

Migration and Religious Radicalization: A Family Issue?

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Abstract: One of the crucial issues of radicalism lately has been the involvement of family members in acts of terrorism. But families and their role in the radicalization process have not yet received proper attention from researchers, despite the growing interest shown by policy makers in several countries. This chapter provides an overview of the role of families in radicalization. Both research literature and policy and practice consider families as a potential risk of radicalization, as well as a source of protection and rehabilitation. Finally, the chapter highlights the importance of prevention, even a family level. Families may not notice change in family members who are undergoing a process of radicalization and specifically youngster may be at risk of radicalization, because of the long time they spend online.

Keywords. migration, family, radicalization, religion, parenting practices and beliefs, mental health

1. Introduction

Religious radicalization is one of the main threats that 21st century societies must address. It is indeed an intricate psychological and social process, fostering people's extreme beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies, and promoting the use of violence to pursue their goals and impose their own world view [1, 2]. Therefore, violent radicalization is extremely dangerous for some social groups and for society as a whole [3].

According to Ali Imron, one of the perpetrators of the 2002 Bali attack that produced 202 victims, there are three main elements driving a person to become radicalized, and a member of an organization inspired by *jihad*: family, education (Islamic schools and colleges), and the *a'wah* (the "calling") [4]. One of the key factors of religious radicalization is, then, the influence exerted by families. As a matter of fact, even though no single factor can fully explain the radicalization of an individual, family's influence, as well as the impact of other close social relations, seem to be quite effective for the recruitment of many members in the Islamic network.

On February 26, 2018, Mark Rowley, Chief of Scotland Yard, made a formal request that the children of "*those convicted for terrorist offenses and those who have been radicalized*" might be removed from parental care. In fact, despite the efforts made lately

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by family courts and social services to defend and protect children being raised in a terrorist, extremist and radical environment, Rowley asserted that more should be done to protect children from parents “*teaching their offspring to hate*”.

Rapoport [5] was the first one to introduce the idea of different waves of terrorism, strongly connected to radicalization, and identified four waves: the anarchic wave (1870-1920), the nationalistic wave (1920-1960), the new leftist-marxist wave (from 1960 to 1980), and the religious wave (from the end of 1970 to-date).

The phenomenon of internal terrorism observed in some immigrant communities of the diaspora became a real concern for national and European political leaders only at the beginning of the XI century, after the USA-England operation against immigrant groups in Iraq. This military action was considered a specific attack against a Muslim country and caused unrest in many Muslim young people living in Western Europe, making them more vulnerable to a possible recruitment from Islamic terrorist organizations. After September 11 and the subsequent US attack against Iraq, the USA as well as other European countries manifested no clear interest in assessing the real causes of violent radicalization. However, after the shift that took place in the public debate from the Western involvement with the Muslim world to the Islamic involvement with young Muslims living in the Western world, adopting strategies of radicalization and recruitment, some basic factors of homegrown radicalization, such as the role played by some mosques and other places of recruitment like jails, have finally been investigated.

2. The notion of radicalization

Radicalization is a multifaceted and questioned concept, which is frequently associated to producing terrorism [6].

Current investigations highlight that susceptibility to radicalization encompasses several factors, which can be classified as psychological, behavioral, political, ideological, religious, socio-structural and those related to socialization [7]. Many scholars have located unlike emphasis upon diverse vulnerability factors. For example [8,9] has focused on psychological and socialization factors; [7] has stressed the importance of focussing on cognition and behavior, how ideas and action are related; Baker [10] has highlighted the importance of examining Islamic legislative expressions and terminology to understand terrorism enacted in the name of Islam; and in a recent European research document, Gaxie et al [11] stress the importance of different social and political contexts. Both Bartlett and Miller [12] and Githens-Mazer [13] make a distinction between radicalization that leads to violence and radicalization that does not, stating that research needs to look at both to better understand the concept of radicalization.

It is also significant to emphasize the fact that the empirical basis supporting radicalization research is very reedy [14,15], with radicalization mostly being viewed as something negative rather than positive [13, 16].

Nevertheless, up to now the study of radicalization has mostly focused on the “vulnerable individual” that is somehow manipulated to become a terrorist. Consequently, “the suitable environment” has not been considered as important as the “vulnerable individual”. And regarding the meso-level even less attention has been given to factors present at a macro-level in the radicalization.

In addition, for a proper investigation it is necessary to come up with a clear definition. Nonetheless, despite more than a decade of studies, there is no consensus regarding the definition of “radicalization”.

According to us, the definition of radicalization suggested by Schmid [17] seems to be one of the most appropriate:

An individual or collective (group) process whereby, usually in a situation of political polarization, the normal practices of dialogue, compromise and tolerance between political actors and groups with divergent interests are abandoned by one or both sides in a conflicting dyad preferring instead a growing commitment to engage in confrontational tactics. These may include (i) the use of (non-violent) pressure and coercion; (ii) various forms of political violence other than terrorism; (iii) acts of violent extremism in the form of terrorism and war crimes. The process is, on the part of rebel factions, generally accompanied by an ideological socialization moving away from positions determined by dominant trends or the status quo towards more radical or extremist positions which imply a dichotomous world view and the acceptance of an alternative focal point of political mobilization that is outside the dominant political order, as the existing system is no longer recognized as appropriate or legitimate.

There are many other definitions, and also many different ways to consider this issue. Radicalization can be seen as a process of political socialization towards extremism. As an alternative, radicalization can be considered a process of conflict escalation, meaning an increasing use of illegal methods of political action while facing an opponent. It can also be viewed as a process of mobilization and recruitment, carried out by political and religious leaders and skillful manipulators. Lastly, it can be considered as an overall process of conversion, a life’s transformation, shifting from a personal more individualistic identity to a more communitarian one, making the vulnerable individual more open to requests from an extremist religious cult, by making him believe that he belongs to a superior group of “true” believers. A further definition of radicalization, suggested by Spalek [18], who in turn takes it from Githens-Mazer [13] underlines instead the idea that it is «a moral obligation, which is collectively defined but individually supported, to be involved in direct operations». This definition includes both the individual and social dimension of radicalization, and also provides an opportunity to consider the role played by families in radicalization, because the family context can be considered as a space where moral obligations are collectively defined and usually passed on.

In investigating and presenting the role that families may play in a context of radicalization, however, this chapter refrains from presuming or suggesting negative opinions on Muslim families, as well as dismisses any natural link among Muslim family, Islamic radicalization, and terrorism. The existence of radical opinions within a family does not pose any specific problem, because it does not necessarily mean a direct tie to violence.

3. Studies related to the role of family in the process of radicalization

Despite the growing number of research on radicalization, studies focusing on family's real incidence in this phenomenon are still at their initial stage. A specific focus on family, including parents, brothers, children, spouses, and other members of the extended family, might be very helpful to understand the direct and indirect influence of family on radicalization.

There are several reviews of studies on radicalization, but none of them have specifically directed their attention on family-related variables and interventions. A systematic investigation on the protective factors against extremism and violent radicalization was published by Lösel et al [19]. This study examined 15 databases and involved different individual, family, school, peer, community, and social factors related to radicalization. Among the family factors outlined, as protective factors were identified: parenting style, the presence of non-violent significant relatives, and owning a house. However, as Zych and Nasaescu pointed out, [20], even though this study provided valuable information on this topic in reviewing the different databases, no family-related search terms were included. In addition, family-related risk factors were not taken into consideration. Therefore, the work done by Lösel et al. [19], despite its unquestionable value, is not really complete, also because many studies specifically focusing on family and radicalization have not been mentioned [20].

Another interesting review [21] investigated more the risk and protective factors connected to radicalization. Parents' educational involvement as well as their being married were found to be a preventive factor against radical attitudes and behaviors.

The "*Protocol for a systematic review of family-related risk and protective factors, consequences, and interventions against radicalization*", proposed by Zych and Nasaescu [20], mostly focused on family. This protocol is different from the review published by Wolfowicz et al. [21], due to its inclusion of protective factors, consequences, interventions, and specific family-related search terms. Nonetheless, this is just a protocol, and not a systematic review.

So far, there are no systematic reviews wholly focusing on family and radicalization, providing keywords, searches, inclusion and exclusion criteria, specific encodings and analyses related to family, but rather reviews that are extremely valuable, but not exhaustive.

A global vision and a complete understanding of family-related factors and interventions will enhance a decrease in risks and an increase in protective factors and implement anti-radicalization practices that can be really effective.

4. Family influence on radicalization

As Scremin [22] noted, despite the extensive research devoted to causes and pathways of radicalization, there is very little evidence-based theoretical knowledge regarding the role families may play in the radicalization process. Some experts argue that family members can have a direct influence on radicalization, as they can pass on, both vertically (intergenerational transmission) and horizontally (intragenerational transmission), formalized ideologies explicitly advocating violence and terrorism. Other scholars, instead, consider family influence only an indirect factor, meaning that, in peculiar instances, problematic family conditions could somehow foster the

radicalization process. Finally, other scholars see no family influence at all in the radicalization process.

Nevertheless, some findings do suggest that family may have a direct influence on radicalization. According to Bornstein [23], parents can directly influence their children through their genetic heritage, belief systems and behaviors. Similarly, Valtolina [24] argues that some parents' attitudes and behaviors, mainly parental punishment, can affect the development of aggressive behaviors. Likewise, Bart Duriez and Bart Soenens [25] pointed out that there is an intergenerational transmission of ideology, which includes the direct transmission of xenophobic opinions from parents to children. Amy-Jane Gielen [26] argues that "radicalized people often share their parents' extremist viewpoints". However, several scholars [22] do point out that the parents' ability to effectively hand down their beliefs to their children has not always been confirmed by research. As Copeland [27] highlights, only in a few cases radicalized individuals get extremist dogmas from their parents. Furthermore, even when this phenomenon seems to be taking place, these values often represent only a partial incentive to radicalization.

Families, however, seem to play a very important role in the recruitment process to join extremist groups. In Islamic groups, Edwin Bakker noted that family relationships –mostly made up of siblings, cousins, and kinship through marriage– had an important role in the formal affiliation of 50 people out of 242 jihadists.

In addition to the direct influence already mentioned above, a more indirect family involvement on radicalization also emerges from other studies. Cowan and Cowan [28] stated, for example, that home conflicts can negatively affect the quality of interaction among family members, and when these conflicts become stifling, they could be detrimental for intergenerational relationships. As a result, parents may not notice the first signs of radicalization in their children or may find themselves in a situation of potential radicalization they usually do not know how to handle. Similarly, other professionals pointed out that family instability, such as the loss of family members, troubled marriages, divorces, family violence, psychiatric problems, and substance abuse within the family, can fuel the radicalization process.

Furthermore, many adolescents and young people looking for belonging are enticed by radical groups [29, 30] being searching for substitute family, especially for father figures.

According to Tore Bjørge and Yngve Carlsson's [31], young members of extremist groups have had very little or no relationship at all with their fathers and usually with their own families. Hence, challenges like joining a radical group may be considered an adolescent way of gaining family attention, with older members of the group often filling the void of the missing father figure.

There are also scholars arguing that parents do not influence the radicalization process at all. In his work on the psychology of radicalized jihadist individuals, Silke [32] discovered no real connection between formal affiliation to radical groups and family history marked by deprivation or poverty. A similar conclusion also emerges from Christmann [33] systematic review: violent and nonviolent Islamists often come from very different family backgrounds. Finally, Botha [34] research on al-Shabaab recruitment shows that parents do not usually represent the role models for their sons and daughters. Specifically, Botha argues that most young people become radicalized not because of their parents' influence, but because they follow other routes that have no connection with their parents' political or religious views.

5. Family-related psycho-social risk factors

Literature on radicalization, as already being mentioned, has addressed the issue of family very little, and, while studying the family role in the process of radicalization, its psychological and socialization risk factors for radicalization are usually highlighted.

From an identity and trauma perspective, families play a psychological role in radicalization. Specifically, some researchers have suggested that in terms of identities and values there might be a gap between individuals who have been radicalized and their families, and this distance increases the risk of radicalization [35, 36]. For example, according to Gielen [35], young people at risk of radicalization are usually looking for an identity and may feel alienated from their parents and relatives. Therefore, their bent towards radicalization may be determined by a desire to belong, to have an identity making them feel at home [35]. It is possible that radical groups intentionally cause conflicts between young people and their families to strengthen the identity of the radical group and consequently the attachment to the group of the young member concerned [16].

As Spalek [37] points out, individuals can become radicalized due to “cognitive openings” developing after psychological crises. Such “cognitive openings” lead people to seek new ways of understanding and relating to the world, which may involve adopting radical ideologies. Wiktorowicz [38] lists several critical conditions that can trigger a cognitive opening from emotional distress, and a death in the family is considered one of the main factors. Githens-Maze [13] has analyzed the radicalization of North African immigrants in Britain. He argues that the brutal effects of the colonization in North Africa, combined with the current harsh economic and political conditions, including the violent state repression of Islamic political parties in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, with torture and violence, have left a devastating legacy. Such repression might have caused an ongoing unrest leading to unceasing anxiety about the fate and loss of one’s family.

In addition to psychological factors, socialization may also be a key element where families can be involved in the radicalization process. Sometimes the very family members have radical views shaping and influencing the opinion of young people. It may also occur that family members engage in activism and have access to networks that young radicalized can draw on [16]. According to a study conducted by Bigo [39], in some EU countries, networks of family and friends can play a significant role in the recruitment of young people to become “extreme activists”, and in some cases that can lead to terrorism. Some of them have also experienced considerable family hardships, which directly contributed to their radicalization process. For instance, for one of the terrorists involved in the 9/11 attack, Zacarias Moussaoui, tried in 2016, his childhood was a significant element to understand his radicalization. In fact, the jury in Moussaoui’s trial argued that he should not have been sentenced to death, on the grounds that he had a difficult childhood, with no home life attention and care, little emotional support, few financial resources, and a father with a violent personality [40]. Another family issue which was considered in Moussaoui’s radicalization process is the fact that his family never practiced Islam at home and therefore, when he turned to Islam as a young man, Moussaoui did not develop an adult and stable identity, but was highly influenced by extremist rhetoric at the most vulnerable stage of his religious upbringing.

Also, in the case of young British Muslims who joined Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), a radical Islamist group, it has been suggested that families are to be considered an important factor to better understand radicalization processes [36]. The social class of families in

which HT members grew up and the cultural gap between the first and second generation may help explain HT membership. HT members usually belong to the middle-class, living in white suburbs even though they are predominantly of South Asian descent. Although HT members may come from stable and loving families, the differences in cultural values between parents and children play a relevant role in the radicalization of young people, looking to find value systems that are independent and separate from their parents' ones [36].

However, according to some studies it must also be stressed that families can be a protective environment against radicalization and enhance the rehabilitation of individuals who have been radicalized. Individuals reconnecting with their family are more likely to be successful in the de-radicalization process [41, 42]. If families are considered a valuable support for de-radicalization, then providing radicalized young people an opportunity to reconnect with their family members is important to help them reject violent ideologies and behaviors. For example, in Indonesia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia, government-sponsored de-radicalization programs give special attention and support to families and individuals who are being deradicalized [43].

Family members can offer radicalized youth the motivation they need to disengage. In Great Britain, a study on a mentoring program aimed at supporting individuals considered at risk of radicalization emphasizes the essential role families play in supporting these young people [42] and how family is also crucial for de-radicalization.

Female figures do play a significant role in these processes. According to Hearn, [43] women can prevent their children from becoming victims of predators trying to radicalize them, because of the special bond with their children. However, research on radicalized young people [16] shows that parents often take little interest in their children's opinion and ignore the risks their children run into by being influenced by radical ideas. Furthermore, most parents never discuss or try to influence their children's opinions, or never seek help from third parties, such as other family members, social services, or the school. Interestingly, while some parents were totally unaware of their children's attention to radical ideas, many of them were aware of it but had no idea how to handle it. Nevertheless, those who sought help from social workers, or from the school, did not get any valuable help. In this study it is strongly suggested that parents should be more interested in their children's viewpoints and discuss their opinions [16]. The internet was also considered a key factor in the radicalization of the youth involved, providing for them images, words and discussion forums that shaped their mind. Many of these young radicals spent a long time on the web. In this research, it is suggested that good parental education might help and give direction to young people, so that instead of becoming violent radicals, they can turn into more critical and politically aware citizens [16].

However, whether family can lead to less violent radicalization is still a much-debated issue, as radicalized individuals are influenced by a large number of different factors, and not just their families [44].

All these elements should be considered especially while looking at countries like France and Belgium, where the attacks were mainly carried out by young people who grew up in the country ("homegrown terrorism"), and not by foreigners who were raised in their Islamic country of origin, as in the case of the 9/11 attacks in the United States. The work of Khosrokhavar [45] points out that these young people mostly came from immigrant backgrounds and lived in ghetto-like neighborhoods. Their families were often very chaotic, broken, and large, and especially in France, they were once patriarchal families, but now the father is practically absent or considered worthless. In

this situation, violence seems to be a suitable substitute for the inexistent family authority, within a degraded subculture.

6. A multilevel model of Islamic radicalism: Moghadam and Scremin

Only a few scholars [17] have systematically organized and analyzed the causes of radicalization on different levels –micro, meso, and macro–; and an even smaller number have set up an integrated framework to better assess the family role in the radicalization process. Since family influence on radicalization is better understood by using simultaneously a multiple level approach, Scremin [22] has proposed an addition to the framework inspired by Moghadam's [46] multicausal method to study suicide terrorism, which consists of four levels of analysis: the individual, organizational, familial, and environmental levels.

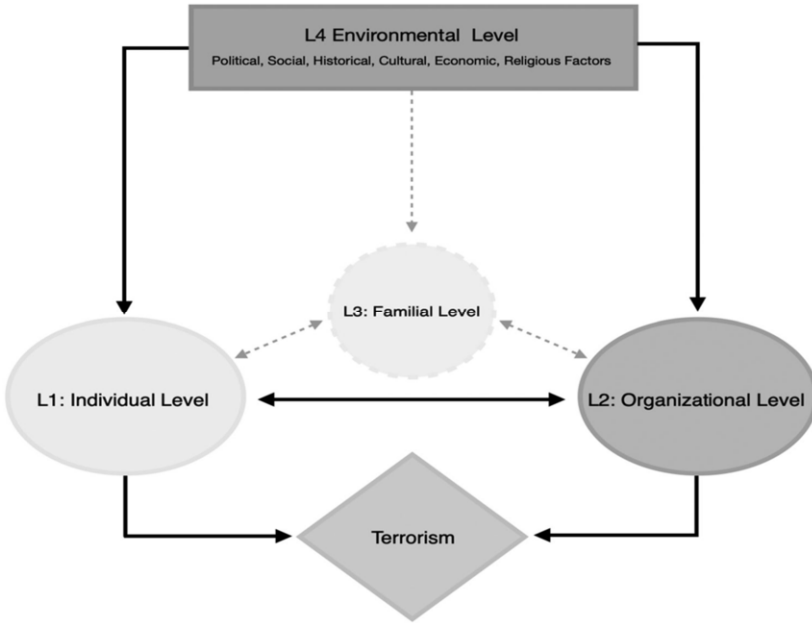
The first level of analysis, the individual one (L1), has been used to investigate the indirect influence that families can exert on radicalization. Specifically, L1 tries to identify some personal factors contributing to Islamic radicalization and indirectly shaped by family background. These elements include, for example, abuse in the family, divorce, an absent father, loss of a close relative, a desire for revenge, spiritual and material rewards for family members. While such family circumstances cannot by themselves explain the drive for radicalization, they are nonetheless considered important, as they can provide a fertile ground for radicalization.

The second level of analysis (L2), proposed by Scremin [22], focuses on Islamic terrorist organizations and how they operate in terms of recruitment and proselytism. Indeed, not only can terrorist groups become a substitute family for individuals looking for a sense of belonging, but through the *da'wa* (proselytism) Islamic terrorist organizations can also shape their own social context, thus creating an environment more suitable for their activities. Since family is a subsystem within the larger community system, it is important to firstly understand the nature of the relationship between an Islamic terrorist organization and its immediate social environment, that is essential to explain why some families are more willing to encourage the involvement of their relatives in terrorist activities in certain contexts more than others.

The purpose of the third level of analysis, the family level (L3), is to investigate its direct influence in the radicalization process. This includes the family role both in conveying extremist beliefs and in recruiting members into Islamic groups. It is important to note that, even though cases of involvement of extended families in violent radicalization are mentioned, this section mainly focuses on nuclear and fragmented family structures that include married and unmarried couples, with or without children. The fragmented family is a type of household where father, mother or both parents are absent from home due to separation, divorce, or death.

Finally, the fourth level proposed by Scremin [22], the environmental one (L4), is essential to uncover the various structural factors that provide the context for the other levels of analysis. Since individuals, groups and families do not exist in a vacuum, but are influenced by the environment in which they live and operate, addressing the broader social, religious, historical, and cultural conditions is necessary to understand how and why these people interact with each other more in some situations than others.

Interactions between these levels of analysis are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Interactions between levels of analysis

Source: Scremin [22]

The most important environmental factors (L4) directly affect the individual (L1), organizational (L2) and the familial levels (L3). This is described in the figure by the arrows coming down from L4 to L1, L2, and L3. Nonetheless, the individual, organizational, and familial levels also interact with each other, sometimes producing synergetic effects. This occurs because some of the motivations coming from L1, L2 and L3 are similar, stemming from the same context. For instance, a country with a strong religious practice and commitment is more likely to have many religious individuals growing up in very religious families, as well as it forces many terrorist groups to take on a religious fashion. While both the individual and organizational levels are prone to an actual engagement in violence, the familial level may serve as an important mediating variable between L4 and L1/L2. Firstly, families can channel environmental influences on the individual. Specifically, an important principle to keep in mind to understand the relationship between L3 and L1 is that what affects the family system can affect every family member. Likewise, what affects each family member can also affect the entire family system. Regarding the interaction between L3 and L2, the organization can shape the social environment from which L3 emerges. However, family ties and background can influence the decision-making process of Islamic groups, especially when it involves recruitment. Family networks may offer exposure to terrorist ideology, recruitment, funding, training, and operational opportunities more easily than those outside the family structure [47]. In the intimate and trusted environment of their families, radicalized people can confidently share information and doctrines to their family members. And when recruitment takes place through the family, it can allow for even more freedom and make their commitment stronger.

It is necessary to say that the central position of L3 does not mean that family is at the center of the radicalization process. According to Scremin [22], the smaller size of the familial level and the dotted arrows from L3 to L1 and L2 serve precisely to make it clear that family is no more important than other factors in explaining Islamic radicalization and it makes a difference only in some cases.

It is important to point out that the purpose of his analysis is not to detect all the possible influences that family networks have on the radicalization process, but to stress the fact that an adequate analysis of family influences on religious radicalization requires an approach that considers all the four levels he suggests.

Focusing on the level of familial analysis (L3), the scholar's objective is therefore to investigate the direct influence that family can exercise in the radicalization process, starting from the intergenerational transmission of an extremist ideology. As it is well known, parents play a crucial role in the socialization of their children, as they provide them with the initial framework to better understand a complicated world. They also pass on to their offspring family culture and the broader traditions, norms, and values of society they belong to [23]. Most likely, in some family circumstances, this transmission may include attitudes and values that somehow foster radicalization, such as narratives of victimization, persecution, grievance or hatred [27]. Furthermore, when parents have radical beliefs, they directly pass them on and thus explicitly support violence and terrorism. There are several examples of parents who have played an obvious role in the transmission of a radical ideology. As Scremin reported [22], in May 2018 Dita Oepriarto, the leader of an Indonesian ISIS-affiliated organization based in Surabaya, staged several suicide attacks in the city, involving her four young children, all aged between 9 and 18 years old. Oepriarto exposed them to jihadist literature and pro-ISIS speeches made by Indonesia's most vocal extremist ideologues, and all of this offered them the ideological environment to foster terrorism. Children growing up in terrorist zones are more likely to become terrorists themselves, as they are exposed to an extremist ideology and experience personal traumas leading them to adopt a violent behavior later on life [48, 49]. Due to the indoctrination and combat training which they are exposed to from an early age, these young people are much more vulnerable to the lure of radicalization. In Palestine, as some scholars highlighted, parents have often raised their children since an early age to be familiar with Islamic groups. Likewise, in countries such as Kurdistan and Chechnya, in several families, father and son have become extremists and joined violent groups like the Chechen Liberation Movement or the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). These cases may represent further examples of ideology diffusion from father to offspring. However, as Scremin [22] points out, ideological transmission is not exclusively a matter between parents and children, but can occur from uncle to nephew, as well as from grandfather to grandchild. «In addition, there may also be intragenerational transmission between siblings, cousins, and spouses» [22].

The multilevel approach proposed by Scremin, as he himself emphasized, is a preliminary framework, supported by several cases, but this has yet to be empirically tested by further studies. However, despite its limitations, this approach makes an important contribution to understanding family influence on the radicalization process.

7. Parental weakness and vulnerability to radicalism

Moving from Erickson's eight-stage framework of psychosocial development [50], Luthfi Zuhdi & Syauqillah [4] offer another interesting perspective of how the parent-child relationship can play a major role in introducing youngster to a vulnerability towards radicalism.

Since in the first four stages of personality development, from zero to twelve years, the parental role is of paramount importance, the authors point out that if –in that period – children cannot establish a positive relationship with their parents, they are very likely to experience distrust in the world, low self-esteem, mistrust about their own abilities and failure to develop their potential. Under these circumstances, it is very easy for a youngster to be enticed by radicalism that offers them assurances and values. Radicalization can lead young people to strongly believe in an ideology, to improve their self-esteem, to feel superior and always right, to go beyond their own abilities [51].

In the later period, between the ages of twelve and eighteen, marked by the search for identity to avoid confusion of roles and to obtain what Erickson called "loyalty", there is an upheaval in most supporters of radical groups. This is the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood, when a boy and a girl must learn the "role" he will play as an adult and clearly define his own identity. A successful experience during this phase will increase the "loyalty" value. Conversely, the inability to form his own identity can bring confusion regarding the actual role the person has in his/her own environment and feel insecure about himself/herself or his/her position in the society.

Therefore teenagers, after junior high school, might feel bored with their regular school education and more drawn to studying religion, or decide to "migrate" to Syria or Afghanistan, to be more compliant with Islamic teachings and committed to Islamic authorities.

According to Luthfi Zuhdi and Syauqillah [4], if young people have been exposed to radicalism during their adolescence, in agreement with their parents or even encouraged by them, it is very likely that in life they will experience great difficulties in practicing values such as love, care, and wisdom.

The father's role finds its fulfillment in educating children. In an extremist environment, the father's responsibility as teacher and role model is fully realized when he can help his wife and children to embrace a radical mentality. This father's goal, in addition to education to Islam, is also to teach practices and beliefs that should lead his children to independently develop an interest in *jihad*. Furthermore, when a husband is radicalized, his wife is very likely to follow suit, and in turn the mother will teach her children to do the same. Children are also indoctrinated with violent movies and magazines the father provides for them. In addition, he persuades his family by using the "*hujjah*", which originated from the Quran and the *hadith*. "*Hujjah*" means "proof" [implied: proof of God] and is usually used to refer to a single individual in any given human era who represents God's "proof" to humanity. The "*hujjah*" is a prophet or an Imam who possesses a relationship with God that is greater than anyone else. Consequently, his behaviors and values highly influence his children's upbringing, as several studies have shown [52]. Conversely, the father's absence in a child's life (both as a caregiver and a role model, protector, and resource), can also influence a young person's decision to become radicalized. Lack of communication in the family can lead to a loss of the father's authority in front of the son; and, since the father is not a respected figure, then his advice or reproaches are usually ignored. This specific situation seems to be one of the main factors making young people –both male and female– very

independent when they have to decide to join radicalized groups [53]. In other words, the combination of lack of a respected head of the family with no communication between father and children, and no control over the children's behavior can be considered a risk factor for radicalization.

The mother figure is also important in radicalization processes. Especially in immigrant families from traditional societies, her main role is to provide childcare [54]. She looks after them by meeting their basic needs, providing care, giving love, monitoring the overall children's health and general conditions. Therefore, given the mother's important role in caring for the children, when she becomes radicalized, her children find themselves slipping almost unconsciously towards radicalization.

8. The importance of prevention

As Spalek [18] reported, in 2008, the UK Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS) prepared a document entitled "Learning to Be Safe Together", outlining the risk factors that professionals need to be aware of in dealing with radicalization. The hypothesis that families may be playing a pivotal role for radicalization is attested in at least three risk factors affecting children and young people: identity crisis, personal crisis, and personal experiences. As far as identity crises, adolescents may feel disconnected from their parents' religious and cultural heritage, thus struggling to establish a sense of belonging. In relation to personal crises, significant conflicts may exist within families, «which produce a sense of isolation in young people from the traditional certainties of family life» [55]. Regarding personal experiences as a risk factor, the document points out how events affecting families in their countries of origin can also increase in young people a sense of alienation, moving away from the values of society in which they live [55].

The 2011 UK strategy "Prevent" also briefly mentions the link existing between families and radicalization, especially in terms of child protection [56]. The document stresses that families may not notice any behavior or view change in family members who are undergoing a process of radicalization and that children may be particularly at risk of radicalization, because of the long time they spend online [57]. Regarding Northern Ireland, this document also states that "*ideology is rarely the only factor in the process of radicalization and recruitment. Recruitment is often personality-driven or dependent on family alliances*" [56]. Following the 2011 "Prevent" strategy, in 2012 the UK Home Office introduced a Vulnerability Assessment Framework for agents like police officers, youth workers, health and social workers, to better assess a person's vulnerability "*while getting involved in a group, a cause or an ideology*" [57]. According to the Vulnerability Assessment Framework, in addition to factors such as feelings of resentment, the need for identity and the desire to dominate others, even the involvement of family or friends in extremism is considered a risk factor. The Vulnerability Assessment Framework is part of the so-called "Channel Program", a controversial national project set up to support vulnerable individuals to reject any recruitment perpetrated by violent extremists, taking advantage of the resources and expertise of a wide range of professionals providing ongoing support to them.

9. Final remarks

So far, families and their role in the radicalization process have not yet received proper attention from researchers, despite the growing interest shown by policy makers in several countries. Nevertheless, finding out the driving factors that lead an individual to become radicalized, especially within a religious context, has been proven to be crucial to identify appropriate strategies to prevent this phenomenon. The pushing factors of radicalization are many and very different: from socio-cultural to political, from situational to familial, from neurobiological to psychological. But none of them seems to be sufficient or necessary. Most of the radicalized terrorists in France and Belgium were local people, born to immigrant parents, often raised in chaotic families and in problematic and stigmatized neighborhoods. These vulnerabilities are risk factors for behavioral disorders, violence, and addictions.

They can also promote processes of violent radicalization, in a dynamism of identity fusion with an ideal but wholly unreal –often only virtual– community, to the point of demanding the death of enemies, even if this involves the sacrifice of one's own life.

Family is an intricate system, which includes many different roles and is culturally mediated. Any de-radicalization and counter-radicalization initiative must consider the different complexities highlighted in this chapter.

Motivations pushing young people to radicalize are many, starting from their cultural, religious, psychological, and gender dimensions. In the process of radicalization, family factors are like two sides of the same coin. Therefore, families can either be a powerful source of radicalization, or a very effective protecting factor against radicalization.

It is, then, important that future research should consider whether there are significant differences regarding the impact that different family members have on the radicalization of children, especially in host countries. Indeed, it is possible that while some family members play an active role in the radicalization of family members, other members instead play a protective role. Within a family there may be significant conflicting opinions whether a son or daughter is radicalized. There may also be tensions among family members in believing whether radicalization can be considered as something positive or negative. These differences within families and among families require further in-depth investigations, to counter a phenomenon that makes young people prisoners of an ideology both extreme and lethal altogether. The prevention and treatment of the radicalization process do not necessarily entail repressive policies, but a better understanding of the causes and contexts in which this phenomenon could develop. And the migrant family is one of these contexts. Only with prevention, in fact, it will be possible to protect the most vulnerable young people with migratory background and build a more cohesive host society, able to foster a peaceful and rewarding inter-ethnic coexistence.

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