started working at the Information Department of the Utrecht Police. In December 2011, she started her doctoral research on the possible role that parents play in radicalization at FORUM, Institute for Multicultural Affairs and the Utrecht University. During her time as a PhD student, she also participated in the European Formers & Families research project. From September 2016 until October 2017, Elga worked as a researcher at the Institute for Safety in Arnhem. Currently she works as an analyst for the Dutch National Police.

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