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

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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.