UNDERSTANDING AND COUNTERING PROCESSES OF RADICALISATION (ISLAMIST AND ANTI-ISLAM(IST)/EXTREME RIGHT): EXPLORING THE ROLE OF 'FORMERS' AND 'FAMILIES' IN P/CVE

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JONATAN SCHEWE

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Understanding and countering processes of radicalisation (Islamist and anti-Islam(ist)/extreme right):

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Jonatan Schewe

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Contents

Executive Summary

The involvement of affected individuals, such as former extremists or family members of deceased terrorists, in measures aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) has recently gained more attention as they play an increasing role in activities such as prevention workshops or family self-help groups. The personal life stories of affected individuals and their credible voices can be of great value for a society's overall efforts to counter and prevent any form of extremism. However, relatively little research exists on the effectiveness of involving affected individuals. This is important, not least because there are various risks and ethical issues associated with the use of former extremists in prevention work, whose own situation may be complicated. Similarly, affected individuals often lack pedagogical training, and while they are experts of their own biography, they may have limited critical self-awareness and use their activism in P/CVE to redeem themselves or to manage untreated trauma, which could prove counter-productive for P/CVE.

This research report takes a step towards understanding why affected individuals engage in P/CVE work by exploring what motivates these individuals to become involved in measures to prevent and counter violent extremism. The study is based on eight biographical-narrative interviews that were conducted with four former right-wing extremists and with four family members of people who travelled to conflict zones in Syria. Using a qualitative-reconstructive approach, this report identified themes and narratives of underlying motivational processes that initiated or sustained the interviewees' P/CVE involvement.

The findings show that family members are motivated by coping mechanisms and post-traumatic growth, an increased identification with others and by situational and volitional factors related to their sociocultural context ('positive marginality'). The motivation of former extremists centred around notions of earning their way back into society ('earned redemption'), renegotiating their identity through pro-social labelling or switching to a collective identity that protects a sense of self ('role residuals'). The findings suggest that a locus of control can signify different stages of de-radicalisation and thus different risks depending on a former's P/CVE role. They also suggest that the strengthening or weakening effect of volition shapes the scope of P/CVE-related activism by affected family members.

1. Introduction

In recent years, a number of initiatives that aim to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism (P/CVE) have increasingly included the involvement of family members of radicalised or radicalising individuals, and of former extremists or terrorists who disengaged and/or de-radicalised, or in some cases direct victims of terrorism. While these are distinct groups of individuals, they have all been affected by violent extremism in one way or another. Likewise, their involvement in P/CVE-related measures may vary greatly, ranging from primary prevention workshops, targeted secondary prevention counter-narratives to tertiary prevention, providing exit assistance from extremist groups. The logic behind drawing on the experience of affected individuals in P/CVE is that by fostering an understanding of the consequences of violence for those affected or formerly involved in it, they can potentially contribute to achieving sustained desistance from political violence (Argomaniz and Lynch 2018: 498; Tapley and Clubb 2019).

The employment of affected individuals in the realm of P/CVE is often based on the assumption that their unique life experience may be an effective tool for averting a cycle of violence. Certainly, the personal experiences of affected individuals, and their potential to act as gatekeepers to communities, can play a significant role in the wider societal effort to resist all manifestations of violent extremism. Yet, without negating the valuable contribution made by affected individuals, given the common academic critique that P/CVE programmes are not subjected to meaningful evaluation, it is important to recognise potential shortcomings and even risks in their deployment, especially when former extremists are involved. The literature on the role of former extremists in P/CVE is scant and mostly recommends good practice for P/CVE programmes based on the personal accounts of former Islamists or right-wing extremists, or is based on case studies in post-conflict settings. Hence, there is not a sufficient evidence-base to guide the P/CVE involvement of formers or to establish the motives of individual formers, e.g. if they are 'cashing in on their notoriety' (Gilsinan 2019), which in turn would be highly problematic. As one ex-radical pointed out in an interview with The Atlantic: 'You can get really famous by saying, "I used to be a jihadist and now I´m not"' (ibid.). Thus, some authors have warned that 'the field needs to do better in developing a critical self-awareness about the risks and limits associated with formers' (Koehler, 2020: 16; cf. Tapley and Clubb, 2019). For affected family members, there are risks of traumatic experiences resurfacing in P/CVE-settings, without sufficient resources to help them overcome the trauma. The question of to what extent involving affected individuals may actually help, in conjunction with issues surrounding their supposed effectiveness, points to the importance of understanding the motivational processes that underpin their involvement in P/CVE.

In view of the research gap and the increasing use of formers in P/CVE measures, it is useful to try and gain a better understanding of why affected individuals become involved in P/CVE in the first place and what it is they wish to achieve. The psychological literature conceives of such motivations as being cognitive processes (desires and aversions), which suggests that motivation can be understood as the mediator between an individual's past experience and his or her intentions for future behaviour. As commonly held in the literature, the relationship between adverse life-experiences, which presumably would be common among affected individuals, and pro-social behaviour can only be understood when motivational processes are taken into account (Vollhardt, 2009: 60).

In addressing this knowledge gap, this research report aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the role of motivations of affected individuals in influencing their effectiveness in P/CVE work. The purpose of this report is to generate hypotheses which could allow future research to validate or expand on beneficial and problematic drivers that initiate or sustain P/CVE involvement by exploring these under-researched motivational processes. The findings may have the potential to inform decisions on appropriate P/CVE contexts or (therapeutic) settings to which an affected individual may best contribute. Accordingly, the research question of this report is framed as follows: *What motivates people who were*

involved in, or affected by, (violent) extremism[1] to engage in measures aimed at preventing and countering (violent) extremism?

This report conceives of motivation in terms of the intrinsic desire for a course of action that is closely related to volition and emotion, i.e. the cognitive process by which an individual decides on and commits to a particular course of action. Volition is understood as a process that leads from intention to actual behaviour. Hence, motivation and volition refer to goal setting and goal pursuit, respectively. In this sense, emotions are linked to motivation in several ways, despite referring to a different psychological concept: both influence human behaviour and can lead to taking action, as a certain emotion itself can act as a motivator (Patrick, Hisley and Kempler, 2000).

Having outlined the aims and research question, this report proceeds by reviewing the literature that provides a theoretical framework for the research undertaken within the framework of the DARE project and drawn on here. Following this, the process of conducting the eight narrative-biographical interviews with affected family members and former extremists is described. The findings from the analysis of these interviews are presented in the subsequent section where the key themes and narrative structures are summarised for each interviewee. In the following section the differences and similarities between the motivations of interviewees are compared and contrasted and considered in light of what the relevant literature might (not) have predicted. The study concludes by carefully generating proposals from these findings to guide future research.

2. Theoretical Framework: Involving Affected Individuals in P/CVE

This section sets the theoretical context for analysing the motivations of affected individuals in P/CVE by reviewing the relevant literature in relation to both families and formers. First, an overview of the relevant literature, including clinical and social psychology, which considers the involvement of families in P/CVE is provided in order to develop a potential theoretical framework for explaining their motivations. This is followed by an attempt to delineate the roles and activities that former extremists can occupy in P/CVE and to outline possible explanations from criminology which may underpin their motivations.

2.1 Families of Radicalising or Radicalised Individuals

P/CVE practitioners and researchers agree that working with the families of radicalising or radicalised individuals can be effective as familial ties have a great potential in reaching the majority of the target group. The relationships that radicalising or radicalised individuals have with family members (or other emotional relationships) are known to play an important role in both radicalisation and de-radicalisation (Koehler, 2017: 157). In the context of P/CVE, family members have been described as vital 'associate gatekeepers' for prevention and intervention (Williams, Horgan and Evan, 2015) or as the 'first line of defence' against radicalisation into violent extremism (Koehler and Ehrt, 2018). As a consequence, an increasing number of Western countries have introduced family counselling programmes to their repertoire of P/CVE measures. They mostly aim to help families identify threats of radicalising relatives and to connect them with intervention programmes (Koehler and Ehrt, 2018: 2; cf. Gielen, 2015). But while the primary focus of these programmes remains on the radicalised family member, it is important that the programmes do not neglect the needs of parents or siblings since the stability of these family members can bring significant 'added value' to the P/CVE being delivered.

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[1] In this paper, we look at both, violent and non-violent forms of extremism. The term 'extremism' here refers to 'the belief that an in-group's success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against an out-group' (Berger, 2018: 44).

2.1.1 Needs of Affected Families

The involvement of family members in P/CVE gained noteworthy traction amid the mass phenomenon of foreign fighting in Syria and Iraq, an experience which left many families in shock that their children or siblings had gone to a war zone. In their study with such affected parents, Koehler and Ehrt (2018: 8) identified several important needs associated with the experience of family members. The most important set of needs stem from feelings of loneliness and (untreated) trauma triggered by the loss of their children, who had travelled to conflict zones. Related to this, the authors found that mothers in particular, had to cope with self-blame for not being able to prevent their children from leaving. Mothers also expressed a shattered trust towards security agencies because they did not provide sufficient information and were unable to help with the situation. The second set of issues which intensified the trauma for parents were related to feelings of uncertainty around, as well as a strong need to understand, what exactly happened to their children who had been radicalised and then travelled to, or were killed in, conflict zones. Mothers expressed that accessing relevant files or death certificates would be healing for them because they desired feelings of closure. The final set of problems came from the fear of being criminalised by state agencies, or stigmatised by the wider public through the media, based on the suspicion that the families themselves were actively involved in sending their children to Syria/Iraq. This caused additional trauma (Ibid.: 7-10).

This study highlights that families need to receive specialised support to help them cope with loss and uncertainty. A lack of support may be detrimental to P/CVE; if the wider community loses trust in the state it may hinder cooperation with the authorities. One way in which affected families have managed this is by forming family self-help groups or founding parents' associations. Self-help groups are generally defined as 'an organization of individuals sharing a common concern who meet regularly to provide and receive emotional support and to exchange information' (Klaw and Luong, 2010: 1538). According to Koehler and Ehrt (2018: 6) these groups 'have a strong track record of increasing the participants' confidence, their emotional stability, as well as compliance with other external treatment or intervention'. It is worth noting that self-help groups are independent but likely also reliant on other (state) actors. This is relevant in the context of travelling or returning foreign fighters because it touches upon a wide array of issues that family parents' associations alone may not be able to address. Thus, depending on the context of the country and the community of the families, support groups may take different forms to address the specific issues through a P/CVE-lens that is relevant to them (Ibid.).

2.1.2 Psychology: 'Altruism Born of Suffering'

The literature on clinical and social psychology offers a promising framework for understanding why family members become involved in preventing and countering violent extremism, namely, the model 'altruism born of suffering' as proposed by Vollhardt (2009). In this model, previous individual sufferings, such as traumatic events, are conceived as strong drivers for pro-social behaviour because they are presumed to activate coping mechanisms in order to prevent future forms of similar sufferings. That is, the harm experienced by individuals, be it individual or collective suffering and intentional or unintended, motivates them to avert trauma from others. Vollhardt (2009) draws on empirical evidence that suggests that the type of suffering will have a causal influence on the type of activism in terms of its inclusiveness (or recipient of help) and scope (or type of help). The activism that an individual takes on after experiences of suffering can help the person to gain a sense of self-efficacy and a more satisfactory perspective on his or her environment. Similarly, through their involvement in P/CVE, affected family members may cope with negative affect and satisfy their need to connect to other people who give them a positive feeling (Vollhardt, 2009; Vollhardt and Staub 2011).

Vollhardt (2009) conceives of motivation as being the mediator that explains the relationship between suffering and helping. She identified three sets of motivational factors that include the above-mentioned coping mechanisms (i.e. less negative affect, increased self-efficacy, and finding meaning), factors related

to positive affect, as well as situational factors. Regarding positive affect, empathy and its cognitive aspect of perspective-taking were found to create positive emotions that can ultimately result in altruistic behaviour. As for the situational factors, they take into account situational demands and norms beyond clinical psychological factors. Hence, 'altruism born of suffering' can further be raised by (actual or presumed) situational demands and norms; that is, the person may either feel morally obliged to help in order to prevent others from experiencing the same harm or they may be motivated to help by the reciprocity of social approval when they expect to gain reciprocally-based benefits for their behaviour (Ibid.: 58).

On the output side of the relationship between suffering and helping, Vollhardt (2009) focused on the recipient of help's or the addressee's pro-social activism. Addressees may include a wide range of people from ingroup members who shared similar sufferings to outgroup recipients who experienced differing fates but nonetheless sufferings (Ibid.: 61). Besides the range of potential recipients, altruistic behaviour can also take on varying forms in terms of its temporal dimension. To be more precise, prosocial behaviour born of suffering can range from short-term help addressed to ingroup members on the one hand, through to long-term, collective help addressed to outgroup members (Ibid.: 65-66).

The final set of factors in Vollhardt's (2009) model are volitional factors that act as mediators which can explain the strength of the relationship between suffering and helping by either enhancing or inhibiting certain motivations (Ibid.: 55). This means that motivational tendencies to prosocial behaviour can be actually prevented by volitional factors where the latter are primarily driven by pragmatic and situational constraints such as conflicting efforts and goals (Ibid.: 71). In order to sustain and strengthen motivations for pro-social activism, Kuhl (1987) describes several strategies that enhance volition. These strategies include (1) selective attention, described as focusing on information that supports the motivation for altruistic behaviour, (2) encoding control, described as recognising situational characteristics relevant for the motivation to help, (3) emotion control, referring to the regulation of negative effect which may undermine the motivation for altruism, (4) motivation control, meaning to reassure the motivation for altruism in light of competing motivations such as, for instance, individuals´ own recovery from trauma, and (5) environment control which refers to identifying settings which support the motivation for altruistic behaviour (Kuhl, 1987, cited in Vollhardt, 2009: 71-71).

Moreover, psychological research found that narratives facilitate the shift to altruistic engagement after suffering because it infuses actual behaviour with a sense of meaning and purpose (Dunlop, Walker and Wiens 2015). This meaning-making via narrative is also important for families affected by terrorism because, if they are stable enough, they can reflect and question whether they want to cling onto the trauma and grief associated with it or whether they want to re-gain a positive perspective for themselves and the world around them (Aarten, Mulder and Pemberton, 2018: 564).

2.2 Former Extremists, Terrorists or Combatants

The employment of former extremists as practitioners in P/CVE measures has a long track record, but the desirability and effectiveness of their contribution has only recently been addressed and questioned in academic circles (e.g. Koehler 2020). Formers are different from other types of P/CVE practitioners because of their experience and time spent inside the extremist movement from which they can derive credibility, e.g. by knowing the movement's organisational structure or being familiar with the ideology so as to 'speak the same language' (Tapley and Clubb, 2019: 10). Although naturally some formers will be more beneficial to P/CVE than others, the individual qualities they bring to P/CVE activities 'do not necessarily derive from being a former' (Ibid.: 2). Tapley and Clubb (2019) propose a distinction between opposing archetypes of formers to delineate the roles and activities where they can be effective. The first ideal type of former extremists has disengaged and fully de-radicalised (i.e. abandoned all extremist beliefs), which makes them more desirable for P/CVE because they pose less political and professional

risks. The second ideal type has just disengaged from the movement without being (fully) de-radicalised yet, which makes them less suitable for P/CVE work as they carry more risks (Ibid.: 10). Likely risks and benefits of these ideal types vis-à-vis P/CVE activities are unpacked below.

2.2.1 Roles, Risks and Benefits

In Western countries, former extremists, terrorists, and combatants (or just 'formers') can engage in various P/CVE-settings. The most common activity for former terrorists is the provision of intelligence for counter-terrorism purposes albeit with varying detail depending on their respective position in the group. This can be seen as a 'low risk' activity because it is unlikely to cause a public backlash (Tapley and Clubb 2019: 3-4). The intelligence role can go beyond counter-terrorism and into the realm of P/CVE since a former's knowledge about a group's structure, motivations, or tactics can be useful to guide a prevention strategy (Loyaza 2016). However, by being in an intelligence-sharing role, formers risk being alienated from communities, which can impede their reintegration (Sonpar 2008), and they may even receive threats from their old group. Moreover, an intelligence role could undermine the contribution of formers in other P/CVE-settings where they could be more effective (Tapley and Clubb, 2019: 5).

In the primary prevention sector, the typical activities of formers are to deliver counter or alternative narratives by sharing their stories to a wider audience in educational settings, outreach activities, or prevention workshops (cf. Koehler, 2017). Thus, this type of public engagement becomes riskier if formers have merely disengaged without yet being fully de-radicalised. Hence, formers who are still fairly committed to their old beliefs can have adverse effects for P/CVE 'because the means by which they derive credibility places them in tensions with developing consistent counter-narratives and the need to respect the experiences of victims' (Tapley and Clubb 2019: 12). Although de-radicalised formers are assumed to be more effective in primary prevention, there is a lack of empirical evidence in this domain. One of the few evaluation reports on long-term effects of primary prevention measures (delivered by a former right-wing extremist in Germany) found neither a negative nor a positive impact (Walsh and Gansewig, 2019). As a result, the authors point to the limitations of formers in primary prevention:

> 1) the potential lack of critical self-reflection or incomplete deradicalization on the side of the former, 2) the usually non-existent pedagogical training of the formers, 3) the fact that formers are usually experts of their own biography only and not on the wider violent extremist environment, 4) the contents of the workshop are usually focused on violence and fear to achieve a deterrence effect, 5) it often served the purpose of self-profiling and 6) the mainly financial motives of many formers to conduct such workshops (cited in Koehler 2020: 18).

In the realm of secondary and tertiary prevention, formers can reach out to those on the brink of disengaging and assist them in that process and they can also try 'to talk people out of (joining) extremist groups' (Tapley and Clubb, 2019: 11). In doing so, fully de-radicalised formers pose lower risks of re-radicalisation or recidivism, however, if they are perceived to be traitors, they could lack the credibility necessary for 'interventions targeting the 'hard to reach' constituencies' (ibid.). One concern, which is particularly relevant in tertiary and secondary prevention, stems from the widespread lack of professional training, as Koehler (2020: 19) points out:

> The experiences […] of one former might be highly different if not directly opposed to those experiences of others still active or looking to join. Risking to conflate individual and subjective experiences and life stories with a generalized assertion on every aspect to CVE that usually require a great deal of comparative research and knowledge might lead to a simplification of the phenomenon and effective counter-measures.

In post-conflict settings, formers have played a crucial role in working towards peace (e.g. by offering mediation in in Northern Ireland, cf. Clubb 2014). This may also apply to other contexts of inter-group

tensions where formers can facilitate cross-community contact aimed at community cohesion and violence prevention (cf. Thomas et al. 2017). As Tapley and Clubb (2019) argue, formers in these types of P/CVE-related setting do not necessarily need be fully de-radicalised if they can be more effective by maintaining some level of 'narrative fidelity' that resonates with the audience and lends them credibility (cf. Snow and Benford 1992). Hence, except in cross-community conflict type settings, it is important to consider potential risks that accompany an incomplete de-radicalisation, especially if formers are employed in primary prevention settings. Echoing Tapley and Clubb (2019: 14), 'this means that special consideration should be given to the sources from which formers derive agency'.

2.2.2 Criminology: Desistance Narratives related to Identity, Emotion and Culture

In approaching possible explanations as to why former extremists are becoming involved in P/CVE, the criminological literature offers useful guidance that draws on much empirical evidence from desistance research. Desistance, which denotes the break away from crime, is a key concept in criminology; hence, an increasing number of authors who focus on the move away from extremism refer to desistance because 'the term favours a multidimensional, comprehensive and processual appreciation of the phenomenon at hand' (Raets, 2017: 2). There is a consensus in desistance research regarding the important role of narrative and identity change; thus, desistance narratives are essential as a means of enabling individuals to explain past behaviour and how they have achieved a new identity as a reformed person (Giordano et al., 2002; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001; Vaughan, 2007). In this sense, narratives consist of internalised and reconstructed life events, which have the potential to shape future behaviour, because 'individuals will act in ways which are aligned to the narratives that they have constructed for themselves' (King 2013: 151). Considering the explanatory potential of desistance narratives, there are three main points of reference that may be relevant for explaining the motivations of formers for engaging in P/CVE.

The first reference point relates to the function of desistance narratives that 'provide some subjective distancing from past events, which may include recognition of the harms caused by particular behaviours' (King, 2013: 152). This matters in the sense that self-stories can signify cognitive transformation and influence behaviour. In explaining their past (politically motivated) offences, the self-stories of former extremists may be 'riddled with victimization narratives' (Pemberton and Aarten, 2018: 543) used to justify past violence due to external constraints. The narrative identity can also contain redemptive scripts about 'making good' that can guide action in 'a process of freeing one's "real me" from these external constraints' (Maruna, 2001: 95). But this does not exclude the possibility of role residuals, which consist of 'leftovers from a previous identity that cloud and impact on one's current role' (Ebaugh 1988: 174).

The second reference point relates to specific episodes of biographical transformation, or turning points (Sampson and Laub, 2005), which are important because they can 'trigger (strong) emotion(s) and thus emotions form the nucleus of a narrative' (Pemberton and Aarten, 2018: 546). Since the autobiographical experience of radicalisation and de-radicalisation can evoke a whole range of emotions, former extremists may elicit meaning from their turning points so as to explain why they want to prevent and counter violent extremism. But narratives can also transmit emotions, hence, the 'narrator can draw on the emotions of the reader/listener to get the story across' (ibid.). Moreover, formers may also elicit meaning from stigmatising life-events in that they can trigger the action tendency of publicly demonstrating that they have changed. Maruna et al. (2004: 279) describes this destigmatising tendency as 'delabelling rituals' that 'certify' the personal reform, since formers need some recognition 'to be able to maintain the difficult process of 'recovery' and desistance'.

The final reference point from criminology concerns how the construction of new identities can be facilitated through existing collective narratives. Pemberton and Aarten (2018: 549) highlight that 'culture provides a menu of stories to which the person's autobiographical narrative can relate'. Formers can draw on such master narratives because it can provide a sense of continuity with oneself and with others in

one's community (ibid.). Morash et al. (2019: 2) point out that the master narrative of redemption (especially in Western societies) can 'affect both the life story structure and the episodes and events included'. In redemption narratives, 'the story moves from a negative to a positive state in such a way that the negative state is deemed worth it for the positive outcome' (ibid.). Hence, culture can play a role in the lost connection between an individual's life story and the master narrative in society. The master narrative of redemption may offer to reconcile the two, suggesting what is referred to as 'earned redemption' (Bazemore, 1999). The 'earned redemption' narrative can signify a sustained stage of desistance (King 2013), because it 'allows offenders to 'make amends' to those they have harmed in order to earn their way back into the trust of the community' (Bazemore 1999: 4).

Overall, criminological research on identity narratives suggests that the personal accounts of formers can be influenced by storytelling in the sense that autobiographical control can be re-achieved (Aarten et al., 2018; Pemberton and Aarten, 2018). As the next chapter shows, this has implications for analysing autobiographical accounts because it is possible to identify underlying meaning structures.

3. Methodology: Combining Thematic and Narrative Analysis

The research carried out for this report consists of eight biographical-narrative interviews, which were conducted by the DARE project within the framework of two international dialogue workshops held in Warsaw (February 2018 and June 2018). The first of these focused on families whose children or relatives had been radicalised by Islamist ideologies. Participants came from the UK, Tunisia, Belgium and Germany. Participants in the second workshop were 'formers' who had been involved with extreme-right groups but have since left the group/party/ideology they were engaged with and are now involved, in some way, in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) work. Participants were drawn from the UK, Germany, Netherlands, Finland, Canada and Poland.

These two international workshops were originally envisaged primarily as fora for generating useful material (through interviews and focus groups) for the DARE educational toolkits. However, in the process of planning the workshops, it became clear to the teams involved that the sensitivity of the stories that would be shared and the importance of including as participants new voices (rather than individuals who had shared their stories many times), the original design should be adjusted. This included constructing the workshops in a collaborative way to facilitate a sharing of experience between participants and researchers and providing support and training tailored to participants as appropriate. Importantly for the purposes of this report, it also meant replacing focus groups with one-to-one interviews in the interviewees' native language (wherever possible) to allow respondents to express themselves fully.

The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were video recorded (with the exception of one respondent who requested audio recording only. All interviewees gave informed consent prior to the commencement of research.

3.1 Methodological reflections

While the interviews conducted for this report were embedded in the wider project design and intended primarily to contribute to the PVE contribution of the project, they were designed with the potential to be used also for analytic purposes. In research terms, they can be considered as a form of biographical-narrative interview since the interviewees were able to determine the structure and content of the interview, being prompted by the interviewers only to further elaborate on biographical phases they discussed and to raise key questions for the project should the interviewee not discuss this naturally. This approach of narrative interviewing utilised the (cultural) competence of conventional storytelling (cf. Treichel and Schwelling, 2003). Following the symbolic interactionist perspective, the biographical-

narrative interviews were based on the assumption that interviewees would talk about what was relevant to them, and that it would be possible to reconstruct the meaning structures (i.e. motivations) that lie beneath the surface and indirectly influence behaviour (Scheunpflug, Kroull and Franz 2016).

A total of 13 interviews were recorded at the international dialogue workshops: 6 with family members who had been radicalised by Islamist ideologies; and seven with 'formers' who had been involved with extreme right groups/ideologies). Of the 13 interviews, eight were selected for analysis for this report; four from the 'families' and four from the 'formers' group . The sample of interviewees is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of interviewees

Interviewee Group	Country	Background	Involvement in P/CVE
Interviewee 1 *Sibling* *male*	Tunisia	The interviewee's younger disabled brother was recruited by an Al-Qaida affiliate and left for Syria in 2013. He managed to get his brother back after a few days.	The interviewee founded a NGO in 2013 to advocate for the safe return of family members caught in conflicts abroad and to rehabilitate returnees.
Interviewee 2 *Sibling* *male*	Tunisia	The interviewee's sister was taken by her husband to join ISIS in 2012, she is currently in a Libyan prison with her son.	The interviewee is a vociferous activist and engages in media advocacy in the same NGO as Interviewee 1.
Interviewee 3 *Mother* *female*	Belgium	The interviewee's eldest son left for Syria on his 18th birthday. She lost contact with him and, at the point of interview, did not know if he was alive or what had happened to him.	The interviewee initially participated in family self-help groups before she co-founded a mothers' group herself. She now hosts parenting workshops and gives talks to a wider audience in primary prevention settings.
Interviewee 4 *Mother* *female*	Germany	The interviewee's only son converted to Islam and subsequently radicalised before leaving for Syria where he was killed.	The interviewee participates in family self-help groups.
Interviewee 5 *Former Extremist* *male*	United Kingdom	The interviewee became involved in anti-Muslim activism and organised demonstrations. He left the movement gradually after demonstrations turned violent.	The interviewee engages in P/CVE-like dialogue settings aimed at community cohesion by facilitating conversations with the Muslim community.
Interviewee 6 *Former Extremist* *male*	Finland	The interviewee was involved in a national neo-Nazi movement before he disengaged and de-radicalised with the help of an exit-programme.	The interviewee engages in an intelligence sharing role for the exit-programme that helped him disengage.
Interviewee 7 *Former Violent Extremist* *Male*	Canada	The interviewee was a street-level activist and later became the public face of a white nationalist movement. He disengaged and de-radicalised without assistance.	The interviewee founded several P/CVE initiatives ranging from online prevention work to providing exit assistance for people who try to leave far-right movements.
Interviewee 8 *Former Violent Extremist* *male*	Germany	The interviewee was part of a violent neo-Nazi group. After one of his victims died, he was imprisoned. In prison he disengaged and became a devout Christian.	The interviewee gives primary prevention talks and is involved in secondary prevention settings with young people at risk of radicalisation.

3.2 Analytical Framework

In exploring the under-researched topic of why affected individuals become involved in P/CVE, this research report followed a qualitative-reconstructive approach 'to generate in a still largely unclear and

unexplored research territory useful hypotheses' (Scheunpflug, Krogull and Franz, 2016: 7). In contrast to qualitative content analysis approaches that investigate subjective attitudes of individuals or groups, the reconstructive approach focuses on the reconstruction of action-guiding orientations (Bohnsack, 2013). Within this single approach, however, the two groups of interviews were analysed separately and using different analytical frameworks: thematic analysis was used for family members (Kuckartz, 2005; Kelle and Kluge, 1999) while narrative analysis was employed for the formers (Treichel and Schwelling, 2003; Schütze, 1987). This decision was informed by the nature of the narratives in the interviews and, given the different relationship of the interviewees to the process of radicalisation narrated, the decision from the outset that a comparative analysis would not be meaningful. While the thematic analysis broadly asked the question *what* themes mattered for family members in relation to P/CVE, the narrative analysis asked *why* and *how* formers engage in P/CVE. The two approaches are congruent in that they both enable the identification of new levels of (tentative) meaning structures (Fischer-Rosenthal and Rosenthal 1997: 149).

As for the analytical steps applied to the interviews with family members, four primary steps were carried out that followed the thematic coding approach: (1) developing the (initial) category scheme, (2) coding, (3) case description, and (4) case comparison (Kuckartz, 2005: 87; Kelle and Kluge, 1999: 58). The initial categories were defined very broadly so as to capture aspects ranging from how family members framed their brother's, sister's or son's pathway that led them to conflict zones, to how they described their personal hardship. After comparing cases through 'simultaneous maximization or minimization of both the differences and the similarities' (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 55), multiple themes emerged per interviewed family member that suggested different motivational and volitional factors related to P/CVE.

The interviews with formers allowed and called for a more in-depth narrative analysis because it was important to examine the narrative construction of identity (see Section 2.2.2). Regardless of whether the narratives of formers are true or false, they allow for an understanding of the interviewees' motivational processes. Hence, the narrative construction itself is loaded with motivations and thus significant for apprehending why a former acted as he did. Thus, the narrative approach allowed for the identification of biographical process structures. Following Glinka (1998: 25), the coding scheme that was applied to the interviews with formers broadly consisted of the following categories: (1) Biographical Action Schemes, i.e. intention and agentic control; (2) biographical trajectories, i.e. limited action capacities; (3) life planning, i.e. socially or collectively preformed narratives; and (4) biographical transformation, i.e. specific episodes that lead to change.

4. Findings

The analysis of the eight interviews yielded descriptive findings as to why four family members and four former extremists became involved in P/CVE-related activities. This chapter proceeds by presenting the qualitative findings related to motivational and volitional factors among different groups of families and formers in order to contrast the differences and similarities within each group that informs the subsequent discussion.

4.1 Families

The interviews with family members revealed various themes that interviewees implicitly or explicitly linked to their motivation for preventing and countering violent extremism.

4.1.1 Siblings

The first two family members were Tunisian nationals who each experienced the loss of siblings who left Tunisia to join Islamist-jihadist groups in conflict zones. Both are middle-aged men who currently work for the same NGO, which advocates for the safe return and rehabilitation of family members and children caught in Syria, Iraq and Libya. Interviewee 1 was able to get his disabled brother back from Syria after only a few days and subsequently founded the NGO to help the many families in his social environment suffering the same experience. The sister of Interviewee 2, however, remains in custody in a Libyan prison (with her child). There is a significant overlap of the themes that constitute the main aspects of the narratives of Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2. First, and most importantly, both felt forsaken by the Tunisian state, saying they had to fill the void left by the government because no one else would do what is necessary to prevent and counter violent extremism, i.e. to advocate for repatriation and to defend affected families against being labelled as terrorists. Secondly, they both make sense of what happened to their siblings through the collective suffering of Tunisians, particularly the societal disenfranchisement of young Tunisians, framing them as vulnerable victims of malevolent recruiters who misuse Islam. What follows is a thematic summary for each of the brothers.

Interviewee 1: Defending Families

Interviewee 1 is mainly involved in media advocacy work related to P/CVE, which he began after experiencing shock when his younger disabled brother suddenly disappeared. Interviewee 1 uses three salient themes to describe why he created an NGO that represents families whose family members travelled to conflict zones: to end the Tunisian revolution and develop the country; to fight for his brother and against extremists; and to defend affected families in Tunisia and Muslims in general.

As for the first theme, Interviewee 1 links his own experience of being arrested in the 2011 Tunisian revolution to his current P/CVE-related advocacy work. After Interviewee 1 was able to rescue his brother from Syria, he went to Syria himself to visit imprisoned Tunisians who had tried to join Jihadist groups. He stresses that his compatriots 'had done nothing' and says that seeing them in prison 'pushed' him to try and stop the mass phenomenon of Tunisian foreign fighting. Therefore, Interviewee 1 wants to stop young people fighting in other revolutions because he sees them as being needed to end the revolution in their own country:

> [In] Tunisia, nobody came to support us […] there is a holocaust of Tunisians over here. […] Tunisia needs its young people. It doesn't need them to go somewhere else. Tunisia needs these young people to hold its country together, to develop itself. In Tunisia, we don't have natural resources. We don't have petrol or gas like Algeria or Libya. Our resource, it's these young people. If we want to be developed like Europe […] we need these young people to work in their own country, not to go to kill.

As for the second theme, Interviewee 1 describes his attempt at getting his brother back as 'going to hell' and he links this 'hell' to the aim of his P/CVE advocacy, that is, to fight 'not only against people but against ideology'. Consequently, he sympathises with the younger and more vulnerable generation of Tunisians like his brother ('me too I would have left'), framing them as victims and condemning recruiters:

> Unfortunately there are people who do not want us to stop this evil. There are people who take pleasure in this evil continuing. Unfortunately, it still continues. [They] are drinking people's blood.

As for the third theme, Interviewee 1 characterises the beginning and the main aspect of his P/CVE-related activism as 'media work' to 'denounce these people' and 'to defend these families' who are 'victims of terrorism'. He emphasises the shame and suffering that affected families experience in Tunisia:

[Families] do not want their children to join terrorist groups. It brings shame to the family. Because when a young person leaves, for example, to work in Europe – it's a source of pride for the family […] But when he leaves for Syria, or for the conflict zones, he will bring shame. […] for every family affected by extremism in Europe, there is also a family affected by extremism in Tunisia.

Soon after his media advocacy started, many people supported him and asked for help:

Because of my distress call [in the media] there were people who came to our house and knocked on the door [asking] us 'how [did] you save your brother, so that I can save our brother or our son?' When I walked down the street, I saw several people who came to greet me […] Above all mothers. Mothers took me in their arms and thanked me.

Interviewee 2: Demanding Justice

Interviewee 2 started his activism at the NGO founded by Interviewee 1 as he is still trying to get his sister back from Libya where she is imprisoned with her child for being (the wife of) a member of ISIS. Interviewee 2 describes his activism in terms of two themes. The first theme concerns the struggle of trying to get his sister back without any support from the Tunisian government. The second theme centres around notions of injustice due to the terrorism label which applied to his sister, and Muslims in general, while wanting to protect universal human values.

As for the ongoing struggle, Interviewee 2 says that his sister and her husband initially had legitimate jobs when the couple moved to Libya. Two years later, when her husband joined ISIS, she requested help from the family, desperate to return to Tunisia with her son. In the midst of the battles in Libya, her husband was later killed and she and her son were shot and severely injured prior to their imprisonment. Interviewee 2 recalls these events as he is still puzzled by the inaction of the Tunisian government:

A child injured, he is three and a half years old, is injured, and is being treated in a prison, and so is my sister. When the Libyan side informed us that my sister was in their custody and they contacted us on the grounds that she could only be released over to the Tunisian authorities, we contacted the Tunisian authorities […] None of these ministries have responded to us. […] Despite the fact that the Libyan authorities have acknowledged on numerous occasions, with recordings and documents [that] my sister and her son are in a prison with other children.

Interviewee 2 then turned to the NGO where he now works to gain public support via media advocacy:

Only the [NGO] has extended its hand to us in order to raise our concerns and unleash our voices to the media so that society supports us […] The Tunisian state completely refuses to [cooperate] and does not want to interact or move forward or do anything. […] We have not [had] any social interaction with the government in my country. I want an official to listen to me; I want to have a discussion with an official, to address them, not to address the media.

As for the second theme, Interviewee 2 describes feelings of injustice because the state treats people like his sister and nephew as criminals ('What is the crime of these women [and] children?'):

We are not looking for nor want to defend the terrorists. We are only looking for the truth. We want the innocent people to be acquitted, and accountability for those who are guilty. We all love the homeland and we all love Tunisia, and we all love peace for the whole world. But, be just, just, just, nothing else.

In line with this, Interviewee 2 laments that 'the media is in the habit of uttering 'the wife of the terrorist'' because it stigmatises his sister who he believes is a victim. He extends this stigma to the label of terrorism that Europeans apply to Muslims when they 'link Islam to terrorism', which sends 'a message of racism

towards Muslims, as if the Muslim is always diseased' because he believes that 'terrorism has no religion.' Interviewee 2 links his sense of injustice to his activism because it underpins his fight for inclusiveness, justice, and equality:

> Your role should not be limited to protecting yourselves. We must protect the whole world; we must protect humanity as a whole. Humanity, I am human, you are human, I am human, and you are human. Let us live and protect universal humanity, Muslim, Arab, Christian, and Jewish. All of us in equality and justice.

4.1.2 Mothers

Among the interviewed family members in this study were two mothers (Int. 3 and Int. 4) of deceased or missing foreign terrorist fighters who had left Europe to fight for Jihadist groups in Syria. There is a significant parallel between the two mothers as they describe the painful experience of living with uncertainty. While Interviewee 3 does not know if her son is alive and, if so, where he is, Interviewee 4 still struggles to make sense of how and why her son was (likely to be) killed. Thus, the experience of loss and the uncertainty of not knowing what had happened to their sons left each mother under a severe strain that traumatised them. Although they both have similar explanations for their initial motivation to connect with other mothers and participate in P/CVE family self-help groups, it is important to point out sharply diverging volitional factors that may be a product of different (cultural) contexts influencing the social environments of each mother. Interviewee 3 immigrated to Belgium from a Muslim-majority country and she raised her son and her two other children in a Muslim community of a Belgium town. Interviewee 4 was born in Germany, and her only son – who was 'the product of a relationship with a non-European' (Int. 4) – converted to Islam and later radicalised. Since Interviewee 3 engages in a much more public role in P/CVE (e.g. by giving talks), while Interviewee 4 is reluctant to speak publicly, this suggests varying degrees of P/CVE involvement based on different motivational processes, as illustrated in the following thematic summary for each mother.

Interviewee 3: Reward for Suffering

There are two salient themes that Interviewee 3 relates to her involvement in P/CVE activities. First, by working with families, she aims to destigmatise and help other parents. Second, by talking publicly about her suffering, she feels rewarded by the preventative impact on young people. Interviewee 3 emphasises how much she suffered by recalling the traumatic experience of the initial loss of her son, and the subsequent struggle of living with the uncertainty about whether her son is still alive:

> I was breathless. I felt so claustrophobic. I have never felt so bad […] I got up every day thinking 'Will he live today or not?' I really couldn't cope with it […] I did nothing but cry in the first two years […] If you lose a child, it's like losing a piece of your heart. It is hard to live with that uncertainty […] You can't shut it off, you live in the uncertainty.

By reflecting on the source of her suffering, Interviewee 3 attributes the pain of losing her son as inflicted by other people and associates it with all the other suffering that she endured in her life:

> I have lived without a mother and a father. I have lived without my brothers and sisters. I got married, it didn't work out. I remarried a sick man. I have gone through all of that. But taking away my son from me, I did not want to accept that. I asked for forgiveness from God afterwards because it was not God who took away my child, but people.

In view of her work in family self-help support groups, Interviewee 3 wants to help other parents avoid making a mistake that she regretted. After her son arrived in Syria, she was still able to communicate with him. But then they stopped talking, and Interviewee 3 blames herself for the break in communication:

He said 'If I die for the Jihad, then you will go to heaven, I'm really doing it for you.' I said, 'No, no, if you bring sadness upon me, I will take you to hell.' […] Every time that he called, I was mostly angry with him […] My friends also said 'You should be happy that he calls you, that he talks to you!' At that point I was not thinking about him, I was actually pushing him away.

Initially, Interviewee 3 felt ashamed for her son (e.g. 'you are seen as "the mother of" aren't you?'; 'people look at us altogether'), however, she was able to overcome feelings of shame after she met another affected mother, and also because she and her other children received extensive social and psychological support. As a result of her dealing with shame while still disagreeing with her son's actions, she increasingly identifies with other affected parents and has arrived at an alternative narrative:

I do not approve of his choices. I will never think it's ok. I will never approve of it. But he remains my child. I would go through fire for him. If he ever comes back, I want to help him as much as I can. The fact that he is doing something wrong, or is hurting other people, no father or mother wants that. But I will always continue to love my child.

After Interviewee 3 connected with a few mothers, she actively sought to set up a formal group of mothers in her city, but the municipality told her that it was a 'sensitive' endeavour and 'very difficult, to bring the mothers together'. Knowing how much it helped her, she and another mother decided to set up an organisation and went on television to speak up 'because that was all taboo' and she wanted 'to do something about these problems'. Most of her current activities are co-hosting workshops, through the organisation which she co-founded, for which she was encouraged by her social environment (e.g. 'a lot of mothers were so happy that they could talk about it to others'). The way in which Interviewee 3 describes her P/CVE activism suggests at least some level of post-traumatic growth, possibly because she and her family received extensive psychological counselling, but mostly because she says that she is now able to find meaning in her suffering and life after trauma. Thus, she now sees her adverse life experiences as a unique opportunity to tell her story and feel rewarded for preventing more suffering as she takes the 'big impact' of her talks 'as a reward' for her suffering:

I have also done talks for young people and I have seen that it has a very big impact on them, if you come with a story by someone who has experienced it. Of course, experts are needed, but that is different. If you tell the story then it is 'Oh that is so and so's mother', and that suffering behind it has a bit of an effect, I hope, as a reward. I feel that way too, afterwards the young people come to you for a hug and in tears. Even the adults are perplexed. They say, 'Finally, I have heard a true story. I always see everything on TV, but it's not the same. This is really heart-breaking'.

Interviewee 4: Dealing with Trauma

For Interviewee 4 there is one theme that is crucial for her participation in family self-help groups, namely, that it helps her deal with trauma. At the same time, other factors contributing to her trauma also prevent her from getting further involved in P/CVE-related activities: the fear of repercussions if she were to 'go public'; regrets and self-blame; and the unfulfilled desire to understand how her son died and feel closure.

Interviewee 4 remembers how painful it was to find out that her son had gone to Syria and she describes the burden of having to cope with this loss all by herself:

[I]t was so painful because I was so powerless at that moment. I couldn't do anything anymore. […] I really lived in a parallel world. Of course, I had my closest circle of friends. But not even they were really prepared for this. The other thing was basically having to keep it secret in front of colleagues […] I had to keep acting as if the whole thing, would just go away […] I really was carrying this endless burden all alone for a very long time.

What helped Interviewee 4 to cope with this trauma was meeting other affected mothers:

> I had support with therapy specialising in trauma. But despite that, what was vital for me, quite clearly, I think it was quite significant that there was a counselling centre for affected families […] it was very healing to meet, for the first time, another affected mother. Even though […] I had certain clichés such as that I thought they were dysfunctional families […] But it was in fact really good to [see] that I was not the only one.

Since Interviewee 4 is reluctant to speak publicly about her experience ('it would damage me even more'), her involvement in P/CVE remains limited to helping other parents in similar situations:

> Everyone does whatever they can, whatever they feel comfortable with. And it is quite varied […] So for me at least, where parents are afraid the same thing might happen to them, I'd like at least [to] share my experience. [But] Without going public, at least for me. I know that wouldn't be good for me [because] of my job.

In terms of regrets and self-blame, Interviewee 4 explains how her son's upbringing and a series of adverse events and missed opportunities led to his sudden radicalisation about a year after he converted to Islam. Interviewee 4 says she 'tried everything' in her efforts to bring her son's search 'for his own identity' into the 'right direction' as she felt responsible for her son's identity problems. When her son was fired from a job, it 'left him in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and in a personal crisis'. She also regrets not taking her son's passport or bank card to stop him from travelling ('I should have taken those steps'). After Interviewee 4 found out from 'reliable sources' that her son was killed, she suspected that he had a 'psychosis' and may have been killed for trying to 'run away'. But she couldn't be certain and this uncertainty of not knowing how her son died only grew because she regrets that she allowed the police to control the only conversations she had with her son:

> There was just one skype conversation that I had and that was, really unfortunately, tracked by the police [who] passed me a note with questions on it that I should build into the conversation and I should then ask 'So where are you?' And then we had email contact [for] maybe 2 to 3 weeks. […] What was so terrible about the situation was that I couldn't ask anything personal at all. It was all about facts, as I said, that the police were interested in.

Consequently, Interviewee 4 still struggles to find closure because her trauma 'still has no end' as she extends her trauma to the struggle of trying to make sense of her son's death, which fuels her desire to go to Syria herself and find out more:

> [It] still has no end for me. I guess that everyone perhaps has their personal thing that allows them to come to terms with it. [But] it doesn't allow me any peace. There are phases when I am busy with other things but then it comes back to me […] I would like to go [to Syria], to really understand it [and] pick up the trail again.

4.2 Formers

This section now turns to the findings regarding how former extremists make sense of their life experience and how they say it informed their rationale to take part in P/CVE measures. As noted above, the analytical approach for the findings on formers was different from the one used for families. Specifically, the interviews with formers were analysed in view of how the interviewees narrate their biographical action, trajectory, transformation and life planning (see Section 3). This section proceeds by outlining the key findings from the narratives of former extremists (Int. 5 and Int. 6) and former violent extremists (Int. 7 and Int. 8).

4.2.1 Former Non-Violent Extremists

There were two formers in this study who were classified as 'non-violent' because violence did not play a role in their personal involvement in extremist movements. Interviewee 5 is a UK citizen in his mid-fifties who used to be an anti-Muslim activist, organised demonstrations for four years before disengaging and starting a dialogue with people from the Muslim community in his city. His main P/CVE-related activism continues to revolve around cross-community contact in various formats. Interviewee 6 is a Finish citizen in his mid-thirties who had become involved in the neo-Nazi movement as a teenager. He disengaged and subsequently de-radicalised with the help of an 'exit' programme for which he works now by providing his insider-knowledge about the movement.

It should be noted that although neither Interviewee 5 nor Interviewee 6 pursued violent activism, they both experienced violence (or violent threats) in as much as it marked their move away from extremism. However, despite this commonality, the biographical accounts and narratives differ considerably between Interviewee 5 and Interviewee 6. In particular, the two interviewees difference significantly in terms of the relative importance that ideology played for them when they were still in the movement. Interviewee 5 stresses he had always rejected violence on the grounds that he 'stood against Nazis' and he 'never had issues with migrants and migration' (Int. 5). In contrast, Interviewee 6 says he deliberately chose Nazi ideology from a young age because he liked the discipline of the movement, aesthetically speaking, despite feeling 'guilty about it' (Int. 6). What follows is a summary of the statements that capture the narratives of Interviewee 5 and Interviewee 6.

Interviewee 5: Keeping the Peace

Interviewee 5 was among the first to organise anti-Muslim demonstrations in his town. One salient feature in the narrative of Interviewee 5 is that he says he initiated and stayed involved in these demonstrations due to external circumstances that he could not control. Hence, he frames his reasons for demonstrating as being the product of his environment, partly because of widespread economic hardship, but the main impetus was the presence of Islamists ('a problem that should have been dealt with officially earlier'):

> If we didn't have to walk past these extremists in the town centre for 12 or 13 years, there would be no [demonstrations] as strange and silly as it sounds, these extremists [sat outside] every week. [When] we tried to address [this problem], we messed it up […] It was a transition it was a chain of events […] there was always going to be a reaction to them eventually.

This biographical trajectory leads Interviewee 5 to describe the key factor that limited his actions; being labelled ('as soon as you get labelled your life gets out of control'). He refers to this limited control as a 'chain of events' when fellow demonstrators started to become violent. In this context, he recalls one incident that triggered a strong emotional reaction and eventually led to his gradual disengagement:

> You remember little things and they grow. It grows over periods of weeks. And one of them was: when I was in [this city] two ladies spat in my face and called me 'Nazi-scum get out of [this city]'. At that point I felt like I stood against Nazis. I was horrified then and ashamed.

Although he was not comfortable with the violence happening at demonstrations, he says he could not leave the movement, even after he 'spiritually pulled away':

> I always felt [we] could pull the plug anytime we wanted, but we couldn't because the media got a hold of it and it got traction […] For many reasons you feel like it's your thing, you started it, you feel a bit responsible, you feel a bit like a coward if you'd pull away from it, you feel like you'd let your family that is still in it down and your mates so you kind of stay in there a lot longer than what you are comfortable doing.

While leaving the movement but still caring for his town, Interviewee 5 realised that the Muslims in his town 'weren't going anywhere', which is why he started to explore 'the fabric of the town', talking to

people who he used to think of being 'a bit of a problem', which in turn moved him towards 'feeling more inclusive':

> It was comfortable conversations we had with each other. I started engaging a little bit, quietly. There was one fella, a religious fella. But he didn't go away, some things I completely disagree with him but he never went away. […] He was the first one to say you're not the [Anti-Muslim demonstrator], you're [says his name]. So, I thought that was good. I just kept conversing.

Interviewee 5 first introduces agency into his narrative when he talks about his conscious decision to start speaking up after he had already left the group for some time. Though he first started talking to people from the Muslim community 'quietly', he thought he 'was able to contribute' more in order to 'keep the peace' by 'paving a way in conversation.' He highlights his intentional choice to speak up publicly in this following 'pretend to' statement:

> When I finally left the [movement] I thought I'm not going to speak out, not going to say nothing while I still know people in it […] I don't want to feel like I've contributed to [them] getting threats. I wasn't at this stage. I was quite comfortable. I could've just stayed quiet, remain quiet and done nothing.

His new activism allowed him to rebuild the confidence he had lost from the lack of agency, which in turn made him resilient enough to endure the violent threats that came with 'doing the right thing':

> It makes me feel better equipped to have my say to feel more engaged. It makes me feel I am part of things now. But I just think it's a shame that happened through that journey to get to here to – if I am honest – to have the personal confidence. Confidence gets knocked along the way. But you have to rebuild it. And every time you rebuild it you become a little bit more Teflon. My journey has made me a little bit more adaptable to take part in things and understand that 'don't look for others to do it, you've got to try and get up and do it yourself. But the first thing that must be done is you must listen to someone, you can't just shout them down or label them, you have to listen.

At the beginning of his public activism (e.g. giving talks in mosques), his family received serious threats, from all sides (right-wing and Islamist), and Interviewee 5 himself was assaulted by a right-wing extremist, which left him severely injured and needing a lengthy recovery. But as he transformed his identity into that of the 'peacekeeper' in his town, he was able to take agentic action despite the hardship:

> I progressed to giving talks in mosques […] sitting down trying to make sense. I got hate mails […] But I thought no, this time I am on the right side. This is me. I'm going to do it the right way […] When you start speaking out, you become sort of like a target for both sides […] Trying to do it right is the hardest. It's easy to be far right and it's easy to be an Islamist to some degree. But I mean try to get an equilibrium, a balance.

While Interviewee 5 continues his peace-oriented dialogue in mosques, schools, and universities, he says he wants 'to stop people making the same errors I made' because it would not improve the community. He says he found better ways of dealing with problems in his town – by listening and allowing people to be wrong – and he wants to show this to others to stop a cycle of labelling. Thus, the key message that underpins the activism of Interviewee 5 in his cross-community dialogue is that everyone should not label or judge the other group because there is no alternative to dialogue since Muslims aren't going away 'and everyone has got to crack on with it':

> Your label goes ahead of you […] People don't want to employ a football hooligan, people don't want to employ somebody who is [labelled] Islamophobic because we live in a

multicultural society and everyone has got to crack on with it [or] you just become a fly in the eye, you're not wanted […] My main message is, don't judge people, really.

Interviewee 6: Taking Responsibility

Interviewee 6 got involved with neo-Nazi ideas from a young age and he spent a large part of his life inside the neo-Nazi movement. The distinct feature of how Interviewee 6 tells his story is that he frames it almost entirely in terms of agentic actions by taking full ownership for every decision along his involvement in the neo-Nazi movement. He starts out by explaining how, when he was 13 years old, he followed his militarist interests and was drawn to Nazi literature for no other reason than liking the ideology despite feeling 'it was wrong'. It was this which made him want to proactively find neo-Nazis:

> I started reading more about Hitler and Nazi Germany. I was very fascinated […] I wanted to know what happened to all the Nazis after the war. I started feeling more sympathetic about those ideas. I felt guilty about it. I felt like it was wrong, but I still liked those ideas. I wanted to find neo-Nazis to talk about these things.

After he found neo-Nazis and joined a group of skinheads, Interviewee 6 again made a conscious decision to leave the skinhead scene because he did not like the drinking, the music, and the violence against foreigners as it did not satisfy his interest in Nazism and he cared more about the propaganda:

> I stopped being a skinhead but I didn't abandon the ideas so I still wanted to look for the real Nazis […] I thought it is better to take care of the propaganda first to have enough followers […] I was mostly interested in the ideological aspects but I did never of course say that there would not be a time for violence. I started finding a lot of connections and writing a lot of letters to Nazis convicted to long prison sentences […] Finally, I found [a famous American Nazi terrorist], who represented the authority that I had been looking for […] We wrote hundreds of letters.

Through finding such connections to Nazi terrorists, Interviewee 6 was able to network with the types of people he had been looking for. Then, by getting people from his home town involved, he was able to spearhead a neo-Nazi movement where he could exercise what he 'always wanted to do like being some kind of ideological teacher.' Thus, Interviewee 6 tells a story in which he takes full responsibility not only for choosing an ideology but also for creating a movement and position for himself that he always wanted ('it did feed my ego').

The disengagement process of interviewee 6 started when he began questioning the movement after a few of his close friends had left and were deemed traitors, which left interviewee 6 with open questions although he still believed in Nazi ideology. He also mentions the birth of his child playing a role in this process and this was his official explanation for resigning from his position in the movement. All of this combined, left him space to reflect on his past:

> I started to withdraw myself little by little from the organisation. I started thinking about how my activities have affected not only me but my close family relations. Then I started reading what I have written, what I have said, and [realised] what kind of thing I have created.

Interviewee 6 says that this started the reversal of his ideological convictions, leading to his gradual de-radicalisation four years later. He was assisted in this process by an exit programme, as he also received threats when he began speaking about his past publicly. In reflecting on his past and when faced with feelings of shame, he owns his past beliefs and does not expect to be welcomed back by society:

> I do not want to forget my past or deny what I've said or done because that is not helpful either. I must be honest to myself. I am responsible for this […] sometimes I want to deny and want to say that wasn't me. Because one feels ashamed about it, that I had those views

and promoted a Nazi revolution and race war and all those horrible things […] I do know that even if they are disgusting, horrible, extremely racist and not acceptable views […] I have to take responsibility over those thoughts. All I can do is condemn those thoughts and say it's wrong and not acceptable in any way. I cannot expect that people will believe me right away just because I have publicly distanced myself.

Interviewee 6 frames the shame that he experiences as an inevitable process he cannot escape and while this underpins his motivation for P/CVE ('I want to be able to help'), he accommodates anyone that would mistrust him ('Even if I was thinking in bad ways, maybe the bad thinking can be turned into good ways'). Thus, Interviewee 6 understands that due to his public role in the movement, that if he had been involved in exit work 'some clients perhaps might feel a little bit uncomfortable', which is why he does not 'do client work' but consults for the Exit-programme with his insider-knowledge by giving presentations ('I am there to share my experience and knowledge'). He also found a new sense of purpose in leading a 'normal life' and in becoming a social worker:

> I am starting to become a youth worker. I have a multicultural and international life right now. Now my purpose is to finish my studies. Lead the normal life that I did not have for 15 or 16 years. If I can help somehow, either to explain some ideological matters or how some certain organisations are working or functioning or what ideas are behind them. Yes, I am willing to help and talk to anybody who wants to listen. I got involved with EXIT in Finland. I was in fact their first client and [am now their] experienced specialist since 2016. I have been able to bring my knowledge and my experience to exit work. I hope that [my insider knowledge] can be used for good purposes.

It is clear from his narrative that it is important to Interviewee 6 not to hide his past from the refugees with whom he works in his professional life but also to maintain those relationships outside the CVE environment:

> They do know my background. Many of them have come and congratulated me that I have been able to change my views. I have been able to create good professional connections with them. They see me as a person they can come and talk to and ask for help.

4.2.2 Former Violent Extremists

For the last two interviewees, violence was an important factor when they were teenagers in neo-Nazi groups. Interviewee 7 is a Canadian citizen in his mid-fifties who first got involved in street-violence, and, later, in racist activism. During his 16 years inside the movement his roles shifted from street-level to public face and propagandist. During the last six years he gradually disengaged from the movement, though it took him six additional years of counselling before he could say that he de-radicalised. After another five years, he became involved in P/CVE by co-founding several programmes, while his main job remains being a financial advisor. Interviewee 8 is a German citizen in his mid-thirties, who committed several violent acts as part of a neo-Nazi group. When one of his victims died after his violent attack, he was imprisoned at the age of 17, which led to his disengagement from the movement and becoming a Christian (today he is a Christian member of the clergy). After five years in prison, he immediately transitioned to giving PVE talks all over Germany. In their narratives, Interviewee 7 and Interviewee 8 use sharply diverging autobiographical anchors to point to different ways of how each of them constructed or preserved a sense of self. While Interviewee 7 stresses the agency he had throughout his life, Interviewee 8 attributes the course of his biographical trajectory to fate. As the following summary for each interviewee shows, these two identity narratives accounted for opposing expectations of society and ultimately for different motivations for engaging in P/CVE.

Interviewee 7: Filling the Void

Interviewee 7 begins telling his story of traumatic childhood experiences from when he was 10 years old: family turmoil, an absent father, bullying at school and a teacher who regularly beat him left him 'angry and powerless'. He says when he was bullied by skinheads, he wanted to 'befriend the bully, become the bully', because he admired them for being tough ('Toughness [was] what I wanted most'). In trying to gain their respect, Interviewee 7 says he 'had to commit all the same acts of violence that they committed'. At the age of 16, he started to get involved in street-violence as he 'took the rebellion from the school to the streets.' After being a skinhead for two years, he switched 'from the skinhead identity to the ideology identity', and he became the leader of a white supremacist group. Interviewee 7 makes sense of why he took these identities in his past:

> The movement gave me a sense of power […] I got attention when I felt invisible. I got acceptance when I felt unlovable […] The skinhead subculture gave me the permission to be violent. I was angry. I wanted to physically lash out […] The ideology gave me an intellectual framework and a justification for being violent.

By making sense of the 'ideology identity', he describes his former self as a 'complete narcissist' seeking attention and power, realising he could do more harm by spreading racist ideology:

> The movement was who I was. I invested everything into being in the movement. […] I learned early on that I had more power and could do more harm with my tongue than I could do with my fists […] I engaged in a ton of violence and did horrible things to people who did not deserve it but the power of the tongue is far more powerful.

The birth of his first child began a 'thawing process' which allowed him to 'reconnect with humanity' ('everything I did up until then was for me'). While it was not a rapid transformation, he began to get attention and acceptance in healthy ways from his children. He realised that the movement was not only dysfunctional but that it would also affect the quality of his children's lives. After he disengaged, he says the ego part of his identity wanted to hold onto the ideology. But to keep his identity alive he had to rationalise his distancing from the movement. The 'psychic bonds to the ideology started to weaken' when he began to de-radicalise through psychological counselling:

> I was able to heal what needed to be healed, that was the beginning of the true transformation and de-radicalisation by which I started to feel differently about other people because I started to feel differently about myself.

In explaining how his identity got 'intertwined with the ideology', Interviewee 7 says that trauma can form a toxic belief system but that people can choose to live their lives in reaction to this belief system. Hence, he implicitly moves beyond the dichotomy of agency and determinism:

> I never blame anything on my childhood. Everything I did I chose to do. I had agency. It would be wrong for me to say I didn't. I share these stories about my childhood not to blame but to help give the lens through which I made those decisions, why I needed to feel powerful.

Interviewee 7 emphasises the role of self-compassion to diminish his capacity to do harm and he extends this compassion to the victims of the ideology he once promoted ('the ideology left unchecked always leads to murder'). To not evade responsibility, he says there are healthy ways to use his past as a 'service to humanity', but that this first requires healing while having the duty to earn the trust of society:

> Our original friends, family and society are not waiting with open arms to welcome us back because we violated the trust in those relationships. That trust has to be earned and has to be rebuilt and that takes time. So, the hardest part in disengagement is being in this place in the middle that I call the void, where you have no social circle. And sometimes the pain of being in the void is so great that we chose the dysfunction of the scene over the pain of the void. That's the hardest part is the two or three years you have to spend in loneliness.

Because of this loneliness, Interviewee 7 now helps others leaving the far-right to 'transition through the void'. He points out that he became involved in P/CVE only after he finished his own healing process (i.e. 'de-radicalisation'), while also separating his professional life as a financial advisor from his P/CVE activism.

> Once I healed […] and came to terms with the things I had said and the things I had done and who I was, then I felt I could share that same experience with others and I had a desire to do so and it was scary because when I decided to start talking publicly about my past, I had a career as a successful financial adviser, so I had quite a career risk when I chose to make that move. But I felt it was so necessary as part of my life's journey to make up for the damage that I had done to humanity by inspiring people not just to follow my footsteps out but to inspire people in general to have more compassion and forgiveness for themselves and everyone else. I have two lives. What I do for career and money and there's what I do to be of service for humanity and I try to find a good balance between those two.

Interviewee 8: Christian Salvation

Interviewee 8 describes his past largely through victimising experiences that determined his biographical trajectory by a convolution of factors: being in an unjust system that produces 'winners and losers'; coming from a small town where many people shared right-wing extremist views hence he 'never had an alternative'; having two severely disabled parents lacking the capacity of caring as he 'never experienced any compassion'; and living in poverty for which he 'felt ashamed'. Consequently, he says that the neo-Nazi group, the ideology, and the street violence each fulfilled a vital function for him: the group filled the vacuum left by his parents, the ideology mirrored the unjust society he had experienced, and through the violence he found a release and gained energy for coping with his misery. In explaining his increasingly violent behaviour when he was 15 years old, Interviewee 8 rationalises the escalating street violence by contextualising it with his own victimhood and the ideological lens that in retrospect left him no room for interpretation:

> I was hunted by a group of foreigners armed with baseball bats and knives. I was severely injured. My experience on the streets confirmed my ideology. Human dignity did not count, it was all about survival of the strongest.

Despite having 'small doubts about the scene', Interviewee 8 says he 'could not leave them alone in their fight' because he wanted to improve his country ('I thought if I leave, Germany will not be a better place'). Accordingly, interviewee 8 links the turning point of his imprisonment to his realisation that he had not improved his country:

> When I was 17 and I ended up in prison I had time to think, I was sober to think and realise that I did not get closer to fulfilling the goals I had when I got into the scene. I had neither improved my country nor improved my life, quite the contrary. I only knew hate and violence. I realised that hate and violence made things worse and created more hate and violence. I was responsible for the death of a human being, dealing with that as a 17-year-old was not easy. To realise that in prison I was not valuable for the group. On top of that, I was in prison with many foreigners. There were too many to fight them. I had to be with them. I realised that there are good and bad people everywhere.

The previous statement highlights how Interviewee 8 does not mention his victim or any other details about the killing for which he was sentenced. Instead, he points to his own hardship in having to deal with the consequences of the killing. In retrospect, Interviewee 8 justifies the disregard for his victim by attributing responsibility to others for his limited capacity of being empathetic, from which he derives the need to share his life story in order to *receive* empathy because it is the (implicit) prerequisite for him to *give* empathy:

> At the time of imprisonment, the psychologist told me that I am not able to have any compassion for my victims. This was indeed the case, but it was because I myself never experienced any compassion. Only in prison I realised that it feels good to receive empathy. And if it feels good, I want to approach other humans in the same way. There were experiences that shaped me, which I wanted to share with others.

Inside prison he became a devout Christian because 'god offers redemption – unlike society'. The idea of Christian salvation to be attained merely through faith appealed to Interviewee 8 and it gave him the 'first feeling of freedom' after prison. However, he is discontented with society's fight against extremism because there are still 'winners and losers' as 'no one wants to be a loser'. Thus, he expresses frustration with this society that is still unjust because he has to justify himself for his past:

> I see how it is difficult for many people to deal with [my past], to give me the chance for being a normal member of society. This is hard. I experience hate from others. Again and again I have to justify myself because people see my past and question with what right I can claim a normal life.

Despite experiencing prejudices, immediately after his release there was a church that gave him the chance to work with children in P/CVE-like settings. Interviewee 8 also appears to have delivered secondary prevention interventions by referring to his questioning strategy for people with right-wing extremist tendencies:

> [He asks them] 'when you continue with your right-wing extremist ideology and group, in three months from now, tell me what you have achieved for Germany, what has improved for your life and your family. You can look at my life to see if I'm doing better with my Christian values.'

Although interviewee 8 acknowledges that this type of questioning 'does not always work', he says that 'Christian values, although not exclusively, should play a role'. He envisions a society that facilitates people to 'live by the values that are the essence of society'. Thus, he highlights how important values are for his current activism:

> I try to talk about attitudes, about their values. I like when a person has values, I can show how you live according to the values and get closer to your goals, if I can help you with that, I will be there for you.

5. Discussion

The findings outlined in Section 4 show that the motivation of those affected or formerly involved in extremism to work towards preventing and countering violent extremism can manifest itself in various ways. Apart from obvious differences between families and formers, all affected individuals are motivated by adverse life-events in their own ways, and in interaction with their own process of post-traumatic growth or identity change. This chapter proceeds by separately discussing relevant findings for each group and in relation to the literature.

5.1 Families

The findings about affected family members suggest three converging themes of motivational and volitional factors that underpinned their engagement in P/CVE-related activities. First, all family members derive motivation from traumatic experiences in relation to their missing, deceased or imprisoned siblings or sons (for whom they all felt some responsibility) as well as in relation to shame they felt as a result.

Second, the salience of themes related to trauma in the narratives of the two mothers (Int. 3 and Int. 4) suggests that their underlying motivation for family self-help groups is a form of coping mechanism and the desire for post-traumatic growth. Third, the prevalence of themes regarding a continuous and collective strain and the feelings of being abandoned by their government expressed by the two siblings (Int. 1 and Int. 2) suggests that their motivation was driven by situational factors that resulted in a need and social expectation for collective activism.

These motivations in conjunction with Vollhardt's (2009) model 'altruism born of suffering', suggest at least four implications that help explain the differences between interviewed family members. First, the motivation for pro-social behaviour rooted in adverse life events cannot be sufficiently understood from only a clinical psychology perspective as they must be contextualised with environmental, situational, and sociocultural factors. Second, these motivational processes are dynamic and subject to change over time due to the strengthening and weakening effect of volition and how it interacts with different stages in dealing with trauma and overcoming stigma. Third, situational demands and norms account for an increased scope of P/CVE activism (i.e. media advocacy). Fourth, perceptions of a common fate with other victims can shift motivations for P/CVE towards an increased empathy and perspective-taking, which can influence the type of helping. This section proceeds by unpacking these implications and how they relate to the model 'altruism born of suffering'.

5.1.1 Experienced Harm and Volitional Factors

The first relevant distinction by Vollhardt (2009) concerns the traumatic event itself, as the dimensions of suffering (i.e. individual or collective and unintended or intentional) are said to influence the type of pro-social behaviour. The findings outlined here appear to confirm the significance of the type of suffering endured not least because the two mothers' loss of their sons appears more severe as a traumatic event in itself compared to the experience of the two siblings.

The first dimension of suffering reveals a striking parallel because it mirrors the contrast between the framing by the sibling family members of a strained collective (Int. 1 and Int. 2) and the mothers' depiction of their own pain (Int. 3 and Int. 4). Thus, both sibling family members repeatedly contextualise their own suffering with that of their compatriots: the 2011 Tunisian revolution, the resulting hopelessness of the masses that travelled to conflict zones (like their siblings), the stigma of the many families left behind, and sense of injustice in relation to the Tunisian government. In contrast, the two mothers each narrate their suffering in individual terms as a unique pain only a mother could feel when losing a son: either by relating this pain to an individual history of hardship (Int. 3) or by having to cope with it all alone (Int. 4).

Despite these differences, all family members saw their suffering as being the result of human agency and being intertwined with shame. The latter is particularly important in accounting for a significant difference between the German mother (Int. 4) and all other interviewees, since she is the only one who is not involved in any public P/CVE-role and still struggles with the anticipated shame if her co-workers were to find out about her son. Echoing Vollhardt (2009), this highlights the importance of considering how affected individuals deal with social stigma because it can weaken or strengthen their volition and thus their overall motivation for more public involvement in P/CVE.

The limited P/CVE involvement of Interviewee 4 and her persistent suffering exemplifies how factors related to volition can inhibit motivational tendencies from developing. The 'altruism born of suffering' model suggests two types of volitional factors that overlap with the salient themes of Interviewee 4; emotional control and environmental control (Vollhardt 2009). As for emotional control, Interviewee 4 expresses her struggle with emotional distress in trying to make sense of her son's death for which she regrets cooperating with the police. This is in line with the findings by Koehler and Ehrt (2018), who found that parents have a strong desire for knowledge to feel closure, and that mothers in particular have to cope with self-blame while resenting security agencies for not sharing information that would have helped

them to feel closure. In terms of environmental control, as Interviewee 4 fears professional repercussions, this suggests an unsupportive environment that is not conducive for her process of dealing with shame. Overall, these factors inhibited Interviewee 4 from becoming more deeply involved in P/CVE (beyond family self-help groups) because they are directly linked to her trauma.

In regard to all other family members, two types of volitional factors from Vollhardt's (2009) model stand out for their explanatory potential: encoding control (i.e. similarity perception with other victims); and (again) environmental control. Both help explain why Interviewee 1 felt emboldened to create an NGO after he had already got his brother back from Syria. After his first media appearance, Interviewee 1 was overwhelmed by the support and affirmation he received from his social environment. By associating the victimhood of affected families to the victimhood of all Tunisians, Interviewee 1 perceives a common fate that underpins his media advocacy, therefore by defending these families he is able to resist social stigma. This closely relates to Unger's (2000: 163) concept of a 'Positive Marginality', which postulates that people can reframe seemingly negative stigma 'and use it as an agent of both personal and social change', i.e. individual perceptions may be the determining factor out of which marginality becomes activism. For interviewee 2, too, the notion of a positive marginality manifests in his rejection of the terrorism label for his sister as well as in his defence of Muslims and of those vulnerable to radicalisation while reframing terrorism as having no religion. This suggests that despite the immediate desire of Interviewee 2 to get his sister back, his type of P/CVE activism (i.e. media advocacy) may best be explained by the desire to counter stigma or achieve a positive marginality.

For Interviewee 3, her supportive environment and perceived similarity with other victims seem to have strengthened her volition to an extent that has shifted her motivation for deeper involvement in P/CVE. The findings suggest that the initial participation of Interviewee 3 in mothers' groups may have had a cascading effect for her volition. First, the perceived common fate with other mothers led her to co-found a parents' association and speak publicly and address the taboo experienced by affected families, which again suggests the deriving of a 'positive marginality'. By experiencing social affirmation and support from other mothers around her, together with the extensive psychological support that she and her other children received, she may have been stabilised to the extent that she could feel rewarded by telling her 'heart-breaking' story publicly.

In sum, the findings show that volitional factors related to trauma and stigma can prevent motivational tendencies from developing if the needs of family members (e.g. finding closure) remain unfulfilled (cf. Koehler and Ehrt 2018). But volition can also foster motivation if family members can overcome shame through the help of their social environment. The impact of volition may change over time as it interacts with different stages of trauma. This implies that for some family members it would be more beneficial to focus on healing trauma, if they are at a stage where any public P/CVE activity would risk re-traumatisation.

5.1.2 Motivational Processes and pro-social Behaviour

To narrow down the decisive impetus for each family member, this section discusses how different motivations played a role for different P/CVE-related activities and how they align with the model 'altruism born of suffering'. The different types of activism of the interviewed family members can be characterised into three broad categories: (1) participating in family self-help groups (Int. 3 and Int. 4); (2) giving primary prevention talks or workshops for a wider audience (Int. 3); and (3) gaining public support or building political pressure for repatriation via media advocacy work (Int. 1 and Int. 2).

According to Vollhardt (2009), there are three overarching sets of motivational factors (coping mechanism, situational factors, and positive affect) that lead to varying degrees of pro-social behaviour in terms of scope (or type of help) and inclusiveness (or recipient of help). For the two mothers, the model accurately predicts that individually experienced harm (as outlined in the previous section) makes coping

mechanisms the most likely motivator for pro-social behaviour. Given that Interviewee 3 co-founded a mother's group and Interviewee 4 participates in a similar self-help group, the engagement in P/CVE family self-help settings could be characterised as interpersonal pro-social behaviour for similar victims. The main motivation of Interviewee 4 can indeed be described as a coping mechanism (as she is still in the process of dealing with her trauma) and this was also the case for Interviewee 3, at least initially (as she moves beyond interpersonal help after experiencing post-traumatic growth).

This motivational dynamic suggests that the key driver for P/CVE activism can change and interact with individual processes of post-traumatic growth. It would be interesting to explore further why Interviewee 3 became increasingly involved in primary prevention while Interviewee 4 did not but the findings do not allow for an isolation of the factors that might account for this difference. Nevertheless, the findings show how a shift in the motivation of Interviewee 3 accompanied the increasing scope and inclusiveness of her contribution to P/CVE. Specifically, by giving primary prevention talks to a wider audience, Interviewee 3 feels rewarded for her suffering, which in turn helps her to transcend the regrets she had about fighting with her son and to feel more empathy towards others. This is in line with the increased perspective-taking that Vollhardt (2009) predicts and, regardless of whether this positive affect was the cause or the result of her increasing P/CVE involvement, the shift towards positive affect highlights the importance of volition for Interviewee 3, or how she derives volition from a 'positive marginality' in a similar vein to the two interviewees who had lost siblings.

As mentioned above, the two Tunisian siblings framed their suffering in terms of a strained collective. Following Vollhardt (2009), collectively experienced harm gives rise to situational demands and social expectations for helping, which would then be the strongest driver for collective pro-social behaviour. And indeed, the predicted primacy of situational factors reflects how Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2 describe their rationale for getting involved in P/CVE-related media advocacy. For one, there was a pressing situational demand for help because both felt abandoned by the Tunisian government. After Interviewee 1 was able to get his brother back and told his story in the media, he founded an NGO in response to the social expectation of helping because many of his compatriots asked for his help in getting their own relatives back. Interviewee 2 says if it was not for this NGO set up by Interviewee 1, no one would have been able to advocate for the safe return of his sister, which highlights another situational dynamic that Vollhardt (2009: 83) describes as the encounter of 'altruistic role models' and the 'reciprocity norm'. In any case, the situational demand for advocacy and repatriation must have been significant in view of Tunisia's fertile regional opportunities for foreign fighting that attracted especially high numbers of recruits (Zelin, 2018: 4). Taken together, these unique situational demands and norms resonate in the stated motivation of both sibling family members, e.g. in the social expectation to finish the Tunisian revolution (Int. 1) or by perpetuating a moral responsibility for repatriation (Int. 2). This gives credence to Vollhardt's (2009: 74) assertion that collective harm leads to a collective helping that is specifically directed towards a group 'such as a community or nation'. Since both the sibling family members frame their activism as a fight between good and evil, it is apparent how their narrative is influenced by an open societal conflict (e.g. 'holocaust of Tunisians' – Int. 1), as they also derive the aims of their activism from their vision for a better Tunisia.

In sum, the findings suggest that the individually experienced trauma of losing a child to violent extremism fuels the desire to help as a coping strategy, however, depending on the progress of dealing with trauma, the psychological function that drives the motivation to engage in P/CVE can shift from relieving grief (if trauma is still significant, Int. 4) to increasing self-efficacy and finding meaning (post-traumatic growth, Int. 3). Given that these motivational processes are dynamic and subject to change, increasing the range P/CVE-related activities engaged in, from immediate and interpersonal (family self-help) towards collective and long-term (primary prevention workshops), can be attributed to the positive effect of identifying with others or perceiving a common fate. This again highlights the potential of volition, specifically, how it can be derived from a 'positive marginality'. However, it also calls into question

whether the identification with others could be weakened as a result of cultural factors, since Interviewee 3 did not achieve a positive marginality as a non-Muslim whose son converted to Islam. Similarly, a perceived common fate in conjunction with situational demands and norms can be a strong motivator for collective pro-social behaviour directed towards a specific social group (cf. Vollhardt 2009). Thus, the motivations of family members to become involved in P/CVE cannot be separated from contextual factors or cultural and situational dynamics.

5.2 Formers

The narratives of formers yielded three sets of motivational factors for interviewees' engagement in P/CVE, each of which can be illuminated with reference to similar findings in the criminological literature. First, this study identified the role of redemption scripts that enabled Interviewee 6 and Interviewee 7 to make amends and earn their way back into the community (Bazemore 1999: 4). Second, social rituals were found to be significant in facilitating Interviewee 5's negotiation of a reformed identity through a process of prosocial labelling (Maruna et al. 2004: 329). Third, a collective (or religious) narrative was identified as supporting the meaning-making of Interviewee 8 as he constructed self-schemata and found a way to protect his cherished values and sense of self (Atran 2017). This section proceeds by discussing how identity ownership was the common denominator of 'earned redemption'; how emotions can constitute problematic motivations for P/CVE; and how collective narratives can provide a menu of stories for identity change (cf. Pemberton and Aarten 2018: 549).

5.2.1 Identity Ownership or Locus of Control

The convergence of motivational tendencies among interviewee 6 and 7 on the one hand and among interviewee 5 and 8 on the other hand highlights the explanatory potential of identity ownership to account for these divided story-telling practices. In this context, Rotter's (1966: 1) concept of a 'locus of control' from social psychology seems applicable. This refers to the degree to which individuals believe that they control the outcomes in their lives (internal locus) as opposed to those who believe in fate or luck (external locus). In this study, Interviewee 6 and Interviewee 7 largely anchor their autobiographical narrative in agentic control, i.e. in the conscious decisions of their past that they cannot evade, but for which they must take responsibility. In contrast, Interviewee 8 and (to a lesser degree) Interviewee 5 make sense of their past in more deterministic terms by emphasising their biographical trajectory that afforded them limited capacity to respond to outside forces (cf. Glinka 1998: 25). In view of the literature on desistance narratives, these two strands of self-stories likely suggest varying degrees of cognitive transformation. While all formers stated that their P/CVE-related activism was supposed to 'make good' (cf. Maruna et al. 2004) in one way or another, it could be argued that their narratives indicate different stages of cognitive change (or de-radicalisation) along the lines of sustained desistance narratives (internal locus) and early desistance narratives (external locus).

As for the strong identity ownership in the narratives of Interviewee 6 and Interviewee 7, they both share the salient commitment to working to gain society's trust because they understand that they have violated that trust. This characterises their reckoning with who they once were and their handling of the discomfort of cognitive dissonance (cf. Festinger 1957). While it is important to note that they each spent at least 15 years inside their movements, they do not seek to avoid this mental discomfort ('I have to take responsibility over those thoughts' – Int. 6), e.g. by shifting responsibility outwards ('I never blame anything on my childhood, I had agency' – Int. 7). This ownership over their past identity also reflects their expectation towards society since they do not expect redemption simply by renouncing their past beliefs. Hence their main motivation can be traced back to the notion of 'earned redemption' (Bazemore 1999), which suggests an advanced stage of cognitive transformation given the social and psychological contingencies for successful desistance (King 2013). In a similar vein, the all-out rejection of their formerly

held extremist beliefs suggests that their P/CVE involvement is not constrained by any incomplete de-radicalisation. This might have been a justifiable concern given the broad activism of Interviewee 7 that spans from primary to tertiary prevention measures. However, this concern is assuaged by the fact that he first engaged in P/CVE after having gone through lengthy and gradual processes of disengagement and de-radicalisation. It could have also been a concern with Interviewee 6, given how important Nazi ideology was for him. However, this risk is not realised as he only engages in low-risk P/CVE intelligence-sharing (Tapley and Clubb 2019).

In contrast, the formers who make sense of their past in more deterministic terms exhibit signs of 'role residuals', or leftovers from their extremist identity that impact their current identity (Ebaugh 1988: 174). This is particularly visible in the narrative of Interviewee 8, who had the most role residuals of all formers. By projecting his biographical trajectory outwards, Interviewee 8 is able to justify his past with his own victimhood and this allows him to claim that the goals he always had are still valid and that only his actions that put him in prison were not right. Hence, Interviewee 8 still wants to fight for a better Germany and justifies the misguided actions of his past self by saying that ideology was the only way his past self could make sense of the world. These apparent role residuals generally manifest shortly after an exit, especially where a large part of the self-identity was equated with role definitions (Ebaugh 1988: 178), and they can also be read as a sign that Interviewee 8 has not yet completely de-radicalised. Given that the P/CVE involvement of Interviewee 8 started immediately after he was released from prison, this points to potential risks, especially in view of his involvement in primary prevention formats (Walsh and Gansewig 2019).

In sum, the formers who based their narratives on strong identity ownership showed a high willingness to deal with cognitive dissonance and earn back the trust of society. Former extremists who exhibited an external locus of control showed role residuals that may signify an incomplete de-radicalisation. This implies that the timing and type of P/CVE involvement matters in terms of potential risks because role residuals are more likely to manifest shortly after the disengagement. Hence, an incomplete de-radicalisation could be particularly problematic in primary prevention settings. As the next section shows, emotions can further complicate the involvement of former extremists in P/CVE.

5.2.2 Emotional Trigger and Transmitter

The narratives of all interviewed formers followed the structure of their critical phases of biographical transformation. The formers who spent the longest time inside their movement (Int. 6 and Int. 7) were also the ones who describe the phase of distancing oneself from the movement as a lengthy and gradual process, which in both cases was accompanied by the experience of becoming a father for the first time. The other two formers whose narratives signalled role residuals (Int. 5 and Int. 8), tended to emphasise the strong emotions they felt during their turning points that led to their disengagement from the movement and their engagement in P/CVE. These diverging findings demonstrate the function of emotions as autobiographical anchors that former can use to explain why or how they became involved in P/CVE.

Echoing Pemberton and Aarten (2018: 546), the narratives of formers suggest that emotions can play the role of a trigger to explain the motivation for a course of action and they can act as a transmitter, e.g. by emphasising emotions in reaction to victimisation. Interviewee 5 exemplifies this in his emotional response to a particular incident, namely, the humiliation he had felt when he was spat at in the face and called a Nazi. By referring to this stigmatising event, which left him 'horrified and ashamed', Interviewee 5 expresses the revelation that he too was stigmatising Muslims. As a result, Interviewee 5 felt the desire to rebuild his confidence by destigmatising himself and others through pro-social labelling. The way he went about it – sitting down with people he once thought of 'being a bit of a problem' (Int. 5) – can be characterised as 'delabelling rituals' (Maruna et al. 2004). Hence, the feeling of humiliation and stigma triggered a chain of events within the narrative of Interviewee 5 that led him to pursue delabelling rituals

through which he could renegotiate his identity and regain confidence ('this time I am on the right side' – Int. 5). These social rituals allowed him to simultaneously disengage from the movement while also engaging in P/CVE. By going public with the community dialogue, this offered him a public stage for the recognition of his personal reform (cf. Maruna et al. 2004; Maruna 2001). This suggests that Interviewee 5 is motivated by delabelling through P/CVE-related activities, which is also embodied in his main message that underpins his cross-community dialogue ('don't judge or label, listen, allow the other person to be wrong' – Int. 5). King (2013) suggests that such delabelling rituals are indicative of an 'early desistance narrative'. However, as expanded on in the next section, the role residuals of Interviewee 5 do not seem to conflict with his activism, not least because he had no direct victims that could be disregarded.

The case of Interviewee 8 provides another example of emotional trigger and transmitter that can feed into the motivation for P/CVE. Interviewee 8 emphasises two opposing emotions: feeling the constraints of hate vs. feeling the freedom of salvation. Thus, the feeling of freedom from the constraints that dictated his life prior to feeling the salvation of Christian faith influenced his decision to join the clergy. Furthermore, the emotions that underpin the 'chosen traumas' within Interviewee 5's narrative, suggest that his motivation for P/CVE is closely intertwined with the emotional transmitter of victimhood and the desire to feel empathy from others (cf. Pemberton and Aarten 2018). There are some apparent role residuals in the narrative of Interviewee 5 that could be deemed problematic in view of his P/CVE roles. By emphasising the emotions of his own victimhood, Interviewee 5 is able to divert attention from his victim, indicative of 'competitive victimhood' (cf. Noor et al. 2012). The narrative of Interviewee 5 suggests he remains embedded in his initial emotional reaction to victimisation and his need of to gain a broader perspective on his own emotions.

The findings also suggest that emotions do not necessarily need to constitute the main motivational aspect that formers draw on in their narratives (Int. 6), but that emotions can also influence the type of P/CVE activism that a former may choose to pursue (Int. 7). For Interviewee 7, the strongest emotion was the loneliness that he had felt 'in the void' between the two turning points of his initial disengagement and full de-radicalisation. He says that this feeling motivated him to 'fill the void' in providing social groups to people that want to leave right-wing extremist groups. But the role of this emotion is not central to the narrative of Interviewee 7 because his activism began a few years after his de-radicalisation. It rather influenced the type of service he would want to provide (without being financially dependent on it). Since there was no exit or de-radicalisation programme in his country at this time, this could have incentivised a kind of 'moral entrepreneurship' (Becker 1963), to provide (former) extremists with a way for redemption.

In sum, emotions can function as autobiographical anchors that can trigger and transmit the motivation of formers to engage in P/CVE. It could be argued that the better formers are able to reflect on their own emotions, the more likely they will be in bringing a critical self-awareness and professional distance into P/CVE work. This implies that employing formers in P/CVE can be problematic if emotional triggers and transmitters become dominant motivational factors, e.g. if formers transmit an emotionally-laden counter-narrative that hinder them from seeing other factors of relevance in their P/CVE work. While it would be beneficial to help formers disentangle their complex variety of emotions, it seems questionable if professional P/CVE-setting are the right place to do so given the potential risks, at least in client work and in primary prevention formats.

5.2.3 Collective and Cultural Narratives

The narratives of all the formers contained elements derived from cultural or collective narratives that played a role in their construction of new non-extremist identities. Notwithstanding the common desire to lead a 'normal' life, three collective narrative structures were particularly important for different formers: societal redemption, multiculturalism, and religious redemption. The findings show that the way

in which formers relate their life story structure to one of these narratives can feed into their motivation for P/CVE.

Given that the language surrounding former extremists fighting extremism is often laden with notions of redemption, it could be expected that the criminological concepts of 'making good' and 'earned redemption' would be salient in the formers' narratives (cf. Maruna et al. 2004; Bazemore 1999). After all, '[r]edemption is a very common master narrative structure in contemporary Western society' (Morash et al. 2019: 2). By relating their autobiographical account to this master narrative, formers can tell a story that transcends from a negative to a positive situation, and in such a way that the negative situation is considered valuable because it has a positive outcome (Ibid.). In their emphasis on having agency and taking responsibility, Interviewee 6 and Interviewee 7 draw on this master narrative as it underpins their meaning-making of not escaping their past and having to earn society's trust. This narrative feeds into their motivation to engage in P/CVE, which can be illustrated by a meta-narrative that Interviewee 7 uses and that can be summarised as 'help yourself before you help others'. Interviewee 7 draws on his own adverse life experience to 'make good' by telling a story that transitions from a negative state inside 'the void' to a positive state of healing. By bridging his past with his present, Interviewee 7 can draw on a narrative that supports the meaning-making of a new non-extremist identity.

For Interviewee 5, the narrative structure of multiculturalism was particularly important, which makes sense in the context of inter-ethnic tensions and his cross-community dialogue (cf. Thomas et al. 2017). Hence, the narrative of a multicultural society provides Interviewee 5 with a sense of self-continuity as well as continuity with his community (cf. Pemberton and Aarten 2018: 549), both of which support his new identity of a peacekeeper. Interviewee 5 says he always cared about the community in his town, and that someone should have done something about the Islamists in his town, but instead of protesting against Muslims he now found 'better ways' by 'paving a way in conversation' through his P/CVE-related activism. Thus, the notion of multiculturalism feeds into his motivation by providing him with narrative and opportunity structures for delabelling, as well as with gains in confidence and communion. One could argue that there are risks if formers are (still) delabelling via their P/CVE-related activism, especially since Interviewee 5 shows minor signs of 'narrative fidelity' (cf. Snow and Benford 1992) by communicating to his peers that 'Muslims aren't going away' (Int. 5). Although this may seem like an unconventional counter narrative, it does not necessarily need to be counter-productive for his P/CVE-related community dialogue, assuming he derives credibility from speaking the language of his peers or bringing more people from his community to the dialogue. The multicultural narrative also plays a role for Interviewee 6, however, without affecting his motivation for P/CVE because he explicitly separates his 'multicultural life' (e.g. by working with refugees) from his contribution to P/CVE. In any case, they both show that the master narrative of multiculturalism can provide gains in communion that can help formers to build a new identity.

For Interviewee 8, the collective (or rather religious) narrative of 'Christian salvation' was crucial as it enabled him to swiftly take on and fully occupy the new identity of being a member of the Christian clergy instead of having to renegotiate his identity by dealing with critical aspects of his biography. Moreover, this allowed Interviewee 8 to preserve his sense of self-perceived victimhood due to an unjust society and his commitment to fight for a better Germany with cherished moral values. In this context, there is an interesting parallel to the 'devoted actor theory' developed by Scott Atran (2017), which highlights how collective identities ('sacred values') become fused with an individual's self-concept ('fused identities'), which can lead to violent extremism. Considering the above-mentioned role residuals (cf. Ebaugh 1988), this suggests that Interviewee 8 did not 'defuse' his old identity, as he is also struggling with the societal master narrative of redemption and again finds himself to be an outsider (cf. Pemberton and Aarten 2018: 549). In other words, the swift transformation from being a neo-Nazi to becoming a Christian clergy may have provided Interviewee 8 with a cognitive-behavioural balance as he was able to gain a sense of religious redemption merely to be attained through faith ('god offers redemption – unlike society' – Int.

8). Thus, the involvement of Interviewee 8 in primary and secondary prevention formats raises ethical concerns about the constituent ideology and theory of change of his P/CVE activism – assuming it would be based on Christian values – especially since his training is theological and not pedagogical.

In sum, the way in which former extremists relate their life story structure to collective or cultural narratives can provide their new identity with a sense of self-continuity as well as continuity with others (Pemberton and Aarten 2018: 549) both of which can contribute to their motivation for P/CVE activism through meaning-making or gains in communion and spirituality (cf. Morash et al. 2019).

6. Conclusion

This research report is an initial exploration of why individuals affected by, or formerly involved in, extremism become engaged in measures aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism. It has shown that family members and former extremists derive motivation from adverse life experiences to engage in pro-social behaviour through P/CVE. However, the way in which affected individuals describe their journeys points to diverging motivational tendencies, other than obvious differences between families and formers. Family members were motivated because it provides them with coping mechanisms and post-traumatic growth, an increased identification with others, or because they respond to situational and volitional factors related to their sociocultural context ('positive marginality'). Former extremists were motivated because it allows them to earn their way back into society ('earned redemption'), to renegotiate their identity via pro-social labelling or to switch to a new identity that pursues previously held goals ('role residuals').

With regards to family members who lost their sons or siblings to violent extremism in conflict zones, this research report provides further support for the assumptions of Vollhardt's (2009) model 'altruism born of suffering'. It does so, firstly, by understanding family members' motivations as mediators that explain the relationship between traumatic events and the type of P/CVE-related activism in which they engage, and highlighting the role of volition as the moderator influencing the strength of this relationship. These findings also suggest a number of propositions that might be explored in future research. First, we suggest, a high degree of individually experienced suffering, due a close family member's involvement in violent extremism – be it in the form of dealing with uncertainty, personal regrets, or social stigma – will motivate the person (at least initially) to reduce negative affect by participating in family self-help groups as a form of coping. Second, motivational tendencies for deeper P/CVE involvement will only develop or lead to action if a person's volition is strengthened by a supportive social environment or an increased perception of a common fate, in which case the motivation will shift towards finding meaning and positive affect by talking more publicly in various prevention formats. Third, societal settings with a high degree of domestic political conflict, militancy, and government reluctance towards P/CVE will increase situational demands and opportunity structures to which affected individuals are likely to respond to through a more collective manifestation of P/CVE-related activism that is directed towards a nation or strained collective. Future researchers should examine the role of volition and how affected family members can receive social support that helps them to find closure and deal with trauma. Echoing Koehler and Ehrt (2018), this also means that security agencies should provide more information for family members, to satisfy their need for understanding, and prevent them from embarking on dangerous journeys to Syria.

By carefully extrapolating the motivations of former extremists in contributing to P/CVE from the findings, the following propositions for further research are made. First, if former extremists exhibit an internal locus of control by largely processing their biography through agentic action, they are likely to be fully de-radicalised and more able to bring a professional distance to their P/CVE engagement. Conversely, if formers externalise most causes of their actions, it can signify residuals of their old extremist identity. Second, formers with a high degree of role residuals are likely to be motivated by strong emotions that can signify notions of competitive victimhood or a reduced ability to abstract from their own biography.

Third, if formers struggle with the societal master narrative of 'earning redemption' they will likely co-opt a collective or cultural narrative in which they 'deserve redemption'.

The findings of this report, in particular those about the motivations of formers, have the potential to inform a critical self-awareness of the field to avoid a P/CVE 'mission creep', where formers are employed based on the assumption that only they are effective (cf. Koehler 2020: 20). Future researchers should examine whether the propositions above are borne out in practice and if there are differences between former Islamist and right-wing extremists, e.g. by using quasi-experimental designs, or combining impact evaluations and psychological surveys. We need a better understanding of the underlying motivation of former extremists and how it can impact their contribution to P/CVE. At a minimum, formers should find their engagement in P/CVE inherently satisfying without being financially dependent on it. Given that this research report was based on autobiographical accounts and no former would self-describe as being motivated by money (cf. Gilsinan 2019), future researchers should examine how prolonged P/CVE involvement can constitute a 'professional former identity' (Koehler 2020) by triangulating multiple sources of (publicly available) data about formers.

Overall, this research report has shown that the underlying motivation of affected individuals can be a crucial factor when considering how effective they may be as P/CVE practitioners. If there is a risk of adverse effects, especially when former extremists conduct primary prevention workshops without the appropriate pedagogical training, there may be considerable ethical concerns. For example, if a former were to use their activism as a vehicle to perpetuate a fixed set of (e.g. religious) values (that may have worked in one case), they would be promoting their own personal theory of change in the name of P/CVE, which challenges the constituent ideology of P/CVE (Tapley and Clubb 2019). Such risks should be taken seriously because any case of ethical misconduct in P/CVE settings may cause a backlash (e.g. if victims are disrespected), which in turn would be detrimental for time and resource intensive P/CVE programmes that rely on public support (cf. Schuurman & Bakker, 2016). Again, this highlights the consequences of employing formers, especially if they are still de-radicalising, in the process of coming to terms with their own feelings of guilt or wanting to project their changed identity outwards. Of course, receiving social confirmation that one has changed is a necessary stage for desistance. However, employing formers who are motivated by a range of emotions introduces a significant amount of complication and unknown factors into the practice of P/CVE. It is important to help formers disentangle the variety of emotions and the sequence in which emotions influenced their own radicalisation and de-radicalisation; the question is whether professional P/CVE settings are the right context for doing this if these emotions can hurt those very prevention efforts.

To conclude, affected individuals can contribute most to preventing and countering violent extremism if the specific role they fulfil does not overstretch their individual capabilities, whilst minimising the risk of re-traumatisation or re-radicalisation. Thus, individuals' underlying motivation needs to align with the scope and risks of the P/CVE role in question, as one's motivation and volition can be indicative of potentially adverse effects for themselves or others. It may be that an affected individual is not yet ready to take on (more) responsibility in a P/CVE measure because she or he needs more time to achieve a level of post-traumatic growth or de-radicalisation that would be most beneficial for all actors involved. Ideally, the involvement in P/CVE should offer affected individuals gains in *communion* and *agency* - the 'Big Two' forces in human motivation (Bakan 1966; Abele and Wojciszke 2007) - as healthy levels in both are known to motivate pro-social behaviour while being associated also with positive outcomes in mental health and overall well-being (Hegelson 1994). It is suggested here, that Pemberton and Aarten (2018: 549) are right to see the 'Big Two' as relevant for research in the field of P/CVE. Since former extremists are not a panacea in the fight against violent extremism, and given that not all family members of deceased terrorists are stable enough to avoid reliving their trauma during prevention workshops, it may be worth rephrasing the question. Instead of asking 'what can this former or that family member achieve for P/CVE',

the question 'where does this affected individual need to belong to achieve healthy levels of *communion* and *agency*' may provide more meaningful answers.

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