

8 Injustice and Violent Extremism

Methodological Directions for Future Justice Research

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The current chapter discusses how judgments of injustice (and related issues such as perceptions of unfairness and immorality) play a role in instances of Muslim radicalization, right-wing radicalization, and left-wing radicalization. In doing so, I define radicalization as a process of growing willingness to pursue and/or support radical changes in society (in an undemocratic manner, if necessary) that conflicts with or could pose a threat to the democratic legal order (Van den Bos, 2018).

Specifically, radicalization can be viewed as a process in which people move from staying within the law (as in the case of activism) to deliberately breaking the law (as in the case of extremism), possibly using violent means (as in the case of violent extremism). The ultimate endpoint of radicalization on which I focus is terrorism, which is defined here as the engagement of individuals or groups in ideologically motivated violence or other destructive acts against persons, property or the fabric of society (Netherlands General Intelligence and Security Service, 2009).

In discussing how injustice judgments play a role in growing radicalization I rely on an earlier review of these issues (Van den Bos, 2018). Building on this review I describe how perceived injustice can fuel various radicalization processes, ultimately leading to violent extremism and terrorism. I then will zoom in onto some of the key challenges the social psychology of justice is currently facing and how the study of radicalization may contribute to what I see as what is needed for the next generation of justice studies.

Radicalization by Means of Injustice Judgments

Many different factors are important in understanding, predicting, preventing, and fighting of radicalization. Various scientific disciplines offer different explanations of radicalization and incorporate several important variables in doing so (see, e.g., Bongar, Brown, Beutler, Breckenridge, & Zimbardo, 2007; De Graaf, 2010; Moghaddam, 2005; Rahimullah, Larmar, & Abdalla, 2013; Reich, 1990; Victoroff

& Kruglanski, 2009). Several explanations do not include judgments of injustice in their analyses of radicalization. That being said, many social psychological approaches to radicalization pay at least some attention to injustice judgments as pivotal variables in processes of radicalization (Feddes, Nickolson, & Doosje, 2015; Kruglanski et al., 2014; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Moghaddam, 2005; Van den Bos, 2018).

Indeed, perceptions of unfairness, injustice, and immorality play a crucial role in Muslim, right-wing, and left-wing radicalization. These perceptions include judgments of unfair treatment, group deprivation, inequity of outcome distributions, perceived immorality, and general impressions that things are not right and that the world is not a just place (Van den Bos, 2018). Two injustice concerns seem to stand out in the social psychology of radicalization, group deprivation and immorality.

People who perceive that they or their group are deprived of important goods in society—whether money, justice, status or privilege—may join social movements with the hope of redressing their grievances. Thus, relative deprivation is a potential cause of social movements and societal protest (Klandermans, 1997). Extreme perceptions of relative deprivation may lead to political violence and terrorism (Gurr, 1970; Merton, 1938).

The perception that one's own group is being deprived plays an important role in right-wing and Muslim radicalization. For example, research on extreme right-wing attitudes in the Netherlands showed that right-wing "autochthonous" respondents felt that their group was deprived of important material and immaterial goods. They perceived that Muslims were taking away these goods (Van den Bos, Loseman, & Doosje, 2009). This can be labeled as an instance of horizontal group deprivation.

Experiences of group deprivation also played an important role among Muslim citizens in the Netherlands as they felt deprived of important goods, including how important symbols of their religion were treated in Dutch society, compared to how other religions were treated in the same society. Interestingly, the Muslim respondents were not so much focused on right-wing groups, but were oriented on important authorities in society and attributed their group deprivation to those societal authorities (Van den Bos et al., 2009). This can be called an instance of vertical group deprivation.

Of course, perceived vertical deprivation can also take place among right-wing respondents and horizontal deprivation among Muslim citizens, and both groups can also experience individual (as opposed to group) deprivation (Crosby, 1976; Runciman, 1966). However, for the moment I conclude that both horizontal and vertical deprivation seem to play an important role in the psychology of right-wing and Muslim radicalization, respectively (for more details, see Van den Bos, 2018).

The notion of perceived relative deprivation is important for our understanding of radicalization processes because it shows that it is not only or primarily people's objective circumstances or absolute deprivation that determines injustice-based grievance, but that it is especially the relative injustice as perceived by individual people or members of groups compared to other individuals or other groups. Thus, people's perceptions of their social conditions are key to the understanding of the radicalization process.

Because these perceptions depend on the referent comparisons that people make (Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Star, & Williams, 1949), this implies that those individuals from radical groups who are themselves relatively well-off may show extreme levels of grievance and resentment. This is because they can become frustrated when they can imagine improving their conditions, but in reality they do not get access to a good job or high societal status (Crosby, 1976).

Although such perceptions may be biased or colored, they can also have real consequences on people's behaviors (Thomas & Thomas, 1928). Therefore, to understand radical behaviors we need to take seriously people's perceptions of unfairness, including their perceptions of horizontal and vertical group deprivation. Once we understand what is perceived to be wrong, we get hold of a major antecedent of why people may engage in radicalization processes.

Another concern that motivates radicalization processes is morality. For example, left-wing radicalizing individuals in The Netherlands indicated that how the government is treating people who seek asylum or how commercial companies are treating animals is morally wrong (IVA, 2010; Netherlands General Intelligence and Security Service, 2010).

Morality and moral concerns are strongly related to the essence of who we as humans are (Haidt, 2012). We want to be moral beings (Cramwinckel, Van Dijk, Scheepers, & Van den Bos, 2013) and moral concerns drive human behavior, in part because we have elaborate reasoning skills and sophisticated cognitive skills that allow us to come to important conclusions about what is right or wrong.

Perceiving that things are morally wrong upsets us, in part because these immoral events threaten our notion that we live in a world that is understandable and predictable (Van den Bos, McGregor, & Martin, 2015) and involve strongly felt moral emotions. After all, core emotions such as anger and disgust are strongly associated with important moral codes of how to behave (Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999).

Feelings and moral emotions also provide meaningful input for how to interpret moral issues (Haidt, 2001). For instance, in many circumstances information about moral issues is not available or too complex to digest in all its nuances. Feelings and emotions then serve as important sources on which people build their moral judgments (Van den Bos, 2003). Thus, when a certain situation *feels* right you infer that

the situation probably *is* morally right. And when another event makes you disgusted you tend to conclude that the event in all likelihood is wrong (see also Hume, 1739).

Morality is important for its own sake, not only because of evolutionary concerns, but also because we deeply and innately care about morality and about what is right (Greene, 2013). Moral concerns thus motivate people to approve or disapprove of certain behaviors. People can feel mandated to take firm stances with regard to important moral issues (Skitka, 2002). Therefore, people may protest and fight against what they see as morally wrong. This morality-based opposition clearly has yielded behaviors that are important and good for society at large.

This being noted, people sometimes behave too much in principled ways. For example, we may not only adhere to certain political or religious beliefs but can also be convinced easily that these beliefs are right, and thus that other points of view are wrong. This may lead to the denigration of those other views without appropriate attention to the validity of the views in question (Haidt, 2012). Focusing on our own moral values and extensive reasoning processes why these values are valid and honorable can lead us to overlook the possible importance of other viewpoints out there.

Judgments of morality may lead to feelings of moral righteousness (Haidt, 2012). In fact, individual moral righteousness has been observed in my country with respect to left-wing radicalization pertaining to asylum and animal rights. Individuals fighting for these rights felt justified and entitled to do something about these issues, even when this implied that they then broke the law or acted in anti-democratic or even violent ways to achieve their goals (IVA, 2010). Thus, because perceptions of moral righteousness are deeply felt they can legitimize violent behavior that violates core democratic values (Van den Bos, 2018).

Perceived moral superiority and strong group identification may help people to downplay rule-breaking behavior of ingroup members (Iyer, Jetten, & Haslam, 2012). Moral superiority may also underlie people's inclination to think that others are more influenced by egoism-based considerations whereas they themselves are more influenced by considerations of right and wrong (Peters, Van den Bos, & Bobocel, 2004). Related to this, people may be tempted to engage in processes of moral disengagement in which they convince themselves that ethical standards do not apply to them. People do this by rethinking or reframing their own destructive behavior as being morally acceptable, something that is achieved by inhibiting mechanisms of self-condemnation and not thinking in moral terms about immoral conduct (Bandura, 1999).

To conclude for now, judgments of injustice are a key antecedent of Muslim, right-wing, and left-wing radicalization processes. This is especially the case when these judgments are combined with feelings of personal uncertainty or group threats and when this is coupled with

insufficient correction of people's self-centered impulses, such as their emotions of anger and contempt or their self-oriented views of moral righteousness. I discuss these issues in more detail in my *Why People Radicalize* book (Van den Bos, 2018).

Towards Violent Extremism

A crucial step in any attempt to understand processes of radicalization is to determine when people will move from thoughts and feelings to behavioral action. Indeed, the social psychology of justice is probably better at describing people's thoughts and feelings about justice than at explaining and predicting their justice behaviors (Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990). The same applies for social psychology in general, which is more heavily oriented toward understanding cognition and affect than toward understanding actual behavior (Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007).

I argue that in understanding the link between injustice judgments and radical behavior a key issue concerns when people will move from legal and non-violent behaviors to illegal and violent actions to achieve their desired outcomes that reflect their beliefs and feelings and what they see as the right cause. This is a pivotal issue, in part because it distinguishes radicalization that stays within the law (activism) from radicalization that basically views the law as irrelevant or an obstacle to obtain what is desired (extremism; Van den Bos, 2018, in press-b).

I propose that insight into the social psychological processes that underlie pathways to violent extremism may help to get a better grip on the understanding and prediction of radical and extremist behavior. One relevant concern in this respect is the rejection of democratic principles and principles of constitutional state law. To understand why people start to reject these principles, I argue that it is important to understand the psychological process of delegitimization. Delegitimization is the psychological withdrawal of legitimacy, for example from some institution such as a state, or from judges in the constitutional democracy in which one lives, or from important principles of democracy in constitutional states. There is evidence that delegitimization of government, law, and other societal institutions plays a crucial role in right-wing radicalization, left-wing radicalization, and Muslim radicalization (Van den Bos, 2018, in press-b).

With respect to right-wing radicalization, Sprinzak (1991, 1995, 2009) argues that far-rightist groups usually start with focusing on other groups, usually minority groups that they perceive to hold inferior legal and social status. Thus, right-wing extremists believe these groups should be expelled or even eliminated. Sprinzak (1995) argues that this belief in delegitimacy of the other is rooted in deep-seated social psychological processes and cultural traditions. The hated other group may be defined by race, nationality, religion, or sexual orientation.

These characteristics cannot be altered easily and make the subgroup intrinsically inferior and deserving of their status.

According to Sprinzak (1995), right-wing groups at the first stage of radicalization engage in political activities designed to strengthen and perpetuate existing social and cultural mechanisms of discrimination. During this stage, right-wing groups accept the government's legitimacy, even though they are disillusioned with its policies, and seek to accomplish their goals through legitimate political activities. Group violence targeting minorities such as hate crimes, are sporadic in this stage and only emerge if the group feels threatened (Kerodal, Freilich, Chermak, & Suttmoeller, 2014).

Sprinzak (1995) further argues that when far-right extremist groups become convinced that the government is not using sufficient energy to protect the interests of majority members as legitimate citizens, it will progress to the next stage of radicalization. At this stage, the right-wing group loses confidence in the government and its policies. As a result, the far-right extremist group attempts to restore the status quo by engaging in low-level intimidation such as harassment of the other, minority, group. In this stage, right-wing groups may also begin to disobey laws. Political action shifts towards protests, which can lead to unplanned violent altercations with law enforcement. The groups may eventually splinter as the members become convinced the leaders are not radical enough (Kerodal et al., 2014).

Sprinzak (1995) also proposes that if far-right extremist groups become convinced that the government is controlled by the other, minority groups a third stage of radicalization occurs. In this stage, both the hated minority group and the government are deemed illegitimate and systematic terrorism could occur. Although Sprinzak (1995) did not believe all far-right extremist groups would follow this pattern, he argued that this framework explained the violent behavior of most far-right extremist groups (Kerodal et al., 2014).

Left-wing radicalization has also been associated with processes of delegitimization. For example, left-wing groups operating within functional democracies often undergo a profound political and psychological change in its members such that they delegitimize politics in their constitutional democracies. This has been observed among members of the Red Army Faction in West Germany (Sprinzak, 1991). The violent extremist actions of the Red Army Faction also spread to the Netherlands. When judging these acts, the relevant court of law in the Netherlands noted that it is completely unacceptable when people engage in violent actions merely because they disagree with the politics and policies of the democratic states in which they live. These acts corrode the basic principles of constitutional law and democratic states (Pekelder, 2007).

Muslim radicalization, too, has been linked to delegitimization of democracy and democratic principles. For instance, Muslim radicalization and support for violence are linked to changing attitudes towards democracy and democratization, which often are associated with negative reactions to modernization. As such, radical Muslim groups ideologically reject electoral democracy as well as the legitimacy of political and ideological pluralism (Ashour, 2009). Ashour states that jihadism is characterized by the rejection of democracy as well as intolerance and the frequent use of violence against political rivals.

Thus, through processes of delegitimization radicalizing persons distance themselves psychologically from politics, societal institutions such as government and law, and principles of democracy and open societies (Popper, 1945). I argue here that key to understanding the ontogenesis of violent extremism and terrorism is people's rejection of constitutional democracy and the rule of law (Mak & Taekema, 2016). After all, when it is hard or impossible for you to work within principles of constitutional democracy (such as when you cannot really force yourself to be open-minded about different opinions and at least be willing to tolerate them to such a degree that you try to make your case heard through majority rule or other democratic rules), then you might easily get frustrated that your wishes and opinions are not put into action and then you are more likely to take action yourself to ensure that things will go your way. Furthermore, violent extremism and terrorism constitute illegal acts and when you do not care about what the law says, or when you even sympathize with illegal behavior, it is easier to prepare or prompt yourself to engage in illegal actions.

Related to this, Ashour (2009) notes that jihadist groups are those movements that ideologically reject democracy as well as the legitimacy of political and ideological pluralism (see also Hagan, Kaiser, & Hanson, 2016; Nivette, Eisner, Malti, & Ribeaud, 2015; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). Radicalization of those groups thus is a process in which a group undergoes ideological and/or behavioral transformations that lead to the rejection of democratic principles (including the peaceful alternation of power and the legitimacy of ideological and political pluralism) and possibly to the utilization of violence or to an increase in the levels of violence, to achieve political goals (see also Meeus, 2015).

Based on these kinds of insights I reason that when radicalizing people start to reject the law in democratic states and open societies this is a pivotal signal that indicates that something is going seriously wrong. In other words, I do think it is fine when people hold radical opinions that differ from others drastically, but when this is coupled with a certain disdain for law and democracy this may well serve as an important next phase of radicalization that ultimately may end in violent extremism and terrorism.

A distinction should be made here between those people who are willing to use violence as part of their not complying with the law and as such engage in such acts as vandalizing the private property of politicians versus those who do not engage in a violent rejection of the law. Many people occasionally oppose certain aspects of the law but this does not lead them to engage in a violent rejection of the law. It is therefore interesting to investigate why some extremists engage in a violent rejection of the law while other radicals oppose this behavior. This might be even more important, psychologically speaking, than is often realized. I propose, therefore, that rejection of the law and democracy constitutes a turning point in the radicalization process of many people.

It is important to realize that to be a radical is to reject the status quo, but not necessarily in a violent or even problematic manner (Bartlett & Miller, 2012). Some radicals conduct, support, or encourage terrorism, while others actively and often effectively agitate against it (Bartlett & Miller, 2012). Therefore, rejection and non-compliance with the law (and related democratic principles) is considered to be a key aspect of cognitive and behavioral radicalization. Indeed, the point where one decides to reject the law (and act accordingly, in violation of rules that protect democratic principles) can be seen as a fundamentally new phase in any process of radicalization.

There obviously can be a gap between what people think is just and legitimate and what society considers being legal. Furthermore, non-violent engagement in forms of civil disobedience in which people act in non-violent ways to convey in an open way about their conscientious thoughts and feelings should be distinguished from violent breaking of the law. Once people have formed intentions to engage in violent extremism and reject principles of law in open and democratic societies, they can be tempted to actively engage in violent and illegal extremist behaviors. In this process, evil as a motive and the justification of violence are important antecedents of political violence, religious violence, and terrorism. Thus, I argue that when people are willing to break the law to obtain their goals, if needed by violent means, this is an important signal that something is seriously going wrong.

Future Directions in Psychological Research

Injustice judgments can fuel radicalization into violent extremism, especially when this is coupled with people feeling threatened and being unable or unwilling to regulate their outwardly oriented negative emotions such as anger and contempt. These judgments of injustice include perceived unfair treatment, inequity of outcome distributions, impressions that things are not right, and the belief that the world is an unjust place. Injustice-related judgments that have a prominent role in

the social psychology of Muslim extremism, right-wing extremism, and left-wing extremism are vertical group deprivation, horizontal group deprivation, and perceived immorality (Van den Bos, 2018).

Interestingly, the social psychology of injustice and radicalization into violent extremism does not only constitute an application of social psychological insight on radicalization processes, the study of radicalization also feeds into basic social psychology and informs researchers how perhaps best to conduct future psychological research on social psychology in general and judgments of justice and injustice in particular. This may help to develop what I see as a new era of research needed in social psychology, including the social psychology of justice and injustice.

One of the issues that I want to raise explicitly is that studying radicalization can be very difficult. People radicalize about different issues in different ways. The extent to which respondents are radicalized is also important. When studying radicalization at least a minimum of radicalization is often present (and in fact, from a methodological point of view, desirable) among research participants. However, once radicalized, potential participants may be difficult to get into contact with and may not trust the interviewer from a university or research institute and who hence belongs to the status quo or to groups different than the respondents' groups. Furthermore, ideally one wants to study how radical beliefs transfer into extremist behaviors, but it is often not doable to reliably examine the actual engagement in extremist behaviors and researchers therefore often refer to assessing sympathy for extremist behaviors among their participants instead. In short, there are several difficulties when studying the topic of radicalization.

Some of the difficulties that researchers may encounter include the problem of small samples, the non-linear quality of models explaining processes of radicalization, and the historical context in which these processes take place. I have argued that part of the solution may be found in careful conceptual analysis which should complement the empirical study of unfairness and radicalization (Van den Bos, 2018). As such, the psychological study of injustice and extremism is perhaps best viewed as a "hub science," bridging thoughtful conceptual analysis and careful quantitative and qualitative empirical studies (see also Van den Bos, *in press-a*).

In my view both micro-oriented approaches to radicalization research (such as quantitative psychological studies on individual processes pertaining to radicalization) and macro-oriented approaches (such as qualitative research from the social sciences and humanities on social and societal issues relevant to radicalization) suffer from important limitations.

An obvious problem for quantitative psychological research is the fact that data are hard to come by on radicalizing persons. This especially applies to those who are committed to violent extremist

behaviors and the problem is even worse for getting data from terrorists. As a result, systematic data about these groups of respondents are lacking (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008). Quantitative scientists studying radicalization often have to rely on groups of respondents that can be sampled in a relatively convenient way, relying on voluntary participation and snowball methods in which a radicalizing respondent suggests possible other respondents. These non-random sampling methods easily yield problems of differential selection and participation bias and thus quickly violate important assumptions of research designs (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Kirk, 1995; Smith, 1981).

Furthermore, the samples in radicalization studies often tend to be much smaller than those that quantitative psychologists are used to or are comfortable with (Webber et al., 2018). Although it can be argued that the population of radicalizing people (and especially those who engage in violent extremism or terrorism) is relatively small, and hence the sample that is studied does not need to be very large, it is a fact that the power of many samples in radicalization studies is debatable (see Cohen, 1988, 1992; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). It can also be difficult to meaningfully compare different persons or groups of respondents and to make sure that these groups are calibrated on important background variables, such as when examining violent and nonviolent far-right groups in the United States and exploring the violent and legal behavioral patterns over their lifecycles (see Kerodal et al., 2014).

Moreover, it is typically very difficult or impossible to replicate findings of studies that are conducted with radicalized persons such as violent extremists and terrorists. There tend to be too few of these kinds of participants and how they interpret their individual and contextual background variables tends to vary too much to be able to conduct meaningful replication studies. The difficulty to replicate results is worsened because issues of radicalization tend to be rather unique. This attests to the difficulty of solid quantitative radicalization research. This is an important limitation for current psychological research in which replication is a very important issue (e.g., Kruglanski, Chernikova, & Jasko, 2017; Schooler, 2014a, 2014b) and in which testing for statistical significance of hypotheses tends to be valued a lot (Cohen, 1994). It may also be difficult to share confidential data about radicalized participants with other scientists, hence not contributing to an open science account preferably used in modern research projects.

It also can be difficult to conduct experiments on radicalization, extremism, and terrorism (Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010). Because experiments are the most-widely preferred and best-accepted method in modern psychological science this can be viewed as a potentially serious problem to the study of radicalization, although there are some solutions to this, for example by conducting worldview defense experiments

(see, e.g., Hogg et al., 2010). In short, a simple usage of quantitative empirical methods may not necessarily work very well when examining processes of radicalization, extremism, and terrorism.

Moreover, the quantitative study of justice and injustice judgments is not without problems. For example, Martin, Scully, and Levitt (1990) noted that

methodological and ethical concerns make it difficult to study injustice under conditions in which economic inequality is extreme, people are severely disadvantaged, livelihoods are at risk, the surrounding context is delegitimated, and feelings of injustice are sufficiently intense to provoke bloodshed.

(p. 281)

Indeed, in-depth insight into what respondents experience when we interview them in quantitative surveys about what they think is unfair and unjust tends to be underdeveloped (Finkel, 2001).

Qualitative approaches to the study of radicalization, such as those conducted in the social sciences or the humanities, are not without problems either. For example, anthropological researchers may sympathize or empathize too much with their radical, extremist, or terrorist respondents. The subjective interpretation is another potential caveat of qualitative studies.

Furthermore, narrative methodologies and the reliance on autobiographies of (former or current) radicals may also suffer from important limitations. For example, Wilner and Dubouloz (2011) note that readers of autobiographies can only interpret the events, characteristics, and relationships the author makes public. Researchers using these autobiographies thus have to rely on the information that the author wants published. As a result, the author of the autobiography controls the scope of the empiricism, not the researcher. Moreover, autobiographies can be self-serving or can portray biased accounts of the author's historical importance.

What most quantitative and qualitative studies of radicalization share is a reliance on self-reports from radicalized persons or individuals who state they have deradicalized. But how can you trust radicalized or deradicalized people to tell the truth? And even if they do this, how can you be sure that they have accurate insight into their reactions and behaviors? Having to rely on self-reported data can severely undermine the quality of studies conducted among normal, non-radicalized participants and the validity of the interpretation of the findings that follow from these studies (see, e.g., Baumeister et al., 2007; Goldstone & Chin, 1993; Lelkes, Krosnick, Marx, Judd, & Park, 2012). This can be an even bigger problem when interviewing radicalized people (see also Koerner, 2017).

In short, researching radicalizing processes in solid, scientific ways can be challenging. Quite often, empirical studies on radicalization, using either quantitative or qualitative research methods, yield data that are less strong than one wants these data to be. This implies that the various accounts on radicalization that are out there tend to be based on a relatively weak empirical basis, that is, a basis that is weaker than most experimental social psychologists are used to and have been trained to like and appreciate.

However, processes of radicalization are too important in this world to leave them alone and to return to the psych lab to focus instead on controllable and hence sometimes somewhat narrow concepts and research topics. In contrast, what is needed, I propose, is to rely on a variety of research methods to address the multi-faceted issues of radicalization, extremism, and terrorism. The complexity of radicalization processes brings ambiguity in the interpretation of these processes and how to intervene in the processes. This also implies that it is likely that there is no single “magic bullet” or one single research method that will nail down all various instances of radicalization that are present in our world (see also Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012). Instead, several methods are more likely to work in combination to meaningfully analyze what is going on in terms of radicalization.

This obviously involves more or less qualitative interviews with former lone wolves (Hamm & Spaaij, 2017), incarcerated Middle Eastern terrorists (Post, Sprinzak, & Denny, 2009), and detained Tamil Tigers (Kruglanski et al., 2017; Webber et al., 2018). But this also includes the quantitative study of the spreading of Islamist ideology in different Spanish jails (Trujillo, Jordán, Gutiérrez, & González-Cabrera, 2009) or the application of “Big Data” approaches to processes of radicalization. And, in my view, this also warrants the reliance on studies with non-radicals and non-extremists and non-terrorists, such as more traditional laboratory experiments done toward revealing basic social psychological processes. Taken together, these insights can then be used to better understand both normal and abnormal roots of radicalization processes (Van den Bos, 2018).

I also argue that is pivotal to complement the insights from these different empirical studies with conceptual reasoning. For example, conceptually reflecting on various psychological models of radicalization, extremism, and terrorism one notices a tendency to depict the psychology of radicalization into violent extremism and terrorism as a slow and particularly a gradual process (Horgan, 2005, 2009; McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008; Moghaddam, 2005; Wilner & Dubouloz, 2011). Feddes et al. (2015) and other recent authors note, however, that radicalization tends to be a non-linear and dynamic process (Bartlett, Birdwell, & King, 2010; De Wolf & Doosje, 2015; Feddes, Mann, & Doosje, 2013; King & Taylor, 2011; McCauley & Segal, 1989). That is, growing radicalization does not necessarily need to develop in continuous ways such that people slowly but gradually

move into violent extremism and terrorism. Indeed, some people radicalize, but a lot more people do not. And sometimes the radicalization process takes some time, whereas at other moments it takes place very rapidly.

Thus, the different pathways in various psychological models of radicalization do not imply that radicalization will always follow these pathways or always will develop along gradual lines. Quite the contrary, there is more and more evidence that radicalizing individuals may jump to different phases of radicalization quite quickly, often quite unexpectedly for their previous social contacts, including their families and former friends.

Furthermore, when studying radicalization so that we can prevent or fight it, one realizes that we need to pay explicit attention to the historical and societal contexts in which concrete instances of radicalization take place. After all, radicalization does not take place in a vacuum, but depend on how the state responds as well as on how groups in society respond back to instances of repression or alienation. The historical and societal contexts of these processes of interaction and radicalization matter. It matters where, how, when terrorism and counterterrorism unfold to explain the next step and stage of the radicalization ladder. Indeed, key publications have paid ample attention to the theatrical aspects and historical context of radicalization processes (see, e.g., Crenshaw, 1990, 2009; De Graaf, 2010; Della Porta, 1995, 2009; Hoffman, 1982; Waldmann & Dieterich, 2007). Furthermore, Gergen (1973, 1978, 1980) has rightfully criticized social psychology as neglecting the historical processes that are relevant to understand what people believe, feel, and do in social contexts. The social psychology of injustice and violent extremism could profit from a more in-depth examination of the historical and societal contexts in which various radicalization processes take place.

Moreover, the primary level of the psychology of radicalization tends to be the individual and his/her relationship with groups, culture, and society. This psychological or in-depth micro-level approach to radicalization processes has many advantages, I argue, but should be complemented with other approaches that focus more explicitly or more strongly on group processes (meso approaches) and societal or structural factors (macro approaches). The field of terrorism studies generally distinguishes micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis (Della Porta, 1995; Schuurman, 2017). The methodology I adopted in my approach to radicalization starts at the micro level and includes elements from group-level theories and societal factors when considered appropriate. The added value of this approach may be exactly this methodological bridge: the connection between perceptions and feelings of injustice.

Coda

The study of injustice and radicalization into violent extremism is more complex and involves many more issues than I can discuss in the current chapter. For a more extensive treatment, please see earlier reviews on this issue (e.g., Feddes et al., 2015; Kruglanski et al., 2014; McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2008; Moghaddam, 2005; Victoroff & Kruglanski, 2009), including the review on which I relied in this chapter (Van den Bos, 2018; see also, Van den Bos, in press-a, in press-b). I hope to have made clear in the condensed discussion that I put forward here that the social psychology of justice and injustice matters when studying violent extremism in such a way that we can do something about it, whether it is by preventing it or combating it once it occurs. The study of injustice and radicalization into violent extremism may also help to pinpoint at key issues needed to be incorporated in future social psychological research. This includes the focus on actual violent behaviors, and also the limitations of relying on quantitative studies only or predominantly, and the need to start embracing qualitative research studies and more thoughtful and multi-disciplinary conceptual thought and reflection. This may force social psychologists to move out of their zone in which they are comfortable, and this is precisely needed, I argue, to make our science more interesting and more relevant for the understanding of multi-faceted and important social and societal issues, such as injustice and violent extremism.

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