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The Netherlands

Rotten trees, bad apples? Understanding the intergenerational transmission of extremism

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Citation
Wieringen, L. van. (2025, November 27). *Rotten trees, bad apples?: Understanding the intergenerational transmission of extremism*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4283781

Version:	Publisher's Version
License:	Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4283781

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

ROTTEN TREES, BAD APPLES?

UNDERSTANDING THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF EXTREMISM

LAYLA VAN WIERINGEN

ROTTEN TREES, BAD APPLES?

Understanding the intergenerational transmission of extremism

Layla van Wieringen

This dissertation was supported by the Ministry of Justice and Security, Research and Data Centre (Wetenschappelijk Onderzoeks- en Datacentrum, WODC) and the National Coordinator Counterterrorism and Security (Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid, NCTV).

Cover design: Layla van Wieringen
Layout and print: Ridderprint | www.ridderprint.nl

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ROTTEN TREES, BAD APPLES?

Understanding the intergenerational transmission of extremism

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op 27 november 2025
klokke 14:30 uur

door

Layla van Wieringen
geboren te Nijmegen
op 4 juni 1994

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I guess the apple don't fall far from the tree
'Cause I've been looking at you so long
Now I only see me

C. E. Aitchison – "Apple"

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Published as:
Van Wieringen, L. Weggemans, D.J. & Liem, M.C.A. (2022). De intergenerationele overdracht van extreme gedachtensystemen: Verkenning van een nieuw onderzoeksdomein. *Mens en Maatschappij, 97*(4), 437-451.

INTRODUCTION

The influence that parents have on their children's development has been a topic of study for decades, if not centuries. Authors from a myriad of disciplines, ranging from biogenetics (e.g., Cavalli-Sforza, & Feldman, 1973) to cultural economics (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986) and behavioral psychology (e.g., Bandura, 1969), have tried to understand how previous generations shape the behavior and beliefs of the next. Positioned at the intersection between *nurture* and *nature,* the importance of our parents for our personal development in the broadest sense can therefore hardly be overstated, and has been well-documented in academic research. It is widely accepted that many aspects of our adult lives, including dietary behavior (Rhodes et al., 2016), political preferences (Jennings, Dalton & Klingemann, 2007), and spending habits (Britt, 2016), are largely influenced by our family background. Moreover, it has been well-established that engagement in antisocial or violent behavior, such as intimate partner violence (Ehrensaft et al., 2003), organized crime (Spapens & Moors, 2020) or bullying (Lawrence, 2022), can also be transmitted from parent to child.

Nonetheless, little is known about whether violent *ideologies* (as opposed to violent behaviors) are similarly passed down from one generation to the next, nor do we know what such processes may look like in practice. When it comes to the first part of this puzzle, anecdotal evidence suggests that extremist ideologies can indeed be indeed transmitted from parent to child. For example, after the 2012 attack in Toulouse, France, which left seven people dead, it soon became apparent that the gunman, Mohammed Merah, was raised with his parents' violent extremist beliefs. According to his brother, Merah and his siblings were brought up with attitudes of antisemitic hatred and intolerance, which ultimately encouraged him to act on these beliefs (France24, 2012). Several years later, the 2018 attack in Surabaya, Indonesia, further illustrated the detrimental effects parental extremism may have on children. Here, a family of six, including four young children, committed a suicide attack on Christians attending three different churches, killing over a dozen (Kapoor, 2018). In a right-wing extremist context, similar examples can be found. For example, Gudrun Burwitz – the only daughter of SS leader Heinrich Himmler – grew up as a convinced supporter of Nazism. Until her death in 2018, she continued to fiercely defend her father's actions and ideas (Sandomir, 2018). More recently, the Joseph Hall case – in which a 10-year-old Californian boy killed his neo-Nazi-father – similarly sparked debate about the effects of parents' violent ideas on children's development (CBS News, 2011).

Interestingly, we know at the same time that not all extremist parents actually manage to produce extremist offspring: some children are able to leave their parents' harmful ideologies behind at some point in their lives. Consider the case of Omar Bin Laden – who is the fourth eldest son of the mastermind behind the attacks of September 11, 2001. Despite his father's notorious legacy and extremist beliefs, Omar Bin Laden has taken a strikingly different path. Upon leaving Afghanistan at the age of 20, he moved to France where he nowadays works as a painter. Over

the years, he has allegedly become an America fanatic who has strongly distanced himself from his father's actions and ideology (Butler & Fazal, 2021). Omar has publicly condemned terrorism and expressed a desire for peace, advocating for a more positive relationship with the West (NBC News, 2008).

Remarkably similar is the story of the American Dakota Adams, 27-year-old son of right-wing extremist and founder of far-right militia the Oath Keepers, Stewart Rhodes. Rhodes played a pivotal role in the Capitol Riots of January 6th 2021, for which he is currently serving an 18-year prison sentence. According to Dakota, he and his siblings were raised in "extreme isolation" in a "particular cultural bubble in increasingly paranoid and militant right-wing political spheres" (Hanson, 2024, n.p.). His father sabotaged the children's homeschooling, and did not allow them to speak about their home lives in public. Ultimately, however, Dakota managed to completely break away from his extremist upbringing, became a self-identified "socialist" (Gabbatt, 2024), and is at the time of writing even running as a progressive Democrat for the Montana House of Representatives.

In academic research too, this ideological resilience of children has been a topic of interest. For example, studies on children raised in other extreme environments, such as sectarian movements, suggest that while some remain members their entire lives, others eventually manage to rid themselves of the family ideology (Danley, 2005; De Baets et al., 2021; Lalich & McLaren, 2017). Nonetheless, these case-to-case differences remain difficult to understand. What caused Omar to break away from his upbringing, whereas Gudrun did not? What factors are at play here? And more generally speaking, what do we know about the ways in which extremist ideologies are passed on from one generation to the next? These questions are at the heart of this dissertation. I will approach them using the concept of 'intergenerational transmission', which refers to the process by which parents pass on various behaviors and beliefs to their children. The concept of intergenerational transmission has its roots in (evolutionary) biology, social learning theory, and cultural reproduction theory, but has generally become well-embedded in fields such as psychology, pedagogy, sociology, and criminology. Using a multi-disciplinary approach, insights from these fields will provide the backdrop of my empirical work.

In this Chapter, I start by reflecting on the concept of 'extremism' and its use in this dissertation. I will then describe the role of family members in processes of extremist radicalization, and how the concept of intergenerational transmission may help us to understand how these ideologies may persist across generations. Lastly, I will provide an overview of the core objectives of this dissertation, alongside an outline of the chapters to come.

DEFINING EXTREMISM

Although this dissertation revolves around 'extremist' ideologies, there is hardly an academic consensus on what extremism entails exactly (Bötticher, 2017; Stephens, Sieckelinck, & Boutellier, 2021; Williford, 2019). In academic literature, authors distinguish between ideological and behavioral extremism (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2010; Stephens, Sieckelinck, & Boutellier, 2021; Weine et al., 2017); violent and non-violent extremism (Holt et al., 2018; Schmid, 2013); collective and individual extremism (Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Wibisono, Louis, & Jetten, 2019); and political and religious extremism (Ezinga & Boelens, 2019; Lösel et al., 2020). Additionally, extremism is sometimes mentioned in conjunction with radicalism, even though these two concepts are notably distinct (Feddes, Nicholson & Doosje, 2015), particularly regarding the acceptance of violence in pursuit of ideological goals (Brunt, Murphy & Zedginidze, 2017; De Graaf, 2018). Extremists, unlike radicals, aim to subject society to their dogmatic and rigid ideology through the suppression of dissent, by use of violence if necessary (Borum, 2011; Van den Bos, 2019; Stephens, Sieckelinck, & Boutellier, 2021; Williford, 2019). In his fundamental work, Schmid (2013) identified four characteristics of extremists and their organizations. In his view, they are (1) anti-constitutional, anti-democratic, anti-pluralist, and authoritarian; (2) fanatical, intolerant, uncompromising, and adhering to strict black-and-white thinking; (3) against the rule of law and advocating a philosophy where ends justify means; (4) willing to achieve their goals through any means, including the use of mass political violence against opponents. To achieve their agendas, extremists prefer violence over persuasion, uniformity over diversity, collective goals over individual freedom, and command structures over dialogue (Schmid, 2013).

Since this dissertation is largely rooted in the Dutch security context (in its use of court rulings, Public Prosecutor files and various detained interview participants), I choose to follow the definition of extremism as used by the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) of the Dutch Ministry of Justice. The NCTV defines extremism as "a phenomenon where individuals or groups, driven by ideological motives, are willing to violate the law to a serious extent or to engage in activities that undermine the democratic rule of law" (NCTV, 2020, translated from Dutch). However, while this definition provided an operational starting point, in practice I focused on two particular extremist movements: jihadism and right-wing extremism. The Dutch national intelligence services consider these two forms of extremism the most prominent threats in the Netherlands today (NCTV, 2023), which justifies a focus on these ideologies. While I acknowledge that intergenerational transmission can occur in various contexts, including left-wing extremist environments, these ideologies fall outside the scope of this project, for reasons of both perceived (security risk) relevance and feasibility constraints imposed by the limited means and timeframe of this research project.

Like with the concept of extremism, there is no universally accepted definition for jihadism (Sedgwick, 2015; Stenersen, 2020). This term is often used interchangeably with other concepts

such as Salafist-jihadism, violent Islamism, or militant Islam (De Poot et al., 2009; Lefèvre, 2021; Sedgwick, 2015). Jihadism is derived from the term 'jihad', which has two different meanings. In the Quran, 'jihad' refers to the moral duty for individual Muslims to live virtuously. Next to this 'greater' jihad of inner struggle is the 'lesser' jihad, also known as the 'holy war' (Berger, 2006; Peters, 1996; Wittendorp et al., 2017). The latter refers to the armed struggle that jihadists wage against those they perceive as enemies of Islam (Leede, 2017). In literature on extremism, this is the way the concept of jihad is most commonly used and understood – and this dissertation follows this practice.

Although jihadism is not synonymous with terrorism, adherence to a jihadist worldview has, in the past, led to terrorist actions. As professor in Arab and Islam Studies Mark Sedgwick (2015) states, "jihadism closely resembles terrorism in being essentially a means to an end, not an end in itself" (p. 39). Because jihadists seek fundamental societal and/or political change, it cannot be ruled out that they are willing to employ extreme means in achieving their goals (Sedgwick, 2015). In this dissertation, I once again follow the NCTV definition, which considers jihadism "[a] current within political Islam that, based on a specific interpretation of Salafist doctrine and the ideology of Sayyid Qutb, strives for global Islamic dominance through armed struggle (jihad), and hence for the re-establishment or preservation of the Islamic state (caliphate)" (NCTV, 2020, translated from Dutch).

In my research I am not only considering transmission processes in jihadist contexts, but also in right-wing extremist spheres – in light of the security threat posed by these ideologies (NCTV, 2023). The definitional struggles regarding the concept of jihadism also apply to right-wing extremism, albeit to a lesser extent (Carter, 2018; Pillo, 2023). While in the literature right-wing extremism is often conflated with related concepts (such as neo-Nazism, neo-fascism, and white supremacist extremism), there is generally a reasonable consensus on its definition, as noted by political scientist Elisabeth Carter (2018). Drawing on previous research by Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde (1995) and an analysis of 15 academic definitions of right-wing extremism, Carter identifies the five main characteristics of right-wing extremism. These include: (1) authoritarianism, or emphasizing conventional norms and values and traditional forms of governance; (2) nationalism, or a strong belief in the importance of one's own national or ethnic community; (3) racism and xenophobia, or exclusion of individuals not belonging to the national or ethnic community; (4) anti-democratic tendencies, or resistance to both the democratic system and its underlying principles; and (5) populism, or focusing on a perceived divide between the 'people' and 'the elite' (Carter, 2018; Mudde, 1995).

While some authors consider (the legitimization of) violence to be a core component of right-wing extremism (e.g., Lefere et al., 2015; Lucardie, 2007; Perry & Scrivens, 2018), this element is absent in Carter's (2018) definition. However, Carter (2018) follows Canadian psychologist Bob Altemeyer's (1983) work in acknowledging that authoritarianism can be accompanied by

aggression when one believes their in-group is under threat. According to the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, AIVD), right-wing extremism can take on violent forms, but this is not a necessary condition. The key elements that characterize right-wing extremism according to the AIVD are "xenophobia, hatred towards foreign (cultural) elements, and ultranationalism" (AIVD, 2022). Moreover, the AIVD notes that right-wing extremists pursue undemocratic goals, "with or without undemocratic means" (AIVD, 2022), with the use of violence being one of these potential means.

In my research, I diverge from the AIVD definition by placing greater emphasis on right-wing extremists' willingness to use violence, as to maintain a clear distinction between extremism and radicalism (see also Bötticher, 2017). In other words, I will focus on groups and individuals who directly or indirectly legitimize the use of violence in pursuit of their ideological goals. This approach aligns with a broader tradition of researchers who consider the legitimization of violence an inherent part of (right-wing) extremist ideologies (see, for example, Wahlström, Törnberg, & Ekbrand, 2021; Stakić, 2016).

EXTREMISM AND THE FAMILY CONTEXT

Over the past decades, a plethora of studies has been conducted on the social drivers and facilitators of extremist radicalization. For example, the role of peers has been relatively well-explored (e.g., Helfstein, 2012; Holt, 2019; Pels & De Ruyter, 2012). However, the role that family members might play in processes of radicalization, only gained scholarly attention in recent years (Noor, 2021). Weggemans, Van der Zwan, and Liem (2018) identify three different roles in that regard, based on interviews with experts and family members of radicalized individuals who travelled Syria. First, family members may play an inhibiting role, where they actively try to counter the radicalization of an individual. Second, family members may play a latent role – either being ambivalent towards the radicalization process or refraining from interference. According to the authors, the majority of the family members they interviewed fell into the latter category (Weggemans, Van der Zwan & Liem, 2018). Yet, at the ultimate end of the continuum, family members can also play a stimulating role in processes of radicalization. Here, family members "[support] to a greater or lesser extent a radicalization process or departure [to Syria], or hinder – in a later stadium – the return or reintegration of an individual" (Weggemans, Van der Zwan & Liem, p. 7, translated from Dutch). This stimulating role can be both direct (e.g., providing assistance in departure to Syria) or indirect in nature (e.g., encouraging participation in extremist activities).

These observations regarding the stimulating influence of family members, are mirrored in other studies as well. For example, Orbach (2004) previously described the material benefits that involvement in suicide terrorism may have for family members, which in some contexts might provide parents with an incentive to encourage children to engage in such actions. In a more

recent study of 44 Spanish jihadists and their recruitment methods, Vicente (2022) even found that half of these individuals had (attempted to) recruit next of kin. Similarly, in the context of right-wing extremism, Copeland and Marsden (2020) identify having family members with extremist worldviews as a potential risk factor for radicalization – although authors admit that for most radicalized individuals, having another family member involved in right-wing extremism is not the norm.

Two recent systematic literature studies similarly confirm the stimulating influence that family members may have in extremist radicalization. Wolfowicz et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of 127 studies and found that having radicalized family members has a small but significant effect on the radicalization of individuals. Zych and Nasaescu (2022) also found that having extremist family members significantly increases the likelihood of radicalization. However, it should be noted that the latter systematic review includes merely two studies that examined the effect of family members' extremism on radicalization (Zych & Nasaescu, 2022). Finally, LaFree and colleagues (2018), using data on 1473 radicalized individuals in the US, found that having radicalized family members increases the likelihood of (participation in) extremist violence when compared to radicalized individuals that do not have this background. Although this effect might be caused by the (indirect) transmission of radicalization risk factors as opposed to the (direct) intergenerational transmission of ideology, it does support previous findings suggesting that family members play a key role in either stimulating or countering radicalization processes.

Nonetheless, questions regarding the nature of transmission processes within extremist families persist. This research gap is problematic not only from an academic or policy perspective but may also lead to incorrect assessments and/or harmful interventions in individual cases. With this dissertation I aim to shed light on the ways in which extremist parents raise their children, the processes and mechanisms that may stimulate or hamper generational continuity of their violent beliefs, and the long-term effects associated with these processes. For this, let us turn to the concept of 'intergenerational transmission', which I will briefly reflect upon in the next section.

FROM 'BRAINWASHING' TO INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

While as we have seen, empirical research on family members' roles in the transmission of extremism is generally lacking, media have not refrained from paying attention to this phenomenon. Over the last decade, general awareness of family influences on radicalization seems to have increased. Specifically, the role that parents may have in the radicalization of their children gained media attention following the collapse of the so-called Islamic State caliphate in 2019. Ever since, European countries have been grappling with the challenge of repatriating women and their children residing in camps in Syria and Turkey. Although in the Netherlands, the Supreme Court ruled in 2020 that the Dutch government is not legally obligated to repatriate foreign fighters and

their family members (Hoge Raad, 2020), at the time of writing, several dozens of them have been brought back to the Netherlands. This decision has been met with both praise and skepticism in the media. On one side of the coin, repatriation allows for these individuals to be subjected to a due legal process in their home country, simultaneously relieving Kurdish authorities from the burden of their captivity. Moreover, with regard to the children of foreign fighters, it has been argued that they may have been at risk of being radicalized while residing in Kurdish camps, and that this process can be reversed through a well-structured process of reintegrating them into Dutch society. This consideration has previously inspired other European countries, including Belgium, Germany and Finland, to repatriate the children of (former) IS-fighters (Eelbode, 2021; Lamote, 2020).

On the other side, there are fears that returning children are beyond redemption and should be kept outside of Dutch borders, some even referring to them as a 'Trojan Horse' (Van San, 2019). Others draw parallels between the debate around IS-children and the way in which children of members of the Dutch National Socialist movement (NSB) were perceived following the Second World War. Here too, it was feared that children of individuals with extremist ideas might follow in their parents' footsteps, and fostered the belief that these children were in need of 'moral re-education' (Van San, 2019).

In both cases, the main question revolves around the susceptibility of a child's mind, and what it takes for children to adopt their parents' violent ideas. Yet, in understanding the relation between extremist parents and their children, media outlets often resort to a rather specific discourse, revolving around terms such as 'brainwashing' and 'indoctrination' (see Moore, 2018). Generally speaking, the assumption underlying these concepts is one of parents using psychological manipulation and/or coercion to instill extremist ideologies into their children's minds (see Stein, 2021). Over the years, it has become apparent that in academia, too, the use of this terminology seems increasingly common when it comes to discussing the role of family members in processes of radicalization (e.g., Cuevas, 2008; McCue et al., 2017; Vale, 2018; Vicente, 2022). In this dissertation, I argue against the use of terms such as 'brainwashing' and 'indoctrination' to understand this phenomenon, and instead propose a more general adoption of the 'intergenerational transmission' framework.

First, the concepts of 'brainwashing' and 'indoctrination' enjoy little empirical support. These terms were first introduced in the United States, following the Korean War (1950-1953) and the Cold War (1945-1991) (Introvigne, 2004), where they served to understand how seemingly 'normal' people could convert to putative 'evil' ideologies, such as Communism. At the same time, the concept of brainwashing grew popular due to a strong anti-cult discourse within American society, as a reaction to all kinds of New Religious Movements (NRM's) that emerged in the 1970s (Young, 2012). Since then, decades of research have been conducted on the scientific validity of the brainwashing and indoctrination theses, yet with little convincing results. Authors have pointed out

that the concept of brainwashing disregards the social context in which radicalization takes place (Greil & Rudy, 1985); while others take issue with the term's apparent negation of free will (Hintjes, 2019) and its dismissal of individual differences in ideological formation (Richardson, 1985). Nowadays, the general academic consensus is therefore that 'brainwashing' and 'indoctrination' are empty and unfulfilling explanations for processes of radicalization (Young, 2012).

Second, these terms suggest a general passivity regarding children's own role in the transmission process. This contradicts the assumption that intergenerational transmission is a co-creation of both parent and child, which predominates in contemporary social-constructivist socialization theories. These theories propose that transmission arises from everyday interactions within the family (LaRossa & Reitzes, 2009; Plourde & Alawiye, 2003) rather than being a linear, parent-driven process (see Goodman, 1985). From this perspective, the indoctrination frame simplifies a complex phenomenon in which both parent and child play a part.

Third, the use of these terms is normative, in the sense that it is usually applied to ideologies that mainstream society views as problematic – or at the very least as *abnormal*. The fact that 'indoctrination' is chosen over terms like 'training', 'education', or 'upbringing' reveals our own disapproval of the beliefs in question (Moore, 2018; see also Coates, 2016; Young, 2012). As such, the persistence of this terminology in public discourse underscores the importance of a broader recognition of intergenerational transmission as a concept and phenomenon.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the indoctrination and brainwashing frame is deterministic, as it negates the fact that children raised in extremist environments may ultimately break away from the family ideology. Contrary to what these concepts imply, children are nor merely passive receivers of the family ideology – nor do parents hold the power to determine their children's worldviews throughout all stages of their lives. This is clearly illustrated by the cases discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, which aptly show how individuals raised in extremist ideologies are sometimes able to break away from their extremist families (and might even undergo a 180 degree shift ideological convictions) Although there is still limited research on the factors stimulating desistance among children from extremist households, these examples suggest that even children raised by prominent terrorists are not pre-determined to follow in their parents' ideological footsteps.

Based on these considerations, I conclude that the 'brainwashing' and 'indoctrination' frame is inaccurate at best, and harmful at worst, when trying to understand extremist family dynamics. I therefore propose a broader general incorporation of the concept of 'intergenerational transmission', which allows for a multidisciplinary analysis of the (dis)continuation of extremist ideas. In this dissertation, I understand this concept as to refer to a multidirectional process in which both parents and children directly or indirectly influence each other's beliefs, norms, and values (Bernardi, 2013; Roest, 2007). I will specifically focus on intergenerational transmission from parental figure (including biological, step-, foster-, grand- and adoption parents) to child, to

better understand parental influences in the ideological formation of children. In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I will further elaborate on the (theoretical) background of this concept, and its use in a plethora of academic disciplines.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This dissertation aims to understand processes of intergenerational transmission in contemporary extremist families. As such, it provides a first unique insight behind the closed doors of these families, using conceptual and theoretical tools to interpret underlying family dynamics. Ultimately, this dissertation can serve as a guide to help better understand what processes of transmission *may* look like in practice, while acknowledging the unique characteristics of each case. As previously mentioned, the focus of this study is on right-wing extremist and jihadist families, in light of the potential security threats associated with these ideologies (NCTV, 2023). Approaching intergenerational transmission (IGT) from a largely unidirectional[1] (parent-to-child) perspective, I am interested in the three core elements of transmission processes: (1) the parents as 'transmitters'; (2) children as 'recipients'; (3) the family ideology as the object of transmission. When referring to 'parents', my scope encompasses not just biological parents but also extends to foster parents, adoptive parents, stepparents, and grandparents. Additionally, I adopt a broad interpretation of the concept 'ideology', including the transmission of both cognitive and behavioral patterns within extremist milieus. As such, I am not just focusing on the doctrines that parents may transmit to their children, but also the problematic (i.e., intolerant or violent) and non-problematic behaviors that may flow from these worldviews.

Using a wide array of data, including existing academic literature, interviews with practitioners and (former) extremists, court rulings, aggregated intelligence data on Dutch jihadist families, I aim to answer the following research questions (see also Table 1):

1. What is the estimated scope of the intergenerational transmission (IGT) of extremism in the Netherlands? How many children are at risk of being raised with extremist ideas?
2. How can we explain the intergenerational transmission (IGT) of extremist ideologies? What mechanisms are involved in this process?
3. To what extent and how can various factors and dynamics (within and beyond the family) stimulate or inhibit extremist transmission (IGT) processes?
4. To what extent does the intergenerational transmission (IGT) of extremism have long-term consequences for the families involved?

[1] That is to say, this dissertation only looks at those instances in which parents are the main 'source' of the extremist ideology. While it has been generally acknowledged that children, too, can influence parents in their radicalization process (with several of such examples discussed in the media, see Elibol, 2018), these cases fall beyond the scope of this dissertation.

In answering these questions, I opt for a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from various fields, such as psychology, sociology, and criminology, to comprehensively understand how extremist ideologies are transmitted from one generation to the next. By taking this approach, this dissertation contributes to our (currently still limited) empirical knowledge about the intergenerational transmission of extremist beliefs. The insights gained will not only deepen our understanding of this phenomenon, but also offer a basis for developing targeted interventions and policy recommendations aimed at mitigating the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideologies and its long-term societal impacts.

Table 1. Schematic outline of research objectives

RQ	*Focus*	*Data used*	*Discussed in Chapter*
#1	Scope of IGT	Intelligence data	5
#2	Mechanisms of IGT	Interviews, PP files & Court rulings	6, 7, 8
#3	Stimulating/inhibiting factors of IGT	Interviews, PP files & Court rulings	6, 7, 8
#4	Long-term consequences after IGT	Interviews, PP files & Court rulings	9

BACKGROUND OF THIS PROJECT

The research presented in this dissertation is based on two subsequently funded projects, for both of which I served as the main researcher. The first project, which was funded by the Research and Data Center (Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Datacentrum, WODC) of the Dutch Ministry of Justice, ran from August 2020 to June 2021 (final report: *Van Ouder op Kind,* 2021). The goal of this study was to understand existing empirical insights on the intergenerational transmission of extremism, based on a systematic literature review. The main findings of this study are presented in Chapter 3 (Empirical Background) of this dissertation. Although originally, radical groups, sectarian movements and cults were also included in the WODC project, only its results regarding transmission processes in extremist families are included here – in light of the security threats associated with jihadist and right-wing extremist ideologies (see NCTV, 2023). The observations pertaining to processes of transmission in extremist households, ultimately laid the groundwork for its empirical follow-up study.

This second research project, which was funded by the Dutch National for Counterterrorism and Security (Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid, NCTV) ran from March 2022 to June 2024 (final report: *De Intergenerationele Overdracht van Extremisme,* 2024). This study built upon the WODC project, as it aimed to gain more empirical insight into the mechanisms through which extremist transmission might take place within families. Analyzing qualitative data involving right-wing extremist and jihadist households, the project provides a layered picture of the dimensions of intergenerational transmission, which largely rests on the model that arose out of the systematic literature review. The methodology of the NCTV-project is described in Chapter 4, and its empirical results are presented in Chapters 6 to 9.

Alongside these two funded projects, I conducted a study together with the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, AIVD). Here, intelligence data was used to examine the scope of jihadist families in the Netherlands, and as such, to better understand the total amount of children possibly raised by jihadist parents. This project ran from June 2021 to August 2024. No funding was received for this project. The findings of this project were submitted for publication in *Tijdschrift voor Veiligheid* (as of February 2025). They are presented in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

OUTLINE

This dissertation follows the following structure. To understand the theoretical framework of intergenerational transmission, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the theories that laid the groundwork of this concept. I explain how historically, disciplines such as (behavioralist and developmental) psychology, sociology, victimology, criminology, and theology have all attempted to study various aspects of the intergenerational transmission process. I specifically zoom in on the ways intergenerational transmission as a concept has previously been used to understand generational continuation in delinquency, religious beliefs, and (collective) trauma.

In Chapter 3, I focus on the empirical background of the intergenerational transmission of extremism. What is known about this phenomenon within academic literature? Based on a systematic literature review of empirical studies, I describe the most recent insights on this topic, and identify the gaps that still require attention. I discuss how the literature shows that, in understanding the intergenerational transmission of extremism, ideological socialization mechanisms, as well as everyday parenting practices and internalized narratives of parenthood, are of pivotal importance. It is through the interplay of these three dimensions that intergenerational transmission can take place. This observation forms the basis for the rest of this dissertation, and Chapter 6 to 8 in particular.

Chapter 4 contains a description of the empirical methodology of this dissertation and a discussion of the ways data from intelligence sources, interviews with practitioners and (former) extremists, and the analysis of judicial case files aid to answering my research questions. In the empirical chapters that follow, I specify the results of my research. First, Chapter 5 contains an overview of the nature and scope of jihadist families in The Netherlands. Based on unique intelligence data, I outline the quantitative details of the family context of individuals that the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) perceive to pose a potential jihadist threat. This allows us to better understand the nature and characteristics of these families and the scope of this phenomenon, which serves as a backdrop for the qualitative chapters to come.

Chapter 6 (Socialization mechanisms), Chapter 7 (Parenting practices) and Chapter 8 (Narratives of parenthood) coherently provide insight into the mechanisms of extremist

transmission. By subsequently discussing the socialization mechanisms that extremist parents employ, the everyday parenting practices that may stimulate intergenerational transmission, and parents' internalized narratives regarding extremist parenthood, I demonstrate how extremist ideas can take hold in children raised in these environments. Such an integrated approach acknowledges the complex and layered nature of this phenomenon.

In Chapter 9, I focus on the long-term effects intergenerational transmission. How do (former) extremist parents and their children look back on their family histories? What helped them in breaking away from these beliefs? In answering these questions, I hope to ultimately contribute to the development of prevention and intervention measures for (children of) extremist families. Finally, in Chapter 10, the Discussion and conclusion, I reflect on the key take-aways of this dissertation. I combine the empirical insights from my research with the theoretical and empirical background discussed in Chapter 2 and 3, to answer the research questions and to explain how these findings aid to existing knowledge. I discuss the limitations of my methods and make several suggestions for future research endeavors.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I discussed that research on the transmission of extremism within the family is largely lacking. Regardless, the topic of intergenerational transmission in itself has received ample academic attention, and there is no shortage of studies trying to understand the complexities underlying generational continuations in behaviors and beliefs. This Chapter therefore aims to provide an overview of the leading theories that allow us to formulate an answer to the question: How can we explain intergenerational transmission? In this Chapter, I will discuss the theoretical background of intergenerational transmission as a concept, which sets the scene for all empirical chapters to come. Using a loosely chronological approach, I will focus on the scientific literature on intergenerational transmission that overtime has become generally considered well-accepted and -established within the academic community. Moreover, the theories discussed in this Chapter have appeared in previous empirical work on processes of intergenerational transmission, which justifies their inclusion in this dissertation. It should be mentioned, however, that I will refrain from diving into macrolevel theories that fall outside the scope of this project (such as theories on the transmission of socio-economic status) or that move beyond the social sciences (such as theories on genetic transmission and biological inheritance).

I start by looking at theories that are either directly or indirectly applicable to the study of intergenerational transmission, those being conditioning theories, social learning approaches, theories of socialization and internalization, attachment theory and the concept of parenting styles. I will then take a closer look at the transmission of three specific types of behaviors and beliefs, namely the transmission of trauma and (collective) victimhood; delinquency and criminality; and religious practices. It is self-evident that the distinction between these theoretical approaches is somewhat artificial – as in reality, authors and theorists borrow from and build upon each other. Additionally, as we will see, studies may differ in their underlying approaches and hypotheses regarding processes of intergenerational transmission, creating inconsistencies at best, and contradictions at worst. Regardless, the purpose of this Chapter is not to land on a single approach or hypothesis, but rather to provide an overview of the body of literature on which this dissertation builds. Ultimately, understanding transmission theories from the broader strands of thinking that they belong to, helps us to better understand the differences and similarities in the ways in which intergenerational transmission has been conceptualized within various fields.

THEORIES OF INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

Behavioralist psychology and conditioning theories

Thinking about the intergenerational continuities in behavior goes back a long time, yet it was only in the mid-19th century that parenthood and the transmission of behavior became a particular topic of (academic) interest. It was during this time that parenthood guides by scholars such as

Theodore Dwight (1839), Caleb Ticknor (1839) and Tandy Dix (1880) grew in popularity (see Casey, 2011). Perhaps most notably, American feminist author Hester Pendleton published several books on her study of the transmission of morality, including *Facts and Arguments on The Transmission of Intellectual and Moral Qualities: From Parents to Offspring* (1844) and *The Parents Guide for the Transmission of Desired Qualities to Offspring* (1848). In her own words, Pendleton first became interested in the topic of intergenerational transmission after observing great variations in moral and intellectual qualities among her children's friends. She described how "in [some], purity and goodness were so perfectly innate, that no bad example could affect, nor evil influence could corrupt them; while others were so dull and stupid that it was impossible to teach them anything more than the mere rudiments of education" (Pendleton, 1848, p. 7). In her view, chance nor heritability constituted a sufficient explanation for why "one child is born a fool, another a prodigy" (Pendleton, 1848, p. 7). Pendleton would ultimately make it her life's work to understand mechanisms of parent-child transmission – although limiting herself to mostly phrenological explanations for moral differentiations among children.

The scientific study of intergenerational transmission processes only gained momentum in the first half of the twentieth century. At the time, a series of psychological experiments laid the foundation for understanding human behavior as being formed through processes of *learning* (Barlow & Durand, 2002; Dickinson, 1987; Zimbardo, Johnson & McCann, 2017). With the groundbreaking studies of behavioral psychologists such as Ivan Pavlov (1927), John Watson (1925) and Burrhus Skinner (1938), behavior was increasingly viewed as an observable and measurable outcome that could be manipulated by external stimuli (Dickinson, 1987; Sierles & Blom, 1982; Zimbardo, Johnson & McCann, 2017). These stimuli could cause subconscious associations that would bring about involuntary or reflex-based behavior – as is the core assumption of classic conditioning theory (Barlow & Durand, 2002; Sierles & Blom, 1982). Most famously, Pavlov (1927) illustrated the workings of the classical conditioning theory by how dogs, exposed to a ringing bell before given food, would over time start salivating at the mere sound of the bell (Zimbardo, Johnson & McCann, 2017). In this case, the subjects (dogs) have no control over the association between the unconditioned stimulus (food) and the conditioned stimulus (bell), nor over the reflexes (salivation) that the latter invokes (Barlow & Durand, 2002). Yet by the repeated exposure to both the unconditioned and the conditioned stimulus, subconscious learning processes take place (Dickinson, 1987).

In operant conditioning theory, on the other hand, the focus is on how learning takes place by the use of punishments and reinforcements as the consequences of one's actions (Domjan, 2015). Here, an association is made between deliberate behavior (e.g., driving without a seatbelt) and a desirable or undesirable event (e.g., being fined) – that stimulates the learning process ('driving without a seatbelt will get me fined'). *When* and *how often* certain actions are punished or reinforced, will affect the speed and strength with which the learning process takes place (Domjan,

2015). For example, if the intervals with which behavior is punished are low (e.g., small chance of getting fined), it will take longer for people to adapt their behavior (Zimbardo, Johnson & McCann, 2017). When reinforcement or punishment is continuous – thus occurring every time after the specific behavior is observed – the learning speed is supposedly at its highest (Blackman, 2017; Domjan, 2015). However, *extinction,* or the sudden disappearance of the conditioned behavior, may occur as soon as the reinforcement or the punishment is halted (Domjan, 2015; Zimbardo, Johnson & McCann, 2017).

Since their introduction, behavioralist theories have had a profound impact on our understanding of childrearing. Its principles have for example been applied to enhancing children's potty-training (Benjamin, Serdahely, & Geppert, 1971), developing treatments for children's stuttering (Ryan, 1970), and overcoming food aversions in children (Siegel, 1982). Nowadays, the basic assumptions of classical and operant conditioning have largely been accepted, and these theories are rarely revised (Bitterman, 2006). Nonetheless, behavioralism is hardly a leading field within psychology anymore (Graham, 2000). Over the years it has received various critiques (Schnaitter, 1999) – especially for its implicit deterministic tendencies and its apparent negation of free will (Graham, 20000). Understanding learning from only a stimulus-response relationship has been called reductionist and simplistic by some (Erlam, et. al., 2017) – disregarding the contextual and social factors that are at play in learning processes (Graham, 2000). These considerations ultimately urged some scholars to turn towards different explanations for learning that take human agency into account – specifically social learning theory.

Table 2a. Summary of theoretical approaches to intergenerational transmission (IGT)

Nr.	*Concept/theory*	*Source*	*(Implicit) IGT assumption*
1	Classic conditioning	Pavlov, 1927; Watson, 1925	IGT occurs *when children associate certain (involuntary) behaviors or responses with specific external stimuli prompted by their parents.*
2	Operant conditioning	Skinner, 1938	IGT occurs *when children associate certain (voluntary) behaviors or responses with specific rewards or punishments by parents.*

Social learning theories

Social learning theory builds on behavioralist theories. Yet, instead of focusing on rewards and punishments, it emphasizes how behavior can be learnt through observation (Akers & Jennings, 2016; Domjan, 2015). Its core assumption is that we do not need to undergo trials and errors *ourselves* to understand their workings – just looking at others can shape our behavior in a similar fashion (Akers & Jennings, 2016). Similar to conditioning theory, social learning has proven to be a valuable explanation in understanding the transmission of deviance (Akers, 2002; 2007). Yet in recent years, scholars have also come to understand it as a crucial mechanism by which extremist ideas are transmitted, both within and beyond the family sphere (see Becker, 2021; Iqbal, 2021; Knott & Lee, 2020).

Psychologist Albert Bandura was one of the most important scholars in developing social learning theory. His famous Bobo Doll experiment shows how children, by observing adults behaving aggressively towards a doll, learn to repeat this behavior themselves when confronted with the same doll (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961). Likewise, if adults treated the doll neutrally, children would do so too (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961; Bandura & Walters, 1977). Based on this experiment, Bandura concluded that social learning takes shape through various processes. The first is known as *imitation,* where one copies the behavior of others (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963; MacBlain, 2018). Secondly, *identification,* is about finding yourself similar to others, which enhances copying behaviors (Bandura, 1977; MacBlain, 2018; Horner, Bhattacharyya, & O'Connor, 2008). As such, we are more likely to socially learn from someone who resembles us in terms of age, gender or background. For example, in the Bobo Doll experiment, boys were more likely to imitate the behavior shown by male adults, whereas girls would copy women's behavior instead (Shuttleworth, 2008). This observation is related to the concept of *modeling* (Horner, Bhattacharyya, & O'Connor, 2008), which posits that behavior is specifically learnt from someone we look up to, and who therefore serves as a role model to us.

Since social learning theory understands learning through observation as a primarily cognitive process, it is commonly considered an integrated theory of learning – combining both behavioralist approaches with cognitivist theories. For example, although social learning theory distances itself from punishments and rewards as a sole explanation for learning outcomes, it did integrate the latter into a concept called *vicarious reinforcement* (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963). Here it is assumed that observing others getting rewarded or punished can have the same behavioral effects as undergoing them oneself (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961; 1963). Such learning processes are mediated by individual factors that affect the relation between the stimulus and the behavioral response. These factors are (1) the *attention* paid to the social learning event; (2) the *retention* of the observed information; (3) the physical and cognitive ability to *reproduce* the behavior; and (4) presence of a *motivation* for reproduction (Akers & Jennings, 2016; Horner, Bhattacharyya, & O'Connor, 2008).

The findings of Bandura's studies were soon applied to conventional educational and family spheres. It was thought that watching violent movies or playing violent videogames would, eventually, make children behave aggressively too (Eron et. al., 1972; Schutte et. al., 1988; see also Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963). Moreover, social learning theory proved to be a valuable approach in understanding the development of criminal and antisocial behavior in adolescents (Akers, 2002; Akers & Jennings, 2016). The growing interest in interventions based on stimulating positive (peer) relations and role models, further illustrates how social learning insights were adopted by child psychologists (for example Ladd, 1981; Ladd & Mize, 1983; Ollendick & Schmidt, 1987).

The social learning theory has, however, not remained without critique. A common point of criticism is that it does not take into account how self-selection mediates the relation between

the social environment and the learned behavior. For example, children with violent or criminal tendencies might choose to surround themselves with individuals who support rather than inhibit these traits (Akers, 2007). The cause-and-effect relation between social surroundings and behavior as hypothesized by the social learning theory might thus not hold up in the real world. Additionally, it has the potential to disregard other relevant factors – such as contextual, biological and psychological factors that might cause individual differentiation in social learning outcomes (Akers, 2007; Akers & Jennings, 2016).

Table 2b. Summary of theoretical approaches to intergenerational transmission (IGT)

Nr.	*Concept/theory*	*Source*	*(Implicit) IGT assumption*
3	Social learning theory	Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961	IGT occurs *when children learn to repeat parental behavior through processes of imitation, identification and modeling.*
4	Vicarious reinforcement	Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963	IGT occurs *when children observe others being punished or rewarded by their parents for certain types of behavior.*

Socialization and internalization

Social learning theories have accumulated in a concept known as *socialization*. Although the line between social learning and socialization is somewhat blurred, socialization more specifically deals with the group context or culture in which learning takes place, both explicitly and implicitly. It has been argued that socialization is different from social learning "because it presupposes that what is to be learnt is already practiced by at least one other actor" (Flockhart, 2004, p. 366). Moreover, there is an "unequal relationship" (Flockhart, 2004, p. 336) to it, since socialization is about the initiation of novices into already existing cultures or practices (Johnston, 2001). It thus refers to the processes whereby "naive individuals are taught the skills, behavior patterns, values, and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up" (Maccoby, 2007, p. 3). Socialization is therefore not only about how specific behaviors are socially learnt, but also about adopting the more general ideas, beliefs, attitudes and meanings that are valued within a group (Baltes & Schaie, 2013). A normative component is, in other words, inherent to socialization processes. This is specifically apparent within the family context, where the overarching purpose of parental socialization is to help children develop into "moral" adults (Maccoby, 2007).

Theories of socialization have had lasting impact on social psychology, as well as sociology – as we will see later on in this Chapter. Yet, where sociologists understand socialization as the training of children for their participation in society, psychologists consider it to be about "the channeling of instinctual drives into socially useful forms" (Neugarten & Datan, 2013, p. 56). For both disciplines, however, the writings of classical sociologists such as Georg Simmel (1968) and structural functionalists such as Talcott Parsons and Robert Bales (1956) have been particularly influential

in developing socialization theory. In Simmel's (1968) relational sociology, for example, society is understood as a web of interactions, rather than a vast structure or system. Active participation within these networks – as well as the "roles" and social expectations we attach to them – then shapes, changes and reproduces the social order, he argued (Simmel, 1968, also see Papilloud, 2018). Functionalists Parsons and Bales (1956), on the other hand, looked more specifically at the American nuclear family and the socializing roles fathers and mothers play within that context. According to them, parents are of particular importance when it comes to stabilizing the adult personalities of their children, preventing them from developing antisocial tendencies (Mackie, 2002; Carroll & Campbell, 2008). Illustrating this reasoning, the authors famously claimed that "families are factories that produce human personalities" (Parsons & Bales, 1956, p. 16). Without this external shaping, the human personality does not exist (see Mackie, 2002; Carroll & Campbell, 2008).

In psychology, based on Parsons' functionalist thinking, socialization is approached as a lifelong process that continues to develop and shape our personality as we age. Here, the first stages of socialization related to our childhood, are of particular relevance. Parents and family members are the core actors in a process known as *primary socialization* (Oetting, 1999; Whitbeck, 1999). It is in our earliest years when the foundation is laid for the social skills and behaviors that we will continue to use for the rest of our lives. Primary socialization processes may be direct or indirect in nature, involving social learning patterns such as learning by observation and modelling (Whitbeck, 1999). It can be assumed that primary socialization processes are of particular importance when discussing the intergenerational transmission of extreme beliefs. Parents provide children with a behavioral and ideological blueprint, through which they come to understand the world around them, and which socializes them into the extremist group culture. *Secondary socialization* on the other hand occurs later in life, when the influence of parents and family members decreases (Crisogen, 2015). As children come of age, social institutions such as peer groups, schools, media and romantic partners become increasingly more important sources of social learning (Callary, Werthner, & Trudel, 2011; Crisogen, 2015).

For both primary and secondary socialization, norms and values of the group are adopted through a process called *internalization* (sometimes referred to as *acculturation,* see Sam & Berry, 2006), introduced by developmental psychologist Vygotsky (1978). This term reflects the process where, in the words of Zittoun and Gillespie (2015), "culture becomes mind" (p. 477). After internalization, our attitudes, behavior and beliefs are no longer externally mediated, but instead "integrated into the cognitive process and help to define our human relationship with reality" (Asmolov, 2019). From a psychological perspective, continuous exposure to individuals with certain beliefs will change our own worldview to align more with those of the "host" group, specifically if *identification* occurs (Kelman, 1958; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). In that case, we accept social influences because they help us establish or maintain a good bond to the individual or the group that does the influencing (Kelman, 1958).

Although the concepts of internalization and acculturation are commonly adopted by psychologists, both have received criticism for their lack of scientific measurability, as well as their inadequacy to capture the vast complexness of social adaptation processes (Chirkov, 2009). Others believe the internal-external division is inherently problematic, arguing instead for broader acceptance of other concepts such as psychological "appropriation" (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015). Regardless of these critiques, internalization and acculturation undoubtedly remain relevant concepts within the study of intergenerational transmission, as they indicate that at some point, the socialization shifts from the external to the internal. Parental values may be adopted until they, in fact, become an integral part of one's owns belief system. It can be assumed that children of extremist parents embrace these harmful ideologies in a similar fashion – which may hamper their ability to separate their own convictions and opinions from those from their parents.

As we have seen, in traditional psychological approaches to socialization, the emphasis has first and foremost been on one-directional processes of influence (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007). Parents are conceptualized as having a linear (and direct) impact on their children's development – understanding social adaptation predominantly from a functionalist perspective (Maccoby, 1992). Children's behavior was thought to be directly linked to their upbringing, as Talcott Parsons' reasoning shows. Yet, over the years, and with increasing influence from sociological thinkers belonging to the social-constructivist school, socialization has been re-framed as a bidirectional or even a multidirectional process (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Rafky, 1971; Rodríguez-García & Wagner, 2009). Not only parents, but children too, are increasingly understood as having agency in the socialization process – yielding it an interactive phenomenon (Maccoby, 1992; 2007), which is dynamic rather than static in its outcomes (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007). This line of thinking, and its relations to the symbolic interactionist school, is further discussed later in this Chapter.

Table 2c. Summary of theoretical approaches to intergenerational transmission (IGT)

Nr.	*Concept/theory*	*Source*	*(Implicit) IGT assumption*
5	Socialization theory; Acculturation	Parsons & Bales, 1956; Whitbeck, 1999; Sam & Berry, 2006	IGT occurs *when children learn societal norms, values and behaviors through interaction with their parents (as primary socialization actors) or society (as secondary socialization actors).*
6	Internalization	Vygotsky, 1978	IGT occurs *when children absorb and adopt their parents' values, attitudes, and beliefs as their own, making them an intrinsic part of their identity.*

Attachment theory

When it comes to parent-child relationships and their effect on children's learning abilities, a particularly important theory to consider is attachment theory. Attachment theory was jointly developed by psychiatrist John Bowlby and psychologist Mary Ainsworth (Bretherton, 1992; Hazan

& Shaver, 1994). Bowlby started formulating his theory in the 1940's and 1950's, after observing the impact of parental loss on children at the London Child Guidance Clinic, where he worked at the time (Bretherton, 1992). He came to understand that family interaction patterns were at the heart of the social and emotional development in children – and that disturbances in these patterns could severely hamper the developmental process. In his earliest theories, Bowlby specifically focused on the role of the mother in children's upbringing – which later proved to be a cause for critique by fellow scholars (Van IJzendoorn et. al., 1988). For healthy mental development, Bowlby believed, children should have a "warm, intimate and continuous relationship" (Bowlby, 1951, p. 13) with their mother. In his seminal paper *Separation Anxiety* (1959), Bowlby describes the three stages children go through after separation from their mother, based on his own observations. First, a child will *protest* against the separation, trying to "recapture [its mother] by the full exercise of his limited resources" (Bowlby, 1959, p. 90), including crying and rebellious behavior. After a few days, the *despair* stage sets in. This is when the child enters "a state of deep mourning" (Bowlby, 1959, p. 90), characterized by withdrawal and passiveness. Finally, *detachment* occurs when the child regains its interests in its surroundings while losing interest in its mother. This apathy and remoteness remain even when the mother returns (Bowlby, 1959).

Bowlby's description of separation anxiety later formed the basis for his attachment style theory. This theory poses that the bond that forms between parents and their children in the first years of their lives, is crucial for their later development (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). This bond is called an *attachment*, which constitutes "a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1969, p. 194). Attachment is thought to be of great evolutionary value, because it secures children of parental care, which increases their chances of survival (Van IJzendoorn et. al., 1988). Yet, although all children become attached to their parents one way or another, the quality of these bonds may vary (Bowlby, 1978; Johnson, 2003; Rholes & Simpson, 2004; Van IJzendoorn et. al., 1988).

Developmental psychologist Mary Ainsworth (1963; 1967; 1968) added to Bowlby's thinking with her "secure base" thesis (Bowlby, 1988; Bretherton, 1992). From this perspective, parents are supposed to provide their children with a sense of security, to allow for optimal development (Ainsworth, 1967; Bretherton, 1992). Ainsworth argued that children adopt attachment styles that can be either secure or insecure in nature. Securely attached children perceive their caregivers as a safe haven, supporting them in exploring their surroundings independently. They experience limited distress when their parents leave, because they trust that they will soon be reunited (Danquah & Berry, 2013; Johnson, 2009; Rholes & Simpson, 2004). Secure attachment patterns arise when "caregivers are sensitive and responsive to the infant's needs" (Danquah & Berry, 2013, p. 5).

Insecure attachment can manifest itself in an *ambivalent* or an *avoidant* manner. Ambivalently attached children generally want to stay close to their parents, and do not feel secure

enough to explore their environment on their own (Danquah & Berry, 2013; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Johnson, 2019). When their parents leave their sides, they feel overly stressed and upset. Upon their parent's return, their behavior fluctuates between angry or dismissive, and clingy or affirmation-seeking (Danquah & Berry, 2013). Ambivalent attachment patterns are the result of poor parental availability and reliability – which causes children to lack trust in their parents to sufficiently address their needs (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Johnson, 2009).

Avoidant attachment is the case when children completely detach from their parents and dismiss of ignore them. Separation from their parents leaves avoidantly attached children untouched, and they show no joy upon their caregivers' return (Danquah & Berry, 2013; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Van IJzendoorn et. al., 1988; Verhofstadt-Deneve, Vyt, & Van Geert, 2003). As Danquah and Berry (2013) describe, children adopt this attachment style as a way to 'deactivate their attachment system to avoid the pain and disappointment that have come to be associated with their unsuccessful bids for physical and emotional closeness' (p. 5). It is often neglectful or abusive parenting that causes children to develop an avoidant attachment style (Jacobs, 2002; Verhofstadt-Deneve, Vyt, & Van Geert, 2003).

Later a fourth dimension was added: the *disorganized* attachment style, which is commonly considered the most insecure pattern. Children with a disorganized attachment style react chaotically to stress induced by separation from their parents (Holmes, 2004; Verdult, 2003; Zilberstein & Messer, 2010). Their behavior is often contradictory and seemingly aimless in nature because of the extreme emotions that the separation invokes (Verdult, 2003; Zilberstein & Messer, 2010). It is mostly in response to unpredictable and opposing parenting styles that children develop a disorganized attachment pattern (Verdult, 2004). In adults, it is commonly related to personality disorders such as borderline (Holmes, 2004).

Although empirical research on the role that attachment styles may play in processes of intergenerational transmission is generally limited, there are several hypothetical effects to be considered. First of all, children with insecure attachment styles may on a general level be more receptive to extremist worldviews. Over the years, psychological research has clearly demonstrated a link between low self-esteem and insecure attachment styles (e.g. Foster, Kernis & Goldman, 2007; Passanisi, et al., 2015). This supports the assumption that children with insecure attachment styles could also be more susceptible to the false sense of security and "belonging" that extremist milieus provide. As such, extremist parents could be more effective in socializing their insecurely attached children due to their limited identity development and lack of self-esteem.

Second, insecure attachment styles can have an indirect effect, as ambivalently attached children tend to be more fearful of the outside world (Lee & Hankin, 2009; Danquah & Berry, 2013; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Since extremist milieus generally capitalize on individuals' existential anxieties – using alarmist narratives to recruit new members and justify violent action (e.g., Wilson, 2022; Fofiu, 2012) – ambivalently attached children may be particularly vulnerable to this

messaging. Lastly, children who are insecurely attached may grow up with an unhealthy need for validation from their parents. Mirroring their parents' extremist ideas and/or behaviors may be one way for them to get this sought-after parental approval (see, for example, Magai et al., 2000, on the relationship between insecure attachment styles and approval-seeking behavior). Additionally, Merz, Schuengela and Schulze (2007) describe how insecure attachment among children could amplify feelings of "intergenerational solidarity" towards parents (see also Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997). In these instances, children are particularly strongly emotionally committed to their parents, yet these feelings are rooted in a perceived moral obligation rather than genuine affection (Merz, Schuengela & Schulze, 2007). As such, this might aid to the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideologies from parent to child.

At the same time, it could be argued that securely attached children are similarly vulnerable to intergenerational transmission, considering that generally speaking, we might be more likely to accept the worldviews of people that we love and trust. Research on the transmission of prosocial behavior and family values suggests that this might indeed be the case (Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Van IJzendoorn, 1992). While I did not come across any studies that particularly examined this relation with regards to (the intergenerational transmission of) antisocial or violent beliefs, it is nonetheless possible that similar workings may be at play here. Ultimately, in families with secure attachments, intergenerational transmission of extremist beliefs may occur more seamlessly, because the child is not questioning the intentions or reliability of its caregiver.

Table 2d. Summary of theoretical approaches to intergenerational transmission (IGT)

Nr.	***Concept/theory***	***Source***	***(Implicit) IGT assumption***
7	Attachment theory	Bowlby, 1959; Ainsworth, 1967	IGT occurs *when children form (secure or insecure) emotional bonds with their parents, which in turn determine their sensitivity to parental responses.*
8	Intergenerational solidarity	Merz, Schuengela & Schulze, 2007	IGT occurs *when insecurely attached children emotionally commit to their parents due to a perceived moral obligation.*

Parenting style theory

Shortly after John Bowlby's and Mary Ainsworth's introduction of attachment theory in the 1960's, the various dimensions of parenting became a topic of interest. Child psychologist Diana Baumrind (1966; 1991) was the first to identify a typology of parenting, as to understanding the influence of parents on adolescent development. Baumrind (1966; 1991) described three models of parental control, and maintained that parents either adopt an authoritarian (high control low support), permissive (low control, high support) or authoritative (high control, high support) style. Later, a fourth style was added by Maccoby and Martin (1983), namely the neglectful parenting style (low control, low support). Authoritarian parents are characterized by a highly controlling and punitive

parenting styles (Carter & Welch, 1981; Kopko, 2007). Children are limited in their autonomy, and their freedom of self-expression is curbed (Carter & Welch, 1981; Van Crombrugge, 2009). Authoritarian parents maintain a 'do as I say'-mentality, considering "the preservation of order and traditional structure (…) a highly valued end in itself" (Baumrind, 1966, p. 890). Children of authoritarian parents tend to grow up obedient on the verge of passive – and might encounter difficulties with self-expression and self-confidence in adolescence (Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2008; Thompson, Hollis, & Richards, 2003; Van Crombrugge, 2009). Codependency – or an overreliance on (validation from) external relationships while lacking a sense of self – has also been linked to an authoritarian upbringing (Crothers & Warren, 1996; Fischer & Crawford, 1992; Leavitt, 1997).

Permissive parents are at the other end of the spectrum. In stark contrast to their authoritarian counterparts, permissive parents are "nonpunitive, acceptant, and affirmative" (Baumrind, 1966, p. 889) towards their offspring. They take no active responsibility in shaping children's behavior, nor do they maintain strict rules within the family household (Van Crombrugge, 2009). Permissive parenting is characterized by a high degree of love and affirmation, yet a lack of parental control (Kopko, 2007; Carter & Welch, 1981). Children from permissive parents tend to grow up with a lot of freedom, but may struggle with self-regulation and coping with authority later in life (Baumrind, 1991).

The authoritative parenting style is, as the name suggests, a combination of the two types mentioned above. Authoritative parents grant their children freedom and encourage independent self-development, while setting reasonable rules and boundaries (Carter & Welch, 1981; Kopko, 2007; Mensah & Kuranchie, 2013). According to Baumrind (1966), this type of parent "exerts firm control at points of parent-child divergence, but does not hem the child in with restrictions" (p. 891). Authoritative parenting has generally been recognized as a healthy and balanced approach to childrearing (Kopko, 2007; Lavrič, & Naterer, 2020; Maccoby, 1992). Children of authoritative parents tend to grow up to be better functioning adolescents in an educational and (psycho)social sense, than the children of permissive or authoritarian parents (Darling, 1999; Lavrič, & Naterer, 2020; Maccoby, 1992; Spera, 2005; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996).

Maccoby and Martin (1983) added the neglectful or uninvolved parenting style, which Baumrind (1991) later incorporated into her typology[2]. Neglectful parenting is characterized by low emotional support and low parental involvement. Parents of this type are hardly present in their children's lives, fail to meet their emotional needs and do not set any rules. Neglectful parenting is generally thought to have the most adverse effects on children. Outcomes linked to this parenting style are, among others, antisocial tendencies, social incompetence, and mental health issues such

[2] In recent years, a fifth parenting style has been proposed. This style is known as overinvolved or intrusive parenting (Odenweller, Booth-Butterfield & Weber, 2014; Ratcliffe, 2020). Parents in this category are often referred to as "helicopter parents", controlling and micro-managing every aspect of their children's lives (Ratcliffe, 2020; Wallace et. al., 2015). This overinvolved and overprotective parenting style is thought to be increasingly common in the Western world, due to the emergence of new technologies that allow parents to track their children's every move (Givertz & Segrin, 2014). Similar to children of neglectful parents, children of helicopter parents have shown higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress (Ratcliff, 2020).

as depression and anxiety (Baumrind, 1991; Hines, Kantor & Holt, 2006; Knutson, DeGarmo & Reid, 2004; Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019).

When it comes to the transmission of religion and parenting styles, findings seem unanimous (Barrow et. al., 2020). They overall suggest that authoritative parenting is most effective in socializing children into religious values (Hardy et. al., 2011; Husain, 2013; Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2004). Dudley and Wisbey (2000), too, concluded that parents practicing "affectionate constraint" (p. 3), or the balancing of care and control, produced offspring with generally higher levels of religious enthusiasm and involvement. Research on the intergenerational transmission of religion (Murray & Mulvaney, 2012) and emotion socialization (Chan, Bowes & Wyver, 2009) also indicates a higher effectiveness of authoritative parenting over permissive or authoritarian parenting. These findings interestingly fit with studies on the relation between secure attachment styles and the intergenerational transmission of prosocial behavior as discussed earlier in this Chapter – yet contradict my hypotheses on insecure attachment (or dysfunctional parent-child relations) as a potential risk factor in intergenerational transmission.

While the precise nature of the relation between authoritative parenting and transmission processes remains somewhat unclear (see Barrow et. al., 2020; Darling & Steinberg, 1993), Murray and Mulvaney (2012) do provide three hypotheses that might serve as an explanation. First, authoritative parenting, in which the self-determination and autonomy of the child is stimulated, might give children the impression that their religious beliefs are self-generated rather than imposed. This illusion of choice would make it more likely for them to adopt and internalize their parents' beliefs. Second, stronger emotional bonds between authoritative parents and their children might exist – which could stimulate the identification processes that aid transmission. Third, through continuous positive interactions, a feedback loop between authoritative parents and their children could emerge, causing them to grow increasingly homogenous in their (religious) values and beliefs (Murray & Mulvaney, 2012).

Table 2e. Theoretical approaches to intergenerational transmission (IGT)

Nr.	*Concept/theory*	*Source*	*(Implicit) IGT assumption*
9	Parenting style theory	Baumrind, 1966; 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983	IGT occurs *when parents influence their children's (emotional) development through repeating patterns in parenting behavior, communication and discipline, which in turn determines their sensitivity to parental responses.*

Socialization theory revisited: a symbolic interactionist approach

At the start of this Chapter, I discussed how classic social learning theory, as introduced by Bandura, laid the foundation for understanding processes of children's socialization. Although widely acknowledged in its relevance, this theory has not remained without criticism from scholars in other disciplines. In his work *Phenomenology and Socialization* (1971), American sociologist David Rafky already

argued for a less 'psychologized' approach to processes of parent-child socialization. He maintained that previous work on socialization theory had been too heavily reliant on concepts of motivation, cognition and perception, and too little integrated with sociological perspectives, specifically from the phenomenological and symbolic interactionist school (Rafky, 1971). Although good progress has been made in the decades thereafter, with symbolic interactionist approaches to family studies being more commonly accepted (James & Prout, 2003; LaRossa, & Reitzes, 2009), socialization theory still remains largely isolated from this trend (Starrels & Holm, 2000). As an attempt to bridge this gap and to strengthen the ties between these two theories, I will dive deeper into phenomenological perspectives on parent-child socialization, by focusing on three relevant dimensions in thinking about socialization: emotions (Thoits, 1989), silence (Weingarten, 2004; Williams & Shore, 1998); and storytelling (Kim & Crepaldi, 2021; Miller, Fung & Mintz, 1996) (for an overview of these approaches, see Table 2f).

When it comes to the socialization of ideologies within a family context, emotions play an important role. Riis and Woodhead (2010) describe how specifically in religious contexts, a so-called "emotional regime" (p. 4) determines what feelings can be 'felt' and expressed, and which emotions are considered valid within a religious community. As such, the experiences and emotions of the individual merge with that of the group, enhancing the self-perception of its members. This "sociology of emotions" (Thoits, 1989) has previously been used to understand, among other phenomena, the intergenerational transmission of trauma within families (Gottschalk, 2003). More recently, it has been applied to Islamist radicalization among Western youth, where radical groups help disadvantaged adolescents to reframe their negative feelings in accordance with their own emotional regime (Larsen & Jensen, 2019). Various scholars, such as Sikkens (2018) and Weggemans, Van der Zwan and Liem (2018), further suggested that parents play a key role in either affirmation or renunciation of negative emotions such as humiliation, existential dread and lack of self-confidence – thereby potentially influencing the subsequent radicalization of their children. This ties into the perspective of the family as an "emotional unit", as introduced by Bowen (1978), where its members are constantly influenced by the complex emotional relationships that exist among them (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, see also Butler, 2015; Donley, 1993). These emotional patterns do not exist in isolation but are shaped by those of earlier generations – and form the blueprint of those to come (Donley, 1993).

Yet, the norms and values expressed by parents are not always explicit. While the emphasis of traditional transmission studies is often on "visible" processes, family therapist Kaethe Weingarten (2004) instead describes the importance of *silence* as an invisible socialization mechanism:

> "Silence can communicate a wealth of meanings. It is its own map: Don't go there; don't say that; don't touch; too much; too little; this hurts; this doesn't. But why the territory is as it is, cannot be read from the map of silence" (Weingarten, 2004, p. 51).

More often than not, the things that are left unspoken and the questions that remain unanswered, can communicate just as much – if not more – as the words that are being said. To those on the receiving end, silence may indicate ostracization and social exclusion, impacting individuals' self-confidence, sense of belonging, perceived control and meaningful existence (Williams & Shore, 1998). Specifically in a family context, Rittenour et. al. (2019) found that a parents' use of silent treatment to their children, negatively affected the personal and relational family dynamics, when compared to parents openly expressing their feelings. This would suggest that perhaps saying *less* is indeed more, when it comes to parent-child socialization.

Finally, the importance of *storytelling* in the transmission of ideas can hardly be overstated. One of the most obvious ways in which stories transmit cultural norms and values to children is, for example, through the use of fairytales (Jones, 2008). But the act of storytelling is not limited to the imaginary. Narratively "making sense" (Weick, 1979) of thoughts, feelings and experiences is central to parents' efforts to help children understand the world around them. From that perspective, it has previously been suggested that the personal stories children tell about themselves and their experiences are not their own creations, but instead, 'joint productions' with parents and other family members (Kim & Crepaldi, 2021; Miller, Fung & Mintz, 1996). Through storytelling and repetition, children and their caregivers actively create a collaborative narration – which shapes children's sense of self as well as their outlook on life. Family narratives can be used to make sense of, among others, collective trauma's, family activism or political resistance (see Cordonnier et. al., 2020; Frankish, 2009; Stephenson-Abetz, 2012) – and can have long-lasting effects on children's identities and their perception of the world (also see Flood-Grady & Koenig Kellas, 2019). From a phenomenological perspective, this makes co-constructed storytelling a particularly relevant site of ideological socialization (Kim & Crepaldi, 2021, see also Jirata, 2014).

Narratives and stories have previously been identified as key components of the extremist belief system, as well as important drivers of radicalization processes (Braddock, 2015; Kruglanski, Bélanger, & Gunaratna, 2019; Syam et. al., 2020). Therefore, in extremist families too, storytelling may intentionally or unintentionally serve as a means of transmission. Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that the act of narration on the one hand, and the processes of meaning-making on the other, are separate yet intrinsically linked. The norms, values or lessons parents or caregivers hope to convey to their children are not necessarily the ones that children take away from them (Wainryb & Recchia, 2014). Moreover, the shape personal storytelling takes and the purpose it serves, appears to be highly dependent on the cultural context of the family (Miller et. al, 1997). An insider or 'emic' perspective is usually required to fully understand the meaning of stories – as well as the role they fulfill within a social system.

Table 2f. Theoretical approaches to intergenerational transmission (IGT)

Nr.	*Concept/theory*	*Source*	*(Implicit) IGT assumption*
10	Emotional regimes	Riis & Woodhead, 2010	IGT occurs *when parents transmit certain negative emotions (such as anger, sadness or shame) to their children.*
11	Silence	Weingarten, 2004	IGT occurs *when parents use silence to indirectly communicate to children which ideas, emotions or experiences are allowed, and which are not.*
12	Narratives and storytelling	Weick, 1979	IGT occurs *when children and parents actively create a collaborative narration – which shapes children's sense of self as well as their outlook on life.*

THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF TRAUMA AND VICTIMHOOD

Regardless of the general theories and approaches discussed in the previous paragraphs, the study of intergenerational transmission has further developed through literature that specifically examines the transmission of particular types of behavior and beliefs. Here, we may take a look at the transmission of trauma and (collective) victimhood; delinquency and criminality; and religious practices.

First, from research on trauma and victimhood, it has become clear that traumatic experiences do not only affect those directly exposed. Based on interviews with three families affected by trauma, Israeli family therapist Lev-Wiesel (2007) found that individual traumatic experiences live on in both children and grandchildren – yielding it a multigenerational phenomenon. Some of the later generations even showed symptoms of secondary traumatization, associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). With regards to the transmission processes underlying these symptoms, Lev-Wiesel (2007) highlights the importance of three emotional responses to trauma that facilitate intergenerational transmission – those being sadness, shame and anger. Rowland-Klein and Dunlop (1998) similarly identified the transmission of negative emotions such as fear and mistrust as a key factor in children's internalization of parental trauma. This once again reflects the relevance of emotions and so-called "emotional regimes" (Riis & Woodhead, 2010) in transmission processes, as previously highlighted earlier in this Chapter. Moreover, in multigenerational families, transmission appears to take on rather overt shapes. The importance of remembering the events is often explicitly vocalized and understood as an act of loyalty – making remembrance into a family "mission" (Lev-Wiesel, 2007).

Other studies, too, have emphasized the importance of loyalty in trauma transmission. Children that feel loyal towards their caregivers, might develop the desire to relieve the hurt and grief they observe in them (Rowland-Klein & Dunlop, 1988). This can result in the experiences and emotions of parents merging with those of their children, making the boundaries between parent and child less clear (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Ulrich, 1981; Williamson & Bray, 1988) – thereby aiding the

transmission process. However, these loyalties and emotional attachments can cause the identity and autonomy of the child to be, in the end, sacrificed (Lev-Wiesel, 2007; Williamson & Bray, 1988). Rowland-Klein and Dunlop (1988) describe how children's projection and overidentification with their parents' trauma is a frequently observed dynamic – which can ultimately harm the well-being of the children involved (Rowland-Klein & Dunlop, 1988). This overidentification may ultimately result in a "parasitic" or "defectively symbiotic" relationship[3] (Dunbar, 1952) between parent and child, in which the individuality of the child dissolves completely and is absorbed by their parent's.

Although little is unknown about the degree to which such loyalty-induced symbiosis occurs in extremist families – it is a mechanism that has previously been observed in the context of cultish and sectarian movements (see Stein, 2021; Van Wijk, et. al. 2013). Uncompromised loyalty towards an ideology and the sacrifice of one's self is at the very core of these groups and their members. Moreover, since individual experiences of trauma and grievances are believed to play an important role in the appeal of extremist ideologies (Charkawi, Dunn, & Bliuc, 2021; Koehler, 2020), it is not unfair to believe that here, similar mechanisms would be at play. Finally, several studies have highlighted how the internalization of trauma can fuel subsequent desires for (violent) revenge (e.g., Lickel et. al., 2006; Pennekamp et al., 2007) – which would also plea for including the role of trauma into the study of extremist transmission processes.

Yet, the dynamics with which trauma is transmitted from parent to child are not limited to the micro level. Increasingly, scholars have been studying the intergenerational transmission of collective trauma, too. Here, victimization narratives are considered an important element. These narratives reflect the ways in which a collective discourse on the (remembrance of) collective trauma is shaped. They consist of "personal experiences as well as elements of the societal narratives of victimization" (Vollhardt, 2020, p. 10). There are different takes on how these narratives develop, and how they subsequently spread throughout society. Societal institutions such as schools, where children's textbooks are among the first to convey trauma narratives to children, are thought to play an important role in these processes (Bar-Tal, 1998). These victimization narratives are further echoed in the rituals and memorials that a society creates to give meaning to collective trauma (Blumer, 2013; De Roy van Zuijdewijn, 2021; Vollhardt, 2012). While they usually contain common themes and phrasings, it is through the differences in personal experiences of victimization that variations in these narratives come about (Vollhardt, 2020).

Such collective victimization narratives strongly overlap with notions of "collective memories" (Cuc et. al., 2006; Schuman & Scott, 1989; Vollhardt, 2012) and "collective identities" (Alexander et. al. 2004; Gongaware, 2003). Gongaware (2003) for example describes how victimization narratives

[3] Such parent-child symbiosis can eventually manifest itself in a psychiatric condition known as *folie à deux* or Shared Delusion Disorder. In this case, a similar mental disorder is shared by two or more individuals who have a close relationship (Sharma & Arora, 2021). Within a family context, this condition is referred to as *folie à famille* (Srivrastava & Borkar, 2010; Wikler, 1980). *Folie à famille* has previously been understood as a result of trauma transmission and secondary victimization within families (see for example Figley, 1985; Glassman, Magulac & Darko, 1987).

are formed through "collective memory creation" – based on the experiences of a few individuals within the group – and then transmitted and carried onwards by a process called "collective memory maintenance". This maintenance consists of reminders that reiterate the history and network composition of the group, creating a sense of unity and a collective identity (Gongaware, 2003; Melucci, 1985).

Finally, related to the transmission of trauma is the transmission of (perceived) victimhood. Where the concept of "victimization" suggests the objectivity of the harm experienced (e.g. in the form of war crimes, genocides, human rights violations), "victimhood" points at the subjective nature of these experiences (Vollhardt, 2012). This subjectivity is specifically evident in a phenomenon known as "victim mentality" (Coicaud, 2017), or the state of mind where one seems himself as a victim; beliefs that the outside world is against them; and disregards any evidence of the opposite. Victim mentality, referred to as "victim beliefs" (Vollhardt, 2012) or "victim syndrome" (De Vries, 2014), is thought to be largely transmitted within a family context. In this case, parents may have the propensity to make their perceived victimhood a "generational problem" (De Vries, 2014, p. 133), where suffering is at the core of the parent-child relationship. However, at the macro-level, the societal system at large plays an important role as well. In the eyes of perceived victim, the society might be unresponsive and dismissive towards their victim status, causing them to feel emotionally insecure, and eventually feeding their frustrations and resentment (De Vries, 2014).

Such a victim mindset may ultimately be an underlying driver of group-level violence, political scientist Jean-Marc Coicaud (2017) argues. This may help us understand why for some, ideological transmission can have behavioral consequences (e.g., extremist violence or terrorism) – even when the necessity of violence itself has not been transmitted. The frustration and resentment that a perceived victim status can bring about, might in some lead to a lack of empathy, proneness to discrimination, and even perpetration of (lethal) violence towards others (Coicaud, 2017). These considerations find support in Volkan's (2001) discussion of 'chosen trauma'. This term refers to "the shared mental representation of a massive trauma that the group's ancestors suffered at the hand of an enemy" (p. 79). The ingroup actively and deliberately reinvokes this trauma (hence its 'chosen' nature), as a way to protect and maintain the identity of the group. The victimized or 'injured' self-image that this chosen trauma entails, is further 'deposited' into children, Volkan (2001) claims, who will then continue to pass it on, keeping the trauma alive for centuries. In the end, chosen trauma might result in a so-called *time collapse*, or "the fears, fantasies and defenses associated with a chosen trauma that reappear when both conscious and unconscious connections are made between the mental representations of the past trauma and a contemporary threat" (Volkan, 2001, p. 89). Similar to Coicaud (2017), Volkan (2001) concludes that these processes could lead to sadism, masochism and cruelties against others – which may again help understand when the transmission of perceived trauma can result in the use of extremist violence.

Table 2g. Theoretical approaches to intergenerational transmission (IGT)

Nr.	*Concept/theory*	*Source*	*(Implicit) IGT assumption*
13	Loyalty-induced symbiosis	Rowland-Klein & Dunlop, 1988	IGT occurs *when children feel overly loyal towards their traumatized parents and develop the desire to relieve the hurt and grief they observe in them.*
14	Victimization narratives	Vollhardt 2012; 2020	IGT occurs *when children are exposed to personal experiences of victimhood as well as (elements of) societal narratives of victimization.*
15	Collective memories/ identities	Gongaware, 2003	IGT occurs *through the creation of collective histories based on the experiences of a few individuals within the social group – which invoke a sense of unity and a collective identity in children.*
16	Victim mentality/ mindset	Coicaud, 2017	IGT occurs *when children are taught to see themselves as victims; belief that the outside world is against them; and disregard any evidence of the opposite.*

THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF DELINQUENCY

Intergenerational transmission as a concept has been well-adopted by scholars in the field of criminology (for an overview of approaches, see Table 2h). One of the leading scholars on the transmission of delinquency, criminologist David Farrington, describes six possible (not mutually exclusive) explanations for the intergenerational transmission of criminal behavior (Farrington, 2002; 2010). First, he points to continuities in risk factor exposure across generations as a potential mechanism underlying intergenerational transmission of delinquency. Here, factors associated with criminal behavior, such as poverty and substance abuse, are transmitted from parent to child, resulting in continuity in delinquency (Farrington, 2002). The second explanation relates to what is called assortative mating – a concept to describe the process by which criminal individuals are more likely to settle with a criminal partner. Such couples are less likely to provide a stable basis for their offspring, making it more likely that their children will end up in crime, too (Farrington, 2010). Third, Farrington (2002; 2010) points at direct and mutual family influences to explain intergenerational transmission. Here, social learning processes as discussed in the first sections of this Chapter (including imitation by children and parental reinforcement), are the main drivers of transmission. Fourth, mediating environmental factors may underlie criminal continuity. Factors such as insufficient parenting style or lack of supervision may mediate the relation between parent-level and child-level delinquency (Farrington, 2010). The fifth explanation relates to genetic factors. In this biosocial approach, it is argued that criminal individuals are genetically predisposed to antisocial or criminal behavior – and that these genes are passed on to their offspring. The sixth and final explanation deals with official authorities' bias against criminal families. This bias makes it more likely for children of delinquent parents to be convicted themselves (Farrington, 2010).

The latter hypothesis bears strong resemblance to what in criminology is known as labeling and stigmatization theory (Becker, 1963). Central to the concept of labeling is the idea that

behavior is affected by the labels that society at large attaches to it (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1967; Mead, 1918). Following the Thomas Theorem, although labeling itself is perhaps not necessarily truthful, the labeling has real consequences (Barmaki, 2019, see also Tannenbaum, 1938). When individuals are repeatedly portrayed as 'deviant' or 'dangerous' by labeling authorities such as the media or the criminal justice system, these persons might ultimately internalize these labels as part of their identity. In turn, they may even reinforce them by purposely behaving in deviant or dangerous ways (Becker, 1963, see also Rogan, 2021). As such, labeling theory has strong ties to other concepts within the social-constructivist school, such as *stigmatization* – or the discrediting of particular attributes deemed immoral or undesirable by society (Goffman,1963) – and the *self-fulfilling prophecy* (Merton, 1968) – where the prediction of certain behavior is directly related to the de-facto realization of this behavior.

Hagan and Palloni (1990) were among the first to understand labeling effects as a moderator in the intergenerational transmission, or 'social reproduction' (p. 265), of criminal offending (Besemer, Farrington & Bijleveld, 2017). In the context of radicalism and extremism, too, labeling theory has shown its academic relevance. For example, Jämte and Ellefsen (2020) conducted in-dept interviews with Swedish left-libertarian radicals, and found that soft repression measures to counter their activities could have positive effects on some. However, they noted, 'most militant activists and groups might be further radicalized' (p. 383), due to their internalization of the extremist 'label' that these measures bring along. Other scholars have similarly pointed out that initiatives aimed at preventing or countering extremism carry the risk of stigmatizing and labeling entire groups as outcasts, possibly having adverse effects (Harris-Hogan, 2021; Iner, 2019; Mucha, 2017; Sallé & Bréhon, 2020). Whether or not these dynamics also extend to the realms of the family – where parents being labeled as a 'extremists' by society or the criminal justice system results in the radicalization of their children – remains unknown.

Finally, criminology may aid to our understanding of intergenerational transmission through what is commonly known as neutralization theory. Originally introduced by Gresham Sykes and David Matza (1957), neutralization theory departs from the assumption that deviant individuals have internalized the conventional norms and values of the society they live in. In their perspective, these individuals are in fact aware that their behavior is morally wrong, yet reason their way out of feelings of guilt (DeTardo-Bora, Clark, & Gardner, 2019; Maruna & Copes, 2005; Topalli, 2005). These justification strategies can be divided into five categories. The first is *denial of responsibility*. Here, the offender declares that he is not to blame, since the offence was either an accident or induced by factors outside of his control (DeTardo-Bora, Clark, & Gardner, 2019). The second neutralization technique, *denial of injury*, refers to the situation where the offender claims no harm has been done. Framing stealing as merely 'borrowing' would fall into this category. Third is the *denial of the victim*. In this case, the offender either claims that the victim deserved whatever happened to them (e.g. framing the crime as retribution) or denies or ignores the very existence of

the victim (Maruna & Copes, 2005). The fourth technique is the *condemnation of the condemners*, where the offender shifts the blame to those judging him. For example, the police and the criminal justice system may be called biased or corrupt (DeTardo-Bora, Clark, & Gardner, 2019). Fifth and finally, an offender may make an *appeal to higher loyalties*. He may claim that his conduct was for the greater good, or that he had no choice to break the law in order to prevent worse from happening.

Although rarely explicitly acknowledged (see Maruna & Copes, 2005), techniques of neutralization strongly overlap with some of the cognitive justification theories developed in the field of psychology. Specifically, Bandura's (1990; 2002) concept of 'moral disengagement' shows similarities (see Maruna & Copes, 2005). Moral disengagement refers to a set of eight cognitive mechanisms that allow us to engage in actions and behaviors that do not align with our moral standards (Moore, 2015). These mechanisms are *distortion of consequences* ('no one suffers from my behavior'), *diffusion of responsibility* ('everyone does something bad every now and then'), *advantageous comparison* ('the immorality of my behavior is only minor compared to that of others'), *displacement of responsibility* ('no one took preventative measures, so this was bound to happen'), *moral justification* ('the moral benefits of my behavior outweigh the immorality of the act itself'), *euphemistic labeling* ('it was just a joke'), *dehumanization* ('the victim is an abstract entity, incapable getting hurt') and *attribution of blame* ('the victim was asking for it') (Bandura, 1990; Bandura, 2002; Moore, 2015).

The resemblance between Sykes and Matza's neutralization typology and Bandura's mechanisms of moral disengagement is rather obvious. Both authors understood that when two types of information do not line up, a cognitive error occurs, for which a solution or explanation must be found to make them consistent. In psychology, this error is known as 'cognitive dissonance' (Aronson, 1969; Festinger, 1962). The most important and most common way to reduce the dissonance, is by changing our primary beliefs or opinions – either fundamentally or partially (Festinger, 1962). For example, we might believe that people who steal things are bad. Yet, one night, we may find ourselves taking a bike that is not ours. The logical conclusion that therefore, we too, must be bad people, causes cognitive distress. We will therefore subconsciously relieve this distress by reframing the stealing of the bike as 'not-bad', by use of the neutralizations or moral disengagements such as those identified by Sykes and Matza (1957) and Bandura (1990; 2002).

The degree to which (the transmission of) neutralization techniques serve(s) as a vehicle for the transmission of extremist ideologies, remains unknown. However, research has shown that parental attitudes moral disengagement can indeed be intergenerationally transmitted (Wolfe, McLean & Pratte, 2017; Zych e.a., 2020). Moreover, considering that radicalized individuals, too, make use of these cognitive mechanisms to rationalize their worldviews (e.g., Colvin & Pisoiu, 2021; Jørgensen, 2023), it is not unlikely that they play a role in the transmission of extremism from parent to child as well.

Table 2h. Theoretical approaches to intergenerational transmission (IGT)

Nr.	*Concept/theory*	*Source*	*(Implicit) IGT assumption*
17	Six-point theory	Farrington, 2002; 2010	IGT occurs *through a combination of risk factor transmission, assertive mating, social learning processes, environmental factors, genetic factors and authorities' biases.*
18	Labeling/ stigmatization theory	Becker, 1963; Goffman,1963	IGT occurs *through the labels authorities and society at large attach to parents and (by proxy) their children.*
19	Self-fulfilling prophecy	Merton, 1968	IGT occurs *when the labels society attaches to children are internalized, and the prediction of certain behavior thus results in the de-facto realization of this behavior.*
20	Neutralization theory	Sykes & Matza, 1957	IGT occurs *when children are taught cognitive mechanisms that allow them to engage in actions and behaviors that do not align with society's norms and values.*
21	Moral disengagement	Bandura, 1990; 2002	IGT occurs *when children are taught cognitive mechanisms that allow them to engage in actions and behaviors that do not align with their own moral standards.*

THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF RELIGION

Of all studies examining the transmission of behaviors and beliefs, the transmission of religion has specifically received much attention. Drawing on theology and religion studies, several theories have been put forward to understand how and why children adopt their parents' religious beliefs. (for an overview, see Table 2i) The channeling hypothesis, for example, presumes that parents 'channel' their children into certain socialization institutions, such as churches, schools and peer groups, (Cornwall, 1989; Himmelfarb, 1980). These institutions then shape the social interactions of children – which reinforce the family values, and subsequently influence the ways in which they will develop themselves ideologically (Erickson, 1992). Thus, in this case, parents are considered to fulfill an indirect rather than direct role in the religious socialization their offspring.

Over the years, the channeling hypothesis has received much criticism, mostly since it was thought to underestimate the direct influence of parents on the religious socialization of children. It is therefore no surprise that the channeling theory was challenged by alternative explanations for religious transmission processes (Martin, White & Perlman, 2002). More economic and production-oriented perspectives were introduced, such as the religious capital theory as developed by professor Laurence Iannaccone (1990), which drew on Gary Becker's (1964) thinking on human capital. According to Iannaccone's theory, one's religious capital, consisting of skills and experiences, such as 'religious knowledge, familiarity with church ritual and doctrine, and friendships with fellow worshipers' (p. 299) influences one's likelihood to remain engaged in religious life (Iannaccone, 1990, see also Myers, 1996). Families play a large role in enhancing religious capital, by stimulating religious participation and thereby 'producing' religion as a 'household commodity' (following Hirshleifer, 1985), Iannaccone (1990) argues. It is therefore that Iannaccone (1990) claims that religion is, first and foremost, a matter of 'learning by doing' (p. 300).

This perspective is mirrored in the work of religious historian Robert Yelle, who in his essay *To Perform or Not to Perform?* (2006) seeks to integrate cognitive approaches to religious transmission with more humanistic-oriented ones. According to Yelle (2003; 2006), the repetitive rituals that characterize religious practice are not so much about aiding in *remembering* the religious doctrine, as cognitive theorists tend to claim (see for example Lawson & McCauley, 1990; Whitehouse, 2004). Instead, Yelle (2006) considers these rituals to be predominantly about rhetoric or symbolic communication, as well as persuading members within and outside the religious group. Whereas cognitive theories regard rituals as first and foremost a means of transmission, Yelle (2006) argues that ritual behavior holds value in and of itself. This is what he calls the function of ritual performance – where 'performance' in this context refers to 'the entire range of pragmatic effects that can result from human action, including changes of behavior, affect, or attitude' (Yelle, 2006, p. 379-380). Here, ritual performances, for example in the form of spells or magic, serves a binding function among the members of the in-group, while simultaneously attracting the interest of outsiders. It is through this element of persuasion from which the cultural reproduction of religion follows (Yelle, 2006). Considering the role that performative 'non-military' rituals play in extremist groups (see Hegghammer, 2015; 2017), these mechanisms may work similarly in the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideologies.

As an alternative approach, Dollahite and colleagues (2019) reversed the question from why children *do* adopt their parents' religious beliefs, to why they *don't.* Based on in-depth interviews with 198 Christian, Jewish, and Muslim families in the United States, Dollahite et. al. (2019) describe how the factors of *religious firmness* and *religious flexibility* impact the intergenerational 'retreat' (p. 2) from religion. Religious firmness is considered to be the family's devoted adherence to religious beliefs and practices (e.g., weekly attendance of religious services), whereas religious flexibility constitutes the willingness to adapt to this religious devotion to the 'needs, challenges and circumstances of family members' (Dollahite et. al., 2019, p. 2). An unhealthy balance between this loyalty to God on the one hand, and loyalty to members of the family on the other, makes it more likely that children will eventually discontinue the religious practices they were brought up with, Dollahite and colleagues (2019) argue. These results reflect earlier findings suggesting that a combination of emotional support and control by parents is best effective when trying to transmit religious values to offspring (Hansen, 1998), and that a too rigid approach to religiosity can hamper family relations and as such, inhibit transmission processes (Burr, Marks & Day, 2012; Dollahite, Marks & Dalton, 2018). Similarly, it can be hypothesized that parents who balance ideological firmness with flexibility might be most effective in transmitting their ideas onto their children.

Follow-up studies in the same tradition further built upon the concepts of religious firmness and flexibility and their role in processes of transmission. From a family studies perspective, Barrow and colleagues (2020) for example extended this theoretical thinking to include parental desired continuity and parental perceived agency. Here, parental desired continuity relates to the 'parents'

desire to have their children remain committed to the faith of their family of origin' (Barrow et. al., 2020, p. 1). In practice, this may take the shape of parents teaching children religious principles and values, providing them with expectations of religious participation, and setting an example for religious life. Parental perceived agency, on the other hand, is about the degree to which parents feel children should be able to make their own life decisions. Examples of behavior supporting children's' agency are not forcing faith upon children, allowing them to explore and make mistakes, and to show respect for children's views (Barrow et. al. 2020). It is the combination of promoting children's autonomy and stimulation religious transmission that is likely to foster healthy family relations and socialization outcomes (Barrow et. al., 2020). This balance supports the authoritative parenting style that we discussed earlier in this Chapter, as the most effective way to transmit family values (Baumrind, 1966) – and it can be expected that this is also the case for the transmission of extremist ideas.

A recent study by Kelley, Galbraith and Korth (2021) provides further detail on the ways in which parents try to integrate their desired continuity into everyday family life, overlapping with Barrow and colleagues' findings. Based on 109 interviews with religious parents they identified four main ways in which the intergenerational transmission of religious beliefs is pursued: (1) setting parental examples, (2) stimulating religious community influence, (3) participating in religious practices, and (4) setting rules and boundaries (Kelley, Galbraith & Korth, 2021). Additionally, the consistency with which parents transmit religious values to their children, has been indicated as a relevant factor in religious socialization – yielding an 'mixed message' upbringing less successful (Bader & Desmond, 2006). Others have pointed out that if fathers and mothers are equally religious (i.e., if they are 'homogenous' in their religious lives), transmission is more likely (Myers, 1996). Based on these considerations, it can be hypothesized that parents who are similar in their values and outlook on life, may be more successful in transmitting their ideologies to their children.

Table 2i. Theoretical approaches to intergenerational transmission (IGT)

Nr.	***Concept/theory***	***Source***	***(Implicit) IGT assumption***
22	Channeling hypothesis	Cornwall, 1989; Himmelfarb, 1980	IGT occurs *when parents 'channel' their children into certain socialization institutions, such as churches, schools and peer groups, which then shape the social interactions of children and thereby reinforce the family values.*
23	Religious capital	Iannaconne, 1990	IGT occurs *when parents pass on certain ideological skills and experiences, which influence children's likelihood to remain engaged in the ideological milieu.*
24	Performative rituals	Yelle, 2006	IGT occurs *through ritualistic behavior that binds family members together in their ideology.*
25	Religious firmness/ flexibility	Dollahite et. al., 2019	IGT occurs *when parents are able to successfully balance loyalty to their ideology on the one hand, and loyalty to the members of the family on the other.*

CONCLUDING

The theoretical overview in this Chapter gives insight in the various viewpoints from which intergenerational transmission processes can be defined and understood. Although the concept of intergenerational transmission is still only sparsely applied in the context of extreme beliefs, this Chapter indicates the relevance of this concept in a myriad of disciplines and topics. Having its roots in in pedagogy and (developmental) psychology, it was discussed how throughout the years, intergenerational transmission has been shaped by theories of conditioning, (social) learning, socialization, internalization, attachment and parenting styles. These approaches have aided our understanding of how basic psychological processes and socializing dynamics between children and their caregivers contribute to the transmission of certain behaviors. From a sociological perspective, however, it was observed that the social context can indirectly influence these transmission processes through more subtle family dynamics and interactions. These indirect socialization mechanisms, such as the deployment of emotional regimes, silence and storytelling, can be of equal relevance. All in all, it suggests that intergenerational transmission is not limited to the realm of behavior: parents also transmit more general beliefs, values, narratives and meanings to their children – that may or may not result in visible behavioral outcomes.

Over time, the concept of intergenerational transmission has been applied to and integrated into other disciplines. Scholars in the field of criminology, victimology or trauma studies, and theology have built upon the classic transmission theories laid out at the beginning of this Chapter, as a way to understand its specific manifestations. From studies on the transmission of trauma within the family, it was gathered that both individual and collective trauma can be transmitted from parent to child. Moreover, theories on trauma transmission have shown us that these processes are not limited to first generation offspring, but that they can extend to grandchildren as well – yielding it a multigenerational phenomenon. We have further seen that many core concepts of transmission theories can also be used to understand criminal continuity. For example, labeling and stigmatization within society may essentialize children's family background – with labeling actors such as the media inherently expecting them to follow in their parents' footsteps. Additionally, parents may engage in moral disengagement or neutralization as a means to rationale their beliefs or behavior.

Finally, intergenerational transmission as a concept has been extensively applied in religion studies. Here, studies point at the importance of social institutions that 'channel' children into their parents' religions, the role of religious capital that is passed down from generation to generation, and the importance of performative rituals – or the traditions that parents use to stimulate the transmission of religion to their children. Such approaches mirror the structural-interactionist perspectives discussed earlier in this Chapter, which consider a shared family culture as the basis for transmission processes. Finally, theological studies of transmission build upon parenting style theory, once again reiterating the importance of balancing religious firmness (or strictness) with

religious flexibility (or leniency). Here too, a combination of setting boundaries and honoring a child's individual agency, appears to be most effective in continuing a family's religious values.

Although no integrated theory of the intergenerational transmission of extreme beliefs exists, this theoretical Chapter shows us that within other contexts extensive knowledge on related topics is available. Transmission processes have been theorized by scholars from various disciplines – with overlaps and similarities between approaches being apparent. The degree to which these theories are applicable to the transmission of extreme ideas from parent to child, however, remains to be explored. Some may turn out to be more relevant than others. Nonetheless, this broad theoretical framework can help us interpret our empirical findings, put these into their theoretical context, and ultimately, they may aid in better understanding of the ways in which extreme beliefs are intergenerationally transmitted.

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

Published as:
Van Wieringen, L., Weggemans, D.J., Krüsselmann, K. & Liem, M.C.A. (2021). *Van Ouder op Kind*. Den Haag: Wetenschappelijk Onderzoeks-en Documentatiecentrum.

INTRODUCTION

In the previous Chapter, we looked into the theories and concepts that have informed (thinking about) processes of intergenerational transmission, and the various disciplines and schools of thought that lie at its roots. As such, we were able formulate various answers to the question 'How can we explain intergenerational transmission?'. In the current Chapter, I will build upon these insights, while specifically looking at the intergenerational transmission of *extremism* within a family context. Because while academics and practitioners alike agree that processes of radicalization are inherently social in nature (Crone, 2016; Knott & Lee, 2020; Schuurman et al., 2019; Scremin, 2020), the empirical focus of radicalization research tends to be on the role of radical leaders, peer groups and online or offline networks (for an overview, see Winter et al., 2020). When it comes to the link between family dynamics and extremism, usually only emphasize the indirect effects parents may have on radicalization processes (e.g., through the transmission of risk factors, see Zych & Nasaescu, 2022) or their perceived deradicalizing potential (El-Amraoui & Ducol, 2019; Schewe & Koehler, 2021). Thus, while different studies have suggested that various ideologies and behaviors can be transmitted from parent to child (e.g., Carlson & Knoester, 2011; Murray & Mulvaney, 2012), the family as a source of extremist ideas remains largely understudied.

The main question at the heart of the current Chapter is therefore: 'What do we know about the intergenerational transmission of extremism?'. I will approach this question by conducting a systematic literature review, that allows me to synthesize existing empirical insights on this topic. Contrary to the previous (theoretical) Chapter, only empirical studies will be considered here, as to better understand (1) the prevalence of intergenerational transmission within extremist families; (2) the mechanisms of transmission, and (3) the factors related to these processes. As such, it offers a systematic overview of what is (empirically) known about this topic, inspiring the preliminary framework on which the upcoming chapters are based.

Search strategy

This literature review is based on the PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews (Shamseer et al., 2015). All relevant empirical peer-reviewed articles, books, book chapters, and (unpublished) dissertations were included in the review. Fifteen electronic databases were consulted in the identification of relevant studies: PubMed (including MEDLINE); PsycINFO; PsycARTICLES; ScienceDirect; Social Science Research Network; Sociological Abstracts; Scopus; Web of Science (including SSCI, AHCI); Child Welfare Information Getaway; ERIC; Social Care Online; Social Services Abstracts; Criminal Justice Abstracts; NCJRS Abstracts; Worldwide Political Science Abstracts. ProQuest and EThOS were consulted to identify any relevant (unpublished) dissertations. Google, Google Scholar and the OpenGrey database were used to identify potentially additional "gray" literature on this topic. In each of these databases, the following search query was used to identify eligible studies.

(intergeneration* OR crossgeneration* OR multigeneration* OR generation* OR transmi* OR continuity*) AND (father* OR paternal* OR mother* OR maternal* OR son* OR daughter* OR parent* OR child* OR offspring* OR famil*) AND (jihad* OR islam* OR salafi* OR terroris* OR radicali* OR extremi* OR "religious fundament*" OR sectar* OR ideolog*) AND (risk* OR mechanism* OR factor* OR intervention)

To make sure that all relevant literature was identified, manual searches were performed for studies within published meta-analyses or systematic reviews on similar topics (e.g., regarding the role of family factors in radicalization), and within the journals and the reference lists of included studies. This yielded 49 potentially relevant studies, which were included in the screening process. In order to prevent publication bias and as a way to include the results of ongoing research projects, I contacted 36 scholars in through my own (international) network and those of my supervisors, to identify (unpublished) sources and upcoming publications, which yielded 8 additional studies.

Screening and data extraction

In conducting the review, I made use of a three-step screening process where I consecutively screened eligible studies on their titles (step 1), abstracts (step 2) and full texts (step 3). Studies were included if they were empirical in nature and concerned the intergenerational transmission of extremism from caregiver (including step-, grand-, adoptive and foster parents) to child. Only studies dating between 2000 and 2022 were included, to ensure relevance today. All study populations were eligible – regardless of demographic characteristics such as age, gender, or country of origin. Studies were excluded if it concerned an ineligible document type (e.g., media sources, non-scientific op-eds, book reviews, etc.); a duplicate; an irrelevant topic; or a non-empirical study. Studies dealing with other types of extremist transmission (e.g., child-to-parent or sibling-to-sibling) were excluded. Data extraction was conducted by one of our team members – whose work was cross-checked by the co-authors through sampling. Any discrepancies were resolved through team discussions.

Synthesis

In examining prevalence of the intergenerational transmission of extremism, only two studies include intergenerational correlates of extremist values (see Table 1), which was insufficient for a meta-analysis. Moreover, while five studies contain effect size data on potential risk factors and protective factors (see Table 2), I was unable to conduct a meta-analysis, due to their vast differences in choice of (independent and dependent) variables, unit of analysis, methodology and reporting. Therefore, I opted for a descriptive synthesis of quantitative findings of both factors

and mechanisms (following Mugadza et al., 2019). Qualitative findings were coded inductively using software program Atlas.ti (Friese, Soratto, & Pires, 2018). I conducted a thematic analysis of empirical work, based on my elements of interest (prevalence, mechanisms, risk factors and protective factors). This allowed us to synthesize the findings while adhering to the nature of these studies. Common patterns and themes across studies will be presented as qualitative summaries.

RESULTS

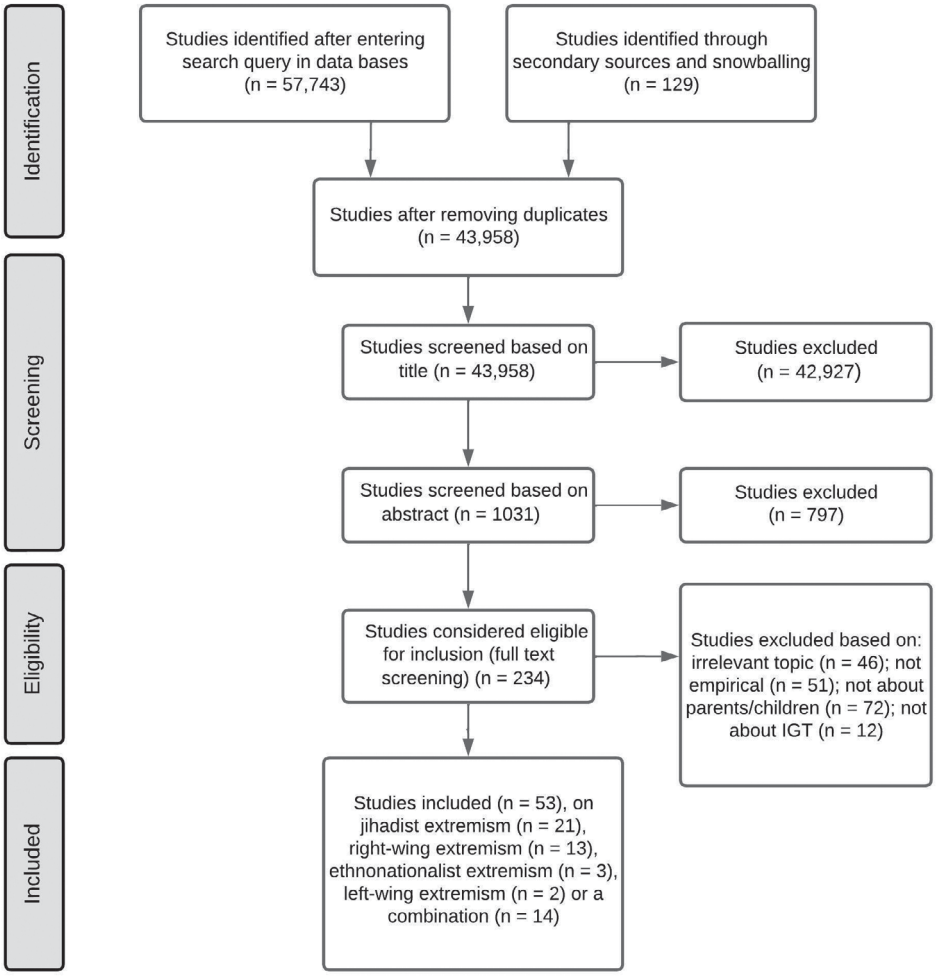
The literature search yielded 53 empirical studies, of which the majority were qualitative in nature (N=39). Other studies used either a quantitative (N=8) or a mixed method (N=6) approach. As their main type of data, the included studies used interviews (N=21), open sources (N=13), surveys (N=5), judicial case files (N=4), (auto)biographies (N=4), ethnographic observations (N=3), focus group discussions (N=1), historical archives (N=1), and written testimonies (N=1). Most of the included studies dealt with Islamic-inspired or jihadist extremism (N=21) (see Figure 1). Others concerned right-wing extremist (N=13), ethno-nationalist (N=3), and left-wing extremist ideologies (N=2) – or a combination of various extremist ideologies (N=14). The studies originate from the US (N=19), the UK (N=10), Germany (N=5), The Netherlands (N=4), Australia (N=3), Sweden (N=2), Indonesia (N=2), Canada (N=2), Italy (N=2), South-Africa (N=1), Spain (N=1), Belgium (N=1), and Switzerland (N=1). All included studies included in Appendix 1.

Prevalence of transmission

Quantitative findings on the prevalence of the intergenerational transmission of extremism are summarized in Table 3. Both Boehnke (2017) and Oepke (2005) observe positive and significant intergenerational correlations of right-wing extremist attitudes (based on parent-child and child-parent correlates, respectively). Moreover, five studies on jihadism or Islamic inspired extremism include data on the percentage of the sample that became involved in these ideologies through first-degree family members – ranging from 3% (Botha, 2014) to 20% (Sageman, 2004). While these authors indicate that these percentages include transmission by parents and caregivers, the precise contribution of this subgroup remains unclear. Three studies focus on parental permission for their sons' decision to participate in jihadist extremism, whereas four others examine extremists' family backgrounds, including parents' involvement in extremist movements.

Figure 1.

PRISMA Flowchart of the literature search and screening process.



Transmission mechanisms

The included empirical literature suggests that the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideologies takes place through various transmission mechanisms – in which parents can take on both active and passive roles. To identify these mechanisms, I conducted multiple rounds of inductive coding. I then combined and grouped codes based on the respective objectives they serve within the general transmission process, which yielded five distinct mechanisms, on the discursive, socio-spatial, temporal, moral-educational and symbolic level. I will discuss each of these mechanisms and their workings.

Table 3. Main findings regarding the intergenerational transmission of extremism.

Authors	Sample	Data	Main findings
Asal, V., Shellman, S., Fair, C.C. (2010)	Family members of Pakistani suicide terrorists (N=141, μ = 46.19 y/o)	Survey data	• 70% of households gave permissions for a sons' participation in jihad, of which 63.4% reported no one in the family refusing
Boehnke, K. (2017)	German students and their parents (N=147, 80% male, μ=20.5 y/o)	Survey data	• Father-child scores on right-wing extremist attitudes are significantly positively related (β=0.24, p<.05). Mother-child scores are not significantly related.
Botha, A. (2014)	Kenian Al-Shabaab members and their families (N=141, 96% male)	In-depth interviews	• 3% of sample became involved in extremist network through family members. • Parents were supportive of decision to join extremist group in 21% of cases.
King, M., Noor, H. & Taylor, D. (2011)	Family members of Indonesian Jema'ah Islamiyah members (N=20, 55% male)	Survey data	• On average, using a scale from completely agree (5) to completely disagree (-5), family support their son's decision to join the JI terrorist organization (M = 2.13, SD = 2.10). • On average, families scored slightly above neutral on support for violent jihad'(M = 0.60, SD = 2.12)
Kule, A. (2007)	Convicted terrorists from Turkey and the Kurdistan Region (N=200, 94.5% male)	Criminal case file data	• 8.8% of sample became involved in extremist network through family members, and 9.8% through extended family.
Malik, N. (2019)	Children in British family court cases (N=20, 24% female, 44% male 32% unknown)	Casefile data	• 52% of cases had a family history of extremist activity. • 48% of cases contained a family member that had joined IS.
Oepke, M. (2005)	German youth and their parents (N=149, 55,1% male, μ =14.8 y/o at first interval)	Longitudinal survey data	• Right-wing extremism among children is significantly positively related to right-wing extremism among parents (r=.19 to .40). • Right-wing extremist attitudes of parents (r=.96 to r=.98, p<.05) and their children (r=.70 to r=.79, p<.05) are stable over time. • Right-wing extremist attitudes of parents are significantly positively related to the attitudes of their children years later (r = .17 to r=.19, p<.05). • 'Acceptance of violence' among parents is not a significant predictor of 'acceptance of violence' among children one year later.
Post, J., Sprinzak, E. & Denny, L. (2003)	Convicted secular and Islamic terrorists from the Middle East (N= 35, 100% male)	In-depth interviews	• In total, 30% of secular terrorists and 20% of Islamic terrorists of sample became involved in extremist network through family members. • Over 30% of the Islamic terrorists reported extensive radical involvement by family. For secular terrorists, this was 15%.
Pritchett, S. & Moeller, K. (2022).	US individuals convicted for radicalism (N=2148) based on the PIRUS database	Secondary data (PIRUS)	• The variable *radical family* scores M=0.85 on a 0-3 score (N=734, 65,9% missing data)
Sageman, M. (2004)	Convicted terrorists from various countries (N=172, 100% male)	Open-source data	• 14% of sample became involved in extremist network through family members
Windisch, S. (2019)	Former white supremacists from the US (N=91, 78% male)	Life course interviews	• 13% of sample mentioned having white supremacists in the family • 73% of sample mentioned growing up with white supremacist discourse as a child

Discursive mechanisms

Of the included qualitative studies, 31 mention the use of discursive transmission mechanisms by parents. Discursive mechanisms concern verbal interactions between parent and child, through which parents learn their children how to interpret the world around them. As such, this mechanism relates back to theories of socialization (and possibly, internalization) as discussed in Chapter 2. Within extremist families, discursive techniques are first and foremost reflected in the black-and-white nature of parental discourse. Extremist parents generally make a sharp distinction between the in-group and the "evil" outside world by using dehumanizing terminology – also known as "othering" (see Said, 1979). In the jihadist context for example, Huggins (2013) described how parents refer to "infidels" as "Christian and Jewish pigs" (p. 64). In right-wing extremist families, children are taught early on that non-white people are "mudpeople" (Blee, 2002) — and that LGBTQIA+ community members are "fags" (Windisch, 2019, p. 117).

In total, ten studies indicate a certain "herofication" or "glorification" within parental discourses. Here, children are entrusted with the protection of the community and the family name, and where participation in the armed struggle is presented as a major responsibility (Copeland, 2020; Pape, 2005; Riany et al., 2018). Parents often refer to an extremist family line and the "hero blood" (Riany et al., 2018, p. 21) that runs through their children's veins, and how this "hero status" is within their arm's reach (Huggins, 2013; Post, Sprinzak & Denny, 2003; Post, 2005; Weggemans, Van der Zwan & Liem, 2018). Parents' stories about the struggle and resistance of previous generations ("tales of glory", Windisch, 2019, p. 138) play an important role in this respect (see e.g., Bosi & Della Porta, 2012; Futrell & Simi, 2004; Köttig, 2004). These findings reflect theoretical approaches that stress the importance of narratives and storytelling in transmission processes (see Chapter 2).

In contrast to this heroic discourse, 13 studies emphasize the role of extremist families' perceived victimization. This links back to the literature on the intergenerational transmission of trauma, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. As the empirical studies included in the systematic literature review indicate, this victimization is experienced in relation to police arrests and executions (Chernov-Hwang & Schulze, 2018; Copeland, 2020; Pape, 2005; Post Sprinzak & Denny, 2003). More general experiences of exclusion and marginalization may similarly feature in these (collective) victimization discourses – which extremist parents use to legitimize their violent ideologies both to their children and to themselves (Bickerton, 2019; Malik, 2019; Pape, 2005; Riany et al., 2018).

Socio-spatial mechanisms

In total, 24 of the included studies indicate the relevance of socio-spatial mechanisms of extremist transmission. This dimension concerns children's participation in social gatherings, where they are introduced to like-minded individuals, often in the context of their parents' extremist network

(Blee, 2002; Futrell & Simi, 2004; Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010; Manning & La Bau, 2015). Socio-spatial transmission takes place, for example, by allowing children to participate in extremist "living room meetings" or study circles (Futrell & Simi, 2004; Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010; Malik, 2019); having them participate in ideological youth movements (Blee, 2002; Kermani, 2010; Reinisch, 2020); or by taking them to important ideological gatherings such as demonstrations and rallies (McComiskey, 2001; Schils & Verhage, 2017; Sieckelinck & De Winter, 2015). The included studies suggest that there is a sphere of playfulness or informality to these gatherings – where personal connections are placed over (ideological) content. Nine studies indicate that extremist parents have their children partake in small chores within their ideological movements, such as assisting in organizing gatherings (Gilbert & Lambert, 2010), folding and distributing pamphlets or newspapers (Blee, 2002; Raposo-Quintana, 2009), mopping the floor in the organization's headquarters (Nolas, Varvantakisa, & Aruldossa, 2016), and bringing tea and cigarettes to members of the movement (Crawford, 2013). In all instances, extremist ideologies are indirectly transmitted by introducing children to a larger social network of extremists – which is potentially illustrative of the 'channeling hypothesis' discussed in Chapter 2.

Temporal mechanisms

Temporal mechanisms of intergenerational transmission are discussed in 22 of the included qualitative studies. These mechanisms relate to the ways in which parents establish a continuity to their extremist socialization efforts, by fully integrating their ideology into the lives of their children – with the difference between the two ultimately completely dissolving (see Futrell & Simi, 2004; Nolas, Varvantakisa & Aruldossa, 2016; Windisch, 2019). In the jihadist context, for example, marriage agreements with other extremist families are a reoccurring theme (Chernov-Hwang & Schulze, 2018; Harris-Hogan, 2014). It is suggested that as such, parents can ensure social (and ideological) control over their children through their spouse and parents-in-law (Sageman, 2004). Other studies mention how extremist parents actively engage in children's friendships, for example by putting them up with pen pals from like-minded families (Blee, 2002) and by explicitly forbidding contact with children from other backgrounds (Windisch, 2019). Here, too, elements of the 'channeling hypothesis' discussed in Chapter 2 can be observed.

School selection is also a relevant temporal mechanism, as described by 14 of the included studies. Blee (2002) describes how right-wing extremist parents in the US send their children to "Aryan-only schools", to avoid exposure to alternative ideologies that can make them "double minded" (p.127). Others emphasize the importance of homeschooling in extremist families (Ahdash, 2019; Blee, 2002; Futrell & Simi, 2004; Huggins, 2013; Malik, 2019; Windisch, 2019). Andre and Harris-Hogan (2013) describe how French children of jihadists are subjected to a homeschooling curriculum "that praises the heroism of Salafists and normalizes violence" (p. 311).

Lastly, 12 studies indicate that extremist parents make deliberate choices in their media consumption. Radio stations appear to play an important role in the political education of children from leftwing extremist and ethnonationalist families (Hamilton, 2000; Orsini, 2012). Similarly, extremist parents make choices about the (comic) books to which they expose their children, as well as the music, poetry and literature that is consumed (Futrell & Simi, 2004, Nolas, Varvantakisa & Aruldossa, 2016). This aspect seems somewhat less prominent in the studies on jihadist transmission, although some mentions are made of children being raised with radical Islamic literature (Andre & Harris-Hogan, 2013) and jihadist parents prohibiting music and television altogether (Manning & La Bau, 2015).

Moral-educational mechanisms

Of the included studies, 18 reveal a moral-educational dimension. Parents implicitly or explicitly teach their children about the (moral) ways they should live their lives, and the repercussions of not adhering to the parental ideology. In the literature it is mentioned that parents themselves – and fathers in particular – function as an important role model in this regard. The expression "following in their father's footsteps" comes up in various studies, thus underlining the importance of paternal modelling within these families (Chernov-Hwang & Schulze, 2018; Copeland, 2020; Cook & Vale, 2018). In nine studies, the moral-educational transmission is more explicit in nature. To illustrate, literature describes how jihadist parents tend to verbalize their expectations that their sons will become martyrs (Chernov-Hwang & Schulze, 2018; Pape, 2005; Riany et al, 2018), or even stress their duty to kill "disbelievers" (Huggins, 2013).

In the included literature, the use of punishments and rewards is discussed as a moral-educational transmission mechanism. These observations fit with the behavioralist theories of learning discussed in Chapter 2. Six studies mention that extremist parents use threats and fearful imagery to make their children adhere to their ideology. For example, Blee (2002) describes how an extremist father in the US threatens to kill himself if his daughter ever comes home with a black boy. Parents similarly use rewards as moral-educational mechanism, as shown by nine studies. Pape (2005) describes how jihadist parents promise their children access to heaven when becoming a martyr. Parents giving emotional or practical support for children's decisions is equally featured in the literature (Khoo, 2018; Pape, 2005; Riany et al., 2018; Sikkens et al., 2018; Weggemans, Van der Zwan & Liem. 2018). Weggemans, Van der Zwan, and Liem (2018) refer to parental expressions of pride as a type of reward. Similarly, Sikkens et al. (2018) mention extremist parents "applauding" (p. 2281) their children's actions, which may also serve as a stimulating mechanism. Other studies use the terms "approval", "consent" and "encouragement" in this context (see Felices-Luna, 2005; Hamilton, 2000; Orsini, 2012).

Symbolic mechanisms

A final dimension emerging from the literature concerns the use of symbols and rituals within the family – as discussed by twelve of the included studies. Parental use of costumes, flags and toys related to their beliefs in the upbringing of their children – and as such, further intertwine the familial sphere with the ideological sphere. Here, elements of the performative rituals (Yelle, 2006) discussed in Chapter 2 can be observed. To illustrate, Futrell and Simi (2004) note in their observational study of white supremacist movements in the US that "movement memorabilia around the home, such as pictures, posters, cards, newsletters, racist comic and coloring books, and movement uniforms (e.g., adult and children's Klan robes, T-shirts, fatigues), [which] also reinforce political identity in unambiguous ways" (p. 25). These authors also note that family members wear T-shirts emblazoned with Hitler and other right-wing extremist figures and symbols. Windisch (2019) similarly describes how right-wing extremists use symbolic clothing and uniforms, flags and other decorations to solidify the ideology within the home sphere. Only one study emphasizes the importance of traditional dressing in relation to jihadist socialization (Copeland, 2020).

Six of the included studies indicate that the use of toys is a symbolic mechanism of transmission in extremist families. Extremist parents let their children play with fake guns, for example (see Blee, 2002; Futrell & Simi, 2004; Windisch, 2019; Horgan et al., 2016). Moreover, five studies point at the importance of naming, suggesting that right-wing extremist families give their children symbolic names at birth – such as "Ariana', "Thor" or "Valkyries" in reference to the Norse-Aryan history (Futrell & Simi, 2004). In the case of jihadist converts, parents might choose to give their children Islamic nicknames later in life (Ayres, 2018).

Finally, seven studies suggest that the role of symbolism is most evident in exposure to, or even involvement in, (online) violent propaganda material. For example, Bickerton (2019) describes how British jihadist parents showed their sixteen-year-old daughter videos of beheadings and photos of "smiling corpses" (p. 10), which catalyzed her radicalization process. Here, again the value of symbolism as a means of extremist transmission is illustrated. The effects of the discussed mechanisms are both enhanced and diminished by factors inside and outside the family sphere. To better understand these dynamics, I included a quantitative overview of risk factors and protective factors that emerged from the included studies (see Table 4).

Table 4. Main findings on the intergenerational transmission of extremism.

Authors	Sample	Data	Main findings
Asal, V., Shellman, S., Fair, C.C. (2010)	Family members of Pakistani suicide terrorists (N=141, μ = 46.19 y/o)	Survey data	• Significant predictors of family consent for jihad: age of the participant (β =03821, SD=.0200, p<.05); family economic status (β = −2.1286, SD=1.161, p<.10); nr. of men in the family attending madrassah (β =6.6109, SD=2.628, p<.001); family being Deobandi (β =−1.7858, SD=.9989, p<.10). • Significant predictors of family refusing consent for jihad: family economic status (β =1.7000, SD=.7842, p<.05); female family members in religious study groups (β =−1.0961, SD=.5331, p<.05); son being unemployed (β=−.76468, SD=.4569, p<.10); son attending madrassah (β =−.95122, SD=.5827, p<.10).
Boehnke, K. (2017)	German students and their parents (N=147, 80% male, μ=20.5 y/o)	Survey data	• The variable 'hierarchic self-interests' moderated mother-daughter relationships (β=0.31, p<.05), father-daughter relationships (β=0.30, p<.05) and father-son relationships (β= 0.64, p<.05) regarding right-wing extremist attitudes.
Estévez, D. C. (2021).	Spanish participants of three different generations (N=2.936)	Survey data	• No significant difference in political extremism in the three cohorts. For all three cohorts, religiosity is significantly negatively associated with political extremism. Other significant factors are mass media consumption (β = 0.114) in the second cohort, and personal relevance of the Spanish Civil War (β = 0.113) and family relevance of the Spanish Civil War (β = 0.067) in the third cohort. • In all three cohorts, religion (an individual's perceived importance of religion) is a significant moderating factor on the transmission of political extremism (*t*= −2,277, p.<0.05; −r =-−5,035, p<0.01; r=-−8,142, p<0.01). • Both fathers and mothers can be significant factors in the transmission of extremism to their children. The effect of mothers appears to be somewhat stronger (effect size unknown)
Kule, A. (2007)	Convicted terrorists from Turkey and the Kurdistan Region (N=200, 94.5% male)	Judicial case file data	• Having convicted family members increases probability of PKK membership (β= 1.104; SD = .488; p<.05).
King, M., Noor, H. & Taylor, D. (2011)	Family members of Indonesian Jema'ah Islamiyah members (N=20, 55% male)	Survey data	• The number of JI members in the family did not significantly predict family support for sons' involvement in JI. Similarly, participants support for violent jihad did not significantly predict family support for sons' involvement in JI. • Sons' martyrdom was significantly related to less family support for their involvement in JI (effect sizes unknown). Perceived community opinions were significantly related to family's support for sons' involvement in JI (effect sizes unknown).

Risk factors and protective factors

One of the most frequently mentioned risk factors (33 studies) of intergenerational transmission, is parental membership of an extremist organization. Studies indicate that such membership can manifest itself in indirect support for terrorist groups, such as through arms and drug trafficking (Harris-Hogan, 2014), and terrorist financing (see Ahdash, 2019). The perceived victimization of family members (specifically parents) by authorities was identified as a potential risk factor in 20 studies – which is related to the discursive transmission of victimization narratives as discussed in the previous section. Experiences of familial imprisonment or assassination, for example, appear to aid intergenerational transmission processes in ethnonationalist (e.g., Bosi & Della Porta, 2012; Crawford, 2013; Noll, 2012) and jihadist families (e.g., Chernov-Hwang & Schulze, 2018; Noor, 2021; Riany et al., 2018). Findings suggest that first-hand experiences of violence and oppression serve to confirm the parental discourse, which emphasizes the victim status of the in-group and the hostility of the outside world. As Copeland (2020) notes, the feeling of wanting to protect the community or family against further suffering can further stimulate intergenerational transmission processes. Other studies note the importance of intergenerational trauma (e.g., Huggins, 2013; Post, Sprinzak & Denny, 2003) – as it is suggested that this, too, facilitates the transmission of perceived grievances from parent to child, which may in turn solidify the transmission of extremism. These observations seemingly underscore the importance of theories on (the transmission of) trauma and victimhood as discussed in Chapter 2.

Multigenerational extremism, or being born into a family of extremist "hardliners" (see Pepich, 2018, p. 111) was identified as a risk factor in nine studies. The fact that the extremist ideology has been part of the family history for many generations, may cause children to take their own involvement in extremist groups for granted (Copeland, 2020; Noor, 2021; Post, Sprinzak & Denny, 2003). To illustrate, Post (2005) observes that for Islamic terrorists, "hatred was bred in to the bone" (p. 616). Chernov-Hwang and Schulze (2018) even speak of "being born into jihad" (p. 19) in an Indonesian context, while Sageman (2004) refers to the "green diaper mujahidin" of the Middle East.

Six studies refer to financial concerns within families as a possible driver of the parental transmission of extremism. For example, it is suggested that financial motivations could drive parents to encourage their children to join IS (Horgan et al., 2016; Khoo, 2018; Motaparthy, 2014). Post (2005) discusses how relatives of martyrs may receive material and financial support from their extremist communities – which could also facilitate the intergenerational transmission of violent ideologies within marginalized families.

Additionally, twelve studies point at the role of extremist siblings within the family. While this potential risk factor is expressed in studies on ethnonationalist (Reinisch, 2020) and left-wing extremist (Lanzona, 2000) families, it is especially in relation to jihadist families that the role of siblings is highlighted (Andre & Harris-Hogan, 2013; Copeland, 2020; Githens-Mazer & Lambert,

2010; Malik, 2019; Sageman, 2004). Here, literature suggests that when children have an older brother or sister to whom a child looks up, this can aid the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideas (Copeland, 2020; Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010). In contrast, one study mentions having a non-extremist sibling as a potential protective factor – since these siblings could challenge the extremist ideology of the family system (Malik, 2019).

In seven studies, children's participation in non-ideological extracurricular activities or hobbies was identified as a protective factor against the radicalizing influence of parents. Here, it is argued that pro-social hobbies may not only stimulate contact with dissenters and counter the familial discourse, but they may also enable children to get their sense of identity and belonging from groups other than the parental network (Ahdash, 2019; Bosi & Della Porta, 2012; Malik, 2019). Nevertheless, the literature also shows that in extremist communities, children's hobbies are rarely completely separate from the family ideology. Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010), for example, observe that in jihadist communities in the UK, even rather innocent games of soccer are combined with religious education – which suggests that here, the protective effects of such hobbies is limited.

Eight studies mention the importance of age as a factor. These studies indicate that in extremist families, exposure to extremism already starts young (e.g., Copeland, 2020; Khoo, 2018; Sieckelink & Winter, 2015). Nonetheless, Malik (2019) stresses that for children, a higher age may be associated with a greater risk of actual radicalization – due to increased agency and because older children are able to seek out (online) extremist content themselves. They are less dependent on their parents for ideological development, and may act as recruiters themselves towards younger siblings (Malik, 2019). Others additionally point out that young children are often merely "parroting" their parents, and that only older children are cognitively able to understand (and act on) the family ideology (Cook & Vale, 2018; Horgan et al., 2016; Khoo, 2018). Nonetheless, Malik (2019) perceives exposure at a young age as a risk factor for radicalization, since "the fact that [a child] is not old enough to articulate radical or extremist views, does not mean that they are not held latently" (p. 43).

Seven studies mention factors related to intelligence, digital literacy and critical thinking as having protective properties. For example, Manning and La Bau (2015) illustrate how intergenerational transmission can be countered through exposure to alternative worldviews in higher education. Nonetheless, other studies suggest that higher intelligence stimulates the transmission of extremism (Andre & Harris-Hogan, 2013; Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010) – since this facilitates children's understanding of the main principles underlying the family ideology.

Nine studies mention gender dynamics as a potential risk factor. Familial gender roles and patterns may influence transmission processes, since in extremist families, violence can be perceived as a symbol of power and masculinity by both daughters and sons (e.g., Felices-Luna, 2009; Hamilton, 2000; Manning & La Bau, 2015). Gender dynamics are also reflected in the everyday

parenting practices of extremist families, as regardless of ideology, this tends to be predominantly a woman's responsibility (Copeland, 2020; Kisyova, Veilleux-Lepage, & Newby, 2022; Malik, 2019; Windisch, 2019). This suggests that while fathers are often most involved in extremist movements, the duty of ideological transmission commonly rests on the shoulders of mothers.

Finally, eight of the included studies suggest that experiences of physical and/or emotional abuse might aid the intergenerational transmission of extremism – which ties into the moral-educational mechanisms discussed earlier. To illustrate, Huggins (2013) describes in the case "Kamal" how a jihadist father and mother burn their son's left hand whenever he improperly uses it (since, according to them, infidels were "the people of the left") (p. 64). This seems to support the hypothesis that insecure attachment might stimulate transmission processes, as discussed in Chapter 2. Interestingly, however, eleven studies note that children who come from a relatively warm nest, can also adopt their parents' violent ideas and behaviors. For example, Noor (2022) observes the interactions between an imprisoned Indonesian jihadist father and his children, which she thought "seemed close and warm" (p. 79). Bickerton (2019) similarly describes how Islamic extremist parents can hold violent worldviews while offering their children a loving and warm upbringing at the same time – and concludes that these qualities are therefore in no way contradictory. Most notably, children's loyalty to their extremist parents, and their need for parental validation, appeared to be an important element here (Copeland, 2020; Huggins, 2019; Noor, 2021). Copeland (2020) describes that while in their memoirs, jihadists tend to claim that they would also have participated in the violent jihad without parental consent – "their narratives nevertheless unconsciously reveal a personal desire to receive this validation" (p. 130). These findings fit with the literature discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, which points at emotionally supportive parenting (in the form of authoritative parenting) having a stimulating effect on intergenerational transmission.

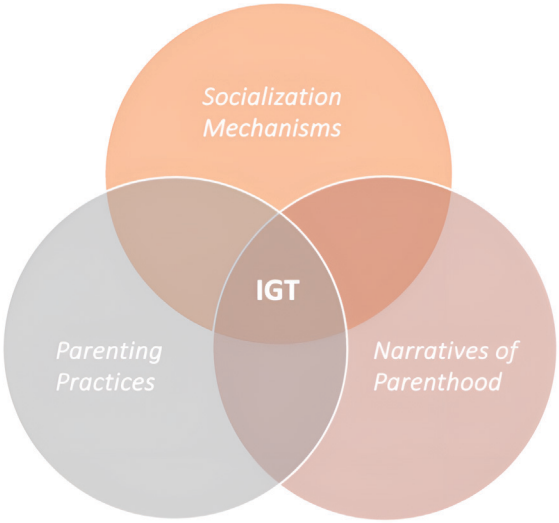
TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

This systematic review supports the observation that extremist ideologies can be transmitted across generations, yet it is unable to make hard claims about the prevalence of this phenomenon. Moreover, the findings indicate that processes of intergenerational transmission can hardly be studied in isolation. The transmission mechanisms observed in this review take place within a complex and layered context of specific family dynamics, interactions, and risk and protective factors. Most notably, the ideological socialization mechanisms, everyday parenting practices of extremist parents, and the (extremist) narratives of parenthood that they adhere to, seem pivotal in understanding the exact workings of these mechanisms, and as we have seen, may ultimately determine the long-term outcomes of these processes. Based on these observations, this review proposes an integrated framework that may aid to the study of (the continuation of) extremist

ideologies within family contexts (Figure 2).While this framework is largely built around the (empirical) studies discussed in this literature review, it equally reflects the theoretical approaches discussed in Chapter 2 – as it combines classic transmission mechanisms (i.e., social learning and socialization theory) with broader developmental approaches such as attachment and parenting style theory, as well as symbolic interactionist theories that emphasize the importance of storytelling and narratives in transmission processes.

Figure 2.

Three integrated dimensions of intergenerational transmission (IGT)



Regarding the first dimension, ideological socialization mechanisms, the current review shows that parents directly and indirectly try to instill their beliefs in their children. They may for example explicitly teach their children about the extremist family ideology, put ideological rules and regulations in place, and punish or reward children for their respective (dis)obeyance. These practices mirror the social learning mechanisms discussed in the previous Chapter. On an indirect socialization level, parents might also choose to surround children with like-minded individuals, as to ensure social control and secondary socialization through peers (see Chapter 2). These findings fit with the channeling hypothesis of religious socialization (see Erickson, 1992) as discussed in the previous Chapter, which argues that in order to prompt children's religious development, parents "channel" their children into certain institutions, such as schools and youth organizations, which in turn shape their social interactions – and thus their religious identity. The findings of the current study suggest that extremist parents indeed map out the ideological paths of their children, by controlling their social lives – which allows for their further socialization.

This empirical review further points at parental narratives as a relevant dimension for studying the intergenerational transmission of extremism. The reviewed literature indicates that extremist parents consciously or subconsciously adhere to certain stories regarding (their role in) the upbringing of their children, which in turn shape and form their transmission efforts. For example, the traditional gender role patterns that dictate extremists' family lives, indirectly inform their mode of ideological transmission. It was observed that according to existing research, women appear to be the primary caretakers within extremist households – and are therefore burdened with the ideological task of raising a new generation of ideological hardliners. Similarly, the expectations of daughters in fulfilling their extremist duties, appear to be different than those of sons – where the latter is more commonly expected to get involved in violent action – which again points at the importance of (gendered) narratives as factor in transmission. Additionally, extremist parents may adhere to family narratives of collective victimhood in solidifying the extremist ideology. Rooted in experiences of adversities, marginalization or social exclusion, these narratives can give rise to the black-and-white perceptions that characterize extremist ideologies (see Schmid, 2013), playing into the indirect transmission processes that were described. At the same time, heroistic 'bloodline'-narratives may reveal the determinist worldviews of extremist parents, where children are perceived to be the natural successors of previous generations of 'fighters'. Here, too, in implicitly negating children's free will to choose a different walk of life, parents may consciously or subconsciously aid to processes of intergenerational transmission.

Finally, as both this review and Chapter 2 have shown, processes of intergenerational transmission need to be considered against a more general backdrop of everyday interactions between family members. Arguably, not all parenting practices exhibited in these families are aimed at the pursuit of ideological transmission, yet they may still play a role in children's susceptibility to their parents' ideas. For example, contrary to popular belief, this review indicates that the prevalence of emotional and physical abuse in extremist households appears to be limited. Although some studies do point extremist parents using threats and psychological manipulation in raising their children, this appears to be far from the norm. Instead, it was observed that more often, studies described loving family relations, loyalty and trust between parent and child, and seemingly positive parenting practices within extremist households. These dynamics may affect the degree to which parental ideologies may take hold in children, as previous research has shown that emotional warmth and trust are important factors in socialization processes: Children are more likely to adopt the ideas and attitudes of loving parents, and will likely rebel against those of cold or distant parents (Jaspers, Lubbers & De Vries, 2008). Reversely, other studies indicate that unhealthy family dynamics may cause children to develop insecure attachment styles, which could in turn cause children to excessively seek parental confirmation (e.g., Abela e.a., 2005; Magai et. al, 2000). Ultimately, such reassurance-seeking behavior may equally put children at risk of adopting the extremist family ideology, as to gain their parents' acknowledgement.

Although the systematic review of empirical studies presented in this Chapter is predominantly occupied with the unidirectional (parent-to-child) transmission of extremist beliefs, the results illustrate that transmission mechanisms are much more complex and reciprocal in nature. In studying this phenomenon, it is therefore crucial to overcome the distinction between parents as "active radicalizers" and children as "passively radicalized", as it ignores the role that children themselves may have in their radicalization process, and the family dynamics that may stimulate or inhibit these processes (see also Qureshi, 2018; Weggemans, Van der Zwan & Liem, 2018). This model is thus a first attempt at moving to a different, more integrated framework, in which socialization mechanisms, parental narratives and the everyday parenting practices of extremist families are equally taken into account. Ultimately, this model will provide the basis for the rest of this dissertation. It functions as the backbone for the empirical methodology and the findings presented in the chapters to come.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Building on the theoretical background, empirical background, and the integrated model of the previous Chapter, the aim of this dissertation is to better understand the intergenerational transmission of jihadist and right-wing extremist ideas. To this end, I consulted and analyzed various data sources from the Netherlands and beyond. In order to understand the potential scope of the intergenerational transmission of jihadism in the Netherlands (Research Question 1), I examined aggregated data provided by the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, AIVD), pertaining to the family background of individuals considered jihadists by the AIVD. The use of this data, as well as the data exchange with the intelligence service itself, is quite unique for the Dutch context. This project, presented in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, allowed me to gain insight into the total number of children potentially at risk of being raised with jihadist ideas in the Netherlands.

I then wanted to gain insight into the mechanisms and factors associated with processes of intergenerational transmission (Research Question 2 and 3), as well as the long-term outcomes associated with these experiences (Research Question 4). To do so, I conducted interviews with former extremists from both domestic and international contexts (N=30), including former extremist parents and (adult) children who grew up in extremist households. Additionally, I spoke with third parties related to these families, such as journalists, practitioners, researchers and experts (N=20). The first-hand experiences of those involved in, exposed to, or working with extremist households are pivotal when seeking to understand how processes of intergenerational transmission manifest themselves. The stories and narratives of interview participants are therefore at the heart of Chapters 6 through 9. They provide insight into the processes of transmission, as well as the family dynamics that may reinforce or inhibit these processes. Moreover, they help us understand some of the long-term effects of an extremist upbringing, and the ways in which adult children may be able to break away from their family ideology. In addition to these interviews, I analyzed case files from the Public Prosecutor's Office (N=12) involving extremist parents. I also obtained access to the court rulings of 27 criminal cases involving extremist parents through the Council for the Judiciary.

As already discussed in Chapter 2, Table 5 contains an overview of how each of the data sources aids to addressing the research questions. When it comes to Research Question (RQ) 2, 3 and 4, it should be mentioned that the Public Prosecutor (PP) files and the court rulings are strictly considered in addition to the interview data – since triangulation of sources was not allowed by the parties from which the former were obtained. As a result, the interviews are regarded as the main data source, which are supplemented by (but not tested against) the data retrieved from the PP files and court rulings. For the purpose of clarity, this Chapter will discuss the quantitative methodology (aimed at answering RQ 1) separately from the qualitative methodology (aimed at answering RQ 2, 3 and 4).

Table 6. Schematic outline of research objectives

RQ	*Focus*	*Data used*	*Discussed in Chapter*
#1	Scope of IGT	Intelligence data	5
#2	Mechanisms of IGT	Interviews, PP files & Court rulings	6, 7, 8
#3	Stimulating/inhibiting factors of IGT	Interviews, PP files & Court rulings	6, 7, 8
#4	Long-term consequences after IGT	Interviews, PP files & Court rulings	9

PART I: QUANTITATIVE DATA

Data collection

The collection and subsequent analysis of intelligence data was a result of a collaborative research endeavor between Leiden University and the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, AIVD), which took off in 2021. The AIVD was able to establish an aggregated and anonymized dataset containing the familial relationships of adults who are classified as jihadists by the AIVD because of their (involvement in) the jihadist ideology, activities or networks. The AIVD tested the dataset prior to sharing for legality and traceability. In the Netherlands, such cooperation between academia and the intelligence service has never taken place before, which makes this study an innovative research project.

The AIVD determined the family relations of all individuals in the dataset through matching their data to the Personal Records Database (Basisregistratie Personsn, or BRP). The AIVD retrieved both the original dataset, as well as the matching BRP data, for the purpose of performing its organizational tasks and duties; the data was not collected for the explicit purpose of this study. The reference date for the dataset is September 12, 2022.

The BRP database contains comprehensive demographic data, including residential information, sociodemographic characteristics (gender, birth year, and migration status), and familial relationships. In the Netherlands, newborns are automatically entered into the BRP system when their births are officially registered. Legal residents possessing valid permits and intending to stay longer than four months in the Netherlands must register with the BRP. Additionally, temporary residents staying fewer than four months may voluntarily register as non-residents, thereby potentially including their data in the dataset. For this study, 'family' is operationalized as individuals sharing documented kinship relations, while 'household' is defined as individuals registered under a common residential address.

Although cohabitation as such is not officially designated in the BRP, the database does maintain detailed records of residential occupancy and familial relationships for each registered address. Household composition was determined by analyzing children's residential addresses and the presence of (officially registered) parents or grandparents at the same address, including potential step-parents or new partners. This methodological approach has several limitations:

it excludes Living Apart Together (LAT) relationships where parents maintain a relationship while residing separately; there may be discrepancies between registered and actual residential addresses; and the data cannot capture the quality or frequency of parent-child interactions or relationships with other household members. Nevertheless, using the BRP dataset offers important advantages, particularly in longitudinal consistency and reliability. The registration system maintains a 99% administrative accuracy standard, and in 2021, person-level residential accuracy reached 97.4%, indicating that most BRP registered individuals indeed resided at their documented addresses. At the household level, accuracy was 95.2%, indicating that in these cases, all persons registered in the BRP at a particular address actually lived there (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2022).

Finally, it should be mentioned that the dataset was primarily collected for security and intelligence purposes in the context of the organizational duties of the AIVD, and – in the case of the BRP – for administrative purposes, but not for scientific research. Although I was unable to independently assess the quality and reliability of the AIVD dataset, it can generally be stated that this organization aims to gain insight into all individuals in the Netherlands who can be classified as jihadists. Nonetheless, the extent to which the AIVD succeeds at this, and the reliability and comprehensiveness of these identifications, cannot be externally verified due to the classified nature of intelligence operations.

Data analysis

I did not have direct access to the raw data underlying the research project. Rather, through the established collaborative framework delineated in the section above, my authorization was limited to aggregated demographic data that (1) demonstrated relevance to the central research question, and (2) could be methodologically derived through the cross-referencing of existing intelligence databases with the BRP. This methodological approach facilitated my analysis of descriptive statistics across three levels: (1) individuals classified as jihadists according to AIVD operational criteria, (2) their offspring, and (3) their household composition and structure. The demographic variables incorporated in this aggregated dataset included, but were not limited to: chronological age (calculated from date of birth), residential geolocation, nationality status, country of origin, marital classification, mortality data (where applicable), and jihadist designation (as operationalized by AIVD parameters). Through systematic descriptive statistical analysis of these variables, I was able to construct a comprehensive demographic profile of the Dutch jihadist population. Where methodologically sound, findings were contextualized against national population parameters provided by Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, CBS) to situate the observed patterns within broader societal trends. However, the specific nature of the study population, combined with the scope of the research inquiry and my constrained access to raw data, hampered the implementation of more sophisticated statistical comparative analyses.

PART II: QUALITATIVE DATA

Background of the study population

In this study, I interviewed participants from the Netherlands as well as individuals from, among other countries, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the US. While my initial intention was to only interview Dutch respondents, I abandoned this criterion during the recruitment process for practical reasons. Particularly regarding (former) right-wing extremist families, it proved challenging to find Dutch cases that met the selection criteria. A potential explanation might be that in recent years, policy makers and academics have primarily been focusing on jihadist radicalization – in light of the respectively large number of Dutch citizens joining terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq since 2012. Additionally, some suggest that in the Netherlands, a 'normalization' of extreme right-wing ideas and discourses has occurred (Butter, 2019; Van den Broeke & Kunter, 2021; Van Puffelen, 2021). For example, Van Puffelen (2021) notes that "to right-wing extremism, something applies that does not apply to jihadist extremism: it is not difficult to say that we find jihadist extremism wrong or scary; right-wing extremism, on the other hand, is less easy to condemn" (p. 15, translated from Dutch).

Hence, I chose to expand the geographical focus of this study to include Europe more generally, Canada, and the United States. The inclusion of the latter was not a given. The US differs significantly from the Netherlands in terms of political climate, demographical composition, national history, and jurisdiction (with regards to extremism and terrorism, as well as gun legislation, parenting, and homeschooling). These contextual differences between the US and Western Europe—and their associated risks of unwarranted generalizations—have been extensively discussed in criminological literature (e.g., Barberet, 2007; Marshall, 2001; Messner, 2021). Nonetheless, having this broader focus, I was able to recruit a more diverse range of interview participants, providing me with a deeper understanding of the various shapes and forms that the intergenerational transmission of extremism may take on. This approach fit with the explorative nature of this study. Yet admittedly, the inclusion of non-European participants undoubtedly hampers the direct translation to the modern-day Western European context, which should be kept in mind in interpreting the findings of this study.

Selection and recruitment of interview participants

In the selection of interview participants, I applied various criteria. The primary condition for selection was that respondents either (1) were raised by at least one parent with right-wing extremist or jihadist worldviews, or (2) themselves held parental responsibility for at least one child at the time of their right-wing extremist or jihadist beliefs. Here, I applied a broad understanding of the concept of 'parents', including adoptive parents, foster parents, stepparents and grandparents. Furthermore, in selection of participants it was required that the extremist upbringing took

place (at least partially) after 1980, as to inhibit contextual differences in our understanding of 'extremism' as much as possible.

In recruiting interviewees, I consulted four different sources: (1) open source material (2) (international) support groups and NGOs, (3) the personal network of me and my colleagues, and (4) the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency (Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen, DJI). Additionally, in all four sources, I employed the so-called 'snowball method', where after each interview, participants were asked for new names or contact details of potential interviewees. Recruitment efforts ceased when saturation of the research group occurred (with a total of N=50), and interviews no longer provided new insights. Recruitment took place alongside the conduction of interviews, between March 2022 and May 2023. See Figure 3 for a flowchart of recruitment efforts.

Firstly, recruitment took place through open sources such as news outlets, blogs, and autobiographies written by individuals who come from an extremist household (either as parent or as (adult) child). These cases were identified by entering relevant Dutch, French, German, Italian, and English search terms in various combinations into an online search engine (e.g., "extremist + youth + family" or "jihadism + upbringing + mother"). Based on the content of the source and aforementioned selection criteria, I then identified cases most relevant to my study (purposive sampling). Potential participants were subsequently contacted by email and via social media (including LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook), using a standardized invitation. Secondly, I reached out to various international organizations for former extremists via their websites. These organizations often provide for support groups led by experts or social workers, and generally have access to a broad network of former extremists. Several of their spokespersons were willing to (digitally) meet and provide me with names or contact details of potential participants, which allowed me to reach out to them.

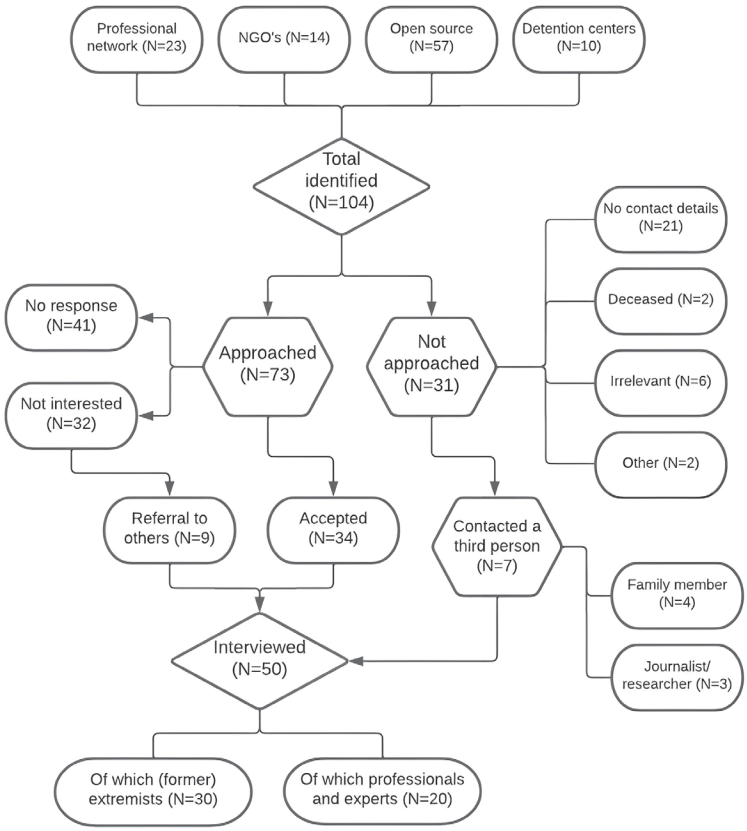
Thirdly, I tapped into the personal networks of my colleagues at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs, who over the years established good connections with researchers, practitioners, and experts in the field of terrorism and extremism research, both domestically and internationally. I invited them to share their knowledge of or experiences with extremist families. In some cases, they could connect me with potential interviewees or refer me to other experts on the topic.

Finally, I recruited respondents through the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency (Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen, DJI). Among Dutch returnees from Syria and Iraq are many (former) extremist parents. In the Dutch context, most of them are currently detained for terrorist crimes, or awaiting trial. In order to get in touch with this group and to ask them about their upbringing and family lives, I submitted a request to DJI to conduct interviews at the terrorist units of three correctional facilities (PI De Schie, PI Zwolle, and PI Vught). The willingness and consent of the detainees was pivotal, as participation in this study was entirely voluntary (convenience sampling). In recruiting detainees and conducting the interviews, I followed the DJI standardized protocol. The employees at the correctional facilities helped me to distribute a letter among potential

participants, which explained the purpose of the study and invited detainees for an interview. Interviews were subsequently scheduled with help of the employees at the correctional facilities and the directorates of the terrorist units.

Figure 3.

Flowchart of interview participant selection.



Background of participants

The aforementioned recruitment efforts ultimately helped to identify 104 eligible participants. From this pool, I approached 73 for an interview. Reasons for not approaching individuals included, among others, the absence of contact details, or the apparent death of the individual at hand. In these instances, I attempted to contact someone from the individual's social network, such as a family member, lawyer, or journalist. Of all participants invited for an interview, I ultimately spoke with 34. In other cases, respondents indicated no interest in participating in the study (N=32). Others did not respond to the invitation at all, even after a follow-up request (N=41).

In the end, I conducted interviews with thirty former extremists, including both (former) extremist parents and (adult) children raised in an extremist household (see Table 7). Of these, sixteen had a history of right-wing extremism, and fourteen had a jihadist background. A notable portion of the participants is from the United States (N=10), the United Kingdom (N=3), and Canada (N=3). Additionally, I spoke with thirteen Dutch respondents and one German interviewee, whom I interviewed in English. In addition to these interviews, I interviewed twenty practitioners and experts who from their own professional experiences could provide insight into the intergenerational transmission of extremism.

Table 7. Background of interview participants

Alias	***Nationality***	***Date of interview***	***Ideology***
Madison	United Kingdom	18-03-2022	Right-wing extremism
Jeffrey	United States	15-04-2022	Right-wing extremism
Charlotte	United States	30-04-2022	Right-wing extremism
Brooke	United States	02-05-2022	Right-wing extremism
Liam	United States	23-05-2022	Right-wing extremism
Michael	United States	25-05-2022	Right-wing extremism
Jocelyn	United Kingdom	26-05-2022	Right-wing extremism
Abigail	United States	27-05-2022	Right-wing extremism
Damian	Canada	02-06-2022	Right-wing extremism
Ethan	United States	08-06-2022	Right-wing extremism
Lukas	Germany	21-06-2022	Right-wing extremism
William	Netherlands	30-06-2022	Jihadism
Andrew	United States	01-07-2022	Right-wing extremism
Bilal	Canada	06-07-2022	Jihadism
Brendon	Canada	06-09-2022	Right-wing extremism
Omar	United Kingdom	01-10-2022	Jihadism
Vincent	Netherlands	17-10-2022	Right-wing extremism
Irene	Netherlands	17-11-2022a	Jihadism
Rachelle	Netherlands	17-11-2022b	Jihadism
Mustafa	Netherlands	26-01-2023a	Jihadism
Ibrahim	Netherlands	26-01-2023b	Jihadism
Soufiane	Netherlands	26-01-2023c	Jihadism
Karim	Netherlands	27-01-2023	Jihadism
Abdelkader	Netherlands	15-02-2023	Jihadism
Jamaal	Netherlands	07-03-2023a	Jihadism
Rachid	Netherlands	07-03-2023b	Jihadism
Nour	Netherlands	17-03-2023a	Jihadism
Samira	Netherlands	17-03-2023b	Jihadism
Benjamin	United States	10-05-2023	Right-wing extremism
Audrey	United States	16-05-2023	Right-wing extremism

Interview setup

With the interview participants in Table 7, I conducted semi-structured interviews using two topic lists (one for parents and one for (adult) children, see Appendix 2 and 3). The advantage of this approach is that in each interview, the same topics are touched upon (structure), while allowing both the interviewer and interviewee the freedom to digress (flexibility). Semi-structured interviews promote a mutual exchange between the researcher and participant, fostering processes meaning-making and critical reflection (Galletta, 2013; Kendall, 2008). Therefore, this approach is considered particularly suitable for complex interview topics, where the participant's personal experiences take central stage (Galletta, 2013).

Based on my research questions, I developed two topic lists covering areas such as interviewee's early childhood memories, their relationship with their parent(s), and the manifestation(s) of the extremist ideology in everyday family life (see Appendix 2 and 3). Topic list 1, which was specifically aimed at interviewing (former) extremist (adult) children, was tested prior to the interviews on an international subset (N=10) of individuals who underwent a particularly harmful (e.g., radical, sectarian or cultic) ideological upbringing. This subset was established through convenience sampling, recruiting respondents based on public (online) sources such as news articles, blogs, and autobiographies. Although their experiences may not directly translate to those of children from extremist families, the (socially isolated) context in which transmission occurs, suggests similar mechanisms may be at play (see also Chapter 4 of this dissertation). With these pilot interviews, I assessed the comprehensiveness of the topic list, the applicability of the questions to the interviewee's lived experiences, and the degree to which the interview topics could cause any psychological distress to the respondents. The pilot interviews themselves are not part of this study. However, based on the pilot interviews, I did rephrase or clarify some of the interview topics and associated questions.

Following my decision to recruit international respondents, a notable portion of the interviews (N=18) took place online, via a video platform such as Zoom or Skype. I was able to interview most Dutch participants face-to-face (N=12). Here, interviews took place at a neutral public location in the interviewees' hometown (N=1) or at the correctional facility where participants resided (N=11). Interviews lasted between 42 and 179 minutes and took place between March 2022 and May 2023.

Privacy and informed consent

All interview participants were asked for their verbal informed consent prior to the interview. Considering the sensitive nature of the study, I provided as much transparency and openness as possible regarding the purpose and design of the study. Interview participants were informed about the ways the information they provided would be used, and the measures in place regarding data

security and-protection. It was emphasized that all data would only be used in an anonymous form. Although this choice to some extent hampers the replicability and verifiability of this study, ensuring the privacy of respondents was crucial. Prior to the interview, participants were informed about their right to withdraw their consent or terminate the interview at any time (either temporarily or permanently). None of the interviewees appealed to these rights. Participants were verbally asked for their permission to record the interview on a digital recorder. All interviewees agreed except for one. This particular respondent was willing to participate in the study, but expressed privacy concerns regarding the voice recording. Therefore, with the interviewees' consent, notes were taken instead, which were subsequently digitally transcribed to reconstruct the conversation.

Coding and analysis of interview data

All audio recordings were transcribed *ad verbatim* and then coded using Atlas.ti software. Coding took place using two methods of qualitative analysis—specifically thematic analysis and narrative analysis. Here, I follow Van Staa and Evers (2010) in their assertion that 'analytic triangulation' (or the application of multiple methods of analysis to the same data) can enhance the depth of a study. It increases the internal validity of qualitative research and allows the researcher to achieve 'thick analysis' (derived from Clifford Geertz's (1973) 'thick description') of data (Van Staa & Evers, 2010).

Thematic analysis as a qualitative methodology allows the researcher to identify the main patterns of conversation and core themes of an interview (Guest, MacQueen, Namey, 2011). This type of analysis helps to understand the core arguments or perspectives that interviewees bring forward. In narrative analysis, on the other hand, less emphasis is placed on the content of the data, and more on the (verbal or linguistic) ways in which ideas, feelings or opinions are expressed (Bischoping & Gazso, 2016). The goal of this analytical approach is to gain a better understanding of the ways in which interviewees interpret their experiences, the meaning they attribute to events, and the stories they tell about their past (Copeland, 2019; Maruna & Liem, 2021; Presser & Sandberg, 2019). Here, the reality of events is subordinate to the subjective interpretation of participants. In other words, narrative analysis does not aim to uncover facts but rather serves as a means to understand participants' inner reflections and meaning-making processes (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Sools, 2012). As such, I attempted to view their stories and experiences 'through their own eyes' (also known as an *emic* approach, see Becker, 1997; Harris, 1976).

In combining a thematic analysis with a narrative analysis, I followed several steps. First, I engaged in thorough data familiarization by repeatedly reading through the transcribed texts and the notes that were taken during the interviews. I then thematically coded the interviews in Atlas.ti using an inductive approach, examining the themes that arose from the data. I created thematic codes by labelling the interview data at the sentence- and paragraph-level for data relating to RQ2 (mechanisms of IGT), RQ3 (factors of IGT) and/or RQ4 (long-term consequences

of IGT). As I progressed through multiple coding cycles, I refined and consolidated themes where necessary, merging codes that overlapped and adjusting categories to ensure they accurately reflected the interview data. For example, the codes “child_sexual abuse”, “child_maltreatment” and “child_corporal punishment” were combined in the code group “insecure parenting”. These overarching code groups and categories were determined based on their frequency, relevance, and the emotional weight interviewees placed on them. In Atlas.ti, I then used specific analytical features such as the code co-occurrence table and the memos I used to document my reflections and observations throughout the analysis, to explore relationships between themes.

Second, I supplemented the thematic analysis with a narrative analysis. The decision to include both approaches was driven by a desire to not only capture the content of participants’ experiences but also to explore how they expressed and interpreted those experiences. In applying a narrative analytical approach to the interviews, I similarly coded the data in Atlas.ti, using an inductive coding style without a predefined coding scheme. I labelled textual elements that I identified as relevant in the thematic analysis at the word-, sentence- and paragraph-level. Here, however, I focussed on the linguistics of the texts and their underlying meaning. This includes the use of specific expressions, nuances, comparisons, digressions, and metaphors. For example, in the thematic analysis I identified “regret and shame” as a relevant theme, but in the narrative analysis I coupled this theme with the code “moral disengagement” and the code group “neutralization techniques”. This allowed me to come to a layered understanding of not just the ways (former) extremist participants reflect on their lives, but also on the ways they themselves try to make sense of their experiences. In both the thematic analysis and the narrative analysis, the coding process occurred in multiple cycles, as is customary in qualitative analyses (also known at the ‘iterative process’ of coding, see Flick, 2013, p. 302). The coding was periodically reviewed by a colleague, as to ensure inter-rater reliability. Upon encountering minor discrepancies in coding style, the coding strategy was adjusted to better fit the purpose of the study.

In trying to answer RQ2 and RQ3, I organized my findings along the three main axes of the model presented earlier in this dissertation (Socialization Mechanisms, Parenting Practices and Narratives of Parenthood), with a fourth dimension (Aftermath) pertaining specifically to RQ4. With regards to the analysis of the rest of my qualitative data (Public Prosecutor’s files and court rulings), I opted for a deductive coding style, as I considered these sources to be supplementary to the interview data. The details pertaining to the selection and analysis of these sources is outlined in the following sections.

Coding and analysis of Public Prosecutor's case files

In addition to the interviews, I analyzed twelve case files of the Dutch Public Prosecutor's Office involving (an) extremist parent(s). Access to these files was granted following a formal request made to the General Office. Case files were selected based on the jurisdictional overview on the website *Rechtspraak.nl*, using the search term combinations outlined below (following the search terms used in Chapter 3 of this dissertation). Prior to formulating these search terms, various cases of extremism and terrorism were examined on *Rechtspraak.nl*, to make sure the search terms adequately fit the terminology used in Dutch jurisprudence.

(Extremis* OR Terror* OR Nazi* OR Neonazi* OR Neo-nazi* OR Fascis* OR Islamis* OR Jihadis* OR Anti-semitis* OR Antisemitis* OR Nationaal-socialis* OR Nationaalsocialis* OR Terror*) AND (Kind OR Dochter* OR Zoon* OR Moeder OR Vader OR Kinderen OR Grootouder* OR Familie* OR Gezin* OR Grootmoeder OR Grootvader OR Ouder* OR Baby OR Babies OR Pleeg* OR Adoptie* OR Stief* OR Kleinkind* OR Generatie)

In the selection of case files, I applied the same criteria as when selecting interview participants. Eligible cases had to involve at least one child with at least one (biological, adoptive, foster, or step-) parent adhering to right-wing extremist or jihadist ideas. In line with the interviews, I also included the possibility of multigenerational transmission via grandparents. Additionally, the verdict had to have been rendered in the past ten years. A criminal conviction was not a requirement for inclusion of the case: cases that resulted in acquittal or dismissal of charges were also included. Moreover, it was not necessary for the extremist upbringing to be the central focus of the case. Here, an expression of concerns about right-wing extremist or jihadist transmission in the family sufficed. Ultimately twelve case files met the inclusion criteria. Case file numbers where subsequently provided to the respective Public Prosecutor's offices in charge, in order to arrange access to the files. The eventual review of the files took place between October 2022 and March 2023. As outlined in Table 8, all cases were found to be related to jihadist ideologies – the search terms did not yield cases involving right-wing extremist families.

All files were reviewed in person at the respective offices that handled the cases. Since most of the files were non-digitalized, they were examined in their entirety. Only one case file (Case File 12) was digitalized: instead of reading this file in full, search term combinations mentioned above were used to identify relevant sections. To extract the data systematically from both the physical and digitalized case files, I applied a pre-established coding scheme during the review process. This coding scheme, detailed in Appendix 4, was based on the findings from Chapters 2 and 3, as well as the analysis of the interview data described in the previous section. It allowed me to focus on key themes related to the three spheres of the Intergenerational Transmission (IGT) model (see Figure

2 on page 57) corresponding to research questions 2 and 3, as well as the 'Aftermath' dimension related to research question 4.

After manually reviewing the files, I imported the data into Atlas.ti for further analysis. Using the coding scheme, I assigned codes to text segments that aligned with the identified themes. The search and query functions in Atlas.ti allowed me to cross-reference specific codes – such as "gendered narratives" or "multigenerational transmission" – and track patterns across the different cases. This structured approach enabled a more in-depth exploration of thematic connections. Considering the deductive nature of the analysis, the initial codes required minimal recoding, redefining, or merging. However, some new code groups were added, such as "IGT in IS territory", pertaining to jihadist families raising children within the former Islamic State 'caliphate.'

Table 8. Background of Public Prosecutor's case files

#	*Office*	*Date*	*Ideology*	*Indictment*
Case file 1	East-Netherlands	27/10/2022	Jihadism	Withdrawal from parental authority
Case file 2	National Office	10/11/2022	Jihadism	Terrorism and related crimes
Case file 3	National Office	25/11/2022	Jihadism	Terrorism and related crimes
Case file 4	Functional Office	07/12/2022a	Jihadism	Terrorism financing
Case file 5	Functional Office	07/12/2022b	Jihadism	Terrorism financing
Case file 6	National Office	15/12/2022a	Jihadism	Terrorism and related crimes
Case file 7	National Office	15/12/2022b	Jihadism	Terrorism and related crimes
Case file 8	National Office	15/12/2022c	Jihadism	Terrorism and related crimes
Case file 9	National Office	05/01/2023	Jihadism	Terrorism and related crimes
Case file 10	National Office	19/012023a	Jihadism	Terrorism and related crimes
Case file 11	Office East-Brabant	19/01/2023b	Jihadism	Withdrawal from parental authority
Case file 12	National Office	16/03/2023	Jihadism	Terrorism and related crimes

Coding and analysis of court rulings

In addition to interviews and Public Prosecutor's case files, court rulings constituted the third qualitative data source of this study. Using the online (restricted) E-Archive of the Council for the Judiciary, I gained access to judicial decisions involving families with extremist worldviews. In selecting these rulings, I used the same search terms as in the selection of the Public Prosecution case files (see the preceding paragraph). Also, the same inclusion criteria were applied: court rulings had to have taken place within the last decade, and cases should be related to right-wing extremist or jihadist parents and their children. Ultimately, this approach yielded a selection of 27 court rulings (see Table 9), which were subsequently coded using the coding scheme also applied to the Public Prosecutor's case files (see Appendix 4).

Similar to the case files, all court rulings pertained to jihadist families – no cases involving right-wing extremist parents were identified. Furthermore, a notable portion of these rulings

pertained to civil and/or family law courts. This is hardly surprising, considering that in the Netherlands, these judicial domains are preoccupied with child protection measures such as care orders and out-of-home placements. In families where concerns about potential extremism among parents exist, such measures are sometimes ordered by courts, provided there is sufficient reason to believe that the family ideology puts children's wellbeing and/or development at risk.

Although in court rulings, discussions of family relations are usually less extensive than in public prosecution case files (several paragraphs of text versus multiple binders of police files), may similarly provide us with an understanding of extremists' family dynamics. These rulings often contain contributions from involved authorities (such as the Dutch Council for Child Protection or certified child protection institutions) which may carry key indicators regarding parent-child interactions and possible mechanisms of ideological transmission. Moreover, judicial rulings by criminal courts often contain a brief summary of the evidence presented in the case, which may similarly include details of family relations. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that there are some limitations in using this data. The parties and entities involved in a legal case hold different (often opposing) interests, which then inform their claims and viewpoints. Additionally, court rulings are not intended for scientific research –and incompleteness, bias, or distortion of the data cannot be ruled out. Therefore, in this study, judicial data was at all times considered in conjunction with the other data sources.

The deductive analysis of the court rulings largely followed the same structure as that of the Public Prosecutor's (PP) files. Data was systematically extracted from the selected court rulings by using a pre-established coding scheme (Appendix 4). I then imported these coding schemes to Atlas.ti to add additional layers of analysis to the data. For example, the coding category "ideological conflicts" was further expanded with the code "false accusations" – as it became evident that within court cases, parents sometimes deliberately accuse one another of being "extremist" in an attempt to gain custody over their child(ren). Again, these codes were subsequently used to identify patterns that could provide us with answers to the research question, with the help of qualitative analysis tools provided by Atlas.ti.

Table 9. Background of selected court rulings

#	*District*	*Domain*	*Ideology*	*Topic*
Court file 1	Amsterdam (District Court)	Criminal Law	Jihadism	Withdrawing from compulsory education
Court file 2	Gelderland (District Court)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 3	Gelderland (District Court)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 4	Den Bosch (Court of Appeal)	Civil Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 5	Amsterdam (District Court)	Civil Law	Jihadism	Educational subsidies
Court file 6	The Hague (Court of Appeal)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 7	The Hague (Court of Appeal)	Criminal Law	Jihadism	Terrorism or related crimes
Court file 8	Supreme Court	Criminal Law	Jihadism	Terrorism financing
Court file 9	Arnhem-Leeuwarden (Court of Appeal)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement
Court file 10	The Hague Court of Appeal)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 11	Oost-Brabant (District Court)	Civil Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement
Court file 12	The Hague (District Court)	Administrative Law	Jihadism	Retraction of nationality
Court file 13	Zeeland-West-Brabant (District Court)	Criminal Law	Jihadism	Terrorism or related crimes
Court file 14	Amsterdam (Court of Appeal)	Criminal Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 15	Rotterdam (District Court)	Criminal Law	Jihadism	Terrorism or related crimes
Court file 16	Gelderland (District Court)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 17	Amsterdam (Court of Appeal)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 18	Rotterdam (District Court)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 19	Rotterdam (District Court)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 20	Limburg (District Court)	Criminal Law	Jihadism	Terrorism financing
Court file 21	Rotterdam (District Court)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 22	The Hague (Court of Appeal)	Criminal Law	Jihadism	Terrorism financing
Court file 23	The Hague (Court of Appeal)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 24	The Hague (District Court)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 25	The Hague (District Court)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 26	Rotterdam (District Court)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order
Court file 27	The Hague (District Court)	Family Law	Jihadism	Custodial arrangement and/or care order

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A large part of the research presented in this dissertation is based on two subsequent projects funded by the Research and Data Center (Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Datacentrum, WODC) and the Dutch National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid, NCTV) (also see 'Background and approach' in Chapter 1 of this dissertation). Nonetheless, the presented findings are the result of an independent research process that was conducted without interference by third parties.

In the course of the WODC project and the NCTV project, extensive attention was paid to the sensitive nature of the topic (and its associated data) as well as the potential distress that the interviewees might experience. Prior to the interviews, each participant was informed of their right to withdraw their participation and/or their consent for the use of their data in this project, at any stage of the interviewing process. Interviewees were guaranteed full anonymity and confidentiality prior to participation. To detained participants, it was made extensively clear that their participation in this project would have no consequences for their court proceedings – nor would the interview recordings be shared with anyone other than the involved researchers. Additionally, interview participants, as well as third parties such as the Public Prosecutor's Offices and the involved courts, were informed of the ways data would be stored and how sensitive (personal) details would be handled. No objections were encountered in any of these aspects.

The data presented in Chapter 5 is based on a unique research project together with the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD). Here, some separate ethical considerations deserve mentioning (its methodological limitations are discussed more extensively in Chapter 10 of this dissertation). Due to the potential security risks associated with intelligence data, my co-authors and I did not have access to the raw material on which the dataset was based. We were therefore unable to check the validity and reliability of the methods used to source this data, nor were we able to account for the completeness or accurateness of the dataset itself. There was, quite naturally, also no informed consent obtained prior to including these subjects in the dataset. Additionally, although I was able to analyze the data independently from the AIVD, several internal reviews had to take place before the manuscript was authorized to be published. While no interference took place regarding the analysis and interpretation of the data itself, the framing and phrasing of the study did require some adjustments to cater to the (understandable) security concerns of the AIVD. Regardless, objectivity and academic distance were maintained at all times, and any changes made to the presentation of the data did not impair the nature or quality of the analysis.

I am not aware of any personal or professional conflicts of interest regarding this PhD project. In conducting this study, I adhere to the Dutch Code of Conduct for Scientific Integrity, as established by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW et al., 2018). Prior to this project, official approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Governance

and Global Affairs at Leiden University (reference number: 2021-010-ISGA-VanWieringen). With this decision of approval, the Committee expressed its confidence in the research design of this PhD project, specifically with regards to the safeguarding of the privacy of the individuals involved. In its review, the Ethics Committee considered, among others, the acquisition of informed consent; the collection and storage of sensitive data; the independence of the researcher; and the transparency of the used methodologies. The Ethical Certificate of Approval for this study is available upon request.

OPEN SCIENCE CONSIDERATIONS

In this project, I adhered to the FAIR-principles of open science (making data Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) to the extent that the sensitive nature of the data allowed. Both the WODC project (Chapter 2) and the NCTV project (Chapter 6 to 9) on which this dissertation was based, were pre-registered on the Open Science Forum (in 2021 and 2022 respectively) – with the purpose of making them accessible to the wider (academic) community and to provide transparency about the approach of the studies. The tools used to analyze the qualitative data (i.e., the topic lists and the coding scheme, see Appendix 2, 3 and 4) were shared on the Open Science Forum as well. The raw data that was used for this dissertation (interviews, case files and court rulings), as well as the metadata (regarding the correspondence with interviewees) were not shared, in light of the privacy (anonymity and confidentiality) concerns associated with this data. Similarly, the study that was conducted together with the intelligence service (Chapter 5) was not pre-registered, nor was the dataset itself shared on the Open Science Forum post hoc. Here too, the sensitive nature of the data, as well as the non-disclosure statements signed prior to undertaking this study, understandably limited my ability to adhere to the FAIR-principles. All work published in the context of this dissertation is subject to a CC-By Attribution 4.0 International license.

SOME COMMENTS ON THE METHODOLOGY

The methodology as outlined above is not without limitations. An extensive reflection on the nature of these limitations, and the ways they may have affected my results, can be found in the section ‘Methodological considerations’ in the Chapter Discussion and Conclusion. For now, it suffices to highlight several important aspects of the approach that was chosen. First of all, as mentioned, this study did not exclusively focus on Dutch extremist families due to difficulties in accessing this particular population. To overcome this, I decided to interview respondents from abroad as well. This decision resulted in a larger pool of interview participants, but may have introduced some bias into the data. A remarkable portion of the interviewees comes from the United States and Canada – countries with political, historical, and cultural contexts that differ

significantly from those in the Netherlands. Moreover, the majority of the interviewees represents right-wing extremist ideologies, as contacting jihadist families proved to be rather challenging. The data on jihadist families is in turn largely based on interviews conducted in Dutch prisons and public prosecutor files, which too comes with limitations and potential biases (also see 'Methodological considerations' in the Chapter Discussion and Conclusion). The participants I interviewed are likely not representative of the total population of individuals with extremist ideas. Based on the data, I cannot make generalized statements about extremist families in the Netherlands, nor can this data be used in assessment of individual cases.

Lastly, it is important to note that many of the mechanisms and patterns discussed here are not unique to extremist families. Most non-extremist parents will, to some extent, employ ideological socialization mechanisms in raising their children. This is hardly surprising, given that previous research has suggested that the intergenerational transmission of extremism shares similarities with the transmission of 'mainstream' political and religious beliefs (Aggeborn & Nyman, 2021; Jennings, Dalton & Klingemann, 2007; Van Ditmars, 2023). Nevertheless, extremist groups are unique in many respects (e.g., regarding their socially isolated nature, their legitimization of violence, their disregard of democratic and pluralist systems, etc.), which justifies a more in-depth analysis of transmission mechanisms in extremist families. It is against this backdrop that the empirical chapters to come, should be interpreted.

In the next Chapter, I will discuss the scope of the jihadist community in the Netherlands and the nature of its family relations, to better understand the manifestation of this phenomenon. Following the theoretical background laid out in Chapter 2, and the model of three overlapping dimensions as discussed in Chapter 3, I will then outline the empirical findings of my study in three corresponding chapters: Socialization mechanisms (Chapter 6), Parenting Practices (Chapter 7) and Narratives of Parenthood (Chapter 8). In the final empirical Chapter, entitled Aftermath (Chapter 9), I discuss some of the long-term effects of the extremist family dynamics, both for (formerly extremist) parents and their (adult) children. In the Discussion and Conclusion, I will then provide an answer to the research questions and discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this study.

4

CHAPTER 5

JIHADIST FAMILIES IN THE NETHERLANDS

Submitted as:
Van Wieringen, L., Van Pelt, P., Weggemans, D.J. & Liem, M.C.A. (2025). De gezinscontext van jihadisten in Nederland in beeld. *Tijdschrift voor Veiligheid.*

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, it was observed that family members can play an important role in (stimulating or countering) radicalization processes. In the Netherlands, too, there are an estimated several hundred families in which at least one parent adheres to jihadist ideology. The National Coordinator of Counterterrorism and Security (Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid, NCTV) already warned in 2019 that children growing up in these families could adopt the ideology of their parent(s) and might thus pose a threat to national security later in life. However, as seen in the previous Chapters of this dissertation, only little academic attention has been paid to the backgrounds of these families.

These considerations prompted the General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, AIVD) in 2021 to explore the possibility of collaborative research with Leiden University, with the aim of gaining insight into children growing up in jihadist families in the Netherlands. This led to a joint project – unique in the Dutch context – that gave us access to anonymized, aggregated intelligence data.

The use of such data is rare in academic research and brings with it a number of methodological and ethical challenges, particularly concerning transparency, verifiability, and academic independence. These concerns raise important questions – not only about how such data should be handled, but also about whether it should be used for academic purposes at all. While these limitations must be taken seriously, it is equally important to acknowledge that intelligence data can provide unique empirical insight into phenomena that are otherwise extremely difficult to access. In a field where complete datasets are often lacking, and given the national security relevance of the topic, this collaboration offered a valuable, though imperfect, opportunity to better understand the scale and structure of the jihadist community in the Netherlands. The broader implications of using such data, including the risks and trade-offs involved, are further addressed in Chapter 10 of this dissertation.

The date of reference for the data, which the AIVD collected in the context of its organizational mandate, is 12 September 2022. The outcomes of this endeavor are discussed in this Chapter. As such, it sheds light on the Dutch jihadist population known to the General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, AIVD) on the one hand, and their family relationships on the other. The study presented in this Chapter provides insight into the estimated scope of this phenomenon for the jihadist population in the Netherlands (or with a strong link to the Netherlands) and establishes a baseline for future analyses. Whether, and to what extent, the parents in these families actually (actively) try to transmit their jihadist ideology to their offspring, cannot be determined on the basis of this study alone. Therefore, the results discussed in this Chapter need to be considered against the broader observations outlined Chapters 6 to 9 of this dissertation – in which the nature of extremist transmission processes will be examined through qualitative data analyses.

Regardless the study presented in this Chapter is innovative in both methodology and data used. For example, the Dutch population of jihadist parents has never been described at a national level before. However, this does not mean that jihadists in the Netherlands have never been quantitatively studied before. Weenink (2019) previously examined the characteristics of 316 Dutch jihadist foreign fighters using police data. Rodermond, Zalmé and Zuiderveld (2021) also looked at the background of 182 Dutch individuals who have been detained for a terrorist offence, using data from the Dutch Prison and Probation Service (Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen, DJI), the Judicial Information Service (Justid) and Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, CBS). Although both studies also looked at the family context of research subjects, the data in these studies is limited to case studies from the criminal justice system. This approach carries a risk of distortion, because only a very small proportion of the jihadists known to the AIVD prepare or commit a terrorism-related offence, or are officially suspected of doing so.

Moreover, in their study, Rodermond, Zalmé and Zuiderveld (2021) not only looked at (former) jihadist detainees, but also at non-jihadist individuals who were detained at the terrorist wing of Dutch correctional facilities. This study seeks to overcome these limitations by using aggregated and anonymized data collected by the AIVD as part of its statutory mandate. The AIVD aims to gain insight into all jihadists in the Netherlands (or with a strong link to the Netherlands), as those adhering to the jihadist ideology pose a potential threat to national security. Due to the organizational tasks of the AIVD, its dataset is very likely more complete than the data used in previous research (e.g., Rodermond, Zalmé & Zuiderveld, 2021; Weenink, 2019). Nevertheless, it is still possible that a portion of the jihadists in the Netherlands remains missing from the data presented in this Chapter.

The results presented in this Chapter shed a first light on the children that might grow up in households where at least one parents adheres to the jihadist ideology. Furthermore, the value of this study is not just in its findings, but also in the unprecedented nature of the collaboration between intelligence and academia that lie at its roots. For years, scholars have pointed at the mutual value that intelligence services and academics can have for each other (e.g., Agrell & Treverton, 2015; Kovacs, 1997; Sageman, 2014; Van Leeuwen, 2016), but to little avail. The current study shows that collaboration between security and intelligence services and academia is indeed possible, and that such endeavors might prove valuable in the study of complex security phenomena, such as the intergenerational transmission of extremism.

RESULTS

According to the AIVD, the jihadist population in the Netherlands consists of approximately five hundred people. The AIVD examined their family background and living situations based on the Dutch Personal Records Database (Basisregistratie Personen, BRP). Additionally, it analyzed the family details of Dutch jihadists (or jihadists with strong ties to the Netherlands) who were living abroad or had died in the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq as of September 2022.

Within this population, 364 individuals were identified as parents (202 males, 162 females) at the reference date (Table 10). Of these, 24 individuals (6.6%) were deceased – presumably all in conflict zones abroad. Among living parents, the modal age category was 30-40 years (47.4%). The majority (82%, or 301 individuals) had at least one minor child (169 males, 132 females). The national average is slightly lower: of all Dutch parents with resident children, approximately 71% had a minor child in 2022 (Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, 2022; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2023).

Of parents with minor children, 91% (274 individuals; 145 males, 129 females) were living in the Netherlands at the reference date (274 persons; 145 men and 129 women). Their birthplaces included the Netherlands (55.8%), Morocco (11.5%), Somalia (4.9%), Turkey (4.1%), and Iraq (2.2%). These proportions diverge from national demographics. These proportions diverge considerably from national demographics, where 2022 figures indicate birth country distributions of: Netherlands (85.5%), Morocco (0.97%), Somalia (0.14%), Turkey (1.1%), and Iraq (0.26%) (CBS, 2023).

Table 10. Total number of parents in the jihadist population in the Netherlands, or with a strong link to the Netherlands.

	Total			***Alive***			***Deceased***		
	N	M	F	N	M	F	N	M	F
Total amount of parents in the study population	364	202	162	340	181	159	24	21	3
Of which parents of a minor in NL	301	169	132	292	161	131	9	8	1
Of which parents of a minor in NL, residing in NL	258	129	129	258	129	129	0	0	0
Non-jihadist parents[4]	123	27	96	123	27	96	0	0	0

Family context of the study population

The 364 identified parents had 665 children collectively (Table 11). The distribution of children per parent was: one (23.6%), two (29.2%), three (23.6%), and four (11.5%), with a small fraction (3.8%) having seven or more children. This distribution differs from national patterns, where according to Statistics Netherlands, Dutch parents had one (43.3%), two (40.9%), or three or more (15.8%) resident children in 2022 (CBS, 2023).

Of these children, 551 were minors (289 males, 262 females) and 114 adults (67 males, 47 females). Among minors, 71% were aged 10 years or younger at the date of reference, with 38.3% younger than five. This figure is notably higher than the national proportion of under-fives (20%) in 2022 (CBS, 2023). Most adult children of the study population (73.7%) were under 30

[4] The dataset contains data of 123 parents who are not classified as jihadists by the AIVD. These are parents whose partner, or another person living at their residential address, has been identified as a jihadist, and whose children may therefore also be growing up in a jihadist family. This group consists largely of women.

years old. The birthplaces of all 665 children predominantly included the Netherlands (83.8%), Syria (5.1%), and Somalia (2.7%). In 2022, the number of Dutch residents born in the latter two countries at the national level was 0.61% (Syria) and 0.14% (Somalia) (CBS, 2023) – indicating an overrepresentation of these birth countries among the children in the study population, despite small absolute numbers.

Table 11. Total number of children of parents in the study population, in the Netherlands and abroad.

	N	***%***	***M***	***%***	***F***	***%***
Minor	551	82,9%	289	81,2%	262	84,8%
Adult	114	17,1%	67	18,8%	47	15,2%
Total	665	100%	356	100%	309	100%

Of the 551 minor children, 276 had two jihadist parents. This means that the AIVD considered both their father and mother as jihadists. In total, 52.5% of this subgroup was five years old or younger at the date of reference. Among adult children, 26 had two jihadist parents. Additionally, 257 children (213 minors, 44 adults) had one jihadist parent. This indicates that only their father or mother was identified as a jihadist by the AIVD. Of this subgroup, 213 were minors and 44 were adults.

Of the 665 children of jihadist parents, 52 had (a) deceased parent(s). Finally, there are 29 children of jihadist parents who are also known to the AIVD as jihadists themselves (20 males, 9 females) – all but one being adults. In thirteen of these cases, it concerns children whose parent(s) has/have died – all of them are located abroad.

Residential distribution of the study population

The 364 jihadist parents in the dataset collectively have 559 children residing in the Netherlands (229 male, 260 female). The majority of this group is minor-aged (87.5%) with an average age of 7.1 years old. Their geographic distribution (Figure 4) shows concentration in the provinces of South Holland (37.5%) and North Holland (19.2%), suggesting that this is a predominantly urban phenomenon. Moreover, these patterns align with national demographical distributions, where according to Statistics Netherlands, in 2022 most children and young adults also resided in these provinces (CBS, 2022a). Among adult children of the study population, the majority is between 20 and 25 years old (37.1%). In addition to the subgroup of children living in the Netherlands, 106 children of jihadist parents resided abroad at the date of the reference. This subgroup consists of 58.5% minors, of which with the majority (85.5%) was born in the Netherlands.

The 559 children of jihadist parents in the Netherlands, consists for 13.9% of first-generation children (76 children) – indicating that they were not born in the Netherlands, but immigrated here. The majority of this subgroup was minor-aged on the reference date (71.1%). This approaches

the national foreign-born proportion of 15% (CBS, 2022), though age-specific comparisons are unavailable. Additionally, 106 children of jihadist parents emigrated from the Netherlands, with minors constituting 58.5% of this group.

Figure 4.

Geographical distribution of children of the study population (N=559), per province.

Household composition analysis

The 559 children of the study population living in the Netherlands are distributed across 260 distinct households (Table 12). Traditional nuclear households – comprising of cohabiting (officially registered) parents – accounted for 35.8% of households (251 children). These households typically contain three (17.2%), four (34.4%), or five (25.0%) members, including parents. In a minority of cases, traditional nuclear households consisted of seven or more individuals (11.9%). This distribution differs from national patterns, where in 2022, Dutch multi-person households with children comprised three (29%), four (34%), and five or more members (13.6%) (CBS, 2023).

Furthermore, 26 of the children of the study population living in the Netherlands resided in a blended household (3.8%), consisting of one officially registered parent and their (new) partner, who may or may not have had children together. Single-parent households represent 33.1% (184 children). These households are predominantly headed by mothers (79 households, of which 37 with jihadist-identified mothers) versus fathers (seven households, of which five with jihadist-identified fathers). In total, 93 children are residing in a single-parent household of a jihadist father

or mother, which could cause children to grow up in an ideological 'bubble', and might contribute to processes of intergenerational transmission in the long run. According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 2023), in 2022 the entire Dutch population consisted of 23% single-parent households (versus 77% two-parent households). At the national level, too, most single-parent households involve a single mother with one or more children (CBS, 2023).

Table 12. Household (hh) types in the study population (N=260).

	All households (hh)			***Households of jihadist parents***			***Other***		
	N (hh)	%	N (child)	N (hh)	%	N (child)	N (hh)	%	N (child)
Traditional hh	93	35,8%	251	93	55.3%	251	0	0,0%	0
Blended hh	10	3,8%	26	5	3,0%	18	5	5,4%	8
Single parent hh (mother)	79	30,4%	172	37	22,0%	84	42	45,7%	88
Single parent hh (father)	7	2,7%	12	5	3,0%	9	2	2,2%	3
Extended hh	30	11,5%	49	27	16,0%	46	3	3,3%	3
Other	16	6,2%	22	1	0,6%	1	15	16,3%	21
Adult child hh	25	9,6%	27	-	-	-	25	27,2%	27
Total	260	100%	559	168	100%	409	92	100%	150

Of the 559 children of the study population residing in the Netherlands, 49 (or 8.7%) lived in an extended household, distributed across 30 households. Households are considered 'extended' when single-parent, traditional or extended households incorporate least one additional relative, such as grandparent(s) or an uncle/aunt. Most of these extended households comprise four (30%), five (26.7%) or six members (23.3%) – including parents and additional relatives. In 16.6% of cases, the extended household consists of seven or more individuals. National comparative data is unavailable for extended household arrangements.

Alternative household arrangements account for 4% of children (22 individuals, across 16 households). This includes children residing in adoptive families, foster care and institutional settings. This figure is notably below the national youth residential care[5] rate of 8.12% for individuals under 23 years (CBS, 2022b). Since these living conditions may indicate an unstable family situation, and at the same time limited pedagogical influence of parents, it would be interesting for future research to contrast (possible ideological transmission within) this group with children who grow up in stable families.

Finally, 27 adult children of the study population (4.8%) lived in an independent household without parents (distributed across 25 households). These are probably non-resident adult children of the study population.

[5] This type of youth care includes residential placements where individuals live with foster families, stay in family-style residential homes, live in group homes run by youth care organizations, or receive care in secure youth facilities. It does not include children living with adoptive families.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Analysis of the data reveals distinctive patterns in jihadist family structures within the Netherlands. When we compare this group to the entire Dutch population, the study population shows considerably higher proportions of children of jihadist parents with migration backgrounds. Additionally, the fact that more than five percent of the children of the study population was born in Syria, suggests that these children may have spent the first years of their lives in Islamic State territory. This could indicate that these children may be struggling with PTSD and war-related trauma – a concern echoed in contemporary research (see Ahdash, 2020; Rousseau et al., 2023). The observation that (at least) 6.6% of the jihadist parents in the study population probably lost their lives in the conflict zone, may further compound trauma risks among these children. Moreover, it is possible that deceased parents continue to exert (indirect) influence on the potential radicalization of their children posthumously through narratives of martyrdom, which constitutes an important element of the jihadist ideology (Nanninga, 2018). Chapter 2 of this dissertation already suggested that narratives of collective victimhood and collective memories of trauma can indeed facilitate the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideas (e.g., Rowland-Klein & Dunlop, 1988; Vollhardt 2012; 2020), which may put the children of deceased parents in the dataset at risk.

Compared to the entire population of Dutch parents, a larger proportion of jihadist parents has at least one minor child (82% versus 71% at the national level). The minor-aged children in jihadist families are also younger, with 38.3% being under the age of five (versus 20% at the national level). These figures likely reflect the relatively young age of the study population, in combination with their relatively large families: of this group, nearly half has three or more children, compared to a national rate of 15.8%.

An earlier study by Alkhadher and Scull (2019) found no correlation between jihadists' family size and their willingness to commit violence. However, other studies suggest that individuals who grow up in a large household might have a higher risk of jihadist radicalization (see Nawaz, 2021; Rodermond, Monster & Weerman, 2020). According to Rodermond, Monster and Weerman (2020), this can be explained by the fact that large households tend to involve blended families, with parental divorces serving as a mediating risk factor for radicalization. Another possible explanation is that parents in larger households might be less emotionally involved in raising their children, which could increase the risk of radicalization (Nawaz, 2024). It is unclear to what extent these observations also apply to children of extremist parents. Chapter 3 of this dissertation already suggested that (ideologically moderate) siblings may be able to provide counterbalance to parents' efforts at jihadist socialization. Additionally, reduced emotional involvement from jihadist parents may actually contribute to children abandoning their parents' extremist ideology, due to reduced family cohesion and subsequent loyalty (see also Chapter 2). Producing large numbers of children is generally an important theme within the jihadist ideology, especially for mothers (Al-Dayel, 2021; Matusitz, 2022). However, the question of whether larger families may indicate stricter ideological

beliefs among parents – and thus perhaps a greater risk of ideological transmission – cannot be answered on the basis of the data.

Of the children of the study population living in the Netherlands, 8.7% reside in an extended household, with relatives other than parents and siblings. This observation might be explained by the fact that having a migration background has already been linked to (living in) an extended family (Charsley et al., 2020). While national comparative data is unavailable, these observations suggest that in the majority of jihadist households parents are the primary caretakers of children, and that exposure to moderate perspectives from non-jihadist extended family members might thus be limited. All in all, this may ultimately contribute to the transmission of jihadist beliefs from parent to child.

It was observed that almost half of the minor-aged children in the study population reside in a dual-jihadist parent household. This is not surprising: religious homogeneity is generally considered an important factor in partner choice and a significant predictor of relationship success (see Heaton, & Pratt, 1990; Schafer & Kwon, 2019), and this is probably particularly true for extremist individuals. Moreover, in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, it was observed that studies on religious households indicate that ideological homogeneity between parents contributed to the successful transmission of such ideas to children (e.g., Myers, 1996). As such, the relatively large proportion of children in the dataset growing up with two jihadist parents, might indeed suggest that intergenerational transmission takes place in these families.

At the same time, the data indicates that 33.1% of the children grow up in a single-parent household in which the father (2.7%) or mother (30.4%) is the sole caregiver. In total, 93 children are residing in a single-parent household of a jihadist father or mother. Both observations are worrying, since the findings discussed in Chapter 3 suggest that for children, having a moderate or non-extremist parent can be a protective factor against the intergenerational transmission of extremism. Parental absence, and the potentially resulting lack of counter-narratives, might contribute to the (ideological) isolation of the family and could thereby facilitate the transmission of jihadism from parent to child.

Finally, the data suggests that the intergenerational transmission of jihadism indeed occurs in the Netherlands, with 4.4% of children of jihadist parents identified by the AIVD as jihadists themselves for their (involvement in) the jihadist ideology, activities or networks. While the direction of ideological influence in these cases remains unclear – since examples of child-to-parent radicalization exist as well (Elibol, 2018) – this observation nevertheless suggests the potential role of the family environment in jihadist radicalization processes.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

This Chapter aimed to shed light on the family relationships of individuals identified as jihadists by the AIVD, and their offspring – in order to determine the potential scope of intergenerational transmission within the jihadist community in the Netherland. It presented the findings of an innovative research endeavor, in which the Dutch intelligence service AIVD collaborated with academia to gain insight into this phenomenon. Considering that such collaboration has never taken place before, and that the dataset used in this study represents the most comprehensive national-level information available on the Dutch jihadist population, the current project is ultimately unique in both its approach and the data it presents. Nonetheless, and regardless of its empirical value, the methodological and ethical drawbacks that come with this approach are profound. Specifically, the transparency and replicability of the data and its origins are limited. These aspects are discussed more extensively in Chapter 10 of this dissertation.

The results of the study advance our understanding of the jihadist community in the Netherlands and the possible intergenerational transmission of the jihadist ideology. While the findings presented in this Chapter do not allow for any hard claims regarding the exact number of children in the Netherlands that is being raised with jihadist ideas, the data suggest that the parent-to-child transmission of jihadist ideas does indeed occur – and that this is a phenomenon that warrants further attention in the years to come. Moreover, the data indicates that various elements observed in the theoretical framework of Chapter 2 – such as ideological homogeneity between parents, intergenerational trauma, and narratives of collective victimhood – might provide a starting point for additional inquiries into the intergenerational transmission if jihadism within families.

However, the study also demonstrated that intergenerational transmission as a process (rather than an outcome) cannot be studied trough quantitative methods alone: the data only allowed us to identify families where the intergenerational transmission of jihadism *may* occur, either directly or indirectly. If we want to understand whether children are indeed socialized into the jihadist ideology, and the ways in which such transmission may take place, qualitative inquiries into this phenomenon are crucial. The precise mechanisms with which such transmission processes can take place, will therefore be at the heart of the Chapters to come.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIALIZATION MECHANISMS

INTRODUCTION

Studying the intergenerational transmission of extremism can be a challenging undertaking: family life generally unfolds behind closed doors, and for outsiders, gaining insight into the parent-child interactions that may facilitate ideological transmission, is rather complex. In this Chapter, I aim to shed light on the of ways parents may socialize their children into the extremist family ideology, using interview data, Public Prosecutor's case files, and court rulings. Although I will primarily focus on the direct and indirect ways in which extremist socialization occurs, I simultaneously acknowledge the assumption that intergenerational transmission is a dynamic and reciprocal process, in which parent and child mutually influence each other in their perspectives and beliefs (Bernardi, 2013; Roest, 2007). Children are thus not merely passively exposed to their parent's worldviews, but (to some extent) have agency over the ways in which they engage with these ideas. This is likely especially the case for older children, who are able to reflect on (their view of) the family ideology.

In this Chapter – building on the theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter 2, and the empirical overview presented in Chapter 3 – I therefore distinguish between direct socialization mechanisms and indirect socialization mechanisms. Direct (or parent-driven) socialization involves the conscious and active choices parents make in trying to get their ideology across to their offspring. Examples include the use of social isolation, exerting media control, and the use of extremist language or symbolism within the home environment. The direct mechanisms discussed in this Chapter inductively arose out of the interviews, case files and court rulings – but as we will see, they largely overlap with the mechanisms observed in Chapter 3. Nonetheless, the current Chapter 2 adds to previous findings by uncovering potential indirect manifestations of extremist socialization mechanisms as well. Indirect (or child-dependent) socialization relates to the ways children subsequently deal with the ideas presented by their parents. In analyzing the data, it was observed that the ways children respond to their parents' extremist beliefs and behaviors depends on, among other factors, children's own personal characteristics and their relationship to their caregivers. By discussing direct and indirect socialization mechanisms separately, the findings discussed in this Chapter 5 demonstrate that intergenerational transmission is a layered phenomenon in which both parent and child can play a significant role – and that parents' socialization intentions do not always match anticipated transmission outcomes.

DIRECT SOCIALIZATION MECHANISMS

Social isolation

Following the empirical background as discussed in Chapter 3, the findings suggest that (social) isolation can play a pivotal role in the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideologies. Both right-wing extremist and jihadist parents may attempt to keep their children away from potential

dissenting voices, as became apparent by analyzing the interviews and Public Prosecutor's files. In practice, this means that children of extremist parents may grow up in an ideological bubble where contact with the outside world is discouraged if not inhibited. Jeffrey, the son of a right-wing extremist father in the United States, shares:

> "I was almost never with [my father] in public. We didn't do anything together as a family. You know, we didn't go out on picnics, we didn't go out and socialize with the neighbors. The only time I ever remember being out in public with him was when we were meeting members of his Nazi Party" (Interview Jeffrey)

For Jeffrey, this socially isolated upbringing results in him being unaware of what is happening in the world as a child. "I had no idea about the things that my classmates talked about, like music or pop culture. I didn't know anything about their world. And I didn't realize until much later how isolated my parents had kept me" (Interview Jeffrey).

Other interview participants, who also grew up in right-wing extremist families, describe their childhood as "very isolated and lonely" (Interview Brooke) and "extremely solitary" (Interview Jocelyn). Five of the right-wing extremist interviewees, describe that their parents exerted very strict control over their children's friendships (e.g., Interview Jeffrey; Interview Benjamin; Interview Michael; Interview Charlotte; Interview Brooke). Any contact with non-white children was strictly forbidden; and romantic relationships outside of the ideological group were strongly discouraged. "One time my brother was dating someone who was 25 percent black, and they got so upset with him. They were furious," the daughter of right-wing extremist parents in the US remembers (Interview Charlotte).

The importance of social isolation also appears in the context of jihadist families. Dutch interviewee William talks about his (formerly) jihadist brother and how he and his wife kept their children away from the outside world: "What always struck me was that [the children] grew up extremely protected. [The parents] thought an Islamic upbringing was important, and so [the children] went to an Islamic primary school, but otherwise, they were very focused on shielding their children from the outside world" (Interview William). In his view, his brother and his wife were looking to establish their "own pillar" of like-minded individuals.

Four of the Public Prosecutioners (PP) files on jihadist families support the significance of social isolation (PP File 1; PP File 3; PP File 11; PP File 12). In PP File 1, a radicalized suspect keeps his children away from daycare because he is convinced they will be mistreated there. The suspect also argues with the children's general practitioner, as well as the Board of the elementary school of his eldest daughter. His wife later tells the police, "[He] was very concerned about the entire world being against us" (PP File 1). According to the suspect's wife, the man believed that the world was an unsafe place for his children, and was committed to keeping them away from it as much as possible. "[He did] everything to protect the children," his wife recalls (PP File 1).

These examples illustrate that within extremist households, social isolation may occur for various reasons. Parents may try to keep 'outsiders' away from their children to strengthen their ideological influence, which corresponds with the findings of the systematic literature review in Chapter 3. Nonetheless, the empirical data shows that for extremist parents, social isolation is also an important means of *protection*. From their perspective, the outside world is not merely a 'bad' or morally compromised place – but more importantly, it is perceived as *dangerous*. This observation cannot be separated from the institutional distrust that often characterizes extremist belief systems (following Van den Bos, 2019; Stephens, Sieckelinck, & Boutellier, 2021; Williford, 2019). Nevertheless, this insight provides considerable nuance to the prevailing idea that extremist parents may keep their children socially isolated solely out of malicious intent.

Media control

In line with the social isolation described in the previous paragraph, extremist parents exert strong control over the media consumed by children, as part of their extremist socialization efforts. Former right-wing extremist respondent Michael from the United States, for example, recalls that prior to his deradicalization, he did not allow his children to watch certain television programs. Most notably, he remembers prohibiting shows in which Chinese was spoken, fearing his children would be 'brainwashed' by Communism. "I was terrified of them getting indoctrinated by anything that I saw as a detriment to white people," he remembers (Interview Michael). Other television shows were also forbidden:

> "I remember talking to my wife about how we can't have the kids watching *Jake and the Neverland Pirates* because it was promoting diversity. It was like brown kids, and white kids, and Asian kids, and black kids. There was just too much diversity. It was not, you know, the way things should really be between the races" (Interview Michael)

Another US interviewee describes what it was like watching television with his right-wing extremist father: "At home, we would be watching a show on TV or something, and if a black person came on [TV], my dad would make these really disgusting sounds and act like he had just seen something that made him want to throw up" (Interview Jeffrey). His father also believed that all mainstream media was controlled by a Jewish elite, instructing his children not to believe anything they saw on television, according to Jeffrey.

Similarly, Dutch right-wing extremist participant Vincent explains that he is critical of the media his children consume. "Everything you see on television is controlled. I just hate it, it makes me sick," he says. He claims to no longer watch so-called "state television" anymore. "And even if

there is a program about *BIJ1* or *GroenLinks*[6] – yeah, I turn it off immediately. We don't watch that," Vincent says. He prefers his children to watch channels that, in his opinion, provide 'objective' and 'independent' news coverage, which in his perspective are mainly found online.

In jihadist families, propaganda often plays a significant role in parental media control, as indicated by Public Prosecutor's (PP) files. In four of these files, parents show their children extremist propaganda, including videos of individuals being beheaded. Moreover, in PP File 2, children of jihadist parents even state that they enjoy this kind of violent material and even ask their parents to replay some of these videos. In other files, parents listen to *nasheeds* (Islamic songs) with their children (PP File 2; PP File 3; PP File 12). PP File 2 explicitly mentions a song glorifying jihadist martyrdom, and in PP File 12, gunshots can be heard in a nasheed. In this latter case, the children are so accustomed to hearing these violent songs that they can sing along. A quote:

> "[The suspect] plays a nasheed. One of the children specifically asks for "that beautiful one". She wants to hear a different nasheed. [The suspect] turns up the nasheed very loud. Later, nasheeds with gunshots in the background can be heard. The children sing along in part. [The suspect] laughs. He explains to the children how to pronounce the words sung in the nasheed" (PP File 12)

The children in this particular case are likely too young to understand the meaning of these songs. Nonetheless, legitimization of violence may indirectly occur through the gunshots in the nasheed – which leave little to the imagination about the gist of its lyrics. Additionally, the 'playful' and 'harmless' nature of this scene – with children laughing and singing along with their parents – may potentially reinforce the intergenerational transmission of extremism.

Homeschooling

In line with the findings discussed in the empirical background of this dissertation (Chapter 3), homeschooling appeared to be a prominent theme within the data. Based on eight interviews, two court cases and two Public Prosecutor's (PP) files, it was observed that for some extremist parents, ideological homeschooling is a desirable way of imparting their ideologies to their children. Damian, a former right-wing extremist father from Canada, remembers that homeschooling was rather common within his organization. Here, stories about Norsemen and Vikings would play a prominent role: "It would all have a really strange overtone of whiteness", he recalls (Interview Damian). Homeschooling materials often had a strong Christian connotation, Damian says. "They would teach their children that Jesus was not from the Middle-East, but that he was actually a

[6] *BIJ1* and *GroenLinks* are two progressive left-wing political parties in the Netherlands.

white person. All that stuff." (Interview Damian). This religious undercurrent was used both to consolidate right-wing extremist ideology within a broader Christian tradition, and as a welcome "cover-up" for its violent agenda. According to Damian, this made it difficult to distinguish where religious education ended and extremist homeschooling began (Interview Damian).

Some right-wing extremist parents choose, either for practical or financial reasons, to provide children with supplementary ideological training as opposed to a full-time homeschooling curriculum. Here it was observed that parents tend to give preference to additional 'alternative' history lessons—specifically regarding World War I and World War II (Interview Jeffrey; Interview Liam; Interview Ethan). The son of a right-wing extremist father from the United States explains:

> "My Dad denied the Holocaust. He taught us that it was all Jewish propaganda. He said it did not happen and he had several very well-rehearsed and very well-thought-out talking points that he used to debate any intellectual person and get people to actually start doubting what they thought was true" (Interview Jeffrey)

Another interviewee similarly describes how his stepfather tried to teach him about the right-wing extremist ideology, as to counter everything he had learned in public school:

> "I would be sitting with him, and he would pull me up to the side, he would have me read different white supremacist books, tell me stories about different things and explain to me the government and you know, this whole Zionist attack on the world and how the Jewish people are here to spread homosexuality" (Interview Ethan)

Based on the data, however, it can be observed that homeschooling is not a self-evident choice for jihadist parents. In three of the PP files, children from jihadist families attend public (elementary) school (PP File 2; PP File 9) or Islamic school (PP File 12). In four of the files, children also receive Quran lessons—either from a preacher (PP File 12) or from the parents themselves (PP File 1; PP File 2; PP File 11). In this aspect, jihadist families seem to differ little from 'regular' Islamic families.

Nevertheless, based on conversations with various experts and practitioners, it is likely that extremist homeschooling also occurs in the Netherlands. In practice, it is challenging to gauge the extent to which this happens since Dutch truancy officers (or compulsory education officers) are not required to report suspicions of extremist homeschooling practices. Yet, both Public Prosecutor's (PP) files and court cases contain some signs of possible jihadist homeschooling practices in the Netherlands. In Court Case 5, for example, it is mentioned that a female teacher at an Amsterdam educational foundation encouraged jihadist socialization practices among her female students.

The teacher told her students:

> "Your children must receive strict Islamic education according to Sharia doctrine; even listening to music is not allowed. You must hide your lesson material well. Otherwise, [your husband] could talk about it to the *Kuffar* [infidels], which will be detrimental to you and can lead to serious problems!" (Court Case 5)

Although it remains unclear to what extent female students indeed adhered to the pressing 'advice' of their mentor, this particular case demonstrates that such ideological communities may indeed impact the private (family) lives of the women involved. Moreover, this case illustrates how isolation and psychological manipulation are used to keep dissidents (specifically women's husbands and the *Kuffar*) at bay. It is therefore not unlikely that these women did at least to some extent follow abovementioned guidelines regarding the upbringing of children.

Only one file out of the dataset suggests extremist homeschooling of an explicitly violent nature. During a police raid of a terrorism suspect's home, various Islamic State schoolbooks are found. As described in the case file at hand: "One of these books, called (translated from Arabic) "Physical Education" contained training for handling a Kalashnikov, including general information about the weapon, maintenance, repair, and shooting exercises" (PP File 9). The book is intended, as indicated in the introduction, for high school students of "level two", which corresponds to secondary school in Syria. Another book has the following (translated) introduction:

> "The new elements of disbelief and apostasy have left their clear traces on Muslim youth. Therefore, the State of the Caliphate has taken on the task of bringing them [the youth] back to the right path, the path of the unity of God, and bringing them to the broad square of Islam under the banner of the wise Caliphate" (PP File 9)

To what extent the suspect in this case actually used these books in raising their own children cannot be discerned from this particular file. Nevertheless, it shows that in the Netherlands, the use of Islamic State teaching materials in the ideological socialization of children cannot be ruled out.

Introduction to parental network

From the analysis, children's introduction to parental network emerged as a prevalent theme (observed in seven interviews, five PP files and four court cases). This mirrors the findings of previous studies already discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, and simultaneously fits with the 'channeling hypothesis' of religious socialization that was presented in Chapter 2. It appears that

extremist parents do not only keep their children away from those with contrasting worldviews; they also ensure that their children become socially embedded within their own network. For example, right-wing extremist parents tend to take their children to ideological gatherings or activities (Interview Jeffrey; Interview Brooke; Interview Liam). A former right-wing extremist respondent from Canada reflects on the families he encountered at right-wing extremist rallies: "A lot of these folks would bring out their kids and then they would have like swastikas on their shirts or whatever," he says. "Those things had a real Third Reich-feel to it" (Interview Damian). According to this particular participant, mothers were often responsible for organizing specific children's gatherings, where games were played and craft workshops were provided – all with a strong Nazi overtone (Interview Damian). American respondent Brooke shares that her father, a KKK member, also considered it important for her to attend "Klan" gatherings:

> "He had my mom sew a little robe for me so that he could dress me up in it and bring me around to things like Klan rallies. And I saw things at some of these Klan rallies that were so frightening for such a young child (...) Just seeing those crosses being burned, with all these adult people standing around in white robes, like ghosts, I mean that was very, very scary" (Interview Brooke)

According to interviewee Benjamin, within American neo-Nazi groups, parents are even compelled to bringing their children along to extremist events. He himself experienced a lot of pressure from his fellow members. "It was not just accepted, more like *expected* that you'd start bringing your kids at some point. Especially when you dressed them up, that was really applauded. All the members would be like: 'Aw, that is adorable'" (Interview Benjamin). Another former right-wing extremist parent shares this vision. He talks about neo-Nazi festivals where hundreds of children of extremist parents would come together, saluting Hitler. "They'd be saying things, like curse words, no child at that age should say" (Interview Ethan). He admits to bringing his own children to such an event once, "but luckily they were too young to remember any of that" (Interview Ethan). A Dutch right-wing extremist father also mentions taking his children to demonstrations and protests, including pro-Black Pete rallies. "They loved that," he says, "It was really an event for them (…) They definitely inherited that interest from home, I think" (Interview Vincent).

In four of the interview cases, children are inadvertently exposed to their parents' friends and acquaintances. The son of a right-wing extremist father recalls: "I grew up hearing my dad talk to his Nazi friends in the garden every weekend. They would talk all day about their hate of gays, feminists, immigrants, trans-people. It was my experience of normalcy" (Interview Benjamin). German respondent Lukas also mentions that his parents frequently had fellow members over. "Our living room was one of their main informal meeting points. So, every now and then, all of the group members would gather in our house, just to discuss politics and movement matters, and so on. (...) I have very strong memories of that, I mean, witnessing that as a child" (Interview Lukas).

In a single (exceptional) case, parents involve their children not only in social events but also in committing extremist violence. An American respondent recounts how her right-wing extremist father took her in the car to shoot or set fire to the houses of black people (Interview Brooke). Similar stories of extremist parents involving their children in violence can be found in the media as well (see, for example, BBC, 2018; Kapoor, 2018). Nonetheless, it is crucial to highlight that such references to participation in violent extremist activities are sparse; the instances where parents have their children partake in violent events are likely a vast minority.

Psychological pressure and emotional manipulation

From the data analysis, the parental use of psychological pressure inductively emerged as a relevant theme (observed in seven interviews, five PP files and six court cases). This theme encompasses the subthemes 'expressing expectations', 'expressing encouragements', and 'using fearful imagery', which all refer to the emotional manipulation with which parents (consciously or subconsciously) try to get children to adhere to the family ideology. To illustrate, US interviewee Jeffrey recounts that his right-wing extremist father taught him that black people are "inhuman demons". "At first, I looked at them with fascination, but I quickly learned to be afraid of them. My Dad convinced me that they were responsible for all of the ills of our society, and it was because of them that all the bad things that were happening in our country" (Interview Jeffrey). Similarly, respondent Brooke also had to deal with the scare tactics of her right-wing extremist father: "When I was in school, I can remember going to the bathroom and washing my arms with soap because my dad told me: 'Black people carry diseases' and one had bumped into me" (Interview Brooke). When her father finds out that despite this scaremongering, his daughter sometimes plays with a non-white friend, he threatens: "If I ever see you playing with that little N-word again, I will burn a cross in her backyard" (Interview Brooke).

In jihadist contexts as well, parents use techniques of emotional manipulation to impart their ideologies to their children. In Court Case 4, a jihadist foster father tells his foster son that women and Dutch people in general are evil. These ideas induce so much fear in the child that his relationship with his mother becomes severely strained, ultimately leading the court to decide on an out-of-home-placement (Court Case 4). In Court Case 5, a mother tells her children that they must swear allegiance to Al-Baghdadi (the former leader of the Islamic State) and emphasizes their obligation to kill disbelievers. Three Public Prosecutor's (PP) files additionally show jihadist parents voicing explicitly violent expectations in socializing their children. In PP File 3, for example, a jihadist suspect who travelled to IS-territory writes in a letter to her family that she hopes her son becomes a "strong boy" as to "kill as many *kaffirs* [unbelievers] as he can, to enter *jannah* [paradise]". Similarly, PP File 2 describes how a suspect tells her children that if anyone ever insults the Prophet, they are allowed to kill that person, and that they will subsequently go to paradise.

The file reveals that the children at hand indeed adopt their mother's mindset and frequently use threats of violence in their everyday interactions (PP File 2).

In jihadism, the glorification of martyrdom plays a notable role too (e.g., PP File 2; PP File 3; PP File 5; Court Case 5). To illustrate, in Court Case 5, a jihadist mother glorifies the death of her husband by telling her children that they should be proud of his martyrdom. Similarly, in PP File 3, a mother expresses the desire to die as a martyr herself – and wonders: "will my children accompany me, or will they stay to grow up as *mujahideen* [jihadi fighters] or the wife of a *mujahid*?" (PP File 3). PP File 2 further exemplifies how a suspect talks about the father of her children, who died in IS territory: "[The suspect] tells her daughter, among other things, that her father was a *mujahideen* and that she should be proud of that. [The suspect] suggests to her daughter that they should do their best to see her father in paradise as soon as possible", the file writes (PP File 2). In another excerpt, the same suspect explicitly states that she expects her children to "become like *baba* [Dad]". She promises her children that they will see their father again in paradise and that they should ask Allah to go to paradise sooner rather than later. The mother even expresses her desire for her children to not live beyond 15 to 17 years old – she would prefer for them to die prematurely and go to paradise (PP File 2).

Moreover, in PP File 2, it becomes evident that extremist parents actively instill existential fears in their children by threatening them with apocalyptic visions, as to socialize them into their ideology. A quote from a recording of confidential communication:

> "[The mother] is presumably furious with [her daughter] and says: 'Sit down and listen out of respect! Don't you want to be protected? Don't you know that you scream in your sleep? Don't you know that? Did you know that the devils come to you every night? That you're screaming and crying out of nowhere? Don't you understand that? Listen to the Quran, even if you don't recite it, at least listen! Listen to the words of Allah'. While [the mother] is shouting, the children are dead silent" (PP File 2)

In PP File 12, recordings of confidential communication reveal similar interactions taking place between a radicalized suspect and his children. The file states:

> "On the recording of [date], it was heard that [suspect] was violent with his child. From the later transcription of the audio recording of that day, it can be heard that [suspect] asks [daughter] why she had said that Satan is good and God is bad. [Daughter] is then repeatedly hit by [suspect]. [Suspect] declares that if she keeps saying this, God will throw her into a big fire" (PP File 12)

An excerpt from the same file:

> "[The suspect] explains to the children what is allowed and not allowed by Allah. He says that if you obey Allah, you will go to paradise, and if you are disobedient, Allah can punish you. [On the recording, a] child's voice can be heard saying that women should wear a headscarf but dads shouldn't. [The suspect] explains that Allah has said that it should be so, and there is no room for discussion. [The suspect] continues talking about what it means to be a Muslim and what happens when you go to paradise (then you become young again according to [the suspect])" (PP File 12)

While these quotes demonstrate how parents use images of fear and promises of paradise in the ideological socialization of their children, their intent is not clear. In the section 'Social isolation' of this Chapter, I discussed how extremist parents genuinely perceive the outside world as an unsafe place and are convinced that they have the best interests of their children at heart. It is possible that this is also the case here. For instance, a former right-wing extremist father explains that the use of threats and rewards was a way for him to protect his children: "I was just so angry… I wanted [my children] to be aware of all these evil forces in the world. I thought to myself, if I could just instill this fear in them, perhaps they would build a defense mechanism. They'd be better prepared than I was as a child" (Interview Benjamin). Such self-reflections are not present in the stories of (former) jihadist parents. Nevertheless, it is not unimaginable that the genuine desire to protect children is a more substantial motivator in parents' scaremongering, than their mere goal of transmitting their extremist worldviews.

Symbolism, home decor, and attire

In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, it was already observed that the home environment is the place where parents feel most free to fully express their worldviews. In the analysis, the significance of symbolism within the home environment emerged in seven interviews, four Public Prosecutor's (PP) files and two court cases. It was observed that parents' extremist ideologies are reflected in in their stylistic choices regarding their home decoration, which tends to feature ideological ornaments, flags, banners, books, and memorabilia. Former right-wing extremist respondent Andrew, for example, describes that he used to have T-shirts with symbolic prints, ideological music, and "boxes of magazines and literature, and handbooks for the members" at home, which his children were regularly exposed to. Another interviewee talks about the "gilded Hitler bust" and swastika letter openers that his right-wing extremist parents had in their house (Interview Jeffrey). Ethan, a former right-wing extremist respondent from the United States tells me:

> "If you walked into my bedroom, you definitely knew that this was the home of a Nazi. In my bedroom, I had a map hung up on my wall that had a bunch of different places marked down where Latinos lived or where a lot of Jewish people lived. I went into the nitty-gritty with that stuff. I also had a swastika flag hung up right above my bed. I had different, you know, like parts of the World War 2, some kind of knife from World War 2 that had a swastika on the handle. I had symbols, like German symbols – at the time I was gonna make a necklace out of that – set up on the dresser. The whole room was like… You could totally tell that this all belonged to someone who was part of the Nazi movement" (Interview Ethan)

As it appears, extremist parents also tend to choose toys that align with their ideologies. American interviewee Jeffrey recalls that as a child, his right-wing extremist father gifted him a chemistry kit so that they could build bombs and explosives together. The use of toy weapons also comes up in three of the interviews (e.g., Interview Abigail; Interview Ethan; Interview Lukas).

Finally, right-wing extremist parents use tattoos and clothing choices to express their ideologies (Interview Ethan; Interview Jeffrey; Interview Benjamin). American respondent Ethan shares that he liked to dress his children in camouflage shirts. Respondent Benjamin reveals that he had a Ku Klux Klan robe made for his three-year-old son. "He loved it", he remembers. "All day he would be like: 'Dad, can I wear my robe? Can I wear my hood?' Looking back on it, it really makes my heart sink" (Interview Benjamin). Now that he has deradicalized, Benjamin cannot comprehend why he did not try to shield his children from his violent beliefs.

From the Public Prosecutor's (PP) files, it becomes apparent that jihadist parents express their extremist ideology at home in similar manners. For example, in PP File 2, the police describe finding an Islamic State flag in the house of a suspect. The suspect's children previously recognized this flag while watching an Islamic State propaganda video, the file describes: "We have that flag too!" they reportedly shouted (PP File 2). Similar to right-wing extremists, jihadist parents may have a preference for toys that reflect their ideology, PP File 2 indicates. It is discussed how the suspect in this case gives her children dolls without faces. Her explanation to the police is that her daughter had expressed finding the faces of the dolls ugly. "Do you know how much money I've spent on that crap... My kids love those things, and I find it difficult to say no to them", she elaborates (PP File 2). However, recordings of confidential communication reveal that the mother explicitly told the children that dolls with faces are "haram", suggesting she cut of the faces of the dolls herself.

For families residing in Islamic State territory in Syria and Iraq, weapons seem to have constituted a common element in home decor. In PP File 8, for instance, it is described how on the online platform "Marketplace of the Caliphate" parents would exchange baby items as well as heavy

duty artillery among each other. According to the file, a female suspect sold "a stroller and children's shoes, but also two hand grenades" on this online marketplace (PP File 8). PP File 3 depicts various photos where the suspect's children play with plastic guns. A large firearm is hanging on the wall, the file indicates – although the suspect claims it is fake. "In Syria, it is very normal for children to play with toy weapons and military figures and such", the suspect in this file tells the police (PP File 3). In PP File 8, a mother who returned from the warzone also reveals that they had weapons at their place in Syria, which the children were frequently exposed to. The police officer inquires:

> Officer: "How did you deal with the children and the weapons [at home]?"
> Suspect: "'You're not allowed to touch them'. Just like that."
> Officer: "So the children knew about [the weapons]? They could see them."
> Suspect: "My son was a baby!"
> Officer: "Yes"
> Suspect: "So, he didn't really pay attention, no. But my daughter, yes, I think she saw it. So, then we would tell her: 'You're not allowed to touch it'" (...)
> Officer: "I'll ask again: [Your husband] comes home..."
> Suspect: "Yes"
> Officer: "You say: 'He just puts his weapon in the living room'"
> Suspect: "Yes, usually in the corner"
> Officer: "In the corner"
> Suspect: "Yes"
> Officer: "Your daughter sees that"
> Suspect: "Yes"
> Officer: "What was her reaction? She comes from the Netherlands..."
> Suspect: "'Not allowed to touch it', she would say."
> Officer: "Is that how it goes?!"
> Suspect: "Yes. She might have found it interesting, but she knew she really couldn't touch it. But she was only three years old, you see? She doesn't know what [a weapon] stands for, she might just know what it does, but she doesn't even know what 'death' means! No, I don't think children at that age are aware of death (...) or that weapons can kill someone. Because sometimes she would say things like 'yeah, he fell'. So if she saw someone die, she would say, 'yeah, he fell'" (PP File 8)

While this interaction might be indicative of some investigative bias – considering the skeptical tone exhibited by the police officer – it is relevant nonetheless. It suggests that ideological socialization

may indeed take on rather covert forms through symbolism in the home environment. When children are repeatedly exposed to weapons as symbols of violence, especially at a young age, it can desensitize them to violence, which can in turn shape their understanding of power and conflict.

Regardless, the parental ideology cannot always be derived from the home environment. In PP File 9, the police explicitly mention the absence of extremist memorabilia and decorations in the home of a jihadist suspect: "During the raid, [the mother] was not wearing a hijab. Our services also found no religious symbols (Quran, verses, wall decorations, …) or other indications that would point at the radical extremist ideology of the residents" (PP File 9). It should be noted that elements like hijabs and Qurans are not inherently indicative of extremism, but their absence is notable in this case given that the suspect was indeed confirmed to be an extremist. This suggests that while extremist parents may use symbols and decorative items at home that reflect their ideologies, this is not necessarily the case, and the absence of memorabilia does not necessarily indicate the absence of ideology. This may be attributed to the security awareness that often characterizes jihadist individuals (see Aarns & Roex, 2017; Grol, Weggemans & Bakker, 2014), potentially resulting in them hiding their worldviews even in the comfort of their own home.

The use of extremist language and "Othering"

The systematic literature review discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation suggested that parental language may play a crucial role in the transmission of extremism from parent to child. The ways in which parents engage in conversations with their children can indeed reveal their extremist narratives – or the stories, narrations, and discourses with which one interprets events and experiences in their everyday life (Maruna & Liem, 2021; Presser & Sandberg, 2019). Narratives, in this context, serve as the means by which people construct and share their personal stories, making meaning of themselves and the world around them (Copeland, 2019; Maruna & Liem, 2021; Presser & Sandberg, 2019). In extremist contexts, processes of "othering" specifically play a crucial role in the construction of these narratives. Othering refers to the phenomenon where individuals or groups are constructed as "The Other"; placed outside one's own *in-group*; and considered evil, strange, or inferior (Dervin, 2012; Etaywe, 2022; Jensen, 2011). Ultimately, group identity is reinforced by creating an external enemy and constructing a dichotomy between "us" and "them" (Mountz, 2009).

The narrative analysis of the interviews, as well as the confidential recordings discussed in the Public Prosecutor files and the court cases, exhibit this dualistic, black-and-white worldview utilized by extremist parents. By speaking negatively about those with different beliefs and simultaneously glorifying their own in-group, extremist parents may convey their ideologies to their children. Former right-wing extremist Michael reveals how his parents exposed him to various

forms of racist derogatory language from a young age. “They called black people ‘darkies’ and they used all kinds of slurs for Jewish people”, he recalls (Interview Michael). Similarly, US interviewee Jeffrey describes how his right-wing extremist father was very vocal in his anti-Semitism. “He would constantly talk about his hatred for Jewish people”, he recalls. “He actually came up with nicknames that he loved to repeat over and over again. You could tell he had a visceral hatred for them” (Interview Jeffrey). Former right-wing extremist Ethan similarly shares that his parents liked to display their racism. “It would be like: ‘Look, there’s a black guy, lock the door’ or they would use the N-word” (Interview Ethan).

In jihadist families, parents also use extremist language and othering techniques, the analysis shows (observed in five PP files and four court cases). Here, jihadist parents may try to instill a sense of superiority in their children. In PP File 2, a radicalized mother tells her children: “We must be in charge because we are Muslims. Allah made us Muslims, so we must be in charge” (PP File 2). The same mother refers to Al-Baghdadi as “our leader” and “our prince” to her children (PP File 2). Another excerpt from the file:

> “[The mother] explains to the children that, when they grow up, they will only need to look at others, and everyone will be scared. [The mother] says, ‘they are scared of us’ (...) [her daughter] asks if everyone is scared. [The mother] confirms that” (PP File 2)

Moreover, the data shows that younger children may be susceptible to these statements and eventually start parroting their parents. For example, Court Case 14 concerns a jihadist mother whose children were placed in foster care due to concerns about her parenting capabilities. However, after placement in a foster home, these children express themselves “very negatively and threateningly towards non-Muslims and disbelievers”, the Child Protection Service writes (Court Case 14). In Court Case 17, a child protection facility similarly states that a radicalized mother’s children make “very worrying statements” in the foster home where they reside. Furthermore, in PP File 1, children imitate their radicalized father in his extremist expression – for example, by attributing certain experiences to the Devil. Lastly, in PP File 2, the daughter of a female jihadist reportedly made several problematic statements at her elementary school, such as: “We are Muslims, the villains are *kaffir* [infidels]”, and “Those fucking *kuffar* [infidels], I’m going to kill them, I want to grow up quickly” (PP File 2).

While the children in these cases are presumably too young to fully understand what they are saying and are likely just mirroring their parents (following social learning theory as discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, see Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961; Whitbeck, 1999), the examples outlined above illustrate how susceptible children are to these verbalizations. This respective susceptibility might be attributed to the fact that extremist narratives – characterized by a dualistic,

black-and-white, us-versus-them perspective – aligns with children's simplified perception of the world. In other words, where children categorize their surroundings into "good" and "bad", extremist narratives effectively do the same. Hence, the use of othering and extremist language by parents may potentially accelerate children's socialization into these ideologies.

INDIRECT SOCIALIZATION MECHANISMS

Romanticizing the ideology

In addition to the direct socialization mechanisms outlined above – which largely resemble those discussed in Chapter 3 – several indirect socialization mechanisms inductively emerged out of the thematic analysis as well. First, it was observed in the interview data that various interviewees recount their parents' extremist ideology having an enchanting effect on them, prompting a romanticized view of their parents and their belief systems (observed in four interviews). As indicated by the interviews, children may feel particularly fascinated or enthralled by the 'dangerous' nature of the extremist milieu. To illustrate, respondent Jeffrey vividly remembers sitting in the car with his parents and siblings – his right-wing extremist father behind the wheel – when their car was suddenly ambushed by a rival neo-Nazi group. The subsequent car chase remains a tangible memory:

> "It was very exciting, I mean my brother and I were in the back seat, the car was sliding from one side to the other and they were whipping around corners and stuff. You know, we couldn't believe this was really happening and we just thought it was like, yeah, it was super exciting" (Interview Jeffrey)

Due to these events, Jeffrey subconsciously started attributing a heroic status to his father, viewing him as some kind of superman. A few years later, Jeffrey's father taught him how to make improvised bombs and explosives, which was another similarly thrilling experience. According to Jeffrey, this altogether caused somewhat of a "psychological fascination" with his father and neo-Nazi activities, further fueling his romanticized perception of his father's right-wing extremist organization.

Likewise, relatives' involvement in violent events can have a similar magnetic allure to children (observed in three interviews). Within right-wing extremist movements, this seems particularly true for family members who fought for nazi-Germany in World War II. One interviewee recalls as a child being fascinated by the battle scars of his great-uncles and grandparents. When inquiring about these injuries, however, they refused to talk about their involvement in the war. This secrecy only increased his interest in right-wing extremism. "It just fostered my fascination with the history and the racism and the hate and all that. To me, they were some kind of war heroes" (Interview

Andrew). Another interviewee similarly remembers being intrigued by the Nazi history of her German grandparents. "Every time I visited [my grandmother], she would say 'Go to the bookshelf' and she'd give me some of her German books, which I just devoured" (Interview Madison). These observations also indicate possible manifestations of multigenerational transmission, which are elaborated upon in the section 'Multigenerational Transmission' of this Chapter.

In a jihadist context, children also seem to put their parents (and their worldviews) on a pedestal at times (observed in two interviews and two Public Prosecutor's files). For example, a mother who returned from Islamic State territory with her children, talks about her ex-husband – the father of her children – who at the time of interviewing still resided in a detention camp in Syria (Interview Nour). Due to his long absence, her children's perception of their father has become somewhat distorted, she explains. Her children have come to view their father as a "superhero", who, during their stay in the Islamic State caliphate, only did fun and exciting things with them – like taking them on daytrips and motorcycle rides (Interview Nour). "They have come to see that man [their father] as Nelson Mandela or something, completely romanticized. But soon he will return [to the Netherlands], and that will be a huge blow to them, of course" (Interview Nour). She reveals that in reality, the children's father has never distanced himself from his jihadist beliefs, and she fears that her children's idealized view of him might make them extra susceptible to his ideology. She is trying to make them resilient against these ideas, as to prepare them for their father's return:

> "It is one of the main reasons why we, as a family, are in systemic psychotherapy. I hope that before he returns [to the Netherlands], [my children] will already be able to stand their ground in terms of their identity and making their own choices. That is one of my biggest concerns for when their father comes back. (...) I just want my children to learn and be able to make their own life choices. I have four children, and all four of them are very different, also in terms of their religious faith and such. And yeah, I want that to stay that way, of course" (Interview Nour)

Here, the idealized perception children have of their father is reinforced by their physical distance. Overall, this illustrates that parents (and their ideologies) may at times even be more present in their absence – which may foster children's romanticization and subsequent ideological transmission. This indirect socialization mechanism might also apply to children who have to miss their parents due to their imprisonment – an hypothesis I was unable to explore further in this study.

Loyalty and trust

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, where the theoretical background of the concept of intergenerational transmission was discussed, it was already hypothesized that loyalty-induced symbiosis can foster the transmission of extremist worldviews. In such symbiotic relationships, children want to relieve the hurt or trauma observed in their parents, causing them to overidentify with their caregivers (see Rowland-Klein & Dunlop, 1988). In the narrative analysis of the data, interviewees often expressed or referenced such feelings of loyalty towards their parents (observed in nine interviews) – usually even despite having distanced themselves from their violent worldviews. Most of these participants do not necessarily view their parents as inherently 'bad' people. "I get that question very often: 'Why don't you just cut ties?' But for me, it's not as simple as that", Audrey, the daughter of American right-wing extremist parents, says. She explains that, for her, her parents' beliefs are to be separated from who they are as individuals. Children's unwavering loyalty to their extremist parents finds resonance in other interviews as well. Brooke, also from the US, shares that she loved her father a lot, despite his right-wing extremist beliefs. "On his deathbed, he cried and asked for my forgiveness. I gave it to him", she says. "And to be honest, I still love him, obviously. He was a charismatic person; he was an intelligent person (...) And yes, there are days when I cry, I still cry over my Daddy" (Interview Brooke). Her social surroundings find it difficult to understand why she still loves her father so much, considering the difficulties her father's ideology caused her in childhood. "But I truly loved him, and I remember being loved by him, too" (Interview Brooke). Another interviewee mentions that despite the violent nature of his upbringing, all he ever wanted was to be seen and loved by his right-wing extremist father. "I never ever stopped wanting him to love me or acknowledge me, or say he was proud of me. (...) I never, never stopped wanting to have a normal father-son relationship with him", he says (Interview Jeffrey).

Some children from extremist households even exhibit a blind trust in their parents (observed in four interviews and two Public Prosecutor's (PP) files). The partner of a former right-wing extremist father from the United States mentions that their children were very attached to him while growing up. "They followed his every move (...) If he said 'Jump' they wouldn't even ask 'How high?'– they'd already jumped" (Interview Audrey). This is also reflected in the interview with Jeffrey, who recalls never getting enough of his father's attention and acknowledgment. Today, he still looks back positively on his childhood – despite undergoing therapy for years to process his violent, right-wing extremist upbringing. "My father was a fun and loving man (...) I have very warm memories of him. Do I agree with the choices that [my father] made at the time? No, of course not. But I never resented him for that" (Interview Jeffrey). American respondent Ethan, who also grew up in a right-wing extremist family, even calls his love for his parents "unconditional". The fact that he had to cut ties with them several times – "for self-protection", he says – has never been an obstacle to this love (Interview Ethan).

This all goes to show that people who grew up in extremist families can still exhibit a profound loyalty to their parents. However, this does not mean this observation is unique to this population per se. Previous studies on children who are physically or mentally abused by their parents have come to similar conclusions, suggesting that children who suffered from maltreatment by their parents sometimes continue to stand by their caregivers (see, for example, Henry, 2002; Hodges et al., 2009; Van Gemert, 2019). Similarly, research on psychological phenomena like Stockholm Syndrome (where individuals who are held hostage may develop sympathy for their captors) also indicates that contrary to our rationale, people do not necessarily seek healthy distance from those that may cause us harm. For children growing up in extremist households, it is possible that the observed patterns of (unconditional) loyalty and trust may stem from insecure attachment styles – where children have not learned to express their boundaries or to adopt a critical stance towards the parental ideology. In the Chapter 'Parenting practices' the role of attachment styles will be further explored.

Rebellion and resistance

Nevertheless, not all individuals who grew up in extremist families exhibit unconditional loyalty to their parents. A narrative analysis of the data reveals rebellion and resistance as a recurring sentiment among some interviewees – although these stories appear to be less prominent than those expressing participants' loyalty. In total, three of the interview respondents indicate never having been susceptible to the extremist ideology of their parents. Moreover, these narratives do not reflect the deep devotion and blind trust observed in the paragraph above. British interviewee Jocelyn mentions never having felt at peace with her right-wing extremist father's worldviews:

> "Even as a young girl, I already witnessed the consequences of my father's ideas. Families ripped apart, many of my father's friends were injured at some point, some even lethally… And I understood early on that there was just no purpose to it all. (…) I sympathized with my father, still do, I mean, I get where he's coming from, but I never felt the desire to prove my love for him by getting violent or taking on these hateful ideas" (Interview Jocelyn)

American participant Brooke believes that her rebellious nature is the reason she never embraced her parents' right-wing extremist ideology. "I am a rebellious little shit", she says. "I saw what my mom and dad were doing and I was just like: 'Ehh… I'm going to do the complete opposite'" (Interview Brooke). According to her, this rebellion stems from the fact that she simply did not respect her parents. "See, I loved them, but I didn't respect them. I think that made a huge difference" (Interview Brooke). British respondent Omar, too, describes developing increasing

resistance to his parents' jihadist ideas while growing up. As a result, he believes their ideology never fully took hold. Nonetheless, he doesn't necessarily view his rebellious attitude from that time as a positive thing. "Because if you are doing the opposite of your parents, their behaviors or beliefs are still the anchor of your choices. (…) It may give you a sense of freedom, but you remain just as much a product of your upbringing" (Interview Omar).

These observations suggest that not all children blindly follow their parents' beliefs. Some respondents prove to be rather resilient to these ideologies. In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I suggested that older children might be less susceptible to their parents' beliefs, as they likely have already formed their own identity separate from the family ideology, limiting parental influences. Additionally, from the socialization literature described in Chapter 2, we know that the role of parents in children's lives diminishes as children grow older (Hurrelmann & Bauer, 2018; Muller-Wolf, 1974; Smetana, 1999). Due to the qualitative, retrospective nature of the current study, I could not test the role age may play in processes of extremist intergenerational transmission. Nevertheless, it is not inconceivable that this factor played a role in the cases outlined above.

MULTIGENERATIONAL SOCIALIZATION MECHANISMS

In Chapter 2, various theories on the transmission of (collective) trauma and victimhood were discussed. Here, it was observed how trauma can continue to persist over multiple generations (see Lev-Wiesel, 2007). In the thematic analysis of the interview data, the multigenerational socialization of extremist ideologies emerged in six of the interviews – although notably, specifically in relation to right-wing extremism. The observation that multigenerational transmission appears to be particularly prominent among right-wing extremists may be explained by the fact that historically, compared to jihadism, right-wing extremism have a longer and more established presence in the Global North (see De Graaf, 2010; Klausen, 2021; NCTV, 2018). Additionally, five of the right-wing extremist interview respondents claim to be of German descent, which they explicitly declare to be proud of – with some even identifying themselves as "Germanic" (e.g., Interview Liam). For instance, British respondent Madison mentions identifying as German due to her family ancestry, despite her brother not doing so. While as a child, she spent hours delving into German literature, music, and history, her brother showed no interest. "It's funny, because we still grew up in the same household. But he identifies much more as British than I do" (Interview Madison).

Three right-wing extremist respondents reveal that their family members fought on the side of Nazi-Germany during World War II (Interview Madison; Interview Michael; Interview Andrew). Rather than concealing this uncomfortable truth, these respondents tend to speak proudly of their Nazi family members. British interviewee Madison, for example, refers to her grandparents as being "early adopters" of Nazism, emphasizing their high status and extensive network within the Third Reich. Former right-wing extremist respondent Andrew claims the same for his grandfather

and great-aunts. He explains that this family history played a significant role in his youth. “It was that fascination with my grandfather’s history and everything that led me down that rabbit hole so to speak. I asked more and more questions growing up so I got bits and pieces here and there” (Interview Andrew).

Some former right-wing extremist respondents believe that this ideology goes even further back in their family line. For instance, German interviewee Lukas reveals that his great-grandfather was already a high-ranking leader within a prominent right-wing extremist organization. “It was like a generational thing. Like, it was just part of the family fabric” (Interview Lukas). However, most respondents are not convinced that being descended from older generations of right-wing extremists leads to a higher status or more respect within right-wing extremist groups. “I think some [of the group members] thought my family history was a cool story, but I don’t think it helped me to rise the ranks [within the movement]”, one of them explains (Interview Ethan). Another interviewee agrees and emphasizes that he did not flaunt his grandparents’ Nazi sympathies. “My grandparents were still alive at the time I was in the movement. And there is a fear amongst German veterans that they’ll be accused of certain atrocities or things…”, he explains. “I also knew there were a lot of infiltrators and informants within the movement. So, I kept a lot of my family background quiet” (Interview Andrew).

Based on the data, multigenerational transmission seems less prevalent in Dutch jihadist families. Files or interviewees referring to grandparents with jihadist ideas are sparse. Regardless, the prosecution files indicate that there are often multiple radicalized family members within a family system (PP File 5, PP File 6; PP File 9; PP File 12). For instance, PP File 9 describes two brothers who are both suspected of planning and preparing terrorist offences. In PP File 5, three generations traveled to Syria – concerning a mother, her two children, and her grandchildren – to join Islamic State, although presumably, the daughter was the ideological driving force behind the decision to travel to Syria (PP File 5). Lastly, in Court Case 17, concerns about the role of grandparents in the radicalization of their grandchildren are raised, and in PP File 9, a suspect shares jihadist lectures from an extremist preacher in a group chat with his brothers and sisters.

While these files do not directly indicate the extent to which the suspects’ ideology is shared or supported by the broader family context, it is conceivable that, in addition to parents, other family members may (directly or indirectly) contribute to the transmission of extremism. Multigenerational transmission (through family narratives about extremist violence) may also play a larger role over time as the jihadist community in the Netherlands continues to evolve. In the context of right-wing extremism, we have already seen that this multigenerational and/or historical perspective can play a significant role.

ABSENCE OF SOCIALIZATION EFFORTS

Nevertheless, the data sources indicate that not all parents want try to socialize their children into their extremist ideas. In fact, in some instances, extremist parents have no intention of passing their beliefs on to their children. Five of the interview respondents, for example, mention that they do not wish for their children to follow in their extremist footsteps. "I didn't want them to have the violence that I grew up with. I didn't want them to have any feelings of, you know, everyone is an enemy until they're not", the former right-wing extremist father Michael explains. He elaborates:

> "I have cuts all over my body. I've been stabbed, I've been shot by a .22 in my shoulder, my teeth got kind of messed up from fighting. I have scars on my knuckles from human teeth getting stuck in them. It was a very violent, very not pleasant life, and I didn't want that for my kids" (Interview Michael)

Instead, Michael decided to keep his right-wing extremist involvement completely hidden. He describes that for many years, he was leading a double life:

> "I kept [my children] away from almost everything. Even to this day, they'd see pictures and they are like: "Why don't we remember? We don't recall you being a Nazi". (…) They were completely aloof to everything throughout the entire time I was a member. It was as if I was living two separate lives. A Dad during daytime and a Nazi by night" (Interview Michael)

This phenomenon of extremist parents leading "double lives" is also reflected in the story of Charlotte, a former right-wing extremist respondent from the US. She says: "When I was younger, my parents never talked about being involved [in a right-wing extremist movement]. They would never admit to that. They lived separate lives, which they wanted to keep away from us" (Interview Charlotte). Damian, another former right-wing extremist respondent, also states that he never wanted to pass on his beliefs to his children.

> "I just couldn't sit down with my kids and read a copy [of a book] that turns racism down to them. Kids deserve to know how the world works; they have so many opportunities. That's the way I saw it. There is so much to learn that is fun and great for kids – the last thing they need is this darkness, you know… "The world is ending because the people are being erased by the blacks." Like, how could you say that with a straight face to a kid when you know that that isn't actually what is happening?" (Interview Damian)

Andrew, a former right-wing extremist father, similarly says: "Every parent wants a better life for their kids than they had, and, you know, I did not want this life for them" (Interview Andrew). However, when raising his children, he felt conflicted: "Part of me was like: I like the ideology, and I'd want [my children] to get involved. But then also, I knew that the life I had in this [movement] was filled with stress, violence, and it's a hard life" (Interview Andrew). Seeing time and time again how violent ideologies would break families apart, he ultimately decided to keep his ideology separate from his role as a father.

Some participants indicate that at the time, the relatively young age of their children played a large role in their decision to keep their extremist activities away from them. Three right-wing extremist parents mention that they had planned to offer their children the opportunity to join the organization only when they were older (Interview Michael; Interview Andrew; Interview Vincent). "Some of my children would ask, "Why can't we go? When can we go with you [to the movement]?". When you're eighteen, then you can make your decision. That was the line," one of them says (Interview Andrew). Nonetheless, he ultimately left the extremist organization before his children reached this age limit. "In the end, none of my children came to anything like that, and I'm glad for that" (Interview Andrew).

A Dutch right-wing extremist interviewee, too, seems to limit his socialization efforts. "We are just a family. We are just part of society. It's not like I am constantly busy expressing my political views," he says (Interview Vincent). Vincent does not necessarily expect his children to adopt his beliefs or join his organization. "They will need to decide that for themselves. (...) If they want to, that's fine, but they don't have to. If one of [my sons] says, "Dad, it seems cool", well fine. But you shouldn't force anything on children," Vincent says. To exemplify his viewpoint, he refers to parents who go to church or who follow a vegetarian diet, and expect their children to do the same. "I'm strongly opposed to that, too" (Interview Vincent).

Three of the (former) jihadist respondents also mention that they never explicitly tried to convey their beliefs to their children. For example, a (former) jihadist detainee who returned from Syria with her children shares that her children never expressed much interest in her ideology, and she did not ask them to learn about it. "My youngest child didn't even know the difference between 'Allah' and 'Hollanda' [the Arabic term for The Netherlands]. So, when I said, "We're going back to the Netherlands, to Hollanda", he said, "I don't want to go back to Allah" (Interview Nour). Some of her other children are interested in Islam, but she thinks it is unlikely they will develop extremist beliefs:

> "Before dinner, they might ask for a blessing in God's name, that's it. And then I have an older daughter who occasionally listens a bit [to prayers], but she's not really interested in the rest of it. The eldest is more interested in religious stories than practicing faith. I mean, she took off her headscarf and such. And if she wants to put it back on, that's fine with me, of course, but if she wants to leave it off, that's also fine with me" (Interview Nour)

This shows that in jihadist contexts, too, not all parents are actively involved in conveying their beliefs, and some even encourage their children to develop their own (religious) identities. The quotes highlighted above, suggest that here too, children's age may play a role: parents are perhaps less willing to invest time and effort in ideologically socializing their children when they notice that their children become less susceptible as they come of age.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, I described the socialization mechanisms that emerged from the interviews, Public Prosecutor's files, and court files. Based on these data sources, I described that parents can convey their beliefs to their children in various ways, through (among others) social isolation, media control, and homeschooling. Children's loyalty towards their parents, the appeal that extremist ideas can have on children, and multigenerational dynamics may also play a role. This aligns with the findings from the systematic literature review (Chapter 3). The socialization processes described in this Chapter, however, are not unique to extremist environments: the literature indicates that these elements can also occur in the intergenerational transmission of "mainstream" political or religious beliefs (see, for example, Grob, Morgenthaler & Käppler, 2009; Jennings, Dalton & Klingemann, 2007; Van Ditmars, 2023). Nevertheless, a specific focus on extremist families is justified from both a security and child protection perspective. Thus, this study provides an important first insight into how violent ideas may be passed from parent to child.

However, in this Chapter, I also demonstrated that the intergenerational transmission of extremism is certainly not always successful. This is partly because, in addition to parental socialization efforts, there should be some level of receptivity among children as well. As illustrated in 'Rebellion and Resistance', the latter may be lacking at times. At the same time, some extremist parents have no desire to pass their beliefs on to their children. To protect their offspring from the violence and hatred of their ideological lifestyle, they choose to keep their children completely away from their "double lives" as extremists. Thus, in both right-wing extremist and jihadist families, not all parents seem to actively engage in socializing their children into their worldviews. The extent to which this is the case, however, is difficult to determine. Socially desirable responses from interview respondents cannot be ruled out. Moreover, intergenerational transmission in these families can also manifest itself indirectly, as children may be attracted to their parents' ideology on their own, as illustrated in the paragraph 'Romanticization of the ideology'.

Lastly, the observations outlined in this Chapter are not without limitations. For a detailed discussion, please refer to the section 'Methodological considerations' in the Discussion and Conclusion of this dissertation. Ultimately, extremist socialization mechanisms will differ from family to family. Nevertheless, this Chapter helps us form an understanding of the elements that may play a role in these processes. As such, this project aims to aid both policymakers and

practitioners working with these families. In the upcoming two chapters, I will zoom in on the two other dimensions that shape intergenerational transmission as a phenomenon: the parenting practices exhibited in extremist families, and the parental narratives and attitudes associated with these ideologies.

CHAPTER 7

PARENTING PRACTICES

Published as:
Van Wieringen, L., Weggemans, D. J., & Liem, M. C. A. (2024). *De intergenerationele overdracht van extremisme: Een empirisch onderzoek naar de overdracht van rechts-extremistische en jihadistische denkbeelden binnen de gezinscontext.* Den Haag: Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid (NCTV).

INTRODUCTION

The everyday choices parents make in raising their children are an important aspect of (the study of) the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideologies. Ultimately, seemingly irrelevant everyday interactions can play a crucial role in the development of an individual's personality and beliefs. In their parenting practices, parents may inadvertently convey certain norms and values, which lay the foundation for children's worldviews. Moreover, parent-child interactions can influence children's social-emotional development, as seen in Chapter 3. A loving, supportive and safe upbringing will support healthy identity development in children, which may inhibit the appeal of extremist messaging.

As discussed in Chapter 3, according to attachment theories based on the work of John Bowlby (1979), "secure" parenting involves parents being sensitive, responsive, and consistent in addressing children's needs. Parents provide comfort, affirmation and support when a child requires it – helping them in developing a sense of security and trust in themselves and the world around them. At the same time, parents are able to set clear and appropriate boundaries, thus providing their child with consistency and structure. Finally, they encourage their children to develop a sense of autonomy and encourage their children to explore the world independently and to take risks (Bowlby, 1979, see also Bretherton, 1992; Stevenson-Hilde, 2007). When parents exhibit unstable parenting practices, these elements are missing, which may result in the emotional bond between parent and child being damaged, ultimately potentially causing children to develop insecure attachment styles.

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, insecure attachment styles may increase susceptibility to extremist views among children. The theories discussed in this chapter suggest that insecure attachment can cause children to develop an unhealthy need for recognition and appreciation from their parents. Adopting their parents' extremist views may be a way to gain this sought-after parental approval (see, for example, Magai et al., 2000, on the relationship between insecure attachment styles and approval-seeking behavior). Moreover, following Merz, Schuengela and Schulze's (2007) thinking on intergenerational solidarity, it can be suggested that insecurely attached children may become overly emotionally commit to their parents' ideologies, due to misplaced feelings of moral obligation. This could in turn facilitate processes of intergenerational transmission.

Yet, attachment theory could also aid to these processes in more indirect ways. It has been well-established in psychological studies that insecure attachment styles are associated with a lack of self-esteem (e.g. Foster, Kernis & Goldman, 2007; Passanisi, et al., 2015). From this, it can be hypothesized that insecurely attached children may also be extra vulnerable to the false sense of security and 'belonging' presented by extremist messaging. In extremist families, the parental ideology can offer children a sense of community and identity that they may not be able to find outside of the family context. Furthermore, insecurely attached children tend to be more anxious about the outside world (see Lee & Hankin, 2009), and so the social isolation often employed

in extremist households (see the section 'Social isolation' in the previous Chapter) may have a stronger effect on their development. Likewise, it is possible that the fearful and hostile disposition of extremist parents is more easily embraced by insecurely attached children because of their limited identity development, which may similarly prompt the transmission of extremism.

In this Chapter I will examine the ways in which extremist parents raise their children, focusing on three different domains. First, I will describe the ways in which parents raise their children within their regular home environment. Here, I am specifically interested in the elements that may indicate secure or insecure parenting practices. Second, the ways in which jihadist parents raised their children while residing in Islamic State territory will be explored. The observations regarding this specific subgroup likely do not translate to extremist families who did not travel to warzones abroad. Nonetheless, examining the parenting practices exhibited in this context is all the more relevant if we want to understand the intergenerational transmission of jihadism in the Netherlands and beyond. Third and last, I will consider the ways in which incarcerated interviewees raise their children. The unique obstacles and challenges posed by parenthood while residing in a correctional facility will be discussed, alongside a reflection on the potentially implications for the intergenerational transmission of extremism.

PARENTING IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

Secure parenting practices

Although popular perception suggests otherwise, the current study indicates that extremist parents are generally capable of providing their children with a secure childhood. For example, almost all interview respondents who come from an extremist family background indicate that as a child, they felt loved by their parents. Brooke, the daughter of right-wing extremist parents, recalls: "I think to most people, we seemed like a pretty normal family (…) My parents loved me, I loved them." She describes having positive memories of her childhood, despite the fact that her parents harbored a lot of hatred and anger. "My father in particular was very playful and engaged with me," she explains (Interview Brooke). She remembers how her father would often be play-fighting with her or tickling her, and that he regularly took her to amusement parks. Another interviewee from the United Kingdom, Madison, talks about her former right-wing extremist grandmother, who played an important role in her upbringing:

> "I loved her very much, although she was a very complicated person. She had a very upper-class formality about her. But on the other hand, I did also really, you know, I loved her… She did do funny things with me. She taught me little bits of cooking and she had a chair in her kitchen which she used to spin me on, that chair. So, she would occasionally do fun things as well" (Interview Madison)

These observations reflect the loyalty and trust that was discussed earlier (see section 'Loyalty and trust' in the previous Chapter), which could have had a distorting effect on respondents' memories. Yet the stories of parents themselves also seem to support the suggestion that they can offer a secure climate for their children. For example, a Dutch right-wing extremist father makes explicit that he is very involved in the lives of his children. As he explains, he helps his children with their newspaper route, builds Playmobil castles with them, and bakes cupcakes as a school treat on his children's birthdays (Interview Vincent). He is also the trainer his sons' soccer team, and participates in the parents' committee of his children's primary school (Interview Vincent).

In a jihadist context, parents also seem to be able to offer their children a safe and stable upbringing. Dutch interviewee William, for example, talks about his (former) jihadist brother and his children. "They [the brother and his partner] were very involved parents. Very caring, almost overprotective", he says. "Bordering on obsessive even." According to William, the mother of the children (his brother's partner) did everything she could to protect her family. "Everything in their home was neatly trimmed, spick-and-span, everything was exactly where it should be. I'd even be afraid to move or touch anything. (…) And their children were like that, too." Nevertheless, his brother's family was "warm", according to William, and the parents and their children were "very close" to each other. A Dutch grandmother also describes her (former) jihadist daughter as a very caring mother. "She can be very protective, even when [her son] goes outside to play and so on, she is very afraid that he will get dirty" (Interview Irene). She emphasizes that this overprotectiveness comes from good intentions. "She just wants the best for him. (…) There is really a lot of love between those two [the mother and her son]" (Interview Irene). Former jihadist William is therefore of the opinion that extremist families do not necessarily constitute "problem families":

> "In theory, you can be a Nazi or an ISIS supporter, but that does not make you incapable of raising your children. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people who think that. But you can be a very normal parent in all other respects" (Interview William)

Especially between mothers and their children who have returned from Syria and Iraq, a remarkably strong bond seems to exist, the interviews indicate. "Everyone thinks that those women who have returned are extremely tough on their children," one of them says about her (former) jihadist sister (Interview Rachelle). "But that is not at all the case. They are very gentle and loving. (…) All of those mothers are very busy with caring for each other's children and so on" (Interview Rachelle). Detained interviewee Karim says explains his view on the women returning from IS territory: "Every mother loves her children. Of course, there is no doubt about that," he says. "And no child will ever say: I don't want my mother. That bond between them is so incredibly strong. Especially among

mothers who have been detained in [Kurdish] camps with their children." According to him, policy makers and politicians tend to disregard these considerations (Interview Karim).

Seven of the court cases and six of the Public Prosecutor's (PP) files similarly show that jihadist parents can indeed raise their children with loving warmth and kindness. For example, Court Case 19 describes a radicalized suspect as "a loving, caring mother" and emphasizes that there are "no signs of immediate danger" regarding her children, according to the judges. Court Case 26 additionally indicates that the bond between a mother (who has traveled to IS territory) and her daughter is very strong, despite the fact that the mother in the case tried to transmit her jihadist ideas to her daughter. Furthermore, in PP File 8, a witness describes a radicalized suspect as a "sweet, devoted and driven mother". Another witness from the same case file claims: "The child was doing well there [with the parents]. She was well cared for, the mother often played with her" (PP File 8). Although the child's parents could at times be violent towards each other, the child itself was never maltreated, according to the witness (File 8). This statement is supported by the rest of the case file.

Contrary to my expectations, this loving involvement in children's lives does not only apply to mothers. In extremist households, fathers too, seem to find it important to build a good relationship with their children, the data shows. In PP File 12, for example, witnesses describe the radicalized suspect in this case as being "crazy about his children" and "always busy with the children", and claim that he "always likes to look after the children". In another file, a forensic psychiatric report writes about a jihadist father: "He treats the children well and is loving towards them" (PP File 1). Moreover, PP File 9 similarly shows that male extremist suspects consider their bond with their children important. For example, the file describes confidential recordings of a conversation between the suspect (being the father of young children) and his friend. The friend indicates that he is tired because the day before, he spent the entire evening at a local cafe. The suspect responds:

> "You are crazy. I'll always be home at half past eight, nine o'clock. By then I'm already home with my kids. I read to them, and sometimes I wear this kind of robe and I make them laugh. I have a lot to do at home. Why would I spend my time sitting at this cafe?! I'd only be looking at those ugly faces!" (PP File 9)

Five of the Public Prosecutor's (PP) files contain confidential recordings, describing both fathers and mothers regularly playing or frolicking with their children (PP File 1; PP File 2; PP File 3; PP File 8), laugh or make jokes (PP File 2; PP File 12), and that they take their children to amusement parks, playgrounds, the local carnival, the theater or a ball pit (PP File 2; PP File 3; PP File 8; PP File 12). Jihadist parents, just like non-extremist parents, take their children to school every day (PP File 2); think it is important that children eat enough fruit and vegetables (PP File 2; PP File 12) and that they

go to bed on time (PP File 8). Two male suspects from PP File 12 even regularly exchange children's clothing, again suggesting that it is not just the mothers who bear the caretaking responsibilities.

All these examples together point to the loving involvement that extremist parents might exhibit in their children's upbringing. Although public opinion and media reports suggest otherwise, they are not different from non-extremist parents in that respect. Ultimately, these observations suggest that children from extremist families may indeed be able to form healthy attachments to their parents, which could mitigate the risk of intergenerational transmission.

Insecure parenting practices

Regardless, even though extremist parents can provide their children with a safe and loving upbringing, this is not necessarily always the case. The data shows that less favorable parenting situations also occur in extremist households. Seven interviewees from right-wing extremist families discuss their dysfunctional childhood, which included physical and emotional abuse (Interview Jeffrey; Interview Charlotte; Interview Liam; Interview Michael), neglect (Interview Liam; Interview Jeffrey; Interview Brooke), substance abuse and addictions (Interview Brooke; Interview Ethan) and sexual abuse (Interview Charlotte; Interview Ethan) by their parents. Three interviewees explicitly mention criminal behavior among parents (e.g., Interview Ethan; Interview Brooke; Interview Lukas). Moreover, in various cases broken family situations or parental separations are mentioned (Interview Liam; Interview Michael; Interview Jocelyn; Interview Lukas; Court Case 6; Court Case 11; Court Case 14; Court Case 16). The American interviewee Jeffrey talks about his right-wing extremist father:

> "My father was a very abusive man, so growing up with him was no fun at all. By the time I left home I was severely damaged by, you know, the way my father treated me and the way he abused me. It took me many years to even start the process of trying to heal from that, and even now it is still work in process" (Interview Jeffrey)

Later he adds:

> "[My mother] said that during the very earliest years of our childhood, [my father] wouldn't really do anything, he wouldn't take us out, really, he wouldn't hold us, he wouldn't change our diapers or anything like that. (...) He really didn't want to have anything to do with us" (Interview Jeffrey)

US interviewee Brooke claims that as a child, her family situation was equally unstable and unsafe. "You could take the [right-wing extremist] ideology out of it, and you'd still have a very dysfunctional situation," she says (Interview Brooke). She remembers as a child being so afraid of her right-wing extremist father and his explosive personality that she did not dare to use the toilet – which was located next to her father's bedroom. Even though her mother insisted, she continued to refuse, resulting in frequent stomach aches, she says. "I was too scared; I was too paralyzed. My mom eventually had to put an empty lard can there on the kitchen floor for me to defecate in, because that's how afraid I was" (Interview Brooke).

Dysfunctional parenting practices also appear to occur in a jihadist context. Court Case 24 and 25 involve "structural physical and verbal abuse" between radicalized parents. In Court Case 22 it is mentioned that a jihadist suspect calls his wife "slut" and "whore", and forces her to eat mouthfuls of sambal (Court Case 22). Furthermore, Court Case 9 describes children being profoundly fearful of their radicalized father. According to the mother in this case, they are extremely afraid of him and "completely estranged from him" (Court Case 9). The children themselves have indicated "with great certainty" that they do not want to stay in touch with their father – not by telephone calls or post cards – according to the Child Protection Service (Court Case 9).

Various Public Prosecutor's (PP) files also discuss concerns about domestic violence between parents (PP File 1; PP File 3; PP File 8). "He was a very good father, but a terrible husband", a female jihadist suspect says about her partner (PP File 3). Some case files additionally mention suspicions of substance abuse among suspects, including the abuse of hard and soft drugs, alcohol and nitrous oxide (PP File 1; PP File 2; PP File 9). In one of these cases, a jihadist father also appears to be involved in drug trafficking.

The data indicates that physical, verbal and emotional abuse of children also occurs (observed in five Public Prosecutor's (PP) files). PP File 2 describes that a (former) jihadist suspect regularly hits her children and shouts at them. During these outbursts of anger, she calls her children *kelba* (bitch) and *zabal* (shit). In PP File 12, a suspect gets angry because his daughter states something with certainty, which she later turns out to be unsure about. The suspect calls her a "brat" and threatens her, saying he never wants to see her lying to him again (PP File 12). An excerpt of the confidential recordings in the same file:

> "[Suspect] hits one of the children, the child starts crying.
> [Suspect] reads the Quran and shouts at one of the daughters to go stand somewhere else. The child says "no, no" while sobbing. [The suspect] says at one point: "If you don't answer, I'm going to pinch you." [The child] starts sobbing and says it hurts. [Suspect] says: "good for you"" (PP File 12)

Nevertheless, two of the Public Prosecutor's (PP) files suggest that parents sometimes correct each other when they lose their temper. In PP File 9, a mother appears to experience so much stress from her husband's criminal conviction, that she takes it out on her children. The suspect – being the father of the children – tries to bring her to reason, even though he resides in custody. Over a phone call, he tells her: "Don't hit [the children], don't hit them. When they grow up, they will start doing the same". The mother responds: "But they are behaving badly". To which the suspect says: "Then go outside with them and walk it out" (PP File 9). A similar dynamic occurs in PP File 12. Here, a male jihadist suspect tells his wife that their daughters were bullying each other, which is why he was "a little strict" with them. An excerpt of confidential recordings in the file:

> "[The suspect] tells his wife not to get angry with [daughter 1], and asks her to only tell [daughter 2] that daddy was sad and angry with her, and that she should give her sister a kiss more often. (…) Later, the parents talk about the children again. The suspect says [to his wife]: "Don't get angry with [daughter 1] and give kisses to both, [daughter 1 and daughter 2]" (PP File 12)

In both cases, it turns out to be the father who corrects the mother in her approach to raising the children. This observation goes against previous studies discussed in Chapter 4, which claim that in extremist families, mothers bear the main task of childrearing (see Copeland, 2019; Dauber, 2017; Windisch, 2019). Moreover, the father in PP File 9 exhibits a great deal of self-reflection regarding the possible intergenerational transmission of domestic violence ("Don't hit [the children], don't hit them. When they grow up, they will start doing the same", PP File 9). This was not observed in the rest of the case files.

Ambivalent parenting practices

In some instances, parenting practices seem to be rather ambivalent, with parental expressions of love or appreciation quickly turning into anger. This is illustrated by four Public Prosecutor's (PP) files on jihadist families and three interviews with respondents from right-wing extremist family backgrounds. In PP File 12, for example, confidential recordings describe a suspect playing with their children ("They are clearly having a lot of fun", according to PP File 12), yet, the following morning, the suspect shouts at their children for not getting dressed. In the same case file: "[The suspect] and the children laugh together. A little later [the suspect] scolds one of the children because she was talking through something" (PP File 12). PP File 2 further underscores this ambivalence. An excerpt from confidential recordings:

> "[The mother] gives [her son] a kiss. [The mother] tells him to be nice. [The son] is not allowed to touch something, starts crying and is sent to his room. [The mother] says: "Unbelievable, what a child. I hate you, I swear, I hate you. I hate how you act. You drive me crazy, you really do. I'm going to tell them to come pick you up. Even better, I will send you to the *mushrikeen* [polytheists] – that will be better for you than you stay with me, *wallah*. I can't handle you. You are being very difficult" (PP File 2)

This quote illustrates how quickly parents can switch from loving to loathing. It also shows how parents use threats of rejection ("I'm going to tell them to come pick you up (…) I will send you to the *mushrikeen*", PP File 2) in an attempt to get their children in line. This suggests that powerlessness is the main driver of this ambivalence: the particular mother in PP File 2 clearly indicates that she does not know how to deal with the child's behavior and that she feels desperate.

Said ambivalence is similarly observed in three interviews pertaining to right-wing extremist contexts. Being the daughter of right-wing extremist parents, the British interviewee Jocelyn was never really sure of her parents' mood. "Sometimes there were moments when they would show their care and concern, but in the blink of an eye they would be guilt-tripping me and accusing me of betraying my roots" (Interview Jocelyn). According to her, it did not matter whether she had actually done something wrong: her parents would always find something that to them illustrated her lack of commitment to the family ideology (Interview Jocelyn). This is also reflected in the story of the former right-wing extremist Brendon. While he does not doubt the love his mother had for him, he thinks that she was not always able to express it: "My mother's love for me was unconditional; her relationship with me was very conditional", he summarizes (Interview Brendon).

PARENTING PRACTICES IN 'THE CALIPHATE'

In addition to parenting practices in the home environment, much of the data concerning (former) jihadist parents describe the ways in which children were raised in Islamic State territory. Dutch interviewee Nour talks about everyday life in the 'caliphate' with her children:

> "Our life in IS territory was not very different from that in the Netherlands. Yeah, sure, the environment was different, but each day I just got up, ate breakfast, and then instead of the kids going to school, I homeschooled them. Simply in Dutch. An Egyptian friend would teach them Arabic and math" (Interview Nour)

She claims that her children "really enjoyed" their time in Iraq – explaining that they played outside a lot and had a lot of friends. "If I have to be honest – and this may sound strange – but I really think they were happy there" (Interview Nour). Even in the Kurdish detention camp where they stayed after the fall of the caliphate, her children had a good time. "Nowadays, they sometimes say that they miss the camp, they have many positive memories of it. They played a lot, built a lot… Very imaginative" (Interview Nour). Another (former) jihadist father also says that he managed to build "a very good bond" with his children while residing in IS territory. "I played with them a lot. I would often take the children to the playground – there are several small amusement parks there – or to friends' houses. My friends there were all married men with children, so they would play there," he remembers (Interview Abdelkader). While in Syria, he considered it crucial for his children's development to continue to go to school– especially stressing the importance language lessons. "We understood that they would be at a serious disadvantage if they only started school at the age of seven, because neither I nor their mother really speak Arabic or Syrian," he explains (Interview Abdelkader). He says he considers himself a good father, although he felt that overall, he could not be there enough for his children while in IS territory. "I tried my best. I also failed at times, because I often could not be there. But when I was there, I tried to give them all of my attention. Yeah, I think they loved me a lot" (Interview Abdelkader).

A female (former) jihadist suspect similarly looks back positively on her time in IS territory. To the police, she describes that she and her family tried to mimic their Dutch everyday routine as much as possible:

> "I'm actually a very good mother. It went very well. In Syria, I tried to do as many European things as possible with my kids. As far as the circumstances allowed, of course. For example, baking cookies and singing songs. I had a routine. I also potty trained the children. [Child 1] after 1 year and [child 2] after 1 year and 3 months" (PP File 3)

When she decided to escape IS territory with her children, she tried to keep the flight as light-hearted as possible. "I built sand castles with my children – I tried to get through it by playing with them," she says (PP File 3). In another case a similar story emerges:

> "Police officer: "What did your children consciously understand from your flight [from IS territory]?"
> Suspect: "(…) At the last place we stayed at, I decorated a room and collected toys, and I started playing with them as much as possible. To keep [my children] away from all the violence as much as possible. To shut out the negative experiences as much as possible. And there I taught [my daughter] … Look, of course she hears all kinds of things, for example about the *kuffar*, which means 'disbelievers'. And so, I taught her that *kuffar* are just (…) people who shoot. They are bad, because they hurt people. By doing so, I tried to protect her from the (inaudible) of ISIS. But I don't think I could have done that for long – if I had stayed there much longer, I wouldn't have been able to. But at that moment, I did my best to protect her as much as possible" (PP File 8)

Other (former) jihadist interviewees look back less positively on their time in the caliphate. A detained respondent, Abdelkader, describes his life in Syria at the time as "very stressful". He lived in Aleppo with his wife and children. "No electricity, no running water. Sometimes no food for days. And also, in terms of medical care, everything was so tiring and so stressful" (Interview Abdelkader). The persistent stress and uncertainty took a significant toll on his relationship with his wife. "We were constantly arguing, and that only became worse when we had children. The situation was intolerable. Eventually we just decided to break up". Abdelkader lost all contact with his children as a result, but he has made peace with that. "I know she is a very good mother. I'm really not worried about that. I know the children are in good hands" (Interview Abdelkader).

Only one interviewee mentions children being trained by IS to become jihadist fighters. A Dutch respondent, former jihadist William, describes his brother's children receiving firearms training while residing in the IS caliphate. In the rest of the interviews, such explicitly violent training for children was not mentioned. Eight of the (former) jihadist interviewees I spoke to are of the opinion that it is therefore not justified that the media continues to maintain this image of returned children as 'terrorists in the making'. "I really don't believe that. I mean, they are *children*," imprisoned interviewee Karim says. "They literally live day to day. They can't even remember what they ate yesterday – and you're going to tell me that they have all those kinds of ideas, or that they have come kind of deep hatred?! Come on, what scaremongering" (Interview Karim). Another (former) jihadist detainee says that she cannot imagine that children raised in IS territory were raised in hatred. "What mother wants her child to walk around with a knife in his

hand?! I really don't believe that" (Interview Samira). In her opinion, the ways Dutch authorities approach returned children is vastly exaggerated. "They look way too much into it. If a child picks up a toy gun, you should not immediately draw all kinds of conclusions. You can just buy those things in store" (Interview Samira).

Nonetheless, three other interviewees are of the opinion children raised in IS territory will automatically be taught to hate the Netherlands. One of them explains:

> "All those women who returned from IS territory have children. And sure, there will be women who are going to raise their children to *do certain things*. But hey, if you leave those women in a [Kurdish detention] camp for five years, what do you expect? That they will tell their children that the Netherlands is the best country in the world? If that's what you expect from them, you should've repatriated them [from Syria and Iraq] on the very first day, and treat them as you would have treated any Dutch woman. That's the difference" (Interview Mustafa)

Although it is unclear what Mustafa means by '*doing certain things*'– the rest of the interview suggests he is referring to committing a terrorist attack:

> "The Netherlands should not be surprised if something happens. The Netherlands should really not be surprised. Even if those women don't do anything [violent], those children will be raised to (…) Those children will understand that. They lived in those [Kurdish] camps, and they are going to grow up someday. If they don't become terrorists, then they will surely end up as criminals or something like that" (Interview Mustafa)

Imprisoned interviewee Soufiane also believes that children of IS-fighters are able to take on parents' anger. He believes it is likely that they will never be able to build a normal life in the Netherlands:

> "These children will be going down the wrong path. Just watch my words: they will also end up in prison, or commit suicide. (…) If you separate them from their family… That's what I'm really afraid of: "They killed my father or put him in prison because of his religion, I'm not allowed to see my mother, they took everything away from me…" As they grow up, children will start to think about these things. As you get older you, naturally look back to your roots. You don't do that when you are too young. But believe me, they will eventually" (Interview Soufiane)

Regardless, interviews with incarcerated (former) jihadist mothers do not suggest that this anger was indeed reflected in their children's upbringing. On the contrary, some women indicate that they tried their best to keep their children from becoming bitter. For example, Nour, who has returned from Syria, remembers that her children did not understand why Germany did repatriate mothers with children from Kurdish camps, while the Netherlands did not:

> "I simply couldn't tell my children: "The Netherlands doesn't want us" or "the Netherlands is afraid of you". So instead, I said: "Well, the Netherlands is a small country; not as big as Germany. Germany has large planes, but the Netherlands has only small planes, so it can only pick up one mother at a time" (Interview Nour)

Other parents chose to tell their children more about how those who joined Islamic State were perceived by the rest of the world. Four of the Public Prosecutor's files and two of the court rulings suggest that while in the conflict zone, mothers tried to mentally prepare their children for what would await them upon return to the Netherlands. For example, two of these women told their children that they would be separated from each other upon arrival at Schiphol, in the hope of limiting the shock of these events. In Court Case 25, a mother even prepared her children for "years on end" for the fact that upon return to the Netherlands, they would temporarily have to live with their grandparents, and that they would probably not see their mother for a very long time. Here too, however, the mothers at hand appear to be motivated by genuine concern for their children's wellbeing, and narratives of anger do not seem to have played a prominent role in the way they engaged with their children.

PARENTING IN DETENTION

Finally, I spoke to imprisoned interview participants about their views on parenthood while in detention. (Former) jihadist interviewee Mustafa claims in prison, he struggles to build a relationship with his five-year-old daughter. She was only a month old when he was convicted, and he finds it difficult to accept that he was not able to play a more prominent role in her first years. "That powerlessness is the worst part. It just breaks you down, little by little," he says. "You don't play any role in their lives. Nothing. Zero. You are simply powerless. I can't even call [my wife and daughter] enough for me to enjoy their voices" (Interview Mustafa). Like other detainees at the terrorist ward, he is allowed to make four ten-minute calls a week. He tries to distribute these conversations as fairly as possible among his family members, but this implies that he speaks to his wife and daughter less often than he would like. "What should you talk about in those ten minutes? It's just like, "How are you? Did you go to school?" Things like that" (Interview Mustafa). He explains that he tries to keep the conversations with his daughter as simple as possible. "You know what little children are like. Even before they start talking, three or four minutes have already passed. They need so much time

to collect their thoughts (…) And before you know it, all time has passed before she has even said anything" (Interview Mustafa). He says he finds it extremely hard to realize that each day, he cannot be there for his daughter. "She is now just growing up without a father. That just hurts, you know. I would rather just have died somewhere; it doesn't even matter where" (Interview Mustafa).

For imprisoned parents, their involvement in children's lives is hampered even more by their limited contact with romantic partners. Six of the detained interviewees I spoke to, suggest that they are hardly aware of what is going on in the lives of their loved ones. For some, this is a conscious decision. Mustafa says that he finds it difficult that he cannot be the man he would like to be for his wife. He cannot help or protect her, he says, and he experiences shame because of that:

> "If I'm ever [released from prison], we will need to have a long conversation... At least here [in detention], we can keep it nice and short. So, she doesn't have to listen to all of my misery. But when you are outside, she will also start to tell me all of her problems. I'd rather just keep it nice and short. Not that I don't want to hear it, but it's the worst thing when your wife talks about her problems, and you're powerless. That's the worst. Then it's better to just say "I didn't hear it". You understand? That hurts less. "I did not know". Perhaps that means you'll have to lie, but at least you can still sleep at night" (Interview Mustafa)

Three (former) jihadist detainees additionally address their desire for unsupervised visits from their spouse (Interview Mustafa; Interview Ibrahim; Interview Jamaal). During these visits, detainees are allowed to receive their partners in a private room, without prison staff watching or listening. As such, this allows them to be intimate with their partners. Unsupervised visits are allowed for detainees residing at regular prison wards, but not for those at the terrorist ward. The interviewees are frustrated by this, and claim that their lack of unsupervised visits makes it near impossible to maintain a romantic relationship.

Despite these limitations, some of the detained parents do manage to play a role in their children's lives. Irene, the mother of a female (former) jihadist describes currently looking after her grandson – who was born in the warzone – while her daughter is serving her sentence. Whenever she takes her grandchild to visit his mom at the terrorist ward, Irene can see they really care for each other: "They are really very close, you can see that straight away. After visiting, [the grandson] always says: That was far too short, when can we go see mom again?", she says. "There really is a lot of love between those two" (Interview Irene). The Irene's daughter occasionally tries to exert influence over her son's upbringing – even while imprisoned. "I just do my own thing. But if it had been up to [my daughter], there would have been many more Islamic influences [in the upbringing]. I did try to do that, with booklets and such, but that is just not my thing" (Interview Irene). In Irene's opinion, mothers staying at the terrorist ward should receive more support in developing

their pedagogical skills and childrearing capabilities. “They are really left to their own devices”, is her observation. “It is very difficult for those mothers to let go of their children. And then they sometimes say things that you should not say to such a child”. Her own daughter, for example, has previously told her son the date on which she will be released, out of her own enthusiasm. “But of course, you shouldn’t say that to a child. He doesn’t understand that at all” (Interview Irene).

For (former) jihadist parents, building or maintaining a relationship with a child while imprisoned is even more complicated when a parental divorce or separation is involved. Court Case 11, for example, involves an imprisoned mother who is in conflict with her ex-husband (being the father of her daughter) after she herself attempted to travel to Islamic State territory. The father considers the mother (and her ideology) to constitute a threat to their daughter, so he tries to keep the mother at bay as much as possible. As described by the court: “Apart from a one-time exchange with her daughter in the presence of the woman’s parents, the woman has not seen her daughter for several months. The man refuses to cooperate in facilitating contact between his daughter and the woman. The man declines all of her attempts at communication, including phone calls” (Court Case 11). The letters that the mother sends her daughter from the terrorist ward, are withheld by the father. Ultimately, the mother is unable to play any role in her daughter’s life due to her imprisonment and her ex-husbands refusal to cooperate (Court Case 11).

Other detainees do manage to have a say in the upbringing of their offspring (observed in three Public Prosecutor’s (PP) files and two court cases). This is particularly the case for (former) jihadist parents whose children have been placed in a relative’s foster family: whenever possible, children of Islamic State returnees are temporarily looked after by family members or friends, while their parents serve their sentence. A (former) jihadist imprisoned mother tells the family members who take care of her son: “I think I’m going to prohibit [my son] to play with most children” (PP File 3) – suggesting that even in prison she tries to exert control over her children. This excerpt also reflects the element of social isolation, which was discussed in the previous Chapter. In another case, a female returnee decides to loosens the reins a bit when it comes to her children’s upbringing – as illustrated by a conversation she has with the grandfather of her children (PP File 8):

> “Grandfather: “Can we give [the children] everything we want? Even pork and such?”
> [Suspect]: “Yes, yes, that is also allowed”
> Grandfather: “Are you no longer opposed to that?”
> [Suspect]: “No, no, I eat it myself” (…) “I was in an identity crisis, it took a while, but I’m back now. You will see it yourself. (…) I just want to raise my children the same way I was raised. Sinterklaas[7], Christmas, birthday celebrations, all of it, you know” (PP File 8)

[7] *Sinterklaas* is a traditional holiday based on Saint Nicholas, which is celebrated mainly in the Netherlands, Belgium, and some parts of France and Germany, among other places.

It should be stressed that avoiding pork consumption and not celebrating certain holidays are normal religious practices within Islam and are not inherently connected to extremism. However, the suspect's explicit abandonment of these practices in this context suggests a deliberate distancing from choices that had previously been associated with her extremist ideology.

Two (former) jihadist detainees do not have children and claim to be happy about that. "I was never married and I don't have a family of my own. I can try to imagine what it would have been like, but I will never be able to experience it. But as I see it now, I am happy that I am alone," one of them says (Interview Karim). According to Karim, it is impossible to support your family when you are imprisoned. And like others, he cannot imagine what it must be like for children to grow up without a father. While Karim says he would eventually like to have children, he doubts this will ever happen (Interview Karim). Samira, a female (former) jihadist detainee is also relieved that she did not have any children during her stay in Islamic State territory: "No, I would not want to have children in this country [the Netherlands]. So yes, I've made peace with it. I do not want other people to tell me when I can speak to my child, or to be able to take my child away from me", she says. "What I see here [at the terrorist ward] is so harmful to those children. They will never be able to forget that" (Interview Samira). Here, Samira refers to female returnees and their children being separated upon their arrival in the Netherlands, which many women at the terrorist ward have experienced as profoundly distressing

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

In this Chapter I considered the ways extremist parents raise their children. In doing so, I sought to understand the broader family context in which the socialization mechanisms discussed in the previous Chapter take place. After all, not all parent-child interactions are aimed at the transmission of violent ideas, yet the everyday parenting practices employed may influence the degree to which these worldviews take a hold in children. In this Chapter I attempted to understand the role of parenting practices in processes of intergenerational transmission, by examining interviews, Public Prosecutor's files and court rulings involving extremist parents.

The findings as outlined above suggest that extremist parents are indeed able to provide their children with a warm and loving upbringing – regardless of their violent and hateful ideologies. Both right-wing extremist and jihadist parents may prove to be caring and actively involved in their children's lives. Contrary to my expectations, this observation appears to apply to both fathers and mothers. Findings from previous studies, which suggest that in extremist families, it is mostly mothers who bear the burden of childrearing (e.g., Copeland, 2019; Dauber, 2017; Windisch, 2019), were not reflected in the current study. While the data does not allow for individual assessments of attachment styles among the involved children, results do suggest that even in

extremist households, children may be able to form secure attachments to their parents. These observations naturally mirror the findings discussed in the section 'Loyalty and trust' in Chapter 6. Therefore, it is indeed possible that the stories of interviewees who grew up in an extremist household are to some extent distorted by an excessive loyalty towards their parents, failing to recognize the less-than-ideal circumstances of their upbringing. As such, children's rose-colored perception of their parents could stem from a deep-seated need for parental recognition, and thus may actually point at an insecure attachment style.

Additionally, it was observed that in extremist families, dysfunctional parenting takes place as well. I described the unsafe and unstable conditions under which children of extremist parents sometimes grow up, with emotional and physical abuse regularly being observed. Moreover, extremist parents at times employ an ambivalent parenting style, in which a (false) sense of security is alternated with various forms of belittlement or psychological manipulation. The children growing up in these families are likely to develop insecure attachment styles. This could also be the case for children who travelled to IS territory with their (former) jihadist parents. Although most participants I interviewed about their time in the 'caliphate' said that they tried to keep their children away from violence as much as possible, the hostile conditions of the warzone will likely have disrupted the parent-child relationship to some extent.

Finally, I showed that multiple (former) jihadist interviewees struggle with their role as a parent while in prison. This is partly due to practical limitations (they only have limited time to see and talk with their children), and partly due to the emotional distance interviewees describe. An important factor in being able to build and maintain a relationship with their children, appears to be the extent to which detainees are on good terms with their (ex-)partners. It also makes a difference whether children stay at a relative's foster family, for example when they are temporarily placed with their grandparents. In these instances, parents still seem to be able to exert some influence over the upbringing of their offspring – but here too, they are ultimately dependent on the goodwill of the foster parents. The current study suggests that detained (former) extremist parents would benefit from more (pedagogical and practical) support in raising their children, both during and after imprisonment.

In the next Chapter I will highlight a final dimension of extremist family life. In addition to socialization mechanisms and parenting practices, narratives of parenthood also play an important role in the transmission of extremism from parent to child. After all, parental attitudes and ideas about what it means to be a 'good' parent, will be reflected in the other two dimensions, which can ultimately shape the ways intergenerational transmission may take place. This dimension will therefore be central to the following Chapter.

CHAPTER 8

NARRATIVES OF PARENTHOOD

Published as:
Van Wieringen, L., Weggemans, D. J., & Liem, M. C. A. (2024). *De intergenerationele overdracht van extremisme: Een empirisch onderzoek naar de overdracht van rechts-extremistische en jihadistische denkbeelden binnen de gezinscontext.* Den Haag: Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid (NCTV).

INTRODUCTION

Narratives of parenthood constitute the third and final dimension that can affect the intergenerational transmission of extremism. In this Chapter, I use the term 'parenthood' in reference to the stories, assumptions, attitudes and general beliefs that underlie parenting choices. How do (former) extremist parents view themselves? What values are important to them in raising their children? And what do they think constitutes 'good' parenthood? These questions are addressed in this Chapter. The purpose is to gain more insight into the underlying rationale for the parenting practices and socialization mechanisms observed in the previous chapters. I will demonstrate that the intergenerational transmission of extremism is inextricably linked to these individual ideas and assumptions about parenthood, based on two considerations. On the one hand, parenthood constitutes an important topic in extremist ideologies, which inadvertently has an impact on extremist parent's approach to family life. On the other, parental attitudes regarding themselves and their offspring may indirectly influence children's susceptibility to extremist messaging – as we will see in this Chapter. So, while not all observations discussed in this Chapter are unique to extremist families per se, an analysis of extremists' narratives of parenthood can help us understand the core beliefs and attitudes that may influence processes of intergenerational transmission.

In this Chapter, I will draw on theories of parenting styles, based on the work of Diana Baumrind (1991). According to this framework, each parent has a distinct way of parenting, which can be categorized into four overarching types: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parenting. Authoritative parents combine high demands with emotional involvement and affection. They value an open style of communication, set clear boundaries and provide emotional support to their children. Authoritarian parents, on the other hand, are strict and unresponsive: they enforce strict rules and require their children to conform and obey. Permissive parents are tolerant and accommodating. They provide are emotionally warm and supportive but have difficulty establishing and maintaining discipline. Parents with a permissive parenting style generally have little authority over their children. Neglectful parents are distant and show little involvement. They pay little attention to the emotional or physical needs of their children, and these are often left to their own devices (Baumrind, 1991; see also Estlein, 2016; Fadlillah & Fauziah, 2022)

The parenting styles employed by parents may affect the ways in and extent to which intergenerational transmission takes place. Authoritarian extremist parents may be able to transmit their hateful worldviews by emphasizing obedience and conformity. Authoritative parents, on the other hand, can promote a more open and inclusive attitude by providing space for discussion and dialogue. As with attachment styles, parenting styles can also indirectly influence the transmission of extremism: parents who have a warm relationship with their children, such as authoritative parents, might be able to help children to develop a sense of identity security and self-esteem

(Jadon & Tripathi, 2017; Pinquart & Gerke, 2019; Sharma & Pandey, 2015). This strengthens their emotional stability, which could in turn make them less susceptible to extremist messaging. At the same time, a lack of emotional support, such as with neglectful parents, may cause children to grow up anxious and unstable in their sense of self – which could increase the appeal of parents' extremist views.

It is against this backdrop that this Chapter will discuss the parenting styles and associated narratives that extremist parents adhere to in raising their children. I describe the beliefs and core assumptions that extremist parents have regarding parenthood; the role parenthood plays in extremist ideologies; and the ways in which (narratives of) parenthood may ultimately stimulate extremists' deradicalization process.

ATTITUDES OF PARENTHOOD

All of the interview respondents I spoke to expressed strong ideas about parenthood. In talking about their attitudes towards parenthood, they reflected on the norms and values that they consider to be important in raising their children upbringing. For obvious reasons, I am unable to check whether they truly live up to their own standards in practice. Nevertheless, a discussion of these beliefs can help us better understand the considerations and motivations underlying the socialization and parenting practices discussed in the previous chapters.

First, four of the (former) jihadist participants stress that they want their children to grow up happy. Karim, for example, tells me: "I would do my best to raise my children well and with dignity" (Interview Karim). When asked what "well" and "with dignity" mean to him, Karim says: "Just giving them all of your attention and love. So that they really feel they are loved. Never letting them down or telling them to "figure it out yourself". Really helping them, in any way you can" (Interview Karim). Soufiane, another (former) jihadist respondent, explains what he thinks he will be like as a father when he is released:

> "I think I'll be very relaxed as a father. And I think I'm really going to talk to my kids a lot. With patience. Because I don't want to praise myself or anything, but because of my life experiences, I know quite a bit about how the world works. (…) If I have children and they do things that I don't agree with, believe me, it is best to talk [to them] and not to instill fear in them, as many parents do" (Interview Soufiane)

Mustafa, another imprisoned interviewee, says he is not too concerned about the fatherhood that awaits him after serving sentence: "You simply cannot know what the future of your child will be like, or how your child will react to that. You may think, "I'm going to be such kind of father," but

what if that is the exact opposite of what your son or daughter needs?" he explains. "So, it will always be a matter of adapting. You can't have a plan for something that keep evolving. Every child needs its own approach (…) I am going to try to make [my daughter] happy, that is the only thing that is in my hands" (Interview Mustafa).

What stands out from the interviews, is that five (former) extremist parents demonstrate a deterministic worldview when it comes to the upbringing of their children. They believe that ultimately, they have little influence over their children's ideological development. For example, Vincent, a Dutch right-wing extremist father describes: "You are just born with these political beliefs. It's something you cannot teach. You either have that or you don't" (Interview Vincent). He therefore does not think that he will be able to convey his extremist ideas to his children. Time will tell whether they will end up sharing his worldview, he explains. While it is possible that interviewees desire to give socially desirable answers plays a role here, this deterministic narrative is reflected in the rest of the data as well. (Former) jihadist interviewee Mustafa, for example, explains that children naturally have a moral instinct. They do not need to be taught about 'right' or 'wrong': "Even if everyone in his family is a thief, a child knows that stealing is bad" (Interview Mustafa). According to Mustafa, a child can however hide this 'moral compass' if parents give him reason to do so: "So if he wants to make his parents proud, he might still decide to steal. And then you can't blame him for becoming a criminal. (…) But in the end, every child is naturally innocent" (Interview Mustafa).

Three (former) jihadist participants explicitly express that they find it important to raise their children in an environment of like-minded people. To them, this usually means that they do not want to stay in the Netherlands after their prison sentence. "I just feel how Muslims are treated here. I wouldn't want that for my children" one of them tells me. "I see the discrimination; I have experienced it myself. You just have less opportunities. In my opinion, this is not a good place to raise your children" (Interview Karim). Karim says he wants to raise his children "at least" in a country like Morocco– suggesting he would consider moving to an even stricter Islamic country. This illustrates that feelings of exclusion and the resulting desire to protect children from being ostracized, may cause give rise to parents' desire to exert authoritarian (social) control over children's lives. The ways in which such social control and isolation may contribute to processes of intergenerational transmission was discussed in Chapter 6.

AN EMPHASIS ON DISCIPLINE

Within the topic of parenthood, the topic of discipline emerged as a theme (observed in six interviews). Various former jihadist and right-wing extremist parents seem to find discipline and good manners important in the upbringing of their children. Although this is hardly a quality unique to extremist families, and even though these values may also be (at least to some degree) socio-culturally determined, this is nevertheless an important observation if we want to understand how

extremist parents raise their children. For example, an American son of a neo-Nazi father says that discipline was a core theme throughout his childhood:

> "Ultimately, my father's main goal was to discipline me. He had these ideas of what discipline should be like. He felt from a fairly young adult age that he didn't have the type of discipline that he found he should have had, and he blamed his parents for that. And therefore, I guess he felt like he didn't want to make the same mistake with me and my brother" (Interview Jeffrey)

British participant Madison also remembers her right-wing extremist mother attaching great importance to order and discipline within the home. "She was very strict, very strict with herself, very strict with others", she says. Madison was never allowed to sleep in, and she had to wash herself and get dressed immediately after waking up. Various (former) jihadist interviewees stress the importance of good manners, too. For example, Karim says that he will be a "lovingly strict" father – "because letting children go too much is not good, either". He illustrates this with the following anecdote:

> "I've always worked as a [profession]. So, I often would visit clients' homes. I once visited an older woman, a grandmother, who had her grandchild at home. A girl of about seven years old. She had just had breakfast and simply left her plate and cup on the table. So, this grandma asks her: "My dear" – she was just a really sweet lady – "would you mind putting your plate and cup in the sink?". That was all she asked. "Shut up grandma, you are not my mother." Well, that's what you get for being too nice" (Interview Karim)

Karim says he expected the grandmother in this case to give her grandchild a "corrective smack". "To me, that would have been a fairly normal response," he says. "But nowadays if you do that, you'll immediately have the Child Protection Service on your doorstep. I don't think that's right" (Interview Karim). Dutch participant William talks about the children of his jihadist brother and remembers that they, too, were raised in a very civilized manner. "They were very polite children, they always said 'please' and 'thank you', and [were] always well-mannered." According to the respondent in question, their mother was a "control freak" who in raising her children, wanted to do everything by the book (Interview William). She also thought it was very important that her children put effort in learning the Dutch language – and in the end they even talked "a bit posh". "But I think it would've been better if she'd toned it down a bit, the disciplining. Children should also be allowed to just be children" (Interview William). The mother of a (former) jihadist returnee sees this reflected in her grandchild. "[My daughter] wanted her son to be very well-mannered.

How you talk, how you act... those norms and values, you know. She finds that very important. She wanted them to be well-dressed, too".

The (former) jihadist participant Soufiane says that he also finds discipline important in raising his children. After all, he also learned this discipline himself while in IS territory, and later while in prison:

> "I want to do things differently from my own parents. I do not want to spoil [my children] or anything. If you want something, you will have to work for it. [My children] will need to be aware that nothing ever comes for free. I grew up here [in the Netherlands], as a spoiled boy, I could always buy everything, there is always money. But when you are there, in IS territory, it is a completely different life. Your mentality also changes. You need to be more considerate with how you spend your money, you will learn to make a budget and be aware of things. So in that sense I also benefited from it. I learned a discipline that I never learned here [in the Netherlands]. I would also use that discipline in my upbringing" (Interview Soufiane)

Later he says:

> "I just really want to teach my children that you can live with nothing and if you have something, appreciate it. And don't be like "gotta have, have, have". This also teaches your children to become resilient to advertisements and influences from bad people. Appreciate your environment, appreciate what you have" (Interview Soufiane)

The importance that (former) jihadist parents attach to discipline and good manners is also reflected in four of the Public Prosecutor's (PP) files and three court cases. A good example can be found in PP File 9, in which a radicalized father talks about a co-suspect whose parents used to be "tough". In confidential recordings, he also reflects on his own role as a father:

> "His father [of the co-suspect] is tough, but yeah, that's what we need to be. You see, our parents were tough too. I mean, there's no denying that. But yeah, that's how parents must treat [their children]. I also have children, and I also have to be tough on my children. We simply cannot deal with democracy and freedom." (…) "It would hurt our parents a lot if Morocco were to become a second Syria. But it surely wouldn't hurt me – in fact, I hope it will, you know? I hope it will" (PP File 9)

Interestingly, in this excerpt, the suspect reflects on the intergenerational transmission of this "tough" parenting style: his parents were hard on him, and so he must also be that way for his own children. At the same time, he also points out an intergenerational discontinuity. His parents would not want to see Morocco become a jihadist caliphate, but the suspect instead hopes it will. This suggests that the harsh parenting style he refers to is to be considered separately from his jihadist ambitions.

GENDER ROLES IN EXTREMIST PARENTING

Although in the data collection (topic lists and coding schemes) I did not focus on gender dynamics per se, the topic of (attitudes towards) gendered parenting inductively emerged from interviews and the Public Prosecutor's files nonetheless. The data indicates that in extremist families, parents often adhere to traditional gender role patterns (observed in eleven interviews, nine Public Prosecutor's (PP) Files, and eight court cases). Extremist households are not unique in this regard, and these observations may also be explained by socio-cultural factors. Nevertheless, examining this aspect may help us to understand the different ways in which mothers and fathers raise their respective daughter and sons. For example, within extremist movements, fathers are expected to provide for and protect their wives and children. Their involvement in an extremist organization is considered as their male duty. "A lot of men are motivated by this perception of 'I want the world to be safe for my wife and kids', or like: 'My children are losing their future and their security and they are like villainized and this is how I can protect them'" (Interview Abigail). Within right-wing extremist families, fathers appear to be generally more outspoken in their ideological viewpoints than mothers. A former right-wing extremist father explains:

> "You know, the [right-wing extremist] movement has this hyper-masculine vibe. If you smile it's like: 'Oh, look at this weirdo, he's over here smiling'. You know, happiness isn't something that you could really express. Sadness wasn't something you could express. It was all hyper-masculine, violent, war. You were either fighting or looking for women – that was the entirety of the movement" (Interview Michael)

Another participant similarly remembers the atmosphere in the right-wing extremist group he used to be a member of: "There was no respect, the guys in the movement were always very disrespectful towards women; women were there to be sex tools and nothing else. There was a lot of misogyny that went around in that group," he says (Interview Brendon). It is suggested that within these movements, women generally take on a more submissive and compliant role, and are not as ideologically invested as the men. As an American respondent who grew up in a right-wing extremist family says: "My mom was always just going along with my dad, it was, you know, she just did whatever he wanted. She did whatever to make the man happy" (Interview Brooke).

When it comes to jihadist communities, the gender dynamics appear to be different. A (former) jihadist respondent from Canada says:

> "In the jihadi scene, the women are stronger ideologues than the men. And my theory is that they are not burdened with the day-to-day of the ideology, like in the battlefield, in a violent context. You know, they don't have to worry about interpersonal problems with people or getting arrested or killed in a drone strike. The women are not in combat so they are kind of in a protective bubble and so that influence can be quite strong with women. And how that is passed on to the children, well, that is very easily done at that stage" (Interview Bilal)

Nevertheless, the case file analysis shows that fathers, too, can play an important role in raising children into their extremist worldviews (observed in three PP files and two court cases). For example, in Court Case 6, a stepfather turns out to be the main driving force behind the extremist ideas of his wife and (step)children. He taught his wife and children about his violent ideas, and eventually persuaded them to travel to IS territory (Court Case 6).

Three female interviewees indicate that within jihadist communities, the topic of motherhood pays a pivotal role. While in IS territory, they experienced a lot of pressure to have as many children as possible: "If you did not have children there, you'd be worthless as a woman", one of them says. "In the media they often say: 'You wanted to bear soldiers', but that was not the point at all. Motherhood is what determines a woman's value" (Interview Samira). Later in the conversation, Samira calls men "leaders" and women "weak", which further underlines this worldview. Likewise, in Court Case 6, a female suspect tells the police: "I don't know what the role of women in jihad is. [How I] see it myself is that you obey God and have children. Four of the Public Prosecutor's (PP) files similarly support the observation that many jihadist women regard motherhood as their highest goal. Moreover, it appears that jihadist men value a woman's fertility just as much. To illustrate, in PP File 11, a male suspect says that he wants to take his wife to Syria to have "twenty children" with her. Moreover, in PP File 12, a male suspect tells a friend that women should be first and foremost be mentally stable, and not "emotional and depressed", because that would obstruct them in taking care of the children. In the suspect's own words: "If the woman is stable, and if the children can fall back on the woman, there will be no issues" (PP File 12).

In the interviews, however, two of the (former) jihadist participants do subscribe to the idea that in a relationship, parents should be equal in their roles. "I think the most important thing is that as a man and a woman you just have respect for each other. It doesn't have to be that difficult", (former) jihadist detainee Karim says. He finds it strange that people nowadays tend to have everything formally arranged when it comes to running the household. "It will be like: I do this, you do that, I do this, you do that... Why would you do that? It can also be done in a

normal, respectful way, I think" (Interview Karim). To him, it ultimately comes down to partners being able to communicate with each other. "That's where things went wrong with my parents. Communication is the most important thing" (Interview Karim).

NARRATIVES OF PARENTHOOD AND JOINING ISLAMIC STATE

In coding the data, it appeared that for (former) jihadist parents, (attitudes towards and expectations of) parenthood tend to be related to their decision to travel to Islamic State territory. For example, being able to raise her children in "*Shaam*[8]" was a main motivator for the suspect in PP File 3 to travel to Syria. This also applies to the female suspects in other cases (PP File 2; PP File 8). "I was looking for love and the perfect family", one of them says during her police interrogation (PP File 8). These suspect's statements are supported by their social media messaging history, in which she expresses similar desires. Immediately after her departure, she wrote to her family: "I want to live under the laws of Islam. And I want my children to grow up with it" (PP File 8). The jihadist suspect in PP File 6 also hoped to start a family in Syria: "It was my dream to have a family of my own, as I've never had this" (PP File 6).

The way in which children grow up in IS territory seems attractive to radicalized parents. This becomes especially clear from PP File 7, in which chat conversations are described between a female suspect who has traveled to the 'caliphate', and a Dutch friend who remained in the Netherlands. The suspect writes to her friend about the children she sees while in IS territory. "[The children] all look like mini *mujahideen* here. Long hair… and the kids here are smacking *Dora*[9] when they see her on TV. *Wollah*, hahaha, as if they were seeing *kuffar*" (PP File 7). Her friend admits to being jealous and responds: "Oooh, stop it. If you were to see the children here… hahaha. All *kuffar* hairstyle and clothing from Israel. And they eat at the Mac [McDonalds] every day. And I'm not allowed to say anything about it, because they're not my children" (PP File 7). The friend sums up what she dislikes about raising her children in the West: "Laws of *kuffar*. Compulsory education. No *niqab* at school. (…) What you are telling me, is my fantasy… It seems too good to be true" (PP File 7). A Dutch interviewee talks in a similar way about their brother, who left for Islamic State territory with his family:

> "[My brother and his wife] were convinced that it would be best for the future of their children if they simply grew up as pure Muslims, not as unbelievers, but as pure Muslims, in a state where everyone is Muslim. Where everyone is some kind of perfect Muslim. It was really about that religious purity. That was self-evident, otherwise you wouldn't be going [to IS territory] with your children" (Interview William)

[8] Arabic for the Greater Syrian region – within jihadist communities often used in reference to the Islamic State 'caliphate'.

[9] Refers to *Dora the Explorer*, an American animated children's program that is also broadcast in the Netherlands.

The analysis of court rulings and Public Prosecutor's (PP) files also shows that the decision to travel to the so-called 'caliphate' and attitudes of parenthood are often interrelated (observed in six PP files and six court cases). To illustrate, Court Case 20 describes confidential police recordings in which a radicalized suspect and a friend watch an IS propaganda video. The suspect comments on the video, saying: "The children are simply being raised in the Islamic State, what more could you ask for?!", which further underscores the hypothesis that for many jihadist parents, raising children under sharia law would be the epitome of 'good' jihadi parenthood.

The analysis indicates that parenthood can also be indirectly linked to the desire to leave for IS territory. In PP File 8, for example, a jihadist couple fears that their children may be removed from their home due to their violent ideologies, which ultimately inspires their decision take their children to Syria instead. Former jihadist respondent William also says that his brother and his wife left for Syria and Iraq with their children, because they were scared that the Dutch authorities would come and take the children away. "They had a bit of a paranoid attitude, a profound distrust, that their children would be taken away," he says. "I think they were afraid that the authorities knew of their plans [to go to Syria], and that the intelligence service would be at their door to have their children taken away" (Interview William).

In a rare instance, however, parenthood itself can also function as a barrier in the pursuit of terrorist ambitions. William remembers that the Dutch jihadist group he was part of, explicitly looked down on family life. "There was a very strong group culture against marriage and so on," he remembers. "Getting married and starting a family was seen as an obstacle, because it would keep you from your religious duty to go on *jihad*", he explains (Interview William). He remembers that for men, settling down was considered a postponement of ideological obligations. These considerations changed when Islamic State came to power:

> "Before the arrival of the Islamic State, *jihad* was primarily a male affair. [Fathers] would leave their wives and children to go fight. But because of the Islamic State, *jihad* has really become a family affair, where you can settle down with your whole family and build a whole new life in the caliphate" (Interview William)

This does not mean, however, that all parents who traveled to IS territory did so to raise their children under sharia law. In Court Case 16 and Court Case 11, parents deliberately chose to leave their children in the Netherlands, and to not take them with them to the 'caliphate'. Although the exact motivation for this cannot be deduced from the court rulings, it is not unlikely that parents' desire to protect children from the physical dangers involved with life in the warzone played a role (see also Chapter 6, 'Absence of socialization efforts').

IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS IN PARENTHOOD

In analyzing the backgrounds of extremist families, it became clear that extremist partners sometimes do not see eye to eye with regard to their ideas about children's upbringing. In fact, based on the interview data, it appears that ideological conflicts between parents do not seem uncommon (observed in seven interviews). American interviewee Jeffrey remembers his mother wanting to sign him up for baseball as a child, but his right-wing extremist father prohibited this. "He was like: 'No, absolutely not, because there will be black kids there'" (Interview Jeffrey). Because his mother did not agree with these viewpoints, she made sure he could secretly still play baseball. Moreover, she tried to keep her husband from bringing the members of his neo-Nazi organization home. "Somehow, she was able to convince my dad to keep that part of his work – or whatever you want to call it – away from the family. She fought every single day to try to establish some sort of normalcy for me and my brother", he says (Interview Jeffrey). Jeffrey's mother also refuses to join his father's organization, much to his father's dismay. "My dad resented that tremendously. He absolutely resented that, and he held on to that resentment to the point where he finally met another woman, had an affair, and left my mom" (Interview Jeffrey).

Interviewee Benjamin, too, describes that the mother of his children was strongly against his neo-Nazi activities. "She didn't want me to get involved. She was heatedly against it. When I started taking my son to these rallies, she was like: I will give you an ultimatum, you either choose the [movement], or the children and me". Benjamin chose the latter – and in retrospect, he is very relieved that he did. I can't thank her enough. She is the reason I got out" (Interview Benjamin). Former right-wing extremist father Ethan says that his deradicalization process meant the end of his marriage (Interview Ethan). After all, his wife did not want to distance herself from the violent ideology, and eventually ended up remarrying another right-wing extremist man. For Ethan, the ideological conflict with his ex-wife puts a lot of strain on the co-parenting of their children:

> "For example, my eldest daughter just won a huge essay prize, with an essay that she wrote on Martin Luther King. But her mom and her new boyfriend – they totally destroyed her work. So, I was like: "Look what your daughter just achieved, look what she was able to do!". But even then, they were still knocking her down with their racism" (Interview Ethan)

Ethan explains he is afraid that his ex-wife will gain too much ideological control over his children. He therefore tries to remain involved in their lives as much as possible, and pushes back on their mother's extremist worldviews wherever he can. Nonetheless, the fear that his children will ultimately follow their mother's right-wing extremist footsteps, remains:

> "My eldest daughter, she's definitely vulnerable to being pushed over by [her mom]. She's often feeling like she doesn't want to hurt [her mom's] feelings, so she does what [her mom] says. And that's the part that worries me most… is that she eventually falls into this extremist ideology someday, just because she feels like she has to appease her mom, you know" (Interview Ethan)

The analysis of court rulings also indicates that children may suffer greatly from ideological conflicts between (radicalized) parents (observed in four court cases). In Court Case 6, parents have a different approach to the family ideology, which causes loyalty conflicts, anxiety and poor academic performance in their children. In addition, court cases suggest that parents may accuse each other of extremism, in light of a (pending) divorce. This is particularly evident in Court Case 10, 14 and 27. In these cases, one parent tries to convince authorities of another parents' extremist sentiments, in order to gain parental authority over their children. In reality, objective indications that these parents are indeed involved in extremist ideologies seem to be lacking, according to the courts. Regardless, the children in these cases often suffer a lot from these mutual accusations, leading to problematic behavior, attachment problems, and in some cases even parental alienation (Court Case 10; Court Case 14; Court Case 27).

Five of the Public Prosecutor's (PP) case files similarly show that in extremist families, ideological conflicts between parents are often present – especially in families where parents are divorced or separated. In the case files, it is often mentioned that suspects have a (former) partner who does not (fully) endorse their extremist views. The files suggest that this can cause tensions. In PP File 1, the partner of a radicalized suspect does not want to convert to Islam, which results in many heated discussions between parents. The radicalized suspect in PP File 1 no longer wants to touch his wife or sleep in the same bed with her, because as a disbeliever, the suspect considers her "unclean" (PP File 1). In PP File 10, a radicalized suspect – a Dutch convert – tells the authorities: "My ex was very negative about Islam. He really had an anti-Islam view (…) I am not allowed to see my daughter if I wear a headscarf… My ex hates Islam". Suspect's contact with her ex-husband deteriorates even further when she attempts to leave for Syria. "All ties with my family have been severed", the suspect says (PP File 10). It took a long time before her ex-partner allowed their daughter to come visit her in prison. "Eventually the Head of Security of [the municipality] (…) had to tell my ex that I should be allowed to see my daughter" (PP File 10).

Ideological differences between parents also play a role in other cases. In PP File 1, for example, a male suspect had his children circumcised abroad – against the wishes of their mother. In PP File 12, ideological differences are reflected parents' schooling choices: the radicalized father of the children wants them to go to an Islamic primary school, as he believes that the children should learn that in the Netherlands, they are allowed to practice their faith openly (PP File 12). The children's mother, however, does not agree, and would prefer to see the children go to a public primary school.

None of these conflicts are necessarily unique to extremist families – disagreements over head scarves, circumcisions, and school choices may also occur in 'mainstream' Muslim families. Nevertheless, the context that all suspects discussed in these case files were radicalized, justifies the relevance of these observations. It seems to support assumption that a parental divorce or separation can prevent the intergenerational transmission of extremism – provided that one of the parents can push back on the socialization mechanisms employed by the extremist parent (see Chapter 3). At the same time, an ideological conflict between parents can put children in a difficult position. After all, it is not inconceivable that the child in PP File 10 suffers psychologically from her mother's pro-IS ideology on the one hand, and her father's "anti-Islam views" (PP File 10) on the other. Moreover, if non-extremist parents use their custodial authority to limit children's contact with their ex-partner, this may ultimately even play into the romanticization of (absent) parents and their extremist ideologies (as observed in Chapter 6) – potentially stimulating the intergenerational transmission of extremism.

PARENTHOOD IN EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES

The data suggests that the theme of ideological assumptions and (attitudes towards) parenthood are linked. Generally, it appears that parenthood constitutes an important topic within extremist ideologies, as interviews with (former) extremist participants reveal that within extremist movements, shared stories and narratives about the meaning of parenthood dictate members' family life (observed in twelve interviews). Several (former) right-wing extremist respondents note that extremist movements place great value on children as being "the future of the ideology", with parents needing to prepare them for the end of times. Michael, a US interviewee, says:

> "Within the organization, you hear the 14 words and it's like a battle cry. There is this fear that it drives into you. 'We must secure the existence of our race for the future of white children'. We must secure the existence of our race – in other words: your race is now in threat. It's in mortal jeopardy. And like in government, whenever you want to pass something, you say: "do it for the children". It is no different in extremist groups" (Interview Michael)

Another interviewee describes the emphasis his organization members placed on creating a new generation of Nazi soldiers. “There was all this talk about: ‘Your children must become white race warriors, blablabla’. Even then I already realized that this was problematic for a whole bunch of reasons. How could you teach your kids that stuff?” (Interview Damian). Ethan, also a former right-wing extremist father, says that this was an important topic of discussion for him and his (ex-)wife: “I can’t remember the specific conversations that we had, but I’m pretty sure we did talk about, like, ‘Hey, this is the next generation, we have to teach [our children] that the white race is in danger, they’re trying to delete us’” (Interview Ethan). Another even says that this future-generations-narrative inspired him to have a large family: “Well, the reason I had so many kids was you know, to replenish the ranks. Originally it was to… basically to bring up the next generation. That was part of it. That’s why in our movement a lot of the people have a lot of kids” (Interview Andrew).

In right-wing extremist movements, these narratives also apply to women (as observed in the section ‘Gender roles in parenthood’ of this Chapter). According to some, these narratives reveal the Christian roots of many right-wing extremist ideologies – where, for example, strong emphasis is placed on the role of ‘tradwives[10]’. “They just feel that it is their duty to raise white kids that are proud of their race,” says American interviewee Abigail says. “A lot of the messaging is around white families; preserving your white family and raising up your family to reject like the degeneracy of society and stuff like that” (Interview Abigail).

According to the Dutch former jihadist William, jihadism contains similar narratives about parenthood. “Within jihadi movements, a lot of emphasis is placed on children, because they see children as a blank slate that can still be shaped” (Interview William). Specifically, the perceived “purity” of children is often stressed, William explains – by organizations such as Islamic State in particular. “To them, children were the key to long-term survival: the education of a pure, pious generation that has known nothing but the Islamic State and can therefore continue the struggle as a morally pure generation” (Interview William). It is for this reason that the Islamic State has always given children a prominent place in their propaganda, a British former jihadist respondent explains (Interview Omar). And I reckon that messaging was particularly inspiring to jihadi parents – both those who stayed and those who ended up going to Syria” (Interview Omar).

DOUBLE STANDARDS IN PARENTHOOD

Regardless of the narratives on parenthood discussed in the previous section, the data demonstrates that extremist parents do not always practice what they preach (observed in seven interviews). Damian, a former right-wing extremist participant, says that in his opinion, many of the parents in his neo-Nazi organization were “hypocrites”:

[10] *Tradwives* (short for traditional wives) is a term used in right-wing radical and extremist environments to refer to women who uphold conservative norms, values and gender roles – and who thus denounce liberal feminism (or *libfem*). To right-wing extremist men, tradwives are generally considered the ‘ideal women’.

> "So many of these folks lead separate lives. They were supposed to be white supremacists but they were… They had a non-white partner and they would have a biracial child, and then they are saying 'I am a white supremacist' and I am going: I don't get this" (Interview Damian)

Interviews with other former right-wing extremists seems to support this viewpoint. For example, former right-wing extremist Andrew says that there is little consensus among right-wing extremists in what is and is not permitted in raising children. For example, during his time in the movement, his own children were allowed to play with non-white children, but romantic relationships were out of the question. Other parents, however, felt that any contact with bi-cultural children should be limited as much as possible. "There were a lot of hypocrisies, a lot of inconsistencies," he explains (Interview Andrew). He remembers that some extremist parents spoke very negatively about Mexican immigrants to their children, while simultaneously regularly taking them to Taco Bell. "So yeah, a lot of mental disconnects there" (Interview Andrew). Another interviewee: "We were going to live to these mythical Aryan ideals, but in reality, nobody did. (…) Women were placed on a pedestal for their wombs, but at the same time they treated their girlfriends like crap" (Interview Ethan).

Two other interview participants who grew up in right-wing extremist families seem to recognize these contradictions. They say that they experienced their upbringing as confusing, because of all the conflicting messaging (Interview Michael; Interview Jocelyn). To illustrate, Michael says that his parents continuously spoke negatively about Jewish people, despite the fact that a close relative turned out to be of Jewish descent. This caused cognitive dissonance at an early age, he says (Interview Michael). Another interviewee similarly explains that as a child, she had to perform a lot of "mental gymnastics" to reconcile her parents' extremist beliefs with their actual behavior (Interview Jocelyn).

This double standard is also observed by Dutch interviewee William. He describes the ways his (former) jihadist brother and his wife raised his children. "That upbringing was actually very contradictory. Very ambiguous" (Interview William). To exemplify, he recalls that his brother's children received a *Transformer* action figure as a birthday gift from their grandmother. The children's mother strongly objected to this present, because the action figure was carrying a gun. "[Their mother] was very upset: 'No, that is too violent, you can't give that to those children. That is not responsible'. Yet, a few months later, they take their children to Islamic State territory. How do you reconcile that?!" (Interview William).

DERADICALIZATION THROUGH PARENTHOOD

Finally, ten interviewees indicate that becoming a parent changed their worldviews. Damian, a former right-wing extremist father, says that he previously had a pessimistic approach to humanity, but with the arrival of his children, he started to see the good in people. This turned out to be the starting point of his deradicalization process:

> "As a parent, you just start to realize new things. (…) You start to think about the type of parent you want to be. What kind of life do I want for [my children]? I think success is them enjoying the world, happiness and things like that. None of the things within extremist groups are happiness. (…) You are just thinking about everything that you hate all the time" (Interview Damian)

US interviewee Ethan, also a former right-wing extremist father, talks about the role his children played in his disengagement and deradicalization:

> "The biggest factor was coming to the realization that, at the end of the day, it's my responsibility to be in my children's life. To be the father that they need; the right type of father. You know, letting go of those things and my history was important for my children" (Interview Ethan)

Other former extremist participants even describe their parenthood as a moment of "awakening". Ethan says that his whole body started to tingle when he held his newborn daughter for the first time. "I knew that I was instantly a different person. I can't describe it, but something definitely shifted. I just didn't know what" (Interview Ethan). US Interviewee Jocelyn also refers to her motherhood as a "catharsis". Another sees his children as a spiritual salvation: "My children saved my life. That may sound overly dramatic, but that is the way I look at it: they truly saved my life" (Interview Benjamin). It is not just biological parenthood that can have this effect on extremist parents. Former right-wing extremist interviewee Abigail says becoming a stepmom to her partner's children made her realize that the right-wing extremist way of life no longer suited her: "I was reading them like these books before bed and [I was] going out and playing with them. And I'm having this idea of 'I don't want them to do this shit, and have them end up like me'", she recalls. This sudden realization created an internal conflict. "The ideology was something that I thought was *so* right. I was willing to die for it. So why don't I want them to believe in it? I was really grappling with that" (Interview Abigail).

In addition, extremists' perception of themselves may change upon having a child:

> "Being a single dad became something of an identity for me. It made it easier to give up the identity of movement leader. Losing that identity was the hardest part, because it is not just what you believe, it is who you are, who you hang out with. For me it was what I read, what I watched, who I hung out with, my preoccupying thoughts most of the time. (…) That part of my identity had to be separated, and becoming a dad facilitated that" (Interview Ethan)

Five of the Public Prosecutor's (PP) files on (former) jihadist suspects also suggest that parenthood can have a deradicalizing effect. In PP File 6, a witness reflects on a jihadist female suspect: "I think [the suspect] her old self again now (…). Ever since she became pregnant, and now that she is a mother, she is her old self again. She now thinks first of her child or herself". The rest of the file supports these observations: "Since the birth of her son, [the suspect] wanted to return to the Netherlands. She realized that she could not raise a child in Syria" (PP File 6). In PP File 8, a female suspect explains to the police why she is happy that she was able to take her children out of Syria:

> "What I was concerned about was: how should I deal with this in the longer term? Because back then, [my daughter] was still young, but they were slowly getting older, you know? But thank God I was able to get my children out of there before they became aware of anything" (PP File 8)

In this file, a witness tells the police that he expects the suspect to simply resume her everyday life in the Netherlands: "Look, she also has her parents here. She grew up in the Netherlands. I think she is just a normal girl, and when she is reunited with her children, she will start living her normal family life again" (PP File 8). Similarly, Irene – mother of a (former) jihadist daughter – says: "The birth of her son was really the most important reason for wanting to leave [IS territory]" (Interview Irene). While in the 'caliphate', her daughter hoped she would have a baby girl – because a boy would have been taken away by Islamic State to be raised a fighter. "And that was absolutely not something she [her daughter] wanted to happen", Irene says. Another suspect says in his police interview that having children slowed down his radicalization process. He says he was interested in Islamic State until a few years ago. "But then I started to cut down on those IS things. I was working a lot, I started a family, and so on," the suspect says (PP File 9). The reliability of this statement is questionable, given that the suspect was ultimately convicted of terrorist crimes. Nevertheless, confidential police recordings in PP File 12 also suggest that settling down and starting a family can be an obstacle to committing extremist violence. In this case, a jihadist suspect refers to men with

families as "weaklings" who are unable to "snatch *kuffar* [infidels]" (PP File 12). In conversation with a friend, he expands on these viewpoints:

> "When you have children, you always keep thinking about them: what is going to happen to them, etcetera? That is an automatism. So, when you want to do something [violent], you will have to think ten times more about it, than when you don't have [a family]. Then you're just on your own. But otherwise, you will have to consider ten times more: Am I going to do that? [What is the] disadvantage of this or that?" (PP File 12)

This fits with the observations described in the section 'Parenthood in IS territory' earlier in this Chapter, which demonstrated that parenthood can indeed be an obstacle to undertaking jihad. It endorses the hypothesis that becoming a parent may not only cause one's sense of self to shift, but could even inhibit (involvement in) extremist activities on a more practical level.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

This Chapter aimed to shed light on parenthood as the third and final dimension of the intergenerational transmission of extremism. By examining interviews, files and court rulings, I was able to study the parenting styles and attitudes of extremist parents, including the ways in which extremist parents view themselves, their offspring, and their respective parent-child relationship. For example, I described how (former) right-wing extremist and jihadist parents have diverse ideas about the meaning of "good" parenting – with differing perceptions of their degree of influence on and responsibility for the development of their offspring. Nevertheless, it turned out that most respondents and cases pointed to the importance of discipline and politeness as central values in parenting. This suggests that both right-wing extremist and jihadist parents may tend towards an authoritarian parenting style, in which discipline and order play an important role.

The study of extremist parenting cannot be separated from the element of gender. In both jihadist and right-wing extremist environments, women are put on a pedestal because of their fertility. This fertility is an inherent part of mothers' extremist ambitions: giving birth to a new generation of extremists is an individual and collective duty for them, our research shows. This certainly seems to be the case for women who have traveled to IS territory, for whom parenthood, and specifically motherhood, appears to be a fundamentally ideological task. This is in line with extremist narratives in which only having children can guarantee the survival of the ideology. For men, parenthood is less central to their violent ambitions: they fulfill their role as extremist fighters mainly within the organization of which they are a member, and to a lesser extent as heads of families.

Nevertheless, I demonstrated that in extremist families there can be considerable conflicts between the theory and the practice of extremist parenthood. Extremist narratives about raising children do not always appear to be adhered to in real life, and double standards among parents do not seem to be unusual, especially in right-wing extremist circles. This fits with the observations from the Chapter 6 on Socialization Mechanisms: although the extremist ideology instructs parents to raise a new generation of fighters, it became apparent that parents regularly choose not to raise their children with these ideas. Ideological conflicts in parenting, where fathers and mothers do not view extremist ideas in the same way, probably also inhibit the intergenerational transmission of these ideas.

Finally, in this Chapter I described how parenthood may inspire processes of disengagement and deradicalization. The data shows that for extremist individuals, having a child can be a life-changing experience. On the one hand, parenthood can give rise to a renewed self-image: where extremist parents previously saw themselves as angry and hateful, having a child can result in them discovering a new (softer, more caring) side of themselves. Through parenthood extremist individuals may learn to take responsibility for something greater than themselves and their ideologies. On the other hand, parenthood can also cause a profound shift in extremists individuals' worldviews: being confronted with the purity and vulnerability of a baby can show them that one is not born with hateful ideas. Such attitudes are socially learned – and as such, they can also be *unlearned*. I will discuss these considerations more in-depth in the final Chapter 'Aftermath'. I will consider how parents' extremism can have a lasting impact on households, both for children growing up in these families, and for parents themselves. Moreover, I will discuss how interviewees managed to come to terms with their ideological backgrounds, and the steps they had to take to reconcile with their extremist childhood and/or parenthood.

CHAPTER 9

AFTERMATH

Published as:
Van Wieringen, L., Weggemans, D. J., & Liem, M. C. A. (2024). *De intergenerationele overdracht van extremisme: Een empirisch onderzoek naar de overdracht van rechts-extremistische en jihadistische denkbeelden binnen de gezinscontext.* Den Haag: Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid (NCTV).

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, I discussed how the intergenerational transmission of extremism can manifest itself in three separate dimensions (those being socialization mechanisms, parenting practices, and narratives of parenthood). Nonetheless, the story does not end when children are grown-up and move out of the family home. As I have come to understand, both parents and children may continue to struggle with coming to terms with their extremist family history – sometimes even long after undergoing a process of deradicalization. How do adult children cope with their extremist upbringing, and what is their relation with their parents like today? How do parents themselves look back on the choices that they made in raising their children, after their extremist days are behind them? These questions are central to this Chapter.

Earlier in this dissertation, in Chapter 3, it was already observed that (adult) children who grew up with extremist parents can deal with their upbringing in different ways. While some continue to embrace their parents' violent ideologies, others may ultimately break away from it. Almost all participants I spoke to who grew up in an extremist family, fall into this latter category. This certainly reflects an important limitation of the recruitment strategy that was employed: individuals who did not distance themselves from their parents' beliefs proved difficult to approach and were generally not interested in participating in our research project. Nevertheless, the interviews, files and court cases can teach us a lot about the ways in which some people manage to turn their lives around. In this Chapter, I will describe the long-term consequences of an extremist upbringing, and the impact their family ideology still has on some former extremists today. I will reflect on the negative reactions they receive from their social environments; the course of their deradicalization process; the role that trauma plays in breaking away from extremist family backgrounds; and the way their childhood influences their own parenthood. Finally, I present some stories of (former) extremist parents; discuss the ways they look back on their past lives as extremists; and the ways they discuss their family background with their children.

LABELING AND STIGMATIZATION

From the interview data it becomes clear that extremist families often have to deal with negative reactions from their (non-extremist) social surroundings (observed in twelve interviews). "For my children… Yes, of course, people know. And they sometimes ask questions", right-wing extremist father Vincent says. "But look, I'm their dad, so [my kids] can always say, 'You don't like it? Talk to my father instead. He will give you your answers" (Interview Vincent). Other interviewees also feel that their children are being held responsible for their parents' beliefs and behavior. "My kids have had people say stuff to them. (…) Like, 'How could your dad have done anything like that?'", a former right-wing extremist father says (Interview Ethan). Madison, a former extremist mother from the United Kingdom recalls that the kids at school called her daughter names like "Hitler's granddaughter".

The data furthermore shows that such experiences of labeling and stigmatization can have a profound impact on children. For example, a respondent who grew up in a right-wing extremist environment says that many neighbors looked down on her because of her father's views. "It caused me to have a horrible school experience. Horrible. I was ostracized big time", she says. "When I was a teenage girl, all the locals were like "Well, there's your father… So, the apple must not fall far from the tree". That kind of thing" (Interview Brooke). Another respondent from the United Kingdom indicates that to her, the negative way the outside world reacted to her parents' right-wing extremist worldviews, was more traumatizing than the upbringing itself (Interview Jocelyn).

In a jihadist context, labeling and stigmatization is similarly experienced. Interviewee Irene looks after her toddler grandchild who was born in IS territory. When she decides to sign her grandchild up for judo, her friends and family act surprised. "A relative of mine responded: 'Well, he grew up in such an aggressive area already, and now you are going to make him even more aggressive'. And then I thought to myself: 'Oh shit, do people actually think that?'" (Interview Irene). A (former) jihadist detainee says that her children did not receive any negative reactions to their family background so far. She does however fear for the future:

> "At the moment my children are not affected by [our history]. But I do think that this could happen. Most people don't know our story. The school simply told the children: 'Their mother and father moved to Syria, but they came back to the Netherlands and the mother will not be there for a while'. Of course, the teachers understand what this means – they'll put two and two together – but the children are not really concerned with it" (Interview Nour)

Nour says she is afraid that her children may still have to deal with social stigmas as they grow older. Media reporting on foreign fighters, and the ways in which mothers and children who have returned from the warzone are being portrayed, may contribute to this stigmatization, she says (Interview Nour).

TRAUMA AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Several of the adult interviewees who were raised by extremist parents describe still struggling with trauma or other mental health issues following their childhood (Interview Jeffrey; Interview Brooke; Interview Liam; Interview Jocelyn; Interview Michael; Interview Abigail). Four of them say they have difficulty trusting others because parents have taught them to be naturally suspicious of the outside world. For example, a US interviewee from a right-wing extremist background says: "I've always been someone to keep to himself because I learned at an early age not to trust people.

People hurt you; or they want something from you. (…) And I grew up with this, so I was always happy being alone" (Interview Liam).

Three interviewees indicate that they struggle with poor communication skills due to their isolated upbringing. Abigail, an American woman from a right-wing extremist background says: "I never learned any social skills, like, how to express what I'm feeling" (Interview Abigail). Another respondent describes:

> "Because I grew up so socially isolated, I used to believe that there was something horribly wrong with me. Up until a few years ago, I couldn't even look another adult in the eye and hold their gaze. I thought they would see right through me and see how worthless I was. I just wanted to hide, you know. It caused me severe problems in my personal life and my professional life" (Interview Jeffrey)

One of the interviewees indicates she experiences psychosomatic pain because of her childhood. "I was exposed to chronic traumatic stress for such a long period of time. And I survived it somehow, mentally. But physically, it kind of burned me down", a daughter of right-wing extremist parents says (Interview Brooke). She explains she still suffers from chronic metabolic and hormonal problems due to her upbringing. In another case, the current political climate is reactivating a participant's trauma. Jeffrey, an American respondent says: "When I saw what happened in Charlottesville in 2017… That just immediately took me back to my childhood" (Interview Jeffrey). Brooke, who also grew up in a right-wing extremist family, says that she had a similar experience during Donald Trump's presidential election in 2016: "That was a real blow to my PTSD anxiety, I mean Trump as president and the way he emboldened the voice of the hateful people…. That was really horrifying for me because of my experiences" (Interview Brooke). COVID-restrictions also brought her back to her family history. "I was isolated and left alone for so long; being in lockdown just felt like a natural thing" (Interview Brooke).

Children raised by (former) jihadist parents may also suffer from trauma. Since I primarily interviewed participants who raised their children in IS territory, these traumas often have to do with their experiences in the warzone. For example, Dutch interviewee William talks about his brother's children, who were taken to Syria by their parents. "They have experienced all kinds of bombings. Their neighbors' house was hit, everyone was buried there under the rubble", he says. "And later they experienced another attack, with phosphorus and such, and all those burning corpses were there. Their children also saw that" (Interview William). William is therefore rather skeptical about his nephews' and nieces' resocialization possibilities. "I think by now, they reached an age where they can no longer be reintegrated. Especially the oldest children, they only ever experienced war and violence. They simply grew up with Islamic State" (Interview William).

The case file analysis demonstrates that children who were raised in IS territory might suffer from anxiety, attachment issues, problematic behavior, anger outbursts, chronic stress and insecurities (e.g. (Court Case 18; Court Case 19; Court Case 23; PP File 3; PP File 8). During a police interrogation, a female suspect explains how difficult her daughter found their time in Syria:

> "I didn't expect [my daughter] to find it so intense. Uhm, I could see it having an effect on her, Syria. For example, she started peeing in her diaper and her pants again, and so on. And she was afraid of the other children, because the children there [in Syria] were quite aggressive" (PP File 8)

Dutch interviewee Irene, who provides foster care to a child who was raised in IS territory, says that she notices signs of trauma in her foster son, too. For example, Irene recalls that her foster son did not want to take off his shoes before going to sleep "because he lost his shoes while fleeing [from IS territory]" (Interview Irene). When they come across a military convoy, the boy clearly recognizes the tanks from when he was still in the warzone: "He said: 'They can really shoot! They really shot at us!'" (Interview Irene). Abdelkader, an imprisoned (former) jihadist, believes that his children are also traumatized by their time spent in IS territory:

> "Absolutely, they have seen too much. I'm not going to lie about that. Those are adult things and they're children. Of course, you try to live [in IS territory] in a place that is as safe as possible, where the risk of violence is the lowest, but yes. As an adult you can put things into perspective, but children cannot put it into perspective at all. And if you have to tell them: 'Your friend is no longer there', or 'Your school was bombed'… I instead told them that [their friends] had moved, or that they were going to a new school because their old school was closed down, or broken or something like that. You just try to live as normally as possible. They did not choose it, but it still becomes their reality. Children themselves can also be resilient. But maybe later when they get older, when they are adults, or when they enter puberty, it will become clear what impact it has had on them. And of course, you don't know whether they will blame you for that" (Interview Abdelkader)

Not all (former) jihadist parents believe that their children were traumatized by their experiences in IS territory. One (former) jihadist detainee recalls that during a play therapy session, her son had to recreate the Kurdish detention camp where they stayed prior to their return to the Netherlands.

> "The play therapist asked 'What is this?' and then [my son] said: 'These are the camp soldiers who were guarding us, they are there to protect us and to keep the lights on'. But that was just his own interpretation. Those soldiers were not there to protect us at all; they were there to make sure that we would not escape. And they had nothing to do with the lights. But of course, children can have a completely different experience" (Interview Nour)

In PP File 3, a (former) jihadist mother also says that her son visibly enjoyed the time they spent in IS territory, and later in the Kurdish detention camp. "He thought it was a campsite", she says during her police interrogation. To pass the time, the mother played with her son a lot, and tried to school him whenever possible. She explains to the police that her son can sometimes behave disrespectfully, which she says is "typically Syrian". "He has been through a lot. When he hears a bomb, he'll laugh, he doesn't experience stress at all. Only now is he experiencing stress, now that we are away from IS", she says in her official report (PP File 3). Her daughter was also not afraid of the bombings, and she too would laugh about it, according to the mother. "She would say: 'Look, mom, how much smoke there is!'". The truthfulness of these statements cannot be verified based on the analysis. Moreover, suspect's claims about children laughing at bombs is not supported in other files. PP File 6 even paints a vastly different picture. "I experienced bombings [in Syria], and then I just saw those children screaming and running away", the suspect in this file says.

The court cases indicate that it is difficult for judicial authorities, foster parents, and child care institutions to gain insight into the traumas of children who were raised in IS territory. In four of these cases, judicial authorities suggest that children "possibly" suffer from trauma – or indicate that this possibility "should be taken into account", but that it is "unclear" to what extent this is actually the case (Court Case 23; Court Case 24; Court Case 25; Court Case 26). Nevertheless, various parties note that children of returnees generally "do well" after arriving in the Netherlands (e.g. Court Case 23; Court Case 25; Court Case 26). For example, in Court Case 26 it is mentioned that the daughter of a jihadist mother has shown "great development" following her return from Syria (Court Case 26). In another case file involving a detained mother, a child protection agency writes: "The children were observed in the foster family by care professionals. They develop positively and do well at school" (Court Case 25). According to the file, the children in Court Case 25 speak Dutch fluently, and do not show any indications of attachment issues or behavioral problems. Although it remains to be seen how the children discussed in these cases will develop overtime, these observations suggest that children of returnees do not necessarily struggle to resocialize and reintegrate into Dutch society – and that the effects of trauma may thus be limited.

DERADICALIZATION AND BREAKING AWAY

Almost all right-wing extremist participants I spoke to have – at least partially – distanced themselves from their parents' ideas. Specific trigger events appear to play an important role in that process. For example, Liam, an American former right-wing extremist interviewee, says that he started experiencing cognitive dissonance when he unexpectedly fell in love with a black woman. "On the one side I was becoming more and more involved in this Nazi movement – as a renown, well-saluted, well-respected SS officer. (…) Yet at the same time, I was also falling for this black woman", he says (Interview Liam). Being confronted with the racism that his wife has to endure, ultimately turns out to be the first step in his deradicalization process. For Ethan, also a former right-wing extremist, a criminal conviction caused him to break away from his extremist family background. "I had this judge, who was a Jewish man, who was very supportive of me. He didn't believe I was the man he saw in front of him. He truly believed that I could change" (Interview Ethan). While in detention, Ethan befriended a black cellmate – with whom he turned out to have more in common than he ever could have imagined. "At first, I didn't want to have anything to with him. But once we started talking, we really opened up, and just talked and talked about our lives. (…) It really opened my eyes" (Interview Ethan).

Religion can also play an important role in processes of breaking away (observed in seven interviews). One of the interviewees said that after a big health scare, he came into contact with a priest for the first time, after which he began to delve deeper into the Christian religion. His faith eventually took the place of the right-wing extremist ideology that he has followed since childhood (Interview Liam). Abigail, another right-wing extremist interviewee, also found salvation in Christianity, after she broke away from her right-wing extremist roots. "I suddenly became very, very traditionally Christian," she says. "But it actually took me a while before I realized: 'Oh, this is actually the same old stuff, all over again'. I just wanted rules to follow, and to have an explanation for why the world is a dangerous place" (Interview Abigail).

Interviewee Michael, who comes from a right-wing extremist background, says that a DNA test changed his view of the world. Upon taking the test, he expected to see the alleged German roots of his ancestors confirmed. However, to his surprise, it turned out to indicate a Jewish background. "It changed everything", he summarizes (Interview Michael). After the initial shock, Michael decides to fully embrace his roots and converts to Judaism. For him too, his religion ultimately took the place of his right-wing extremist ideology. Moreover, former right-wing extremist respondents Brooke and Ethan say that Eastern religions helped them to break free from their parents' ideas. "I didn't realize how much of this [right-wing extremist] ideology was entangled with all this Christian-identity stuff, until I started reading about other religions", the latter says (Interview Ethan). Buddhism specifically taught Ethan to look at the world in a different – "a less negative, less toxic" – way, he explains. This is also the case for Brooke, who found support in Buddhism and Hinduism during her deradicalization process. She left her Christian background

behind at the same time as her right-wing extremist upbringing. “I just felt like Christianity had been so misused in my life. I was astounded by how religion was used to cover-up the most gruesome acts of violence, so I just couldn’t hold onto that anymore” (Interview Brooke).

For other interviewees, this process of breaking away is often accompanied by education and self-study (observed in four interviews). For example, American respondent Jeffrey says that he independently started to study the Second World War. As such, he discovered that the Holocaust – which his parents had always denied – did in fact take place (Interview Jeffrey). He ultimately decides to visit the concentration camp in Dachau, as to find a symbolic closure to his parents’ extremist views. UK interviewee Jocelyn, the daughter of right-wing extremist parents, says that her deradicalization process involved reading various historical books and diving into archival materials, to better understand her family history (Interview Jocelyn).

Yet, the interviews suggest that the breaking away from an extremist upbringing is often a continuous, long-term process. Five of the interview participants describe that to this day, they still have to remain aware not to fall back on the worldviews they were taught as a child: “Even today, I have to check myself every now and then. I have to be like: ‘No wait, I don’t wanna go there again’. Because that way of thinking is just so deeply engrained in my system, you know. At a cellular level almost” (Interview Jeffrey). British interviewee Jocelyn similarly summarizes: “The process is never truly finished”. This observation fits with insights from life course criminology, which suggest that desistance (Laub & Sampson, 2001) is not a one-time decision, but a choice that has to be made again and again (Warr, 2017).

CUTTING TIES OR CONTINUING CONTACT

Six of the former right-wing extremist interviewees indicate that to them, cutting ties with extremist family members was an essential step in their recovery process (Interview Charlotte; Interview Brooke; Interview Liam; Interview Damian; Interview Ethan; Interview Benjamin). “I had to cut ties, I just had to. It’s similar to drug addicts and alcoholics: you can’t heal in the environment that made you sick in the first place”, one of them said (Interview Brooke). Another participant says: “I cut my dad’s side of the family out completely. I only have one uncle that I talk to from that side of the family. But even still, our politics don’t line up anymore” (Interview Ethan). Charlotte, an interviewee from the United States, says that she chose to not only cut off all contact with her right-wing extremist parents, but also with her brother and sister. She fears that otherwise, her parents could try to reach out to her through her siblings. “I was terrified of the idea that [my siblings] might let my parents around my kids if I ever asked them to babysit”, she explains (Interview Charlotte). American interviewee Brooke similarly indicates that to her, the main reason to cut ties with her right-wing extremist father was to shield her children from his violent ideas.

Three interviewees coming from a right-wing extremist background indicate that their social environment responded very negatively to them breaking away. From their stories it appears that extended family members and family friends in particular found it difficult to come to terms with their decision. For example, American participant Brooke says that right-wing extremist family members started calling her a "race traitor" when she decided to cut ties with them. Furthermore, interviewee Jeffrey remembers that friends of his right-wing extremist father tried to slander him because he spoke out against his father's violent actions. They ultimately even started threatening him via social media, claiming to revenge his perceived betrayal (Interview Jeffrey).

Regardless, not all interviewees decided to cut ties with their extremist parents. Five interview participants indicate that even today, their parents still play an important role in their lives. Even though they distanced themselves from their parents' ideologies, they continue to support and sometimes even defend their extremist parents. From these conversations it can be observed that several interviewees appeal to some level of moral disengagement (see Bandura, 2002): in order to come to terms with their parents' hateful ideas and behaviors, participants may mentally downplay or soften their involvement in the extremist movement. This allows them to accept the facts of their family history, without having to consider their parents "bad" people. This is evident, for example, from interviewees' use of euphemisms when talking about their upbringing. The daughter of a right-wing extremist neo-Nazi leader says that her father's violent actions were "unpopular", but emphasized that he did not act out of bad intentions (Interview Jocelyn). Another participant calls her Nazi grandfather a "romantic" who fell in love with the idea of the Greater Germanic Empire. "I don't think he was necessarily hateful", she explains. According to Madison, her grandfather was not a bad man per se, as his choices stemmed from a certain "blindness" to the bigger picture (Interview Madison). Other interviewees, too, speak very positively about their extremist (grand)parents, and sometimes verbally put them on a pedestal. American interviewee Jeffrey refers to the memoirs of his right-wing extremist father as "The Bible of the racist right", and calls his father's organization "one of the most prominent hate groups in the entire world" (Interview Jeffrey). He also describes his father himself with several euphemistic terms – calling him "the most dangerous man in the US" and "an extremely intelligent man" (Interview Jeffrey). These observations suggest that, despite his deradicalization process, Jeffrey still takes a lot of pride in his father's extremist "achievements" and the status he acquired in right-wing extremist circles. It also reflects children's unconditional loyalty discussed in Chapter 6 – suggesting that these feelings are not limited to childhood, but may be carried on well into adulthood.

Jeffrey's case is remarkable because his twin brother – who was raised in the same right-wing extremist household as him – has a completely different stance towards their parents. Jeffrey's twin brother decided at an early age that he no longer wanted to stay in touch with his extremist father, while Jeffrey continued for years to try to build a relationship with his dad. "My brother grew to hate my father", Jeffrey says. "When my father passed away, I asked [my brother]

to go to the memorial service together. But he was like: 'No way, good riddance. I'm glad he's dead'. But I personally never felt that way" (Interview Jeffrey). While Jeffrey cannot explain their opposing viewpoints, he thinks that he and his brother both experienced their childhood very differently. Where Jeffrey as a child continuously tried to gain his father's approval, his brother early on decided to look for support and acknowledgement outside of the family home.

This shows that different children from the same extremist family can deal with their childhood in different ways. While some cut off all contact (either in order to focus on their deradicalization process and emotional recovery, or out of spite and disappointment), others continue to support their parents even into adulthood. For the latter group, some level of moral disengagement appears to be necessary in order to disconnect their parents from their hateful ideologies.

EFFECTS ON PARENTHOOD

From the data it becomes clear that some of the (adult) children who were raised in an extremist household later struggle with their own role as parents (observed in six interviews). For example, interviewee Abigail says that she twice decided to give up her newborn baby for adoption, because she believed that her right-wing extremist history would inhibit her from being a good mother. "I was like, I am going to ruin this human being, for sure" (Interview Abigail). Jeffrey, another participant from a right-wing extremist background, says that for years, he also did not want to have children because of similar reasons. Jeffrey was afraid of passing on his parents' hateful genes to his children, and he too was convinced that he could never be a good father because of his family history. Ultimately, Jeffrey and his wife decided to adopt. "When we finally came up with the idea of adoption, I insisted on having girls. I was afraid that if I had a son, I would somehow end up treating my son the way my dad treated me" (Interview Jeffrey).

Brooke, an American respondent from a right-wing extremist family, also opted for adoption. That choice was a "pure spiritual calling", she explains (Interview Brooke). Brooke ultimately decided to adopt a bi-cultural child, in the hope of permanently distancing herself from the right-wing extremist ideas of her parents – and in hope of putting things somewhat "right", she adds (Interview Brooke). US interviewee Abigail says that she feels obliged to raise her children in a completely hate-free and violence-free world. "I have a life-long commitment to making amendments", Abigail says. Others similarly view their parenthood as an opportunity to offer children something they themselves never had. For example, the former right-wing extremist Liam says that he is very happy that he can provide his children with a "normal, healthy" upbringing. "That's something that I never knew. And I'm so happy to see that we can provide that [to our children], really" (Interview Liam). Brooke, who also grew up in a right-wing extremist family, says:

> "As far as parenting goes, it was a very, very important thing to not do any of the things that [my father] had done. Being a mother is the most important role of my life. Because I was determined to make my children's lives better. To leave these generation-old, traumatic curses behind and make our own legacy, you know" (Interview Brooke)

This further illustrates the dedication of (former) right-wing extremist respondents to do better than their own parents. These observations are not reflected in interviews with (former) jihadist participants, which can (at least partly) be explained by the fact that I did not interview many (former) jihadists who themselves were raised in an extremist household.

Regret and shame

Four former extremist parents say they regret the decisions they made in raising their children. "My whole past is a regret", one of them summarizes (Interview Michael). Michael describes that his eldest son recently came out as gay – yet he was hesitant to do so, because of his parents' neo-Nazi past. Michael's son was afraid that his parents would react negatively:

> "I was very supportive [of his coming out], of course. But had I still been in the movement at that time, I most certainly would have lost my mind. I probably would have flipped out and would have told him: 'No, you just don't understand, you're indoctrinated by the Zionist occupational government'. I would have literally thought: 'Oh my god, the media grabbed the whole of my son's mind'. It would have been horrible. It would have mentally scared him in ways that are almost irreparable. That is very sad to think about" (Interview Michael)

Ethan, another former right-wing extremist respondent, says that he too has felt a lot of shame about his past:

> "There was a lot of shame. For the longest time, I couldn't even go to the beach with [my children] because I had a swastika tattoo on my arm. It's covered up now. But I was afraid to even go to the beach, take my shirt off or do anything with my children because of the shame" (Interview Ethan)

Ethan recalls that in the past, he would post photos of his children in neo-Nazi costumes on social media. These memories invoke a lot of shame. "I look back and feel like… Why would I have ever

done that to my children? It might be part of your whole life, but it's not part of theirs" (Interview Ethan). Yet, Ethan views his shame as something positive: "It is all healthy shame. You know, healthy shame is 'I did bad. I did wrong', toxic shame is 'I am bad. I am wrong'. And I think toxic shame is at the root of it all", he explains. "That feeling of being less-than, not powerful, unlovable… it's at the root of all the hate. Healthy shame, on the other hand, means you are willing to heal, willing to be better" (Interview Ethan).

Regret and shame are less prominent topics in interviews with (former) jihadist participants. This may again be because many of the (former) jihadist parents I interviewed are in prison, and thus have only limited contact with their children and partners. Therefore, the effects their ideology may have on their children is perhaps not as visible to them. In addition, feelings of regret and shame can be subconsciously avoided, so as not to have to see the consequences of one's own actions. This is also related to the powerlessness many of the detained interviewees reported with regards to their children (see Chapter 7). Their reported (physical and emotional) distance to their families may make it harder for parents in prison to accept that their mistakes may have caused their children harm. For example, one of the (former) jihadist interviewees says:

> "Regret is always a bit difficult to say. I think people should make their own choices. And yes, when it comes to my children or something... Of course, it's never fun to hurt them, but yes. Look, ultimately you have that freedom to make mistakes, to make choices. I have three children of my own. I would not judge my children for certain choices they make. I just wish they would get behind it. (…) So, I think guilt or something… that doesn't help you. I think I am responsible for how I feel" (Interview Abdelkader)

This quotation illustrates a moral disconnect: employing a highly individualistic narrative, the consequences of one's own actions are separated from their social context – and thus downplayed (and thereby exhibiting the moral disengagement and neutralization techniques in Chapter 2 of this dissertation). Although Abdelkader seems to acknowledge his actions may have caused his children harm, he does not take responsibility for this, claiming he "has the freedom to make mistakes" (Interview Abdelkader).

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE

Eight of the former extremist parents I spoke to indicated that at some point they had to openly talk to their children about their extremist family history. "At some point I was like: 'I'm well-known, I'm well-hated by certain people… We're gonna have to talk'. And I sort of laid it all out for my kids", former right-wing extremist interviewee Michael says. This transparency is important, Michael

explains, since otherwise, children may hear about their parents' history through the grapevine. "I wanted to help them understand what I believed, and why", Michael says. US interviewee Abigail tells in a similar way how she informed her children of her former ideology: "I never wanted my kids to accidentally discover, like, 'your mom was a Nazi' or whatever. So, I made a choice to be very open and honest with them".

To Ethan, a former right-wing extremist respondent from the United States, hiding his extremist past from his children was out of the question: "I mean, they were getting older, and if you Google my name… It's pretty self-evident", he says. "I just wanted them to hear about it from me" (Interview Ethan). Ethan fears that his children could be susceptible to the messaging of new right-wing extremist movements, such as the Proud Boys, due to their parents' extremist history. "It worries me, that [my children] may feel themselves attracted to these groups because of my own past" (Interview Ethan). By educating them about his experiences, he hopes to increase their resilience. Damian, another former right-wing extremist father, shares the fear that his children may eventually end up in an extremist movement due to their family history. "That fear is always there. It still keeps me up, sometimes. But then again, for my kids, my door is always open to talk and communicate" (Interview Damian).

Three (former) jihadist respondents also indicate that at some point they want to tell their children about their history, as well as their experiences in prison. "But everything has a certain age, of course", interviewee Karim adds. Another (former) jihadist respondent, Nour, says that she always tried to be as honest and open as possible with her children. She never attempted to hide the fact that she is currently in prison:

> "I told the children that we were in IS territory and that IS actually did a lot of wrong things and that the police are now investigating whether mom participated in these things or not. And if the police say that I did participate, then I have to stay [in prison] for longer, and if the judge says 'No, I don't agree with that', then I can go home. I also said to the children: 'You know what mom is like, and we know what we are like, but the outside world doesn't know that, and they are now investigating that'" (Interview Nour)

(Former) jihadist detainee Abdelkader never told his children why they left for the IS 'caliphate'. Even during their stay in Syria and Iraq, he never discussed this with them, he says:

> "No, I never talked about that with my children. They were still too young. My daughter was six. What are you going to say to a six-year-old? They understood that bombings were taking place, and [they knew that] if they heard an airplane, a bomb was going to fall. Then they would say: 'Plane is a bad man'. But we just wanted to let them enjoy being a child. That may sound a bit strange, but it just wasn't the right time. I knew that those conversations would have to take place sooner or later" (Interview Abdelkader)

Mustafa, another Dutch detainee and (former) jihadist father, also says he did not talk to his daughter about his jihadist past. He believes that knowing about these details is not helpful to children. Mustafa therefore also did not tell her about the nature of his criminal conviction. He does not know whether his wife did have these kinds of conversations with their daughter:

> "I don't know if her mother explained that. I actually do not know. I didn't ask either. Some things you just don't want to know. I mean, how are you going to ask that? 'Did you tell her that her father is in jail?' I don't know how to ask such a question. So, then I'll think to myself: You know what, I'll just leave it" (Interview Mustafa)

Mustafa thinks that his daughter may have her suspicions about where her father is, especially now that she is getting older:

> "She does realize it, of course (…) When children are two or three years old, they may not know those things, but now it's starting to grow. Girls grow up a little faster than boys. She is very aware of what is going on around her. (…) As a five-year-old child, I always knew exactly where my father and mother were" (Interview Mustafa)

Dutch (former) jihadist Soufiane says that he is not planning on to telling his children anything about the time he spent in IS territory. "Absolutely nothing. I'm just going to lie to them. It is a state secret" (Interview Soufiane). He says that is even planning to submit a request to Google to have all news articles about him deleted upon his release. "Believe me, it's not going to help anyone if you put this burden on your family" (Interview Soufiane).

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

In this final Chapter I considered the long-term effects of extremist parenthood. Both children who grew up in an extremist family and former extremist parents themselves experience different consequences of their family history. Negative reactions from the outside world, including stigmatization and labeling, appear to be experienced regularly. Such hostilities may ultimately contribute to the transmission of extremist ideas within these households in two ways. On the one hand, it may strengthen extremist families' social isolation, limiting contact with dissenting opinions or worldviews, and thus enhancing the family ideology. On the other hand, it could fuel the sense of victimization that extremist ideologies often tap into. As observed in the previous chapters, perceptions of (collective) victimhood can play an important role in the narratives of these families, possibly contributing to the intergenerational transmission of these ideas (see also Pemberton & Aarten, 2018).

The fact that children do not necessarily follow in their parents' extremist footsteps is nonetheless evident from the fact that children from extremist families are able to break away from their parents' ideology. Almost all interview participants I spoke to have undergone a process of deradicalization, as described in this Chapter. This reflects an important shortcoming of the employed participant selection: deradicalized interviewees were easier to reach and more willing to participate in this study. As a result, I have not gained insight into the stories of people who did not decide to break away from their ideological upbringing. I therefore cannot make any statements about the differences between the individuals that did break away, and those that did not.

Nevertheless, the interviews and case file data indicates that there may be several reasons for children to leave the extremist family ideology behind. The role of counter-narratives and encounters with "the Other"; new forms of meaning-making, for example through (Eastern) religions; and self-study are central themes in these processes. This suggests that breaking through the isolated 'bubble' of extremist families is crucial to stimulate exposure to other narratives, and thus worldviews, in order to make deradicalization possible. This observation fits with previous research that points at the importance of opposing opinions and ideas in processes of deradicalization (Hansen & Lid, 2020; Koehler, 2016). The current study additionally shows that for some, cutting off contact with extremist family members in order to develop a new identity may be crucial. This finding fits with existing literature suggesting that for children raised in dysfunctional families, cutting ties may be an effective way to increase their resilience (e.g. Meyers, 2016; Schnarrs et al., 2020). It is nonetheless unclear how this observation relates to the suggested possibility of secure attachment styles among children raised by extremist parents, as discussed in Chapter 7. It can be hypothesized children who suffered from maltreatment or abuse – and resulting attachment issues – at the hands of their extremist parent(s), are more likely to consider cutting ties a necessary condition for their recovery.

Yet even respondents who managed to leave the extremist family ideology behind, tend to struggle with trauma and mental health issues. They also often have difficulties with managing their own parenthood, as some are afraid that their family history makes them unsuitable to raise a child. Some therefore decide to put their children up for adoption, or instead choose to adopt children themselves. Finally, the interviews suggest that former extremist parents are often also haunted by their past. They tend to look back with shame and regret on the parenting choices they made in the past. Some therefore opt for an honest and open conversation with their children, in which they explain the reasoning behind their decisions at the time. The interview data suggests that open communication is crucial for both parents and children to come to terms with the extremist family background. The fact that some (former jihadist) respondents indicate that they did not have these discussions with their children, and do not intend to do so, can in that regard be considered worrisome. This silence may, in the longer term, stimulate indirect transmission mechanisms, as observed in the section 'Romanticization of the ideology' in Chapter 6.

9

CHAPTER 10

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In Chapter 2 it was discussed that within academic literature, much attention has been paid to the influence that parents can have on their children's development. However, the ways in which extremist ideas could be transmitted from parent to child have only sparsely been examined. The systematic literature review presented in Chapter 3, showed that at an international level, little is known about the ways extremist parents raise their children and the extent to which they are able to (un)intentionally convey their ideas. So, although there is no lack of discussion in the media, empirical research into extremist parents remains scarce.

In this dissertation, I aimed to shed light on extremist parents and their children. Based on 30 interviews and a review of 12 Public Prosecutor's files and 27 court rulings, I analyzed the family lives of right-wing extremists and jihadists. I tried to understand the ways in which the intergenerational transmission of extremism may take place in their households, by focusing on the socialization mechanisms, parenting practices and narratives of parenthood employed by extremist parents. I additionally considered the longer-term effects of extremists' family lives, which showed that not just children, but parents too, often appear to struggle with their extremist family history.

The diverse array of sources used in this project allowed for a nuanced picture of extremist parents and their children. This makes the current study valuable to anyone working with families where extremist transmission could occur. It should be noted, however, that this dissertation illustrates first and foremost what extremists' family lives *can* look like. While various patterns were observed, differences among households should not be ignored. The results of this study are therefore not intended for interpretating individual cases – in which a tailor-made approach should always take preference. Nonetheless, the findings of this project do provide a first insight into the mechanisms and dynamics through which the intergenerational transmission of extremism may take place.

In this Chapter, I will reflect on the most important observations of this study, the insights that can be derived from them, and the ways in which these insights help to answer the research questions. I will also discuss how my findings fit within existing theoretical frameworks, and their possible implications for both policy and practice. Finally, I will discuss the methodological limitations of this study and provide some recommendations for future research.

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation served several purposes. The aim was not only to study how processes of intergenerational transmission can manifest themselves in extremist families, but also to learn about parental motivations for socializing their children into their ideologies, the family dynamics and interactions associated with these processes, and the long-term effects on those involved. Each of these objectives and their corresponding research questions are addressed below.

1. *What is the estimated scope of the intergenerational transmission of extremism in the Netherlands? How many children are at risk of being raised with extremist ideas?*

Throughout this research project, gaining reliable quantitative data to assess the potential scope of the intergenerational transmission of extremism in the Netherlands proved difficult. Since extremist socialization processes generally take place behind closed doors, practitioners and academics have limited access to (data on) these families. Moreover, legal and ethical constraints further restrict (quantitative) research methods, particularly when minors are involved. Ultimately, I was able to analyze the most comprehensive national-level dataset for the jihadist community in the Netherlands through a collaboration with the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, AIVD). This dataset was based on information that the AIVD gathered in the context of its organizational tasks and duties, which was subsequently matched to the Personal Records Database (Basisregistratie Personen, BRP). This allowed me to examine the family relations and household composition of Dutch individuals identified as jihadists by the AIVD.

From this endeavor, it became clear that the intergenerational transmission of extremism (jihadism in particular) is indeed a phenomenon that may occur in the context of the Netherlands. Overall, it was observed that the parents in the Dutch jihadist community collectively have 665 children (551 minor-aged), all of which could theoretically be raised within a jihadist family environment. Moreover, data indicates that 4.4% of children with jihadist parents have themselves been identified by the AIVD as jihadists. While admittedly, the direction of ideological influence (parent-to-child or child-to-parent) cannot be clearly determined in these instances – it is possible that processes of intergenerational transmission might be at the root of this figure. Additionally, it was observed that nearly half of the minor-aged children in the study grow up in dual-jihadist parent households, which research on "mainstream" religious continuity suggests may increase the likelihood of successful ideological transmission, due to parental homogeneity in worldviews (e.g., Myers, 1996).

The study also identified other factors that might indicate a risk of intergenerational transmission within Dutch jihadist families. For example, the dataset suggests that children of the study population might grow up with limited exposure to moderate influences: only 8.7% of children in jihadist families live in extended households with relatives beyond parents and siblings, and 33.1% of children grow up in single-parent households. In total, 93 children even reside in a single-parent household in which the main caretaker is identified as a jihadist by the AIVD. This suggests that a vast amount of children of the study population lack regular contact with potentially moderating family members who could offer ideological counterbalance to extremist parental views, creating environments where jihadist ideas may go unchallenged. In the long run, this could contribute to the intergenerational transmission of extremism.

Finally, trauma exposure and narratives of victimhood may contribute to risks of integenerational transmission. Over 5% of the children in the dataset were born in Syria, likely experiencing their formative years in Islamic State territory, potentially resulting in PTSD and war-related trauma (Ahdash, 2020; Rousseau et al., 2023). Additionally, approximately 6.6% of jihadist parents died in conflict zones, which could potentially aid to children's ideological radicalization through intergenerational loyalty, stories of (collective) victimhood, and romanticized martyrdom. This would fit with studies discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, which indicate that both collective and individual experiences of trauma can facilitate the transmission of extremist ideas (Rowland-Klein & Dunlop, 1988; Vollhardt 2012; 2020).

In the end, it should be acknowledged that quantitative methods alone cannot fully capture the exact number of children that is actively being socialized into jihadist ideologies, nor can it determine the nature of such processes in individual households. Nevertheless, the results presented in this study provide the most comprehensive national-level assessment available of the potential scope of this phenomenon in the Netherlands, establishing that the intergenerational transmission of jihadist extremism is a reality that warrants ongoing attention from researchers and intelligence services.

2. *How can we explain the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideologies? What mechanisms are involved in this process?*

In this study, I tried to understand what processes of intergenerational transmission could look like within extremist families. I firstly approached this question by focusing on the socialization mechanisms employed by extremist parents, as discussed in Chapter 6. Here, it was observed that intergenerational transmission may take place through direct socialization mechanisms, or the intentional and purposive ways in which parents attempt to transmit their ideas to their children. These direct mechanisms reflect many of the elements that were observed in the systematic literature review in Chapter 3. For example, I described the importance of social isolation in extremist families, where parents attempt to keep their children away from the outside world as much as possible. Within extremist households, parents may exercise strict control over the friendships, hobbies and social relationships that children engage in. They also restrict the media that children consume, only allowing them to enjoy music, TV shows and literature that fit within the parental ideology. In addition to using social isolation as a socialization mechanism, extremist parents may introduce their children to their own network of like-minded people that resonate with the parental ideology. Already from an early age, children are encouraged to participate in the extremist meetings that their parents engage in, and through workshops and games of an 'innocent' and 'playful' nature, they are gently introduced to the hateful ideas of their caregivers. Although rare, it appears that parents in some cases even take their children along in committing

violent acts. Based on the data, however, this does not seem to be norm.

The intergenerational transmission of extremism can also take place through the language used by parents. In interactions with their children, parents' choice of words generally reflects the dualistic, black-and-white worldview that is characteristic of extremist ideologies. By talking negatively about dissenters, while praising their own in-group, extremist parents subtly convey their ideas to their children. These observations fit with the concept of 'othering' – referring to the phenomenon whereby individuals or groups are dismissed as 'The Other' and placed outside one's own ideological group – and which are subsequently framed as different, evil or inferior. Extremist parents use linguistic techniques of 'othering' to strengthen their group identity (as a family, but also as part of an extremist movement), through creating an external enemy, and thus emphasizing an ideological divide between 'us' and 'them'. The observation that children appear to 'parrot' their parents in these extremist discourses fits with the social learning theories discussed in Chapter 2 (see Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961; Whitbeck, 1999). It illustrates the importance of parental modelling, and suggests that through repetitive exposure to extremist language, these discourses may at some point be adopted and internalized by children themselves. Finally, the socialization mechanisms that parents use to transmit their ideas within the home environment, often have a visual component: parents frequently use various symbols, flags, decorations and, in some cases, attire or uniforms to perpetuate their ideas. As a result, children learn at an early age that the safety and security of the home environment is linked to the (symbolism used in the) parental ideology. Extremist parents also seem to specifically opt for toys that are in line with their ideas, sometimes even stimulating children to play with weapons. The glorification of violence implicit in these socialization mechanisms, could potentially aid the transmission of extremist ideologies.

Regardless, these socialization mechanisms do not take place in a vacuum and are often related to the extremist ideology itself. In Chapter 7, it was observed that the overarching parenting practices employed by parents, play an important role in processes of intergenerational transmission. Drawing on theories of attachment style theory (Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1968), I demonstrated that parent-child relations are the foundation through which transmission processes can take hold in extremist families. As already discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, seemingly mundane everyday interactions can impact children's emotional and social development, which in turn could affect the 'effectiveness' of parental socialization efforts. Providing a nurturing, supportive, and secure environment can foster healthy identity formation in children, potentially reducing the attractiveness of extremist messaging. In contrast, children with insecure attachment styles might be more prone to adopting extremist views, because of the misplaced loyalty and solidarity that children may develop towards their parents (following Merz, Schuengela & Schulze, 2007), as well as the anxiety and low self-confidence that are often associated with insecure attachment styles (e.g., Foster, Kernis & Goldman, 2007; Passanisi et al., 2015).

The findings of the current study suggest that extremist parents can indeed be loving and warm in raising their children, regardless of their violent beliefs. Both right-wing extremist and jihadist parents may be caring and emotionally involved in their children's lives – where healthy relations between parents and children were observed in both fathers and mothers. In these instances, it is indeed possible that likelihood of successful extremist transmission is mitigated by children's healthy attachment styles. At the same time, however, healthy family relations may pose a risk factor for intergenerational transmission – considering (securely attached) children may be more susceptible of the worldviews of caregivers that they love and trust (see Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Van IJzendoorn, 1992). Nonetheless, it should be noted that instances of emotional and physical abuse were also observed – and in other households, parenting practices seem to be rather ambivalent, with parental expressions of love or appreciation quickly turning into anger. Following the theories outlined in Chapter 2, is probable that these parenting practices result in insecure attachment styles among children (see Bowlby, 1959; Ainsworth, 1967), which potentially give rise to misplaced feelings of loyalty and intergenerational solidarity (see Merz, Schuengela & Schulze, 2007), and thus aid the intergenerational transmission of these ideas. In future studies, potential associations between children's attachment styles and extremist transmission processes will need to be examined more in-depth.

In Chapter 8 it was additionally observed that implicit narratives about parenthood play a pivotal role in the parents' approaches to their childrearing practices. These narratives reveal the norms and values that parents employ in their parenting, and as such, they give insight to their preferred parenting styles. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, parenting styles – like attachment styles – may affect the ways in and extent to which intergenerational transmission takes place. Authoritarian extremist parents may be able to transmit their hateful worldviews by emphasizing obedience and conformity. Authoritative parents, on the other hand, can promote a more open and inclusive attitude by providing space for discussion and dialogue. This strengthens their emotional stability, which could in turn make them less susceptible to extremist messaging.

Not just parents' individual narratives about parenthood play a role, however. Extremist ideologies often also contain strong assumptions about what it means to be a parent, which may in turn inform parenting styles in individual families. As observed in Chapter 8, within extremist communities, motherhood is of particular symbolic value. In both right-wing extremist and jihadist circles, women are perceived as the physical source of all future generations of extremist fighters, which makes bearing children their main ideological task. Children are similarly placed on a pedestal within these narratives, through their perceived purity and malleability. The multigenerational emphasis and apparently deterministic worldviews reflected in these narratives – where (grand) parents tell children about the "warrior blood" that is running through their veins – demonstrate parents' implicit expectations of their offspring, as described in the section 'Multigenerational socialization mechanisms' in Chapter 6 of this dissertation. This could cause children to feel that

they are 'chosen' or destined to become extremist fighters – appealing on both generational duties and the perceived desirability of this heroic status. Moreover, this idea of being part of an extensive tradition of extremist violence may provide children with a sense of identity and *belonging* – specifically when combined with narratives of victimhood embedded within (collective) trauma (see Chapter 2 of this dissertation). This may similarly stimulate transmission processes and children's subsequent adoption of these ideas.

3. *To what extent and how can various factors and dynamics (within and beyond the family) stimulate or inhibit extremist transmission processes?*

As described in this study, the intergenerational transmission of extremism certainly does not always take place. Within extremist families, various factors and dynamics can be identified that may obstruct extremist transmission processes. Generally, a lack of ideological transmission can have two different reasons: either the socialization mechanisms employed are not successful, or transmission is not attempted at all. Regarding the first aspect, parents could have the ambition to pass their ideology on to their children, yet fail in doing so. After all, extremist socialization is not just dependent on parental intentions: while direct socialization mechanisms are certainly important, indirect mechanisms also play a role, as observed in Chapter 6. Indirect socialization mechanisms refer to the different ways in which children deal with the ideas presented by their parents, and the extent to which they ultimately adopt these ideas or not. This dimension reflects the dynamic and multi-directional nature of intergenerational transmission processes – as both parents and children directly or indirectly influence each other in their beliefs, norms and values (Bernardi, 2013; Roest, 2007, see also the socialization theories discussed in Chapter 2). For example, in this study it was observed that some children from extremist families show a profound degree of loyalty and trust towards their parents. Despite – or because of – their difficult childhood and isolated upbringing, some continue to express an unconditional love for their extremist parents. Some also appear to put their parents on a pedestal and romanticize their ideas. The fact that extremist narratives rely heavily on black-and-white thinking, which mirrors children's natural way of perceiving the world, with a tendency to categorize people and events into binaries such as 'good' and 'bad' (see Staub, 2003; Tsao, 2020; Obiols-Suari & Marco-Pallarés, 2021), could play an important role here, and may ultimately stimulate intergenerational transmission.

Nevertheless, children also seem to be able to resist their parents' ideas. Several of the research participants indicated that they had they personally never felt drawn to their caregivers' extremist worldviews. This can be interpreted in different ways. For example, age may play a role here: older children are probably less susceptible to parents' ideological influences, because they have already formed an identity of their own, distinct from the family ideology (see also Worthman, Tomlinson, & Rotheram-Borus, 2016). Moreover, older children may be able to understand that

morality is subjective, and that rules and norms are not fixed, but rather, negotiable (see cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget's foundational work *The Morality of the Child,* 1932). In addition, other factors that were observed in the empirical literature review in Chapter 3 could play a role, such as critical thinking skills and (emotional) intelligence. These cognitive skills can increase resilience against radical or extremist messaging, existing literature suggests (Macaluso, 2016; Sas et al., 2020; Stephens & Sieckelinck, 2021). Finally, as discussed in the section above, transmission mechanisms need to be considered against the backdrop of the parenting practices and narratives of parenthood that extremist families adhere to. Children who were raised in ambivalent or unsafe situations, or in households where extremist parents utilize authoritarian, permissive or neglectful parenting styles (see Baumrind, 1966; Maccoby & Martin, 1983), may develop insecure attachment styles, which could inhibit them from adopting a constructive-critical attitude towards their parents' views. This can stimulate the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideas in the long run.

At the same time, this study also demonstrated that some extremist parents are indeed capable of providing their children with a safe, warm, and loving upbringing. The effect this has on transmission processes is not clear from this study. Children who were raised in emotionally supportive environments, are more likely to develop secure attachment styles and tend to have a more positive self-image and more self-confidence (Kohnstamm & Wenneker, 2016; Sandoval 2008). This is particularly the case for children who grow up with parents with authoritative parenting styles (Deshpande & Chhabriya, 2013; Neal & Frick-Horbury, 2001). It is therefore conceivable that this group is better equipped to break away from their parents' extremist ideas. On the other hand, an ideology that is transmitted in a non-coercive manner may be easier to adopt (consider the work by Dollahite et al., (2019) discussed in Chapter 2, on balancing firmness and flexibility to enhance the "successfulness" of transmission), considering the trusting and loving bond that exists between parents and children in healthy family systems. These potential dynamics deserve more attention in future research on the transmission of extremist ideologies.

Yet, while some parents fail to pass on their ideas to their children, others do not even try in the first place. In the section 'Absence of Socialization Efforts' in Chapter 6, it was observed that not all parents feel the need to raise their children to follow their ideas. This is often a deliberate choice: extremist parents generally want to keep their children away from the danger and violence they are frequently exposed to and/or engaging in. Hence, parents sometimes choose to keep their lives as extremists completely separate from their roles as parents – and, in their own words, decide to live "double lives". In other cases, the lack of ideological transmission stems from an ideological conflict between parents, where a more moderate parent is able to counterbalance the extremist socialization efforts of a more extreme parent. Practical restrictions, such as parents residing in a correctional facility, can also prevent them from being able to socialize children into their ideologies – although this does not rule out the possibility of indirect mechanisms emerging,

such as parental romanticization and idealization by children. Finally, it was observed that having a child can change extremists' worldviews and self-image, reducing or even completely eliminating the desire for ideological transmission. For some, becoming a parent is ultimately the turning point kickstarting a deradicalization process.

The ideology itself may also be a relevant factor in transmission processes, as some dynamics appear to differ among jihadist and right-wing extremist families. Firstly, multigenerational socialization plays a significant role in the transmission of right-wing extremist ideologies, often rooted in familial histories dating back to World War II. It was observed in Chapter 6 that within right-wing extremist households, the pride associated with an extremist family lineage seems to contribute to the perpetuation of these ideas. This observation reflects the importance of collective experiences (and shared stories to understand these experiences) in processes of transmission, as outlined in Chapter 2. In contrast, jihadist families in the West lack such a strong ideological history (and thus, the collective narratives to make meaning of this history), as jihadist ideologies gained prominence only in the late 20th century (see De Graaf, 2010; Klausen, 2021; NCTV, 2018). Nonetheless, it is plausible that multigenerational aspects may become more prominent in jihadist families in the future, particularly for those who have been involved with Islamic State (IS) and romanticize the 'caliphate'. Here too, heroic narratives of Islamic State's glory days (as well as stories of collective victimhood/trauma following the decline of IS, also see the theories of victimology discussed in Chapter 2) may change the outlook of transmission processes within jihadist milieus.

Finally, this study suggests that jihadist families strive for a greater degree of social isolation in comparison to right-wing extremist parents. Although isolation plays an important role in both ideological contexts, and intergenerational transmission processes are largely dependent on keeping dissenters at bay (see section 'Social isolation' in Chapter 6), jihadist parents seem to have an even stronger desire to withdraw completely from mainstream society. Security awareness on the one hand, and experiences of social exclusion and stigmatization on the other, appear to be driving factors here. In their search for like-minded people, jihadist parents do not limit their social isolation efforts to the rejection of conflicting worldviews: The (former) jihadist interviewees I spoke to, often described being disappointed in the Netherlands and Western societies at large. Some expressed the wish to eventually move to an Islamic country with their families, and their decision to travel to IS territory is often founded in this sentiment. As such, social isolation can potentially be understood as a more prominent factor in jihadist families, than in right-wing extremist households.

Altogether this suggests that there are several factors that can stimulate or inhibit the intergenerational transmission of extremism. Nevertheless, it appears that most (former) extremist parents – both those who try to socialize their children into their ideologies, and those who refrain from doing so – use similar considerations in their decision-making. For both groups, the (perceived) protection of children is of crucial concern. Parents who consciously choose *not*

to raise their children as extremists want to shield them from the (physical) violence, hatred, misogyny and pessimism that characterize extremist movements. They often also see potential risks in *doxing* (the illegitimate online distribution of personal data), revenge attacks by rival groups (particularly among neo-Nazi movements), or stigmatization and exclusion by their social surroundings. At the same time, parents who do try to socialize their children into their extremist worldviews are similarly motivated by the goal of protecting their children. To them, however, the perceived danger is not so much in the extremist ideology itself, but in a treacherous outside world characterized by evil forces, powerful elites, disinformation, temptations, sinful behavior and other existential threats. These observations support the hypothesis that this group of parents, too, has the best interests of their children at heart, and does not necessarily act out of bad intentions. Although their parenting choices likely cannot be separated from extremist narratives that call for parents to produce a 'new generation' of fighters, the current study shows that these parents are doing what they believe is necessary to make their children resilient to the dangers of outside world. This is an observation that goes against the prevailing image of extremist parents solely being motivated by hatred and anger in socializing their children into their ideologies.

4. *To what extent does the intergenerational transmission of extremism have long-term consequences for the families involved?*

As observed in Chapter 9, (growing up in) extremist family contexts can have long-lasting effects on individuals. Both (adult) children raised in such environments, as well as parents who engaged in extremist socialization practices themselves, seem to struggle with the aftermath of their family history. When it comes to children from extremist milieus, they often appear to struggle with mental health problems and trauma due to their upbringing. Issues range from difficulty trusting others, poor communication skills, psychosomatic pains, anxiety, attachment issues, chronic stress and problematic behaviour. At a later age, some of these children even struggle with their own parenthood, and fear that their family history makes them unfit to raise children themselves, inspiring some to opt for adoption or remaining childfree instead.

Traumas appear to be particularly prevalent among children who were raised in Islamic State territory, which fits with previous studies on this group (Barricman, 2019; Speckhard, 2017; Weine et al., 2020). Years of exposure to war and violence, combined with the scarce facilities in Syria and Iraq, often left their marks on those born and/or raised in the 'caliphate'. Interestingly, however, not all (former) jihadist parents that I interviewed appear to believe that their children suffer from trauma following their experiences in Syria and Iraq. Some interviewees even suggest that while residing in Islamic State territory, their children were happier than ever. The truthfulness of these statements cannot be verified, and in the end, truth-seeking is not an objective of this study. Nonetheless, such claims should be taken with caution. Interviewees may be overly optimistic

about their children's mental health and reintegration, ignoring any negative effects that their stay in Islamic State territory may have caused – either because of a lack of awareness, or in an attempt to escape feelings of responsibility and guilt (see Sykes & Matza's (1957) neutralization techniques).

Nonetheless, the observations in case files and court rulings analyzed in this study give cause for hope. It is frequently noted that children of jihadist parents are indeed doing well in adapting to their foster families, or that they are mentally developing at great speed. In several cases it is mentioned that children exhibit no attachment issues, or that they are doing well at school. Regardless, negative effects of children's experiences (either in the warzone, or following their physical separation from their parents upon return in the Netherlands) may take longer to manifest. Research on the delayed onset of post-traumatic stress disorder shows that it can take up to years for mental health issues develop following a stressful event (see Andrews et al., 2007). Specific studies on delayed onset of (war) trauma in children, however, appear sparse and it is therefore difficult to predict the trajectories of these children. It ultimately remains to be seen how these children develop in the long term and to what extent they are able to cope with their family history in healthy manners.

Regardless of these negative mental health effects, children are generally able to leave their parents' ideologies behind, this dissertation suggest. Most commonly, children's deradicalization processes are not so much a rational choice, but rather a gradual process inspired by trigger events (Feddes, Nickolson & Doosje, 2015) and exposure to people with other worldviews and lifestyles. While some decide to cut off all contact (either in order to focus on their deradicalization process and emotional recovery, or out of spite and disappointment), others continue to support their extremist parents even into adulthood. For the latter group, some level of moral disengagement (Bandura, 2002) appears to be necessary, as to separate their parents from their hateful ideologies. In order to come to terms with their caregivers' hateful ideas and behaviors, children may mentally downplay or soften parents' supposed involvement in the extremist movement. This allows them to accept the facts of their family history, without having to think of their parents as 'bad' people. It is possible that these moral disengagement mechanisms inhibit children's ability to recognize the harmful effects of their upbringing. Although empirical studies on the relation between childhood maltreatment and moral disengagement is sparse, there is some literature indeed suggesting that the ability to perceive oneself as a 'victim' is dependent on one's levels of moral disengagement (e.g., Cuadrado-Gordillo, Fernández-Antelo, & Martín-Mora Parra, 2020). This supports the hypothesis that these mechanisms may also play a role in the self-perception of children raised in extremist households.

Parents, too, seem to struggle with their ideological past. Specifically in conversations with former right-wing extremist parents, it was observed that many of them find it difficult to come to terms with their life choices. Interviewees frequently expressed feeling regret and shame about the way they raised their children back when they were still in the extremist movement. Several of

them therefore decided at some point to openly discuss their right-wing extremist family history with their offspring. Often, this appears to be related to parents' desire to keep control of the family narrative: it is feared that children will otherwise find out about their violent family history via the internet, where the parents may be portrayed in a less positive light. Admittedly, such self-reflections are less prominent among (former) jihadist parents. Most of the (former) jihadist interviewees included in this study appear to be somewhat reluctant to having an open discussion with their children regarding their past. This can be understood in various ways. To those who returned from Syria and Iraq, their experiences may be too recent for this kind of transparency, or parents may deem their children still too young for these types of 'adult' conversations. Additionally, incarcerated parents sometimes describe feelings of 'regret' as unhelpful or undesirable, thus subconsciously or actively pushing these sentiments aside. From their perspective, maintaining good family relations while in prison is complicated enough as it is (see the section 'Parenting in Detention' in Chapter 7). Here too, psychological self-protection through the use of neutralization techniques (see Sykes & Matza, 1957), might play a role. Denying that their children have suffered due to their life choices, allows parents to mitigate feelings of accountability and thus, guilt. It is unclear to what extent these perceptions may change upon release from prison. If jihadist parents refrain from opening up the conversation, deciding to hide their original intentions and motivations for traveling to IS territory from their children, they may eventually promote indirect socialization mechanisms. Children can romanticize the views of parents and justify their choices at the time. It can also help children become more resilient to possible stigmatization by the outside world, as described in 'Aftermath' (Chapter 9), if they are provided with openness about their parents' past.

Finally, the fact that both parents and children seem to experience negative responses from the outside world can be considered worrisome. As this dissertation has demonstrated, both parents and children seem to regularly experience stigmatization and discrimination by mainstream society. Both in jihadist and in right-wing extremist families, children are often bullied or socially excluded due to their parents' ideologies. This type of 'labelling' is not just harmful for children's social development, but may also contribute to the transmission of extremist ideas within these households in two ways. On the one hand, it may strengthen extremist families' social isolation, limiting contact with dissenting opinions or worldviews, and thus enhancing the family ideology. On the other hand, it could fuel the sense of victimization that extremist ideologies often tap into. As discussed in this dissertation, perceptions of (collective) victimhood can play an important role in the narratives of these families, possibly contributing to the intergenerational transmission of these ideas (see also Pemberton & Aarten, 2018). From this perspective, countering and preventing social stigmatization vis-a-vis extremist families should take central stage – which will be discussed more in depth in the section 'Implications for policy and practice' of this Chapter.

THEORETICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings presented in this dissertation profoundly advance our understanding of intergenerational transmission within extremist families. They demonstrated the value of the concepts and theories introduced in Chapter 2, and show how a multidisciplinary approach, which combines various theoretical perspectives, can help us map transmission processes. Elements from different schools of thinking, including pedagogy and developmental psychology, criminology, sociology, and victimology were observed in the analysis. In this section, I reflect on the most important theories within these disciplines as discussed in Chapter 2, and discuss how they can help to better understand the transmission of extremist ideas within a family context.

First of all, this dissertation suggests that existing theories from fields such as pedagogy and developmental psychology are particularly relevant in the study of the intergenerational transmission of extremism. Most notably, theories of attachment and parenting styles may hold untapped value. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, parenting style theory considers the ways in which parents raise their children, while attachment style theory describes the emotional bonds and relations that develop between children and their caregivers, especially in early childhood. Although both approaches differ in their focal point (parent versus child perspective), these theories do overlap to some degree, both allowing us to understand the dynamics between parents and children. The current study suggests that processes of intergenerational transmission are largely resulting from these parent-child interactions: insecure attachment styles and dysfunctional parenting might stimulate the intergenerational transmission of extremism, which could in turn influence parent-child dynamics. Previous studies from developmental psychology on children growing up in cultlike environments, contain similar observations (see Furnari, 2005; Kern, & Jungbauer, 2022; Markowitz & Halperin, 1984). For example, Furnari (2005) reports that conflicting group narratives about raising children within cultic communities can lead to unstable parenting and ultimately insecure attachment patterns among children. Kern and Jungbauer (2022) make similar observations based on in-depth interviews with former cult members. The authors observed that children's social isolation often causes them to develop anxious attachment styles, and that parents in sectarian movements have predominantly neglectful parenting styles (Kern & Jungbauer, 2022). In line with the current study, however, the authors furthermore note that a large proportion of their research participants look back positively on their childhood. In future research, these possible similarities between intergenerational transmission processes in sectarian and extremist families should receive more attention.

Second, in understanding processes of intergenerational transmission within extremist families, we may also draw from psychological and criminological research. For example, the current study suggests that moral disengagement (Bandura, 2002) plays a central role in extremist households. Moral disengagement refers to the psychological process by which individuals temporarily separate their moral norms and values from their behavior (Bandura, 2002, see

also Sykes and Matza's (1957) 'neutralization techniques'). In other words, people may act in ways that contradict their own moral beliefs, by invoking mental justifications that make them feel less guilty about their behavior. In criminology, moral disengagement is used to understand how people can rationalize criminal behavior (Maruna & Copes, 2005). As seen in the current study, children growing up in extremist families may use moral disengagement to bridge the moral gap between their parent's extremist violence and the norms and values of the outside world. Moreover, they may seek to reconcile their parents' (at times) inconsistent actions with the extremist family ideology (see the section 'Double standards in parenthood') – in an attempt to alleviate the cognitive dissonance created by these inconsistencies. Finally, both parents and children who look back on their family history, seem to use moral disengagement in their accounts. Children raised in extremist households frequently continue to support (the choices made by) their parents, despite the fact that they no longer adhere to their parents' extremist worldviews. This is evident, for example, from the euphemistic labelling adult children use when recalling childhood memories, with which they seem to soften the violent nature of their parents' beliefs. Similarly, former extremist parents use moral disengagement to downplay the consequences of their actions. (Former) jihadist parents in particular seem to use neutralization techniques (see Sykes & Matza, 1957). They often appear to take little responsibility for their parenting decisions, and make light of the adverse impacts their actions could have had on their children.

Third, labeling theory seems to hold value when examining the intergenerational transmission of extremism. Labeling theory is a sociological perspective which aims to understand how individuals or groups are labeled and categorized by society, specifically by institutions such as the criminal justice system, educational institutions, or the media. This theory suggests that once an individual or group is labeled with a particular identity or status (such as 'criminal' or 'deviant'), it can shape their self-perception and behavior. Ultimately, the internalization of societal labels can lead to a *self-fulfilling prophecy,* where the labeled individual starts behaving in a way that matches others' expectations. The current study suggests that children raised in extremist households may experience labelling because of their parents' beliefs or behaviors. The outside world may regard them as "terrorists in the making", which in the long term could stimulate the intergenerational transmission of extremism. Previous literature suggests that labeling may influence radicalization processes (Fadil et al., 2022; Lösel & Bliesener, 2021; Peeters et al., 2022) – and the current study indicates that this probably also applies to children from extremist families.

Fourth, the findings of this study fit with previous insights from victimological studies. In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, it was already suggested that victimhood – as in: the experience of suffering intentional harm, see Pemberton & Aarten, (2018, p. 541) – plays an important role in the intergenerational transmission of extremism. Narratives of victimhood are reflective of the ways extremist ideologies create a sense of urgency: by emphasizing that the extremist *in-group* faces existential threats, the use of violence is deemed legitimized. Within extremist ideologies,

particular emphasis is placed on experiences of collective victimhood, for example in the form of social exclusion, marginalization and discrimination (see Lynch & Joyce, 2018; Pemberton & Aarten, 2018; Van den Bos, 2019). These shared stories about perceived injustice can in turn fuel processes of radicalization (Van den Bos, 2019). The current study demonstrates that extremist parents can covey such victim narratives to children. As seen in Chapter 6, collective stories of social exclusion may particularly play a role in families where extremism has been passed on for generations. Here, family members' loyalty towards their ancestors and their perceived suffering, can foster the internalization of this respective victimhood status, creating a fertile ground for extremist transmission.

Other concepts rooted in victimological studies may be of relevance, too. Langone (1993) previously coined the term *spiritual abuse* to understand how victims of coercive ideologies look back on their experiences. According to Purcell (1998), spiritual abuse refers to "the act of making people believe – whether by stating or merely implying – that they are going to be punished in this life and/or tormented in hell-fire forever for failure to live life well enough" (Purcell, 1998, p. 227). In recent decades, the concept of spiritual abuse has become more embedded within victimological studies, and it is increasingly recognized as a form of (domestic) violence (see for example Khan, 2021; Xavier, Petherick & Sinnamon, 2017). Based on the findings of the current study, spiritual abuse as a concept may be valuable in understanding processes of intergenerational transmission. As observed, extremist parents can engage in fearmongering, for example through the use of fearful imagery or psychological pressure, in an attempt to socialize their children into their hateful ideologies. This can, according to Purcell's (1988) definition, be considered a form of spiritual abuse. As such, insights from studies into this concept may help us better understand the childhood experiences of those raised in extremist households.

Additionally, victimological studies can help to understand processes of disengagement in cases of extremist transmission. In line with previous comments on the concept of spiritual abuse, children who grow up in extremist families may be best understood as victims of a violent family ideology. In Chapter 6, it was observed that extremist parents are in fact able to raise their children with love and warmth, and that not all of these children look back negatively on their youth. Nonetheless, in discussing the aftermath of intergenerational transmission, Chapter 9 showed that many of them do experience negative consequences from their childhood later in life. In this respect, children from extremist families resemble children who suffered from domestic abuse or parental neglect (see, for example, Avdibegović & Brkić, 2020; Jackson & Deye, 2015; Lev-Wiesel, 1999). This suggest that in developing interventions for (children from) extremist families, existing insights on trauma treatment may be a useful source.

Fifth and finally, the findings of this study can be interpreted through the lens of terrorism studies. Previous research into radicalization processes can help us understand how parents indirectly create the conditions that could allow for extremist worldviews to take hold. Theories about push and

pull factors, for example, point to the importance of belonging as a stimulating factor in processes of radicalization (see Dawson, Amarasingam, & Bain, 2016; Doosje et al., 2016; Vergani et al., 2020). Belonging refers to the inherent human need to be part of a group of like-minded people. If this need is not sufficiently met in daily life, individuals may feel drawn to the fellowship that extremist movements can provide (Dawson, Amarasingam, & Bain, 2016; Doosje et al., 2016). For children who grow up with extremist ideas, the family system may be an important source of belonging – especially when the exclusion and stigmatization discussed in Chapter 9 inhibits them from forming meaningful bonds outside of the family sphere. Additionally, previous research suggests that social isolation can play an important role in radicalization processes, because it hinders the development of prosocial relations and identity formation (see Hug, 2013; Mitts, 2019). As discussed in Chapter 6, social isolation is an important socialization mechanism that extremist parents may employ in raising their children. Considering the lack of exposure to alternative worldviews that results from this, it can make children more susceptible to their parents' extremist ideology.

Here, the two-pyramids model of radicalization (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017) can help us understand the transmission of extremism within families. In this model, McCauley and Moskalenko (2017) suggest that are two distinct but interconnected pathways (or 'pyramids') that individuals may follow towards radicalization: ideological radicalization and behavioral radicalization. According to the authors, beliefs and behavior therefore need to be studied as separate entities within processes of radicalization: on the one hand, someone can become radicalized in their beliefs without wanting to take violent action; and on the other hand, one may (want to) use violence without a strong ideological motivation (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017; see also McCauley, 2022; Moskalenko, 2021). This theory may be applicable to the intergenerational transmission of extremism. It is conceivable that parents are able to pass on elements of the extremist ideology (such as underlying narratives) without transferring a behavioral component. At the same time, the systematic literature in Chapter 4 suggests that some children imitate their extremist parents in behavior or language, without internalizing the associated ideology – and in the current study, 'parroting' by children was similarly observed. This may be especially the case for small children, who are too young to understand the underlying rationale for parental actions, and for whom parents are the primary socialization actors (Whitbeck 1999, as discussed in Chapter 3). In future research, the relationship between ideological transmission and behavioral transmission in extremist families, deserves more attention.

REFLECTION ON THE IGT MODEL

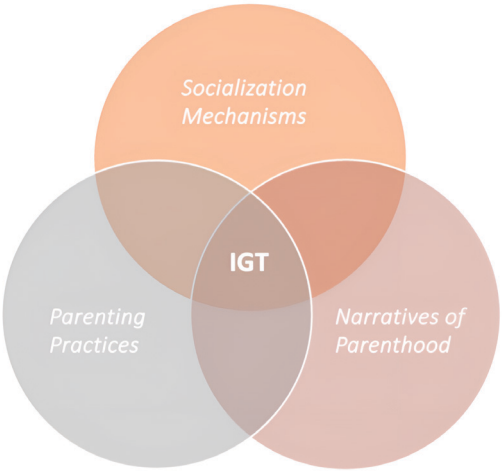
Ultimately, the insights described in this dissertation do not merely support the relevance of existing approaches – they also aid in theory-building when it comes to understanding processes of intergenerational transmission. Overall, this project shows that the theories outlined above (and in Chapter 2 of this dissertation) may all hold a piece of the puzzle. This is not just true for classic

developmental psychological approaches such as social learning and socialization theory, but also for approaches that are less frequently applied to intergenerational transmission processes, such as attachment style and parenting style theory. Taken together, these approaches allow us to understand not just *how* the intergenerational transmission of extremism occurs, but more generally, *why* it does occur in some instances, but not in others. They demonstrate that in order to fully capture the dynamics at play in transmission processes, we need to look beyond parental efforts at children's socialization, and include the broader family interactions and underlying parental assumptions in which transmission processes are embedded.

Altogether, the insights outlined above support the validity of the model that was introduced in Chapter 3, based on previous empirical studies of the study. It shows that indeed, the intergenerational transmission of extremism can arise out of three overlapping spheres – those being socialization mechanisms, parenting practices and narratives of parenthood (see Figure 5).

Figure 5.

Three integrated dimensions of intergenerational transmission (IGT)

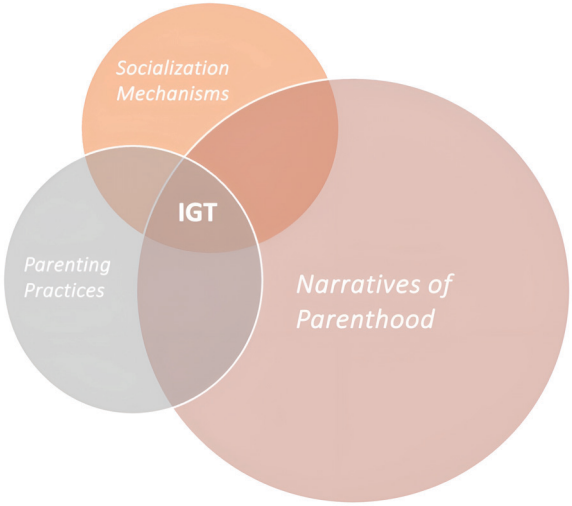


However, the empirical data presented in this dissertation adds to this model by showing that these dimensions can manifest themselves in various shapes and forms in individual families. It suggests that in some cases, one (or two) of the dimensions might be more prevalent than the other(s). To illustrate, it seems likely that the relation between the three spheres is different for extremist parents residing in correctional facilities. From my interviews with detained (former) jihadist individuals, I observed that even though these parents are physically much more limited in their ideological influence over their children, this might not hamper the possibility of intergenerational transmission taking place. Here, the respective stories that (former) jihadist parents may tell

their children (regarding the nature of their offences and their prison sentence), as well as their underlying assumptions of what 'good' parenthood should look like, could still potentially aid to the transmission of their beliefs onto their offspring (see Figure 6).

Figure 6.

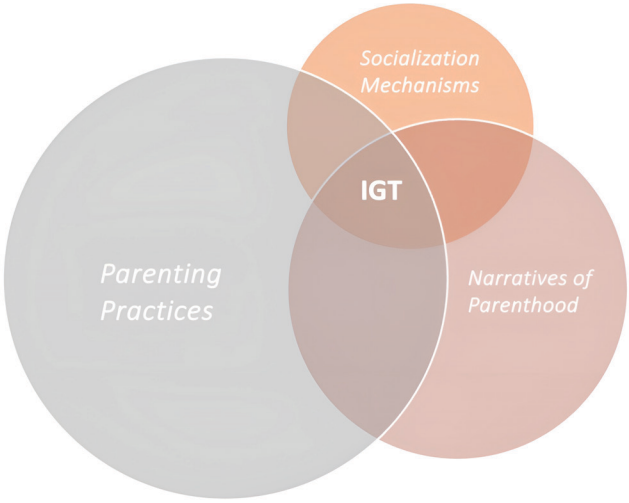
Potential variation on the IGT model (I)



In other instances, parents may not overtly socialize their children into their ideology, but still heavily rely on parenting practices that could stimulate the intergenerational transmission of extremism. For example, it was observed that several right-wing extremist participants declared living (or having lived) "double lives", trying to keep their extremist ways completely separate from their roles as parents. Here, explicit (direct) socialization mechanisms might be absent, yet parents may still engage in emotionally ambivalent or dysfunctional parenting practices that could in turn contribute to the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideologies. In various cases discussed in Chapter 7, physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse was observed, which might enhance children's susceptibility to their parents' worldviews through insecure attachment styles. Underlying these parenting practices may be implicit narratives of parenthood (such as an emphasis on discipline and/or a preference for authoritarian parenting styles, see Chapter 8), which could further feed into these dynamics. This suggests that even when (direct) parental socialization efforts are lacking, extremist parents might still indirectly contribute to the transmission of their ideologies onto their offspring (see Figure 7).

Figure 7.

Potential variation on the IGT model (II)



Theoretically, one could think of a third variation on the model, where classic socialization mechanisms (i.e., overt ideological training) takes central stage in extremist family dynamics. However, in analyzing the data I did not come across any families in which parents employed *direct* extremist socialization mechanisms without any parenting practices or narratives of parenthood to match. Therefore, in such hypothetical cases, it seems that the original model (Figure 5) captures potential processes of transmission best. Yet, an exception may be found in those families where all parental efforts at transmission are absent, and only *indirect* socialization mechanisms prevail (such as children's romanticization of (grand)parents involvement in extremist movements, as discussed in Chapter 6). These cases likely fall beyond the scope of the model, since in these instances, parental efforts at intergenerational transmission (including accompanying parental narratives and parenting practices) might be lacking entirely.

Finally, it is important to note that (the variations on) the model discussed here do not intend to suggest that all children raised in extremist families will naturally end up adopting the family ideology if parents indeed engage in all three dimensions of intergenerational transmission. Based on the (mostly qualitative) data employed in this project, I was not able to establish the correlative effects of the three spheres on children's adoption of the extremist family ideology. Moreover, 'succesful' extremist transmission is not a static outcome, since as we have seen in Chapter 9, children frequently manage to break away from their extremist upbringing sooner or later in life. The three dimensions presented here are thus to be understood as core elements underlying the intergenerational process, rather than as causal contributors to ideological outcomes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The current study did not consider (the effectiveness of) potential interventions in extremist families. Nevertheless, its findings contain some relevant lessons for both policymakers and practitioners working with extremist families. For example, this dissertation illustrates that in the Netherlands, still little is known about the extent to which extremist parents withdraw their children from the mainstream education system. Although extremist homeschooling does appear to occur in the Dutch context, and while in conversations with third parties, concerns relating to homeschooling were expressed, it is unclear to what extent this takes place. In the Netherlands, compulsory education officers do not have to report concerns about extremist homeschooling. As a result, both at a national and a local level, data on extremist homeschooling is lacking. In light of the isolating effects that extremist homeschooling can have, and the ways in which social isolation may in turn encourage the transmission of extremism, this can be considered problematic. Insights into potential extremist homeschooling practices could help to take timely preventative measures, should these be required. To this end, a clear framework for assessing individual cases is required, in order to determine whether homeschooling of an extremist nature is taking place. Here, recent concerns regarding (the limitations of) ideological assessments must be taken into account (see Stoeldraaijers et al., 2023). Naturally, at all times a balance should be struck between the possible (security) risks of extremist homeschooling and the invasion of privacy associated with such registrations.

Nonetheless, the finding that extremist parents may raise their children with love and care goes against the popular notion that extremist parents are inherently "bad" parents (Hamilton, 2018) or even "child abusers" (Palmer, 2014). Such argumentation has previously been used to justify far-reaching policies or interventions in extremist families (Bickerton, 2019). The current study shows that such repressive measures may indirectly facilitate the transmission of intergenerational transmission of extremism. For example, it was described that anger plays an important role in the stories that extremist parents convey to their children. Experiences of discrimination and stigmatization often inspire these narratives: extremist parents frequently appeal to feeling excluded or neglected by the outside world, as Chapter 8 showed. The interviews further suggest that (judicial) interventions and counter measures can fuel these extremist narratives, and that feelings of anger or hate may in turn be passed on to children. In particular, anger towards governmental institutions plays a pivotal role, especially among jihadist parents who traveled to IS territory. In the interviews, Dutch detained (former) jihadists whose nationality has been revoked frequently express their frustration. As of yet, it is unclear what long-term effects these narratives of anger will have on the intergenerational transmission of extremism. Nevertheless, experts, practitioners and policy makers dealing with these families should be are aware that repressive measures – although sometimes unavoidable – may unintentionally stimulate extremist transmission processes. A tailor-made and integrated approach, centered around the unique dynamics and experiences of each respective family, would thus be preferred.

In addition, the findings of this study show that children from extremist families are able to break away from their parents' ideas, but that in doing so, they can follow various paths. While some completely cut off contact with their parents when breaking away from the family ideology, others continue to support their extremist caregivers. In line with the findings of the systematic literature review in Chapter 3, findings also point to the protective power that non-extremist influences from outside the family sphere may have; the importance of alternative identity formation; and the role of positive trigger events and exposure to people with different lifestyles or ideologies. Research participants who grew up with extremist parents describe tapping into to new forms of meaning-making during their deradicalization process. To some, for example, mainstream religion may serve as an alternative, pro-social form of meaning-making that can replace the extremist family ideology. These observations could be used in the development of programs to combat the intergenerational transmission of extremism. Ultimately, breaking the isolated bubble in which children grow up is crucial in this regard.

All in all, this shows that for children of extremist parents, the process of breaking away is a long-term and unique process. Where some are able to close the chapter at some point, others fear that their ideological upbringing continues to haunt them for the rest of their lives – even after years of therapy. Yet, the current study suggests that the prevailing assumption that children who grow up in an extremist family will by definition become extremists themselves, is unjustified and most likely even harmful. For anyone who works with extremist families, it is pivotal not to reduce children to their parents' ideas – and to avoid at all times that a wedge is being driven between parents and their children. After all, despite their extremist family ideology, a healthy and loving relationship between parents and children may indeed exist, and children raised in extremist families can show themselves to be particularly loyal to their parents. The observation that extremist parents tend to convey their views to their children out of a desire to protect them against a supposedly 'dangerous' outside world, further underscores this hypothesis. Combating processes of intergenerational transmission should therefore not come at the expense of the relationship that may exist between extremist parents and their children.

The observations described in this dissertation provide a valuable starting point for anyone who is working on preventing the intergenerational transmission of extremism within a family context. The insights outlined in this study can help set up new interventions and prevention measures, or can contribute to existing programs. This dissertation may additionally help in the development of policies that better reflect the experiences of (children growing up in) extremist families. It should nevertheless be emphasized that the findings discussed in this dissertation do not necessarily translate to individual cases, and that their applicability to specific extremist families may be limited due to a variety of methodological considerations. In the next section I will address the most important ones.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Regarding the data selection

The qualitative methods applied in this study are not without limitations. As discussed, studying extremist families in the Netherlands (and beyond) has not proven easy. In an ideal scenario, I would have additionally included data from other relevant actors, such as the Child Protection Council, the Dutch Probation Service, youth care facilities, and Dutch municipalities. Due to the sensitivity of this type of data and the judicial constraints surrounding (research on) minors, this was not feasible, which in turn limited triangulation of data. As a result, my findings are naturally biased – but it is hard to determine the extent of this bias. For example, the Public Prosecution Service files only reflect those jihadist families that were subject to a criminal charge and subsequent prosecution. Data from cases that were discharged, or from families that remained under the radar of the criminal justice system, is therefore lacking. Similar limitations apply to the examined court rulings: this data only considers (families of) individuals who ended up in the criminal justice system, for whatever reason. I am therefore unable to comment on the ways in which these cases may differ from families that were never criminally charged. This limits the generalizability of the statements made based on this data (see also Schuurman & Eijkman, 2013).

It must also be emphasized that the nature of the Public Prosecutor's files that were analyzed, varies greatly. In some cases, criminal charges relate to a suspicion of (attempted) travel to a conflict area; in other cases, parents are suspected of plotting an attack on Dutch soil; and still other files are 'merely' concerned with parents' involvement in terrorist financing. The family contexts of the suspects are also rather divers (children born in a conflict area versus born in the Netherlands; parents deceased, divorced or still together; etc.). Furthermore, many of the female jihadist suspects in Public Prosecutor's files are converts, whereas this is not the case for male suspects. Any similarities or differences in ideological transmission processes must therefore be considered against these diverse backgrounds.

In addition, these files were generally drawn up in the context of a criminal prosecution, and not intended for academic research. As a result, details about suspects' family lives are often sparse. The non-scientific nature of the data also raises questions about the extent to which these files contain an accurate representation of suspects' family dynamics and interactions (see Schuurman & Eijkman, 2013). Furthermore, the files generally contain information provided by various parties with conflicting interests – such as the Public Prosecution Service, the police, the suspect itself, child protection services, and any potential witnesses or experts. It is not our job to weigh the facts and circumstances as stated by these parties. Nevertheless, during the case file analysis it was at all times considered that the provided information, most notably claims made by suspects, might not always be truthful – and may even conflict with other evidence in the file. Therefore, statements made by suspects were only included if they were supported (at least to a certain extent) by other

case file evidence (psychiatric evaluation reports, recordings of confidential communication, wire taps, witness statements, house search reports, etc.). Statements that lacked additional support were not taken into account.

Regarding the interviews

The interview data comes with several limitations of its own. This is partly because of the diverse backgrounds of interview participants, but also due to several constraints that are inherent to retrospective interviews and qualitative methods of analysis. Given the weight I attach to the interview data in this study, these limitations deserve explicit attention. I will discuss some of the most important comments regarding participant selection, retrospective interviews as a research method and the use of qualitative analysis techniques.

First of all, some comments on the participant selection. Although I managed to interview a decent pool of research participants, I do not claim that my interviewees are representative of the general extremist community in the Netherlands or abroad. In approaching interview participants, I primarily focused on individuals who have been deradicalized, or who are at least no longer active in extremist milieus. Feasibility was the core consideration in this decision, since people who are no longer extremist themselves prove to be generally more willing to cooperate in academic research (see Horgan, 2009). Secondly, primarily including deradicalized participants took preference from an ethical point of view. I wanted to limit the potential social and security risks (such as retaliation from the extremist community) as much as possible for those involved, which rendered deradicalized interviewees the most sensible choice. Thirdly, it was assumed that deradicalized individuals would be able to look back on their past with more distance, and perhaps therefore feel more comfortable talking openly about their lives. Extremists who are still fully committed to the ideology might want to convince me of the spotlessness of their family lives instead, and could potentially downplay any extremist socialization efforts on their part.

Nevertheless, the inclusion of deradicalized respondents also has its limitations. Many of the participants I interviewed managed to make a living out of their experiences: they wrote an autobiography, regularly speak at conferences, or lead a support group for (relatives of) radicalized individuals. Particularly in Canada and the United States, it is not uncommon for deradicalized individuals to establish themselves as experts within the so-called 'deradicalization industry' (Perry, Gruenewald, & Scrivens, 2022). This observation fits into a broader trend in which experts on various topics (crime, addictions, etc.) are able to turn their own life stories into successful business models (Lindström & Toikko, 2022; Segal, 2017). In some instances, interviewees' double roles as 'professional formers' (Gansewig & Walsh, 2021 p. 1; see also Koehler, 2020) may have diminished the authenticity of the interviews. Interviewees' stories might no longer reflect their genuine experiences, but instead, they might serve as a marketing tool – where participants adapt their

narratives to accommodate societal expectations of what it means to be a 'former'. The question then remains to what extent these narratives can still be considered authentic or accurate, when they are simultaneously used for commercial purposes. In this light, concerns have previously been expressed about the conscious and subconscious biases of professional formers (Koehler, 2020; Walsh & Gansewig, 2021). Moreover, one may wonder to what extent the experiences of those who seek out media attention and monetize their stories after breaking away, differ from those who do not. The employed methods of participant selection therefore carry the risk of leading to interviewees with particular ('mediagenic') stories and/or personalities.

While generally speaking, the truthfulness of interviewees' statements is always difficult to verify, this is a particularly important limitation of the interviews conducted at the terrorist ward. A common saying among criminal justice professionals is that 'Everyone in prison is innocent' and in the interviews, too, participants would at times try to convince me of their clean hands. This justifies the suspicion that this group may give socially desirable answers when asked about their past. I tried to limit this risk in two ways. On the one hand, it was emphasized ahead of each conversation that the interviewees would at all times remain anonymous; that everything they shared would be treated as confidential; that their answers would have no effect on criminal proceedings; and that our academic research team operates independently of the criminal justice system. On the other hand, it was made explicit that the precise nature of interviewees' convictions would not be of concern to this study, but instead, that I was interested in hearing about their life stories and personal experiences. While these efforts do not completely eradicate the possibility of socially desirable responses by interviewees, it was attempted to minimize their potential drivers as much as possible.

Another limitation to consider is that only retrospective interviews were conducted – which carries the risk of hindsight bias. The events discussed by participants typically occurred a rather long time ago, especially when referring to incidents in early childhood. In recounting such memories, distortions may arise, where individuals recall certain aspects while overlooking others (see Bartlett's (1932) foundational work). Events can also become distorted over time, where subjects change the nature of events or attribute a different meaning to them (Kensinger & Schacter, 2005; Nash & Ost, 2017). Finally, false memories can develop based on the experiences of others, news articles, or even fictional stories (Conway, 1997; Frenda et al., 2013; Nash & Ost, 2017). Such memory effects are not uncommon when it comes to remembering traumatic events in childhood (Maughan & Rutter, 1997), which may also apply to the interviewees in the current study. Although it is not possible to check the truthfulness of respondents' stories, this does not necessarily hamper the findings of this study. Ultimately, truth-seeking was not the goal of this project – as instead, I aimed to understand and illuminate the experiences, perspectives, and subjective interpretations of those involved. Using a narrative analysis method, I attempted to unravel participants' stories and thus gain insight into how they retrospectively give meaning

to their own family relations, identity formation, and subsequent choices and actions (see also Copeland, 2019; Maruna & Liem, 2021; Presser & Sandberg, 2019). It is precisely these profound understandings of (highly subjective) personal experiences which constitute the core of this study.

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the historical, social and cultural context of the interviews differs greatly. While some individuals' experiences took place just a few years ago, other participants talked about events in the 1980s or 1990s. The political and social context of Western countries at the time was very different from those today (consider, for example, the role of the internet and social media). Additionally, authors have previously noted that right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands during the 1990s differ greatly from those that are currently active (Peels, 2021; Sterkenburg, 2021). The experiences of older research participants are therefore difficult to compare with more recent stories – and the former may be less relevant in understanding intergenerational transmission processes today. In addition, the cultural context of interviewees differs at the micro level as well: while some interviews come from urban middle-class households, while others were raised in less affluent rural families. As a result, their stories are not necessarily comparable. Although these individual differences obstruct the generalizability of findings, the variety in backgrounds of interviewees allows for a layered understanding of intergenerational transmission mechanisms.

It is unclear to what extent the experiences of interviewees accurately reflect the Dutch context. A large portion of participants comes from the United States and Canada. Although I initially aimed to focus on extremist families the Netherlands and (Western) Europe, this turned out to yield too little interviewees. Considering I wanted to include as many first-hand experiences of (former) parents and adult children as possible, applying a broader scope was justified. While compromising on the specificity of findings, this decision allowed me to reach a larger group of potential research participants, subsequently allowing for the identification of more general patterns in transmission mechanisms. Nevertheless, cross-country differences in history, culture, politics and legal systems do not always make a direct translation to the Dutch context possible. This was taken into account in discussing the findings.

In addition, the interviewees included in this project come from different ideological backgrounds. Specifically, the study was focused around parents and children (formerly) holding right-wing extremist and jihadist worldviews. In defining these concepts, I relied on respondents' own identification with these ideologies (or a derivative thereof, such as neo-Nazism, white supremacy, or militant Islamism). In analyzing the case files, the ideological assessments made by the Public Prosecution Office were followed. It was not examined to what extent the ideologies discussed in these cases actually met the NCTV definition of violent extremism, considering the many misconceptions and definitional confusions surrounding these concepts. However, in all included cases the use of ideological violence was (at the very least) legitimized by the parents involved. In modern radicalization literature, the willingness to use violence in pursuing ideological

goals is considered a core characteristic of extremist ideologies, which sets them apart from 'mere' radicalism or activism (Berger, 2018; Bötticher, 2017; Striegher, 2015). Nevertheless, individual differences among interviewees in (their understanding of) the definitions of these ideologies cannot be ruled out – which may also hinder the generalizability of the findings.

In conducting this study, I was well-aware of the sensitivity of the research topic. Parenting practices in general are inherently personal, and so is the experience of being raised within an extremist milieu. For example, during the interviews, even participants who broke away from their parents' violent ideologies years ago, would still be emotional when recalling their childhood. Therefore, the do-no-harm principle (cf. Zimmerman & Watts, 2004) was applied at all times: the interview (and interviewees' participation in the study) should cause them as little psychological stress as possible. Participants were always provided with the option to terminate the interview at any time, either temporarily or permanently. While this was communicated to the interviewees ahead of each conversation, none of them chose to do so. On several occasions, they seemed compelled to justify their past decisions regarding their children's upbringing. Despite them no longer being engaged in extremist milieus, some visibly struggled with the realization that their choices may have had a significant impact on their children's lives. Consequently, it is possible that some interviewees may have downplayed the effects their extremist ideology could have had on their children, as to avoid being perceived as "bad parents". As a result, self-selection effects could have played a role in the selection of participants. Parents who heavily socialized their children into their extremist worldviews, may have opted out of participating in this project.

Regarding the analysis

Finally, a few comments on the analysis strategy. In examining the interview data and case files, I primarily employed thematic and narrative analysis techniques. While these qualitative methods are well-suited for analyzing deeply personal themes such as upbringing and family dynamics, they do have their limitations. Notably, in the interviews, I typically only spoke with one individual per household, thus gaining insight into the family system solely from this single perspective. The ways these individual experiences related to those of other family members thus remains unknown. Consequently, the factual accuracy of participants' statements cannot be verified, and therefore remains plausible that their interpretations or experiences do not align with those of other involved individuals. Furthermore, the methodologies applied in this study do not allow for the determination of any risk or protective factors influencing the transmission of extremism from parent to child, as causal relationships cannot be established solely on the basis of qualitative data. Nonetheless, the current study provides us with a unique initial understanding of the firsthand experiences of individuals who themselves experienced (or participated in) the intergenerational transmission of extremism. Their subjective interpretations of their family history are of pivotal

importance if we want to move towards an integrated approach to prevent extremist ideologies from being passed on.

Regarding the use of intelligence data

As described in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, intelligence data was used to gain insight into the scope of jihadist families in the Netherlands. The use of such data, as well as the collaboration with the General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, AIVD) was unique - particularly because in the context of the Netherlands, this project was the first attempt at academic collaboration between an intelligence service and a university. As such, a large deal of trust was involved in our collaboration, where our unprecedented access to this unique type of data sometimes came at the cost of the principles of transparency and replicability. This is no surprise, as intelligence services in general serve a different purpose than academic institutions such as universities. While intelligence agencies prioritize national security, secrecy, and the protection of state interests, universities are committed to the open pursuit of knowledge, intellectual freedom, and transparency. These differing objectives required a lot of manouvering, as the closed, confidential nature of intelligence data inherently contradicts the academic principles of openness and public accountability. In practice, this meant that my co-authors and I did not have access to the raw data on which the dataset was based, due to its sensitive nature and its associated privacy concerns. Moreover, as already mentioned in Chapter 4, we had to sign non-disclosure agreements in working with the data, and several additional internal reviews had to take place prior to publication of the manuscript.

The use of intelligence data was further limited by the fact that the dataset was not created for academic purposes. For this reason, we were unable to establish (the reliability and validity of) the data collection method, nor were we able to check for intercoder reliability. Additionally, because the AIVD cannot share much about its rationale underlying its selection of jihadist 'targets' (as it cannot disclose details pertaining to its modus operandi), we were not fully informed about the exact inclusion criteria underlying such selection. It is therefore to be expected that there is some level of bias in the data, but it is difficult to establish the exact nature of this bias. Finally, there was, quite naturally, also no informed consent obtained prior to including these subjects in the dataset. These individuals in the dataset are likely unaware that their information had been collected by intelligence services in the first place, let alone that their data was being used for academic research purposes.

These limitations raise important questions about whether such restricted data should be used at all in academic research. Since I cannot independently verify the data's quality or origin, the intelligence data and results as a whole fail to adhere to the FAIR-principles that should generally guide academic research. While I believe that such data can indeed be of substantial

value – particularly in areas where no alternative datasets exist, as is often the case for research on extremism – it is crucial to acknowledge that its use requires a careful methodological rationale and transparent acknowledgment of its constraints. In this study, I do not claim transparancy or replicability in the conventional academic sense. Instead, the strength of the study lies in its contribution to a domain where empirical knowledge is scarce, and where access to such data can shed light on otherwise opaque phenomena. Nonetheless, future research efforts should preferably aim to develop clearer methodological frameworks for handling intelligence-derived data. These frameworks would ideally include oversight mechanisms to safeguard academic integrity.

In spite of these limitations, the fact that we were able to gain access to intelligence data did not only allow us to understand the broader context in which intergenerational transmission takes place, but also demonstrated that joint projects between universities and intelligence services are feasible. As mentioned, it is the first time that the AIVD allowed external (academic) researchers to work with their data, which is a promising result in itself. However, such collaborations should not obscure the ethical dilemmas they pose. The experience described here should serve as a starting point for further debate on how, and under what conditions, sensitive security data can be responsibly integrated into academic research. This hopefully inspires other researchers to undertake similar endeavours in the future, while also shedding light on the trade-offs such data access might entail.

CONCLUSION

Despite these caveats and limitations, this study constitutes an important first step in understanding the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideas. As seen in Chapter 3, this field of study is still underdeveloped. Nonetheless, the current study demonstrates the importance of academic research on the dynamics of extremist families, considering the ways in which these interactions may inspire intergenerational transmission mechanisms. Despite individual differences in family backgrounds and relations, general patterns can be discerned in the ways children are raised within extremist environments. As observed, intergenerational transmission occurs within a broader context of mutual interactions between parents, children and the outside world. These interactions are central to the ways extremist beliefs are passed from one generation to the next. This dissertation therefore demonstrates that transmission mechanisms can best be understood as arising out of three dimensions: socialization mechanisms, everyday parenting practices and narratives of extremist parenthood.

As discussed, extremist parents can actively contribute to processes of intergenerational transmission. However, in socializing their children into extremist ideologies, they are typically not driven by malicious intent, but rather by the perceived ‘dangerousness’ of the outside world, and a resulting desire to protect their children against existential threats. Moreover, children raised in

extremist households do not necessarily look back negatively on their upbringing, and many of the interviewees in this study do not harbor any resentment towards their extremist parents. In some cases, a healthy and loving relation between extremist parents and their children can even be observed. These insights are vital for shaping intervention and prevention strategies to counter extremist transmission within the family. In developing such programs, emphasis should be placed on systemic approaches that focuses on both parents and children and the dynamics between them. In cases where serious indications of developmental risks to children are absent, caution should be exercised in implementing drastic measures in extremist families. Interventions by authorities may exacerbate family members' distrust, potentially leading to further social isolation and, consequently, stimulating the intergenerational transmission of these ideas.

While this dissertation does not serve as a risk assessment tool in individual cases, its findings underscore the ongoing importance of addressing intergenerational extremism transmission in the foreseeable future. This appears to be particularly the case for the Dutch context. Interviews with experts and professionals suggest that the intergenerational transmission of extremism occurs in the Netherlands, too. The files from the Public Prosecution Service, court rulings, and interviews with Dutch (former) extremist parents further support this assumption. However, the current study yields limited definitive conclusions regarding the extent of intergenerational extremism transmission in the Netherlands. Some points of interest for the Dutch context can be distilled. For example, there is still little insight into the nature of right-wing extremist transmission in the Netherlands. The exact number of children who grow up with right-wing extremist views is unknown, and this group is particularly difficult to examine. This study also shows – in line with the systematic literature review in Chapter 3 – that extremist homeschooling practices probably occur in the Dutch context as well, but it is unclear to what extent and in which ways this takes place. A lack of awareness and willingness to report issues among compulsory education officers may play a role here, and this should also be addressed in the future.

Based on this study, I cannot make any predictions about the ways the intergenerational transmission of extremism will evolve in the near future. Considering recent trends and shifts in (new forms of) extremist ideologies, it is possible that more children will be at risk of being raised with violent worldviews. Increases in ideological polarization within society may exacerbate this trend, potentially inspiring extremist families to further isolate themselves from mainstream society. This is concerning, particularly because this dissertation has demonstrated that for children to break away from their parents' extremist beliefs, exposure to other worldviews and lifestyles is pivotal. Simultaneously, insufficient understanding of these families could impede the timely implementation of preventive and intervention strategies. In the end, stimulating diversity and dialogue, combating stigma, and alleviating the social isolation experienced by children, should therefore be prioritized in combatting the intergenerational transmission of extremism within the family.

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APPENDIX

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CURRICULUM VITAE

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APPENDIX 2. TOPIC LIST I

Topic list for interviews with (former) extremist children[11]

1. Introduction

a. Researcher introduces themselves and the research topic.
b. Informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality are discussed.
c. Permission is asked to record the conversation on a recorder.

2. General upbringing

a. Where did the participant grow up?
b. What was the family like? What was the relationship with siblings like?
c. What kind of child was the participant?
d. Did the participant go to school? Hobbies? Extracurriculair activities?

3. Relationship with parents

a. What was the occupation of the parents? What was their social circle like?
b. How would the participant describe their father? What was the relationship like with the father as a child?
c. How would the participant describe their mother? What was the relationship like with the mother as a child?
d. To what extent the participant feel loved? Why/why not?
e. To what extent did the participant look up to his parents? Why/why not?

4. The family ideology

a. When did the family ideology first appear? Are there other people in the family who adhere to the ideology (uncles, aunts, grandparents, etc.)?
b. What are the first memories of the ideology?
c. What were the rules? What was allowed/not allowed?
d. To what extent did the participant 'understand' the family ideology as a child?
e. To what extent did the participant feel 'different' as a child because of the family ideology?
f. How was the outside world perceived?
g. Were there also 'nice' things about the family ideology?

[11] As registered on the Open Science Forum page for this study: https://osf.io/84aje/?view_only=925e06df65c340388062fa782ad00ced

5. Ideological socialization

a. What was the role of ideology in education?
b. Who was responsible for the transmission or the ideological upbringing – father or mother? Why? What was the role of siblings in this?
c. What punishments or rewards were used?
d. To what extent was the participant allowed to interact with 'outsiders'?
e. Was there homeschooling involved?
f. What was the worst that could happen if ideology was not adhered?

6. Leaving the ideology

a. Did the participant ever doubt the family ideology? How did that doubt come about?
b. What was the desistance process like?
c. How long did it take to break away? What helped with this? What did not help?
d. Does the participant feel that the process of breaking away is completed by now?
e. Have others in their environment disengaged- siblings, for example? Why/why not?
f. Did the participant ever hesitate to return?

7. Today

a. What is the contact like with parents after breaking away? And with siblings?
b. What traces has the upbringing left? What role does the participant's past still play today?
c. How do they look back on their childhood today?
d. How do they view closed communities or religious/ideological groups in general today?
e. Does the participant have children themself? What is the participant like as a parent? (if applicable)

8. Concluding

a. Are there any things left undiscussed?
b. Possible follow-up appointments.
c. Suggestions for new participants?

APPENDIX 3. TOPIC LIST II

Topic list for interviews with (former) extremist parents[12]

1. Introduction

a. The researcher introduces themselves and the research topic.
b. Informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality are discussed. (*if applicable*: it is emphasized that this conversation will have no impact on participants' legal process).
c. Permission is asked to record the conversation on a recorder.

2. Family background in general

a. Where did the participant grow up?
b. What was their family like? How was their relationship with siblings (if applicable)?
c. What kind of child was the participant?
d. How do the parents view the participant's life choices (*if applicable:* what do they think of the fact that the participant is in prison and/or traveled to conflict areas)
e. What is grandparents' relationship with the grandchildren like?

3. Parenthood

a. Can the participant tell something about their child(ren)? (Age, place of birth, etc.)
b. To what extent was parenthood planned? Did the participant want to become a father/mother at the time? If so, why?
c. Who is the father/mother of the child(ren)?
d. What was their relationship like in the past? What is the relationship like today?
e. What was the relation with the child(ren) like in the past? What is the relation with the child(ren) like today?
f. If applicable: who does currently have parental authority? What does the participant think of this?
g. To what extent did participant's family relations change after (de)radicalization?
h. What role did/does their ideology play in their children's upbringing? What did/does this look like in practice?

[12] As registered on the Open Science Forum page for this study: https://osf.io/84aje/?view_only=925e06df65c340388062fa782ad00ced

4. If applicable…

a. To what extent does imprisonment affect participants' family relationships? What challenges are experienced?
b. What has the participant told their child(ren) about their imprisonment?
c. What has the participant told their child(ren) about the situation in Syria and Iraq?
d. It is often said about children who have been in Syria and Iraq that they are 'traumatized'. What does the participant think of that statement?

5. Parenting values

a. Does the participant consider themselves a 'good' parent?
b. When is upbringing considered 'successful', according to them?
c. *If applicable:* How does the participant envision parenthood after detention? What challenges do they expect to encounter?
d. What kind of parent does the participant hope to be for their child(ren)? What values does the participant find important in upbringing?
e. What kind of future does the participant envision for their child(ren)? How do they contribute to this?
f. Are there things that the participant would have liked to do differently in the upbringing of their child(ren)?

6. Concluding

a. Are there any things left undiscussed?
b. Possible follow-up appointments.
c. Suggestions for new participants?

APPENDIX 4. CODING SCHEME

Coding scheme - Case files and court rulings[13]

Date of review:

Municipality/district:

District number:

File number:

Court:

Date court ruling:

General description of case:

CATEGORY	THEME	DESCRIPTION
GENERAL INFO CHILD	Age	
	Living situation	
	Job/education	
	Peer relations	
	Hobby's	
	Description of personality traits	
	Mental wellbeing	
	Indicators of radicalization (i.a.)	
	Other/comments	
GENERAL INFO PARENTS/ HOUSEHOLD	Family structure	
	Socio-economic status	
	Job/education level parents	
	Parental relationship	
	Ideology	
	Parental network	
	Other/comments	

[13] As registered on the Open Science Forum page for this study: https://osf.io/84aje/?view_only=925e06df65c340388062fa782ad00ced

CATEGORY	THEME	DESCRIPTION
TRANSMISSION MECHANISMS (DIRECT)	Discursive	
	Moral-educational	
	Socio-spatial	
	Temporal	
	Symbolic	
	Other/comments	
TRANSMISSION MECHANISMS (INDIRECT)	Multigenerational transmission (i.a.)	
	Loyalty	
	Role of siblings	
	Resistance/rebellion	
	Other/comments	
GENERAL PARENTING PRACTICES	Parenting style	
	Attachment	
	Maltreatment/abuse	
	Expressions of love	
	Other/comments	
NARRATIVES OF PARENTHOOD	Parenting values	
	Contradictions (i.a.)	
	Ideological conflicts (i.a.)	
	Gendered narratives	
	Other/comments	
AFTERMATH	Breaking away	
	Trauma/mental health	
	Other/comments	
OTHER COMMENTS / OBSERVATIONS		

SUMMARY

The influence that parents have on their children's development has been well established in a myriad of academic disciplines. Broadly speaking, we know that parents (and parental figures in general) are of key importance for children's values, ideas and beliefs in life. Nonetheless, little is known about whether extremist ideologies are similarly passed down from one generation to the next, nor do we know what such processes may look like in practice. This dissertation aims to examine the ways in which right-wing extremist and jihadist parents convey their violent worldviews to their children. I approach this research topic using the concept of 'intergenerational transmission', which refers to the process by which parents pass on various behaviors and beliefs to their children. Using a wide array of data, including existing academic literature, interviews with practitioners and (former) extremists, aggregated intelligence data and court rulings, I aim to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the estimated scope of the intergenerational transmission of extremism in the Netherlands? How many children are at risk of being raised with extremist ideas?
2. How can we explain the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideologies? What mechanisms are involved in this process?
3. To what extent and how can various factors and dynamics (within and beyond the family) stimulate or inhibit extremist transmission processes?
4. To what extent does the intergenerational transmission of extremism have long-term consequences for the families involved?

In answering these questions, I opt for a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from various fields, such as psychology, sociology, and criminology, to comprehensively understand how extremist ideologies are transmitted from one generation to the next. By taking this approach, this dissertation contributes to our (currently still limited) empirical knowledge about the intergenerational transmission of extremist beliefs.

The scope of intergenerational transmission

In answering the first research question, I had the possibility to work on a collaborative research project with the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD). In this project, a national-level dataset on Dutch individuals identified as jihadists was matched to the Personal Records Database (BRP). This allowed for an analysis of family structures and household compositions within the Dutch jihadist community. Findings (as of 12 September 2022) indicate that the intergenerational transmission of jihadism might indeed take place in the Netherlands. Jihadist parents collectively have 665 children (551 minor-aged), all of which could theoretically be raised within a jihadist family environment. Moreover, data indicates that 4.4% of children with jihadist

parents have themselves been identified by the AIVD as jihadists. Additionally, fact that nearly half of the minor-aged children in the study grow up in dual-jihadist parent households, could increase the likelihood of ideological transmission.

Other risk factors were identified, including children's possibly limited exposure to moderating influences. Only 8.7% of jihadist children live in extended family households, and 33.1% grow up in single-parent homes, with 93 children raised by a sole caregiver identified as a jihadist. This lack of ideological counterbalance may reinforce extremist beliefs within children. Additionally, trauma and victimhood narratives might contribute to transmission risks. Over 5% of children in the dataset were born in Syria, potentially experiencing war-related trauma. Furthermore, 6.6% of jihadist parents died in conflict zones. Both observations may foster children's ideological radicalization through intergenerational loyalty, the romantication of martyrdom, and collective victimhood.

Three dimensions of intergenerational transmission

In order to qualitatively understand the processes of intergenerational transmission within extremist families, I first conducted a systematic literature review to gain insight into existing literature on this topic. The results of the systematic review support the observation that extremist ideologies can be transmitted across generations. Moreover, the findings indicate that processes of intergenerational transmission can hardly be studied in isolation. Instead, intergenerational transmission takes place within a complex and layered context of specific family dynamics, interactions, and risk and protective factors. Most notably, the literature suggests that ideological socialization mechanisms, everyday parenting practices of extremist parents, and the (extremist) narratives of parenthood that they adhere to, seem pivotal in understanding the exact workings of these mechanisms, and may ultimately determine the long-term outcomes of these processes.

Based on these observations, I developed an integrated framework that serves to better understand the mechanisms involved in the intergenerational transmission of extremism within families. The framework combines classic transmission mechanisms (i.e., social learning and socialization theory) with broader developmental approaches such as attachment and parenting style theory, as well as symbolic interactionist theories that emphasize the importance of storytelling and narratives in transmission processes. In short, it revolves around three core dimensions: (1) socialization mechanisms, (2) parenting practices, and (3) narratives of parenthood. These three dimensions, which will be discussed in detail below, became the backbone of my empirical study, as well as the eventual structure of this dissertation.

Socialization mechanisms

Regarding the first dimension, ideological socialization mechanisms, the empirical data of this research project shows that parents directly and indirectly try to instill their beliefs in their children. They may for example explicitly teach their children about the extremist family ideology, put ideological rules and regulations in place, and punish or reward children for their respective (dis) obeyance. Additionally, parents might choose to surround children with like-minded individuals, as to ensure social control and secondary socialization through peers. However, indirect (or child-dependent) mechanisms of transmission also play a role. Indirect mechanisms pertain to how children subsequently deal with the beliefs provided by their parents, and the various factors involved in their adoption or rejection of the ideology. The data points at the importance of children's loyalty to their parents, the romanticization of extremist ideology by children, and multigenerational transmission processes. At the same time, the findings suggest that the intergenerational transmission of extremism is not always successful. This is because, on the one hand, besides parental transmission efforts, children must also be receptive to the extremist ideology. The interview data indicates that this receptivity is sometimes lacking, and some children indeed prove resilient to their parents' extremist beliefs. On the other hand, the data indicates that in both right-wing extremist and jihadist families, not all extremist parents have the desire to transmit their beliefs to their children. To protect their children from the violence and hatred of their ideology, they sometimes opt to keep their children completely away from their extremist 'double lives'. Regardless, this observation does not negate the possibility of transmission occurring indirectly, as children may be drawn to their parents' ideology of their own accord.

Parenting practices

Moreover, the data shows that the socialization mechanisms outlined above need to be considered against a more general backdrop of everyday interactions between family members. Arguably, not all parenting practices exhibited in these families are aimed at the pursuit of ideological transmission, yet they may still play a role in children's susceptibility to their parents' ideas. For example, it was observed that children who are raised in dysfunctional or unsafe family situations, may develop insecure attachment styles and/or misplaced loyalty towards their parents, which could stimulate the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideas in the long run. At the same time, this study also demonstrates that some extremist parents are indeed capable of providing their children with a safe, warm, and loving upbringing. Both right-wing extremist and jihadist parents may prove to be committed and involved parents. This applies to both fathers and mothers in both milieus – contrary to earlier studies that suggest that specifically mothers play a pivotal role in extremist families. The effect this has on transmission processes is not clear from this study. Children who were raised in emotionally supportive environments, are more likely to develop secure attachment

styles and tend to have a more positive self-image and more self-confidence. On the other hand, an ideology that is transmitted in a non-coercive manner may be easier to adopt, considering the trusting and loving bond that exists between parents and children in healthy family systems. These potential dynamics deserve more attention in future research on the transmission of extremist ideologies.

Lastly, this study suggests that a remarkable portion of (former) jihadist interview participants struggle with their parental role while in prison. This is partly due to the practical constraints of detention (e.g., limited time to engage with their children) and partly due to the emotional distance that some experience. Results suggest that detained (former) extremist parents would benefit from more pedagogical and practical support in raising their children, both during and after imprisonment.

Narratives of parenthood

The findings further suggest that the intergenerational transmission of extremism is inherently connected to individual ideas and assumptions about parenthood. Ultimately, the topic of parenthood is a crucial concern in extremist ideologies, subsequently influencing the everyday family lives of extremist parents. Additionally, parenting styles can indirectly increase susceptibility to extremist messaging among children. The results suggest that (former) right-wing extremist and jihadist parents have diverse ideas about the meaning of 'good' parenthood, with varying perceptions of their influence on and responsibility for their children's development. Overall, the data highlights the importance of discipline and civilization as central values in (extremist) parenthood, suggesting that both right-wing extremist and jihadist parents may lean towards authoritarian parenting styles, where discipline and order play a significant role.

Gender roles are also a key topic in narratives of extremist parenthood. In both jihadist and right-wing extremist environments, women are put on a pedestal due to their childbearing capacity. This is simultaneously an inherent part of the extremist ambitions of mothers: giving birth to a new generation of extremists is considered both an individual and a collective duty, the research shows. For men, parenthood is less central to their violent ambitions; they primarily fulfill their role as extremist fighters within their organization and, to a lesser extent, as heads of families.

However, extremist narratives about parenthood are not always adhered to in practice, as double standards among parents are not uncommon – particularly in right-wing extremist milieus. Despite the extremist ideology instructing parents to bring forth a new generation of 'fighters', it was observed that parents often choose not to raise their children with these beliefs. The danger and stress that come with a life as an extremist are not always something they wish upon their children. Moreover, ideological conflicts among partners, where fathers and mothers do not see eye to eye on their extremist beliefs, sometimes hinder the intergenerational transmission of these beliefs.

Finally, the data suggest that parenthood itself can be a first step towards a deradicalization process for parents. Having children can be a life-changing experience, leading parents to discover another side of their identity, and may teach them to take responsibility for something greater than themselves and their ideology. Becoming a parent in may thus serve as a 'turning point' for extremists – a finding that fits with established life-course approaches within criminology.

Aftermath

Both children who grew up in extremist families and former extremist parents experience various long-term consequences of their family history. Negative reactions from the outside world, including stigmatization and labeling, are often encountered in the data. Such hostilities may reinforce the transmission of extremist ideologies by strengthening the isolation of extremist families, keeping potential counter-narratives at bay, and possibly fueling the (collective) victim narratives that children from extremist families are often raised with.

However, children do not necessarily follow in their parents' extremist footsteps. Various reasons may lead individuals to abandon the extremist family ideology. My study indicates that counter-narratives and encounters with "the Other," as well as new-found forms of identity-seeking and meaning-making—including involvement in (Eastern) religious practices and self-study—are central to this process. This suggests that countering the isolation of the extremist family is crucial to allowing other stories and worldviews to enter, thereby facilitating deradicalization. My study also reveals that, for some, it is necessary to sever ties with extremist family members to develop a new identity.

Regardless, even individuals who managed to overcome the family ideology tend to struggle with trauma and mental health issues. They also often face challenges in their later parental roles, fearing that their history makes them unsuitable to raise a child. Finally, this dissertation shows that former extremist parents, too, are haunted by their past. They usually look back with shame and regret on the parenting decisions they made. Some choose to have a moment of explicit disclosure where they explain their past decisions to their children. Such open and honest conversations are likely crucial for both parent and child to reconcile with their extremist family history.

Conclusion

This study constitutes an important first step in understanding the intergenerational transmission of extremist ideas – a field of study that is still underdeveloped. It has become clear that children from extremist families are indeed at risk of being raised as extremists themselves. It remains however unclear what the actual scope of this phenomenon is. The quantitative analysis of intelligence data suggests that in the Netherlands, there are some children that grow up with at least one parent that adheres to jihadist ideologies, which justifies further (longitudinal) research

on this group. However, based on this study alone, I cannot draw any conclusions regarding the scope of children receiving a right-wing extremist upbringing, nor about the number of children at risk of intergenerational tranmission beyond the Netherlands.

Regardless, and despite individual differences in family backgrounds and relations, general patterns can be discerned in the ways children are raised within extremist environments. It was observed that intergenerational transmission occurs within a broader context of mutual interactions between parents, children and the outside world. These interactions are central to the ways extremist beliefs are passed on from one generation to the next. This dissertation therefore demonstrates that transmission mechanisms can best be understood as arising out of three dimensions: socialization mechanisms, everyday parenting practices and narratives of extremist parenthood.

As observed, extremist parents can actively contribute to processes of intergenerational transmission. However, in socializing their children into extremist ideologies, they are typically not driven by malicious intent, but rather by the perceived 'dangerousness' of the outside world, and a resulting desire to protect their children against existential threats. Moreover, children raised in extremist households do not necessarily look back negatively on their upbringing, and many of the interviewees in this study do not harbor any resentment towards their extremist parents. In some cases, a healthy and loving relation between extremist parents and their children can even be observed. These insights are vital for shaping intervention and prevention strategies to counter extremist transmission within the family. In developing such programs, emphasis should be placed on systemic approaches that focuses on both parents and children and the dynamics between them. In cases where serious indications of developmental risks to children are absent, caution should be exercised in implementing drastic measures in extremist families. Interventions by authorities may exacerbate family members' distrust, potentially leading to further social isolation and, consequently, stimulating the intergenerational transmission of these ideas.

It should be noted that this dissertation primarily illustrates what extremist family life *may look like*. Besides some similarities, various differences among households were observed. Therefore, the results of this study are not intended for interpreting individual cases, where a customized approach is always preferred. Regardless, this dissertation provides a first glimpse into the mechanisms and dynamics with which the intergenerational transmission of extremism may take place. The results of the research underscore the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in studying the intergenerational transmission of extremism. I found that concepts and elements from various fields may prove valuable in understanding these mechanisms – including pedagogy and developmental psychology, criminology, sociology, victimology, and terrorism studies. This interdisciplinary nature should play a central role in future research on extremist transmission processes.

NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

De invloed die ouders hebben op de ontwikkeling van hun kinderen is in tal van academische studies vastgesteld. Zo weten we dat ouders (en ouderfiguren in het algemeen) van cruciaal belang zijn voor de waarden, ideeën en overtuigingen die kinderen zich eigen maken. Desondanks is er weinig bekend over de vraag of extremistische ideologieën op vergelijkbare wijze van de ene generatie op de andere worden doorgegeven, noch weten we hoe dergelijke overdrachtsprocessen er in de praktijk uitzien. Dit proefschrift heeft als doel inzicht te krijgen in de manier waarop rechts-extremistische en jihadistische ouders hun gewelddadige denkbeelden op hun kinderen overbrengen. Ik gebruik daartoe het concept van 'intergenerationele overdracht', wat verwijst naar het proces waarbij ouders specifieke gedragspatronen en overtuigingen aan hun kinderen meegeven. Aan de hand van een breed scala aan data, waaronder bestaande academische literatuur, interviews met professionals en (voormalige) extremisten, geaggregeerde inlichtingendata en gerechtelijke uitspraken, probeer ik de volgende onderzoeksvragen te beantwoorden:

1. Wat is de geschatte omvang van de intergenerationele overdracht van extremisme in Nederland? Hoeveel kinderen lopen het risico om opgevoed te worden met extremistische ideeën?
2. Hoe kunnen we de intergenerationele overdracht van extremistische ideologieën verklaren? Welke mechanismen spelen een rol in dit proces?
3. In hoeverre en op welke manier kunnen verschillende factoren en dynamieken (binnen en buiten het gezin) de extremistische overdrachtsprocessen stimuleren of remmen?
4. In hoeverre heeft de intergenerationele overdracht van extremisme langdurige gevolgen voor de betrokken families?

In het beantwoorden van deze vragen kies ik voor een multidisciplinaire aanpak, waarbij ik put uit verschillende vakgebieden zoals psychologie, sociologie en criminologie om een alomvattend begrip te krijgen van hoe extremistische ideologieën van de ene generatie op de andere kunnen worden overgedragen. Met deze benadering levert dit proefschrift een belangrijke bijdrage aan onze (momenteel nog beperkte) empirische kennis over de intergenerationele overdracht van extremistische overtuigingen.

De omvang van het fenomeen

Een unieke samenwerking met de Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst (AIVD) maakte inzage mogelijk in een nationale dataset van individuen die door de AIVD als jihadisten zijn geïdentificeerd, wiens gegevens zijn gekoppeld aan de Basisregistratie Personen (BRP). Dit stelde mij in staat om de familieverbanden en gezinsstructuren binnen de Nederlandse jihadistische gemeenschap te analyseren. De bevindingen (met als peildatum 12 september 2022) wijzen erop

dat de intergenerationele overdracht van jihadisme daadwerkelijk kan plaatsvinden in Nederland. De bij de AIVD bekende jihadistische ouders hebben gezamenlijk 665 kinderen (waarvan 551 minderjarig), die allen mogelijkerwijs opgroeien binnen een jihadistisch gezinsmilieu. Bovendien blijkt uit de data dat 4,4% van de kinderen met jihadistische ouders zelf bij de AIVD bekend staat als jihadist. Daarnaast zou het feit dat bijna de helft van de minderjarige kinderen in de studie opgroeit in een huishouden met twee jihadistische ouders de kans op ideologische overdracht kunnen vergroten.

Er zijn ook andere risicofactoren geïdentificeerd, waaronder de vermoedelijk beperkte blootstelling van kinderen aan gematigde invloeden. Slechts 8,7% van de jihadistische kinderen woont in een uitgebreid gezin (met andere gezinsleden dan de directe verwanten), en 33,1% groeit op in een eenoudergezin – waarbij 93 kinderen worden opgevoed door een verzorger die bij de AIVD als jihadist bekend staat. Dit gebrek aan ideologisch tegenwicht kan bijdragen aan de overdracht van extremistisch gedachtegoed. Daarnaast kunnen (collectief) trauma en slachtoffernarratieven bijdragen aan de risico's van overdracht. Meer dan 5% van de kinderen in de dataset is immers geboren in Syrië en heeft mogelijk oorlogstrauma's opgelopen, en 6,6% van de jihadistische ouders is omgekomen in conflictgebied. Beide factoren kunnen bijdragen aan de ideologische radicalisering van kinderen door intergenerationele loyaliteit, de romantisering van martelaarschap, en (verhalen over) collectief slachtofferschap.

Drie dimensies van intergenerationele overdracht

Voorafgaand aan de analyse van mijn kwalitatieve data, heb ik een systematische literatuurreview uitgevoerd om inzicht te krijgen in bestaande inzichten over de intergenerationele overdracht van extremisme. De resultaten van de systematische review ondersteunen de observatie dat extremistische ideologieën van generatie op generatie kunnen worden doorgegeven. Bovendien wijzen de bevindingen erop dat processen van intergenerationele overdracht nauwelijks in isolatie kunnen worden bestudeerd. In plaats daarvan vindt intergenerationele overdracht plaats binnen een complexe en gelaagde context van specifieke gezinsdynamieken, interacties, en risico- en beschermende factoren. Relevant is bovendien dat de literatuur suggereert dat ideologische socialisatiemechanismen, alledaagse opvoedpraktijken van extremistische ouders, en hun onderliggende assumpties ten aanzien van (extremistisch) ouderschap, cruciaal lijken voor het begrijpen van de precieze werking van deze mechanismen, en uiteindelijk de langetermijneffecten van deze processen kunnen bepalen.

Op basis van deze observaties heb ik een geïntegreerd raamwerk ontwikkeld dat helpt om de mechanismen die aan de intergenerationele overdracht van extremisme binnen gezinnen ten grondslag liggen, beter te begrijpen. Het raamwerk combineert klassieke overdrachtmechanismen (d.w.z. sociale leren en socialisatietheorie) met bredere ontwikkelingsbenaderingen zoals hechting

en opvoedstijltheorie, evenals symbolisch interactionistische theorieën die het belang van verhalen en narratieven in overdrachtsprocessen benadrukken. Samengevat draait het hierbij om drie overlappende dimensies: (1) socialisatiemechanismen, (2) opvoedpraktijken en (3) narratieven van ouderschap. Deze drie dimensies, die hieronder in detail zullen worden besproken, vormen de fundering van mijn empirische analyses, evenals de uiteindelijke structuur van dit proefschrift.

Socialisatiemechanismen

Wat betreft de eerste dimensie, de ideologische socialisatiemechanismen, laat de empirische data zien dat ouders direct en indirect proberen hun overtuigingen aan hun kinderen over te dragen. Ze kunnen bijvoorbeeld hun kinderen onderwijzen over de extremistische gezinsideologie, ideologische regels opleggen, en hun kinderen straffen of belonen voor hun respectieve (on) gehoorzaamheid. Daarnaast kunnen ouders ervoor kiezen hun kinderen te omringen met gelijkgestemde individuen, om zo sociale controle en secundaire socialisatie via leeftijdsgenoten te waarborgen. Indirecte (of kindafhankelijke) overdrachtsmechanismen spelen echter ook een rol. Indirecte mechanismen hebben betrekking op hoe kinderen vervolgens omgaan met de overtuigingen die hun ouders hen aanreiken, en de verschillende factoren die betrokken zijn bij hun acceptatie of afwijzing van de ideologie. De data wijzen hierbij op het belang van loyaliteit van kinderen aan hun ouders, de romantisering van de extremistische ideologie door kinderen, en multigenerationele overdrachtsprocessen. Tegelijkertijd suggereren de bevindingen dat de intergenerationele overdracht van extremisme niet altijd succesvol is. Dit komt enerzijds doordat naast de overdrachtsinspanningen van ouders, kinderen ook *ontvankelijk* moeten zijn voor de extremistische ideologie. De interviewdata laat zien dat deze ontvankelijkheid soms ontbreekt en dat sommige kinderen inderdaad weerbaar zijn tegen de extremistische overtuigingen van hun ouders. Anderzijds suggereert de data dat in zowel rechts-extremistische als jihadistische families niet alle extremistische ouders de wens hebben hun overtuigingen daadwerkelijk aan hun kinderen over te dragen. Om kinderen te beschermen tegen het geweld en de haat van hun ideologie, kiezen ze er soms zelfs voor om hun kinderen volledig weg te houden bij hun extremistische 'dubbellevens'. Desalniettemin sluit deze observatie de mogelijkheid van indirecte overdracht niet uit, aangezien kinderen zich desondanks ook zelf aangetrokken kunnen voelen tot de ideologie van hun ouders.

Opvoedpraktijken

Daarnaast laat dit proefschrift zien dat de hierboven beschreven socialisatiemechanismen moeten worden beschouwd tegen de achtergrond van alledaagse interacties tussen gezinsleden. Hoewel niet alle opvoedpraktijken in deze families ideologische overdracht tot doel hebben, kunnen deze bredere dynamieken toch de vatbaarheid van kinderen voor de ideeën van hun ouders medebepalen. Zo kunnen kinderen die opgroeien in disfunctionele of onveilige gezinssituaties,

onveilige hechtingsstijlen en/of misplaatste loyaliteit jegens hun ouders ontwikkelen, wat op de lange termijn de intergenerationele overdracht van extremistische ideeën kan bevorderen. Tegelijkertijd heeft deze studie ook aangetoond dat sommige extremistische ouders wel degelijk in staat zijn hun kinderen een veilige, warme en liefdevolle opvoeding te bieden. Zowel rechts-extremistische als jihadistische ouders kunnen toegewijde en betrokken ouders zijn. Dit geldt zowel voor vaders als moeders in beide milieus, in tegenstelling tot eerdere studies die suggereren dat vooral moeders in extremistische gezinnen een cruciale rol spelen in de opvoeding. Het effect hiervan op overdrachtsprocessen is niet duidelijk uit deze studie. Kinderen die opgroeien in een emotioneel gezonde omgeving ontwikkelen waarschijnlijk een veilige hechtingsstijl, een positiever zelfbeeld en meer zelfvertrouwen. Aan de andere kant kan een ideologie die op een niet-dwingende manier wordt overgedragen, wellicht makkelijker worden geaccepteerd, vanwege de vertrouwensband die tussen ouders en kinderen in gezonde familiesystemen bestaat. Deze mogelijke dynamieken verdienen meer aandacht in toekomstig onderzoek naar de overdracht van extremistische ideologieën.

Tot slot suggereert deze studie dat een deel van de (voormalig) jihadistische interviewrespondenten moeite heeft met hun ouderrol tijdens hun verblijf in detentie. Dit komt deels door de praktische beperkingen van detentie (zo hebben zij meestal weinig contact met hun kinderen) en deels door de emotionele afstand die sommigen ervaren. De resultaten suggereren dat gedetineerde (voormalig) extremistische ouders baat zouden hebben bij meer pedagogische en praktische ondersteuning bij het opvoeden van hun kinderen, zowel tijdens als na hun gevangenschap.

Ouderschapsnarratieven

De bevindingen suggereren verder dat de intergenerationele overdracht van extremisme nauw verbonden is met persoonlijke ideeën en aannames over ouderschap. Ouderschap is een cruciaal thema binnen extremistische ideologieën, wat vervolgens doorwerkt in het dagelijks gezinsleven van extremistische ouders. Daarnaast kunnen ouderschapsstijlen mogelijk ook indirect de vatbaarheid van kinderen voor extremistische boodschappen vergroten. De resultaten laten zien dat (voormalig) rechts-extremistische en jihadistische ouders uiteenlopende opvattingen hebben over wat 'goed' ouderschap inhoudt, met verschillende percepties van hun eigen invloed op en verantwoordelijkheid voor de ontwikkeling van hun kroost. Over het algemeen benadrukt de data het belang van 'discipline' en 'beschaving' als kernwaarden in (extremistisch) ouderschap, wat de suggestie wekt dat zowel rechts-extremistische als jihadistische ouders neigen naar een autoritaire opvoedstijl, waarin tucht en orde een belangrijke rol spelen.

Ook gender is een centraal thema in de narratieven over extremistisch ouderschap. In zowel jihadistische als rechts-extremistische kringen worden vrouwen op een voetstuk geplaatst

vanwege hun mogelijkheid kinderen te baren. Deze voortplantingscapaciteit vormt tegelijkertijd een inherent onderdeel van de extremistische ambities van moeders: het baren van een nieuwe generatie extremisten wordt zowel als een individuele als collectieve plicht gezien, zo blijkt uit het onderzoek. Voor mannen staat ouderschap minder centraal in hun gewelddadige ambities; zij vervullen voornamelijk hun rol als extremistische strijders binnen hun organisatie, en in mindere mate als hoofd van het gezin.

Extremistische narratieven over ouderschap worden in de praktijk echter niet altijd nageleefd, en dubbele standaarden zijn onder ouders niet ongebruikelijk– vooral in rechts-extremistische milieus. Ondanks dat de extremistische ideologie ouders instrueert om een nieuwe generatie 'strijders' voort te brengen, laat dit proefschrift zien dat ouders er soms voor kiezen om hun kinderen juist niet met deze overtuigingen op te voeden. De fysieke en emotionele stress die gepaard gaat met een leven als extremist, wensen zij hun kinderen vaak niet toe. Bovendien vormen ideologische conflicten tussen partners, waarbij vaders en moeders niet op één lijn zitten wat betreft hun extremistische overtuigingen, soms een belemmering in de intergenerationele overdracht van deze overtuigingen.

Ten slotte suggereert de data dat ouderschap zelf een eerste stap kan zijn richting een deradicalisatieproces voor ouders. Het krijgen van kinderen kan een levensveranderende ervaring zijn, waarbij ouders een nieuwe kant van hun identiteit ontdekken en leren verantwoordelijkheid te nemen voor iets groters dan zichzelf en hun ideologie. Ouderschap kan dus dienen als een '*turning point'* voor extremisten.

Nasleep

Zowel kinderen die zijn opgegroeid in extremistische gezinnen als voormalige extremistische ouders ervaren diverse langdurige gevolgen van hun familiegeschiedenis. Negatieve reacties van de buitenwereld, waaronder stigmatisering en labeling, komen vaak voor in de data. Dergelijke vijandigheden kunnen de overdracht van extremistische ideologieën versterken door de isolatie van extremistische gezinnen te vergroten, waardoor potentiële tegengeluiden buiten de deur worden gehouden, en de (collectieve) slachtoffernarratieven waarmee extremistische ouders hun kinderen vaak grootbrengen, worden gevoed.

Toch volgen kinderen niet noodzakelijkerwijs altijd de extremistische voetsporen van hun ouders. Verschillende redenen kunnen ertoe leiden dat individuen de extremistische familie-ideologie verlaten. Uit mijn onderzoek blijkt dat tegenverhalen en ontmoetingen met "de Ander", evenals nieuwe vormen van zingeving en identiteitsvorming – waaronder vormen van (oosterse) religie en zelfstudie – centraal staan in dit proces. Dit suggereert dat het doorbreken van de isolatie van het extremistische gezin cruciaal is voor het toelaten van alternatieve verhalen en wereldbeelden, en daarmee deradicalisering te bevorderen. Uit mijn onderzoek blijkt ook dat

sommigen de banden met extremistische familieleden volledig moeten verbreken om een nieuwe identiteit te ontwikkelen.

Desondanks blijven zelfs individuen die erin slagen de familie-ideologie te overwinnen vaak worstelen met trauma's en geestelijke gezondheidsproblemen. Ook ervaren zij vaak uitdagingen in hun latere ouderrol, uit angst dat hun familiegeschiedenis hen ongeschikt maakt om zelf een kind op te voeden. Tot slot toont dit proefschrift aan dat ook voormalig extremistische ouders vaak worden achtervolgd door hun verleden. Zij kijken meestal met schaamte en spijt terug op de opvoedbeslissingen die ze hebben genomen. Sommigen kiezen er bewust voor om een voorlichtingsmoment te houden, waarin ze hun verleden aan hun kinderen uitleggen. Dergelijke open en eerlijke gesprekken zijn waarschijnlijk cruciaal voor zowel ouder als kind om zich te verzoenen met hun extremistische familiegeschiedenis.

Conclusie

Deze studie vormt een belangrijke eerste stap in het begrijpen van de intergenerationele overdracht van extremistische ideeën – een onderzoeksveld dat nog altijd onderontwikkeld is. Het is duidelijk geworden dat kinderen uit extremistische gezinnen inderdaad het risico lopen om zelf als extremisten op te groeien. Toch blijft onduidelijk wat de daadwerkelijke omvang van dit fenomeen is. De kwantitatieve analyse van inlichtingengegevens suggereert dat er in Nederland enkele kinderen opgroeien met ten minste één ouder die jihadistische ideologieën aanhangt, wat verder (langdurig) onderzoek naar deze groep rechtvaardigt. Echter, op basis van deze studie alleen, kan ik geen conclusies trekken over het aantal kinderen dat een rechts-extremistische opvoeding ontvangt, noch over het aantal kinderen dat buiten Nederland risico loopt op intergenerationele overdracht.

Desondanks kan men, ondanks individuele verschillen in gezinssituaties en -relaties, algemene patronen onderscheiden in de manier waarop kinderen binnen extremistische omgevingen worden opgevoed. Dit proefschrift laat zien dat intergenerationele overdracht plaatsvindt binnen een bredere context van wederzijdse interacties tussen ouders, kinderen en de buitenwereld. Deze interacties zijn essentieel voor de manieren waarop extremistische overtuigingen van de ene generatie op de volgende worden overgedragen. Deze studie toont dan ook aan dat overdrachtsmechanismen het best kunnen worden begrepen vanuit drie overlappende dimensies: socialisatiemechanismen, dagelijkse opvoedpraktijken, en narratieven van extremistisch ouderschap.

Zoals waargenomen, kunnen extremistische ouders actief bijdragen aan processen van intergenerationele overdracht. Echter, bij het socialiseren van hun kinderen in extremistische ideologieën, worden zij doorgaans niet gedreven door kwaadaardige bedoelingen, maar eerder door het gepercipieerde 'gevaar' van de buitenwereld waartegen zij hun kinderen willen

beschermen. Bovendien kijken kinderen die in extremistische huishoudens zijn opgegroeid niet per se negatief terug op hun opvoeding, en veel van de interviewrespondenten in deze studie koesteren geen wrok jegens hun extremistische ouders. In sommige gevallen kan zelfs een gezonde en liefdevolle relatie tussen extremistische ouders en hun kinderen worden waargenomen. Deze inzichten zijn van cruciaal belang voor het vormgeven van interventie- en preventiestrategieën om extremistische overdracht binnen het gezin tegen te gaan. Bij de ontwikkeling van dergelijke programma's zou de nadruk moeten liggen op systeemgerichte benaderingen, met een focus op zowel ouders als kinderen en hun onderlinge dynamiek. In gevallen waar serieuze aanwijzingen voor ontwikkelingsrisico's bij kinderen ontbreken, moet voorzichtigheid worden betracht bij het implementeren van drastische maatregelen binnen extremistische gezinnen. Interventies door autoriteiten kunnen het wantrouwen van gezinsleden vergroten, wat kan leiden tot verdere sociale isolatie van het gezin, en die zodoende de intergenerationele overdracht van deze ideologieën kunnen stimuleren.

Het moet worden opgemerkt dat dit proefschrift voornamelijk illustreert hoe ideologische overdracht in een extremistisch gezin eruit *zou kunnen* zien. Naast enkele overeenkomsten zijn er ook veel verschillen tussen huishoudens waargenomen. Daarom zijn de resultaten van deze studie niet bedoeld om individuele gevallen te duiden – waarbij een maatwerkaanpak altijd de voorkeur heeft. Desalniettemin biedt dit proefschrift een eerste inzicht in de mechanismen en dynamieken waarmee de intergenerationele overdracht van extremisme kan plaatsvinden. De resultaten van het onderzoek benadrukken het belang van een interdisciplinaire benadering bij het bestuderen van de intergenerationele overdracht van extremisme. Zo is gebleken dat concepten en elementen uit verschillende disciplines waardevol kunnen blijken bij het begrijpen van deze mechanismen – waaronder pedagogiek en ontwikkelingspsychologie, criminologie, sociologie, victimologie en terrorismestudies. Dit interdisciplinaire karakter zou een centrale rol moeten spelen in toekomstig onderzoek naar processen van extremistische overdracht.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey would not have been possible without the support of many individuals to whom I am deeply grateful. First and foremost, I extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Marieke and Daan. It is through your continuous trust and encouragement that I was able to navigate this project (and its challenges) with confidence. Marieke, your sharp insights and thoughtful feedback consistently pushed me to think critically and refine my ideas. Your mentorship has been pivotal to my development as a researcher – and I want to thank you for fostering a team culture that promotes curiosity, collaboration, and growth. Daan, your creative mind and kindheartedness have left a lasting impression on both my academic work and personal development. Thank you for welcoming me into your network, stimulating out-of-the-box thinking, and always taking my input seriously – even when I myself did not.

I am thankful to my current and former colleagues at ISGA, who enriched this journey through stimulating discussions and mutual support: Jolien, Leah, Olga, Arnaldo, Pauline, Martín, Mischa, Laura, Don, Esmée, Kamilla, Anouk, and Seran. Special thanks to Kathi for being a constant source of motivation and German steadfastness throughout this process. My appreciation also extends to the Scandinavian colleagues I met along the way and during my visiting fellowship at the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) in Norway, Oslo. Moreover, this research benefited immensely from the contributions of several student assistants and interns: Zonne, Pablo, Chiara, Dilara, Francesco, and Ilaria. Your efforts advanced this project profoundly.

I am particularly grateful to all interview participants who were trusting enough to share their stories with me. This dissertation would not have been possible without their honesty and openness.

A sincere thank you to the partner organizations that facilitated data collection, especially NCTV, WODC, AIVD, the municipality of The Hague, Raad voor de Rechtspraak, OM, DJI, and the detention centres where I conducted my interviews. Particular recognition goes to Paul and Ingmar for their trust and willingness to explore new research paths.

Throughout the past years, my collaboration with Landelijk Steunpunt Extremisme (LSE) as a research fellow has been particularly rewarding. I am thankful for the stimulating environment LSE povides, and for the opportunity to work alongside such talented individuals. I would also like to thank Fiore Geelhoed, Edward Kleemans and Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn, whose early encouragement sparked my interest in academia when I was still a student.

Finally, I thank my friends and family for their unwavering support, especially Boas and Miriam. Above all, my deepest gratitude goes to Maarten, who stood by me every step of the way. You made me believe in this dissertation as much as I believe in us. Ik hou van je.

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