



CREST

Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats



IDEOLOGICAL TRANSMISSION II PEERS, EDUCATION AND PRISONS

FULL REPORT

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IDEOLOGICAL TRANSMISSION II PEERS, EDUCATION AND PRISONS FULL REPORT

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About CREST

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IDEOLOGICAL TRANSMISSION AMONG PEERS IN EDUCATION AND PRISONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND CONTENT

This is the second in a series of synthetic research reports on ideological transmission produced by the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST). It focuses on peer-to-peer relationships as a context for ideological transmission, particularly in the context of education and prisons.

The research questions that inform these reports are as follows:

- a. *How* is political and religious ideology (beliefs, values, attitudes, and embodied practices) passed on between and across generations and to newcomers?
- b. *Who* is responsible for ideological transmission?
- c. *Where* and *when* does ideological transmission take place?
- d. How do these issues apply to the transmission of extremist and terrorist ideologies?

These questions will be addressed across the three stages of the research review, with findings summarised in the final report.

Our early analysis of the research literature suggested an approach to organising the reviews based on the life cycle and the general process of socialisation in and through (a) the family (Report 1), (b) peers, particularly in the contexts of education and prison (Report 2), and (c) political and religious organisations (Report 3). This life-cycle perspective builds on earlier developmental approaches to socialisation.

WHAT THIS RESEARCH REPORT COVERS

1. This second report focuses on secondary socialisation, and considers ideological transmission within social groups (peers), centred on educational settings, including schools, universities and university societies, and prisons.
2. Ideological transmission is interpreted as the passing on of ideology from one person to another. We treat ideology as a broad concept, encompassing both political and religious ideas, and including beliefs, values, and practices.
3. This report is structured in three parts. The first considers communication and learning among peers, and focuses on their similarities, relationships and influences. It also considers the positive and negative impacts of peers on mobilisation and engagement in terrorism.
4. Part two focuses on the important role of education in secondary socialisation. It reviews perspectives on education as a tool for ideological instruction, both political and religious, and

considers young people as active agents as well as passive recipients of ideological transmission. It looks at educational venues – where ideas, beliefs and values are learnt and shared – in schools, universities and their student societies.

5. Part three reviews ideological transmission in the prison estate, looking at theoretical perspectives on prison as a 'total institution', and prisoners as agents in the transmission process. Religion and religious conversion in prisons are discussed. The evidence on radicalisation and the transmission of extremist ideologies in prisons is assessed.

PEER TRANSMISSION AND INFLUENCE

1. Individuals tend to form relationships with others similar to themselves (*homophily*). This is the result of two processes: selection and socialisation.
2. Selection effects can be explained in part by the ease and certainty which people similar to ourselves can offer.
3. External factors may also influence the available pool of friends.
4. Many social science theories predict that, once associated, individuals will come to resemble each other in both thought and behaviour (socialisation effects).
5. Peer groups have been identified variously as a source of norms for individuals, a source of peer pressure, and sources of identity for individuals.
6. Where empirical research has been conducted, this has generally found evidence for both selection and socialisation processes.
7. At the same time, empirical work has struggled to account for differentiation in peer groups e.g., the presence of relatively few best friends, multiple group identities, and changing group trajectories.
8. Evidence for peer group influence on the political attitudes and affiliation of individuals is modest at best.
9. From a security perspective, we can expect those with an interest in extreme ideologies both to seek each other out and to influence those around them, especially in closed groups insulated from wider society.
10. Peer relationships have been reported as a source of mobilisation and engagement with terrorism in multiple studies.
11. Equally, peer relationships can be an important source of ideological restraint, for example by providing moderate ideological benchmarks that contrast extreme ideas and cuing activists to rethink their beliefs.

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EDUCATION, PEERS AND IDEOLOGICAL TRANSMISSION

1. Education has been at the centre of debates on the preparation of young people for their roles as citizens in a diverse and global society, and as independent decision-makers and critics.
2. Schools and universities are institutions in which children and young adults are socialised and exposed through teachers and peers to ideas, values, practices, but also attitudes and influences.
3. Transmission is both 'vertical' (top-down, from teacher to pupil), and 'horizontal' (between those of a similar age or status).
4. The educational process has been seen as inviting children and young adults to try out new ideas and be experimental, and to learn about diverse norms, values and practices as well as more established ways of thinking and doing things. Children and young adults are considered to be open and potentially vulnerable to extreme messaging and other influences.
5. Peers may help protect one another from exposure to undue influence; they may be critical friends, but occasionally they too may be links in a chain of extremist transmission.
6. 'Learning' encourages student agency; school and university learning environments extend beyond the teacher-pupil relationship and the classroom to peer-to-peer relationships and informal times and places such as breaks and the playground, after-school clubs, cafeterias and the student union.
7. The process of citizen formation takes place among peers, in an intra-generational process, as well as between teachers and pupils.

Schools, citizenship, religion and counter-terrorism

1. The school environment has been seen by some educationalists as a dry run for participation in the more complex political life that follows, and by others as an arena for establishing political competencies. Critics have questioned the effectiveness of citizenship education, and asked what kinds of citizens it is geared to producing.
2. Britain saw a shift in the first half of the 20th century from religious instruction to religious education. In national guidance, RE has been understood to have several purposes: to provoke challenging questions; to encourage pupils to explore their own beliefs; to enable them to build their sense of identity and belonging; to develop respect for others; and to prompt pupils to consider their responsibilities.
3. Research has examined how young people learn about religion and make it meaningful through their own and others' experiences and through everyday dialogue with one another. Even young children have been shown to be active communicators and learners when it comes to their own and others' religious identities, beliefs and practices.
4. Religious schools are held to contribute to the continuation and renewal of faith-based identities, but critics have argued that they are divisive, exclusive and potentially disruptive of critical

thinking. However, other scholars argue that *all* schools – irrespective of whether they are faith-based or secular in orientation – can be a medium for the transmission of ideological positions.

5. Issues of power and agency in education have been a matter of critical concern among scholars, with teachers, the education system, governments and nation states seen variously as protecting the status quo, controlling the ideological tenor of the curriculum, legitimizing knowledge, conducting events in the classroom and preventing children from developing into active learning agents.
6. A key area of critical intervention among scholars of education has been counterterrorism strategies as they impinge on schools, universities and young people. Critics argue that they may stifle debate, target certain groups and risk pathologising dissent at the expense of conformity.

Universities, student societies and extremism

1. The period now known as ‘emerging adulthood’ is associated with increasing participation in higher education, delay in marriage and family life, career instability, and the need for ongoing parental support. Researchers have found that, despite continuing engagement with family members, this stage sees a lessening of bonds, more independent decision-making, increased receptivity to new ideas and worldviews, and ‘intense identity exploration’.
2. Evidence suggests that religious identity is greater among university students than those who do not attend, and that university or college offers a protection against losing one’s religion.
3. Nearly a third of those convicted of al-Qaeda related offences have been found to have studied at university or college, and student societies have been judged to be vulnerable to penetration by ideological extremists. However, the link between such institutions and radicalisation has been questioned. Researchers and student organisations have argued that a number of individual cases does not constitute evidence that student societies are seats of radicalisation or extremist networking.
4. Focusing on a hard-line minority, critics have stated, has taken attention away from the vast majority of students who are not drawn to extremism, and to the protective role of student societies in providing places for prayer and socialising, identity exploration, and student activism and charity work.

PRISON, PEERS AND EXTREMISM

1. Prisons are environments where a high level of control is exercised but prisoners retain some agency and autonomy, often resisting the controls placed upon them.
2. Debate is ongoing as to the formation of prisoner social relationships: it is not clear how much the external world impacts on prisoner relationships (imported), or how much social relationships are responses to the prison environment (indigenous).

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3. Imprisonment sits alongside other life events such as divorce and the loss of a child in its capacity to disrupt individuals' understandings of their own self-narratives, challenging how they make sense of their past and future.
4. Through its provision of ideological and emotional support, religion can be an important coping mechanism for prisoners faced with deprivation. It can have intrinsic functions, focused on self-improvement, personal transformation and inner peace, or extrinsic ones, for example, by enabling solidarity with other prisoners or producing better treatment from staff.
5. Religion, in this case Islam, provides protective factors which help prisoners face their fears and come to terms with their new environment. It can also play a role in desistance from crime and rehabilitation.
6. A radical dualist (us v. them) mentality has been witnessed in *both* inmates and prison staff, and attributed to the prison environment rather than radicalisation by extremist individuals or literature.
7. The difficulty for prison authorities in distinguishing the dangerous from the pious, the potentially violent ideological extremist from the convert to Salafi Islam, has been acknowledged.
8. There is evidence of both prisoner vulnerability and peer pressure to convert for individual or group benefits, but these need to be distinguished from radicalisation into violent extremism. Conversion more often results from personal motivation and need than from pressure from others.
9. The convergence of religious and gang identities in prison has been highlighted, calling into question the extent to which radicalisation is the appropriate framework for the analysis of prisoner behaviours.
10. Existing prison cultures have been identified as a potential check on the growth of extremism within the prison estate. Where terrorist prisoners are the minority, they will be forced to work within and adapt established prison cultures rather than simply expand their own support bases.
11. Prison overcrowding, the lack of staff resources, and shortage of rehabilitation programmes are mentioned as contributing to the potential growth of extremism in and beyond prison.
12. Although there is potential in prisons for radicalisation, and prisoners are acknowledged as vulnerable, there is little hard research evidence of widespread prison radicalisation. Claims of prison radicalisation tend instead to come from second-hand accounts.

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

This is the second in a series of synthetic research reports on ideological transmission produced by the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST). It focuses on peer-to-peer relationships as a context for ideological transmission, particularly in the context of education and prisons.

The research questions that inform these reports are as follows:

- a. *How* is political and religious ideology (beliefs, values, attitudes, and embodied practices) passed on between and across generations and to newcomers?
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How the process of socialisation happens for individuals – who are always interconnected with others in families, communities, groups and networks – depends on a number of variables. These include cultural and geographical context, social position and status, nationality and citizenship, ethnicity, religion, political participation, gender, age, migration history, education, family structure, and media access, as well as physical, cognitive and affective influences.

INTRODUCTION - PEERS, EDUCATION AND PRISONS

This is the second of three literature reviews on ideological transmission. The first review dealt with the ideological influence of the family on young people. The third review will deal with transmission by and through political and religious organisations. This second review focuses on secondary socialisation, and considers ideological transmission within social groups (peers), centred on educational settings, including schools, universities and university societies, and prisons.

The focus of these reviews is ideological transmission. This is interpreted as the passing on of ideology from one person to another. We treat ideology as broad concept, encompassing both political and religious ideas, and including beliefs, values, and practices. For further discussion of both 'ideology' and 'transmission', see *Ideological Transmission I: Families*, p. 7.

This report is structured in three parts. The first considers transmission between peers. As almost any relationship between two people can be viewed as a peer relationship, this section builds on previous work done to explain social learning theory as part of the literature review on the family. Additional theories explaining peer influence are also considered including social comparison and social identity theory. In the contexts of extremism and terrorism, researchers have drawn not only on theories of peer socialisation and influence, but on social network analysis to examine processes of recruitment, mobilisation and ideological transmission.

Part two reviews selected literature on education and its role in ideological transmission. This covers both radical as well as mainstream perspectives on education as a tool for ideological instruction, both political and religious. This review stops short of reviewing in depth different branches of educational theory, but focuses instead on where ideological transmission – the learning and sharing of ideas etc – happens, in schools, universities and their student societies.

Finally, part three considers ideological transmission in the prison estate. It includes theoretical perspectives on prison as a 'total institution' and those which have sought to establish greater agency for prisoners. Research on prisons has also included studies that deal specifically with extremist political beliefs of the types most closely associated with political violence, although the majority voice is sceptical of claims of widespread prison radicalisation.

In research on families, the focus on intergenerational transmission and socialisation is well developed (see *Ideological Transmission I: Families*), but that is not the case in research on friendship and other peer networks. This review has revealed little work that concentrates explicitly on ideological transmission between peers. Studies have focused predominantly on behaviours, relationships and to a lesser extent influences, with relatively little consideration of ideas, values and beliefs or their connection to action. Because of the range of types of literature (books, chapters, articles and grey literature) and multiple disciplines drawn on, and the variety of terminology used, it has not been possible to undertake a systematic review. Instead we have undertaken an interpretive review that we think best reflects the range of material relevant for understanding the current state of research on peer-to-peer transmission.

PART I: PEER-TO-PEER TRANSMISSION AND INFLUENCE

Peer-to-peer transmission refers to the transmission of ideology, as we have defined it, between individuals of broadly similar statuses and within a single generation. It includes a vast range of interactions, including those between children in the school playground, adults in religious organisations, users of social media networks, and professionals and those they serve in a variety of institutions. These interactions contribute to the secondary socialisation of individuals (Berger & Luckmann 1966: 130).

Peer-to-peer or intra-generational transmission, according to Acerbi & Parisi (2006: 1) plays an important part in 'adding variability to the evolutionary process', particularly in a period of environmental, social and cultural change. Computational modelling suggests that adaptation to environmental change is slower in contexts where cultural transmission is solely inter-generational, but speeds up when intra-generational transmission allows redundant behaviours to be dropped or sidelined in favour of new and better adapted ones in a cumulative evolutionary process.

[H]orizontal transmission - and in particular, young people learning from other young people rather than from adults - appears to have acquired a greater role in present-day economically advanced societies. (Acerbi & Parisi 2006: 1)

Although ideas, beliefs, values and practices are repeatedly being transmitted between peers in a variety of settings, this report concentrates on those processes and arenas that have a bearing on the transmission of extremist ideologies and the transaction of terrorism.

The first part of the review summarises selected research literature on peer-to-peer socialisation, influence and ideological transmission. It focuses initially on theories that build on the role of social learning theory, discussed in the previous report on intergenerational transmission in families. Following an examination of homophily and its selection and socialisation effects, it turns to peers and their role in extremist transmission and involvement in terrorism.

HOMOPHILY

The starting point for the transmission of ideology between peers is a long-standing observation that those connected to one another tend to resemble each other in behaviour and attitudes (Kandel 1978). The idea that social networks tend to form on the basis of bonds between people who are similar to one another has been well-observed, making an appearance in the writings of Plato (McPherson et al 2001: 415; see also Marsden 1988). Homophily is 'the tendency of individuals to affiliate with others who are similar on various attributes' (Ryan 2001: 1136).

The theory emerged from studies that found groups of friends tended to share characteristics such as political affiliation, educational aspiration, and attitudes to drug-use (Kandel 1978: 427). The first systematic evidence of homophily came from studies in educational settings that provided

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convenient and modest samples (McPherson et al 2001: 417). As this expanded to larger samples and into more diverse settings, patterns of homophily were a consistent theme (McPherson et al 2001: 418). This has been found to be the case in studies of: delinquency (Haynie 2001), adverse social behaviours (Evans et al 1992), religious attendance (Carey 1971), academic burnout (Kiuru et al 2008) and political participation (Klofstad 2010). There is also evidence to suggest that involvement in terrorist movements and foreign fighter facilitation has been influenced by friendships and romantic attachments (Bakker 2006; Everton 2015; Hafez 2016; Holman 2016; Sageman 2004; Vidino 2011; Webb 2017).

Homophily has been explained as the result of one or a combination of two processes. The first is selection effects, which derive from individuals most like one another choosing to affiliate. These can also include structural effects caused by constraints on available affiliation. The second is socialisation effects that result from individuals influencing one another. From the perspective of ideological transmission, socialisation effects are the most interesting as they suggest peer relationships as a potential influence on ideological development. However, realistically, both selection and socialisation effects should be seen as working simultaneously (Kandel, 1978: 428; Cheadle & Schwadel 2012). Disentangling these effects has been called 'one of social science's greatest unsolved puzzles' (Lewis et al 2012: 68 see also: Weerman 2011).

Selection effects

Similarities between peers can be explained in part by selection effects – the decisions individuals make about which peer groups to enter and who to admit. The phenomenon of homophily is likely to be partially accounted for by individuals choosing to become friends with other individuals who more closely resemble them. Different explanations for selection effects have been offered: **preference** and **structure**.

Preference explanations concentrate on the benefits provided through befriending individuals similar to yourself. Selfhout et al (2010) identified two possible benefits from selecting friends who resemble you in terms of personality. First, those more like ourselves are seen as being more predictable and therefore possibly safer to associate with. Equally, interacting with people with similar views and opinions may make them simply more attractive to have as friends (Selfhout et al 2010: 512). Schaefer et al (2011) identify two further schools of thought in explaining preference-based selection effects: a preference for those that may have useful knowledge or skills to offer based on current circumstance; and higher reward and lower cost of homophilous friendships. In analysing selection effects in those experiencing depression, Schaefer et al (2011: 765) proposed additional selection effects at work in situations where individuals may not be acting out of preference. In the case of depression, homophily may arise out of avoidance, where people exclude depressed individuals, restricting the available number of potential friends. Additionally, withdrawal from social networks as a result of depression, and the resulting marginalisation, was seen as potentially leading to friendships based on marginalisation rather than preference.

In addition to preference-based selection effects, **structure-based effects** emphasise the role of external factors in determining friendships. Weerman (2011: 255-256), in the context of studying delinquent youth, asks which criteria are used in friendship selection, pointing out that decisions made by delinquent youth to befriend other delinquents may be based on known behavioural similarities, or be a function of attitudinal similarities that correlate with behaviour. Within these constraints on friendship selection, the structure of networks has also been seen as playing a role in determining the choices made. Weerman (2011) notes the propensity of individuals to befriend friends of friends, i.e., those already close to them in networks.

Another perspective on selection effects emphasises shared social characteristics and experiences. Park's study of the relationship between race, friendship and religion started from the assumption that, in the US context, the historical segregation of individuals based on race and religion continues to influence group selection, for example, the existence of Jewish-only fraternities as a result of bars on Jews joining existing fraternities (Park 2012: 11). Other studies have made the case that joining peer groups is too often seen as the end of parental influence on children. Instead, parents are seen as playing an indirect role in peer group selection (Brown et al 1993: 468-9). A study involving 3,781 students suggested that students were affected indirectly, through social characteristics inherited through the family such as the absence of a parent or ethnicity, as well as through more direct parenting strategies such as monitoring a child at home (Brown et al 1993: 479). This was interpreted as the reinforcement by peer groups of existing characteristics in young people, accentuating either pro-social or anti-social attitudes already established (Brown et al 1993: 479).

Ellis and Zarbartany (2007), in discussing friendship formation amongst children, noted the tendency for friendships to be dynamic. Traits that may help to explain friendship formation, such as sense of humour, athletic skills, behavioural similarity, acceptance by the wider group, may not be the same as those that are required to maintain a friendship (81). The effects of selection can be surprisingly strong. A study that attempted to engineer peer groups in freshmen in the United States Airforce Academy noted the tendency of students to avoid those they were supposed to interact with (Carrell & West 2013: 855).

In summary, one component of homophily is selection-based: individuals, given the freedom to choose, will form relationships with those similar to themselves. However, we rarely have complete freedom in our choice of friends. External influences such as schools, parents, and social status all work to limit the pool of available friendships. Conversely, external factors such as going to university or a prison sentence, can also expose us to people we may never ordinarily have encountered.

Socialisation effects

Beyond selection-based explanations for homophily, further work has been done on the basis that, once connected in some way, individuals will influence one another. This process is generally referred to as 'socialisation', although many different terms are used in the literature. There is

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evidence to suggest that our friends and social relationships can influence our perspective on the world. In a security setting, the role of peers in political mobilisation may also extend to support for extreme ideologies, groups, or involvement in violence. In analysis of terrorist social networks, for example, Bakker (2006: 42, 49) noted the prevalence of social affiliations in networks of European terrorists, and the prevalence was even greater in Sageman's (2004) analysis of those affiliated with Jihadist terrorism internationally. On the basis of his research Sageman mooted a 'bunch of guys theory' – that social affiliation plays a vital role in the radicalisation process – with accessibility to the organisation of transnational jihad crucial to an individual's move from mere sympathiser to active mujahedin (2004: 112).

The relationship between discussing politics with peers and political participation has been established (Klofstad 2007: 180). The specific mechanisms underlying this relationship were explored by Klofstad in a natural experiment in a US university. Klofstad identified students' political discussions as lowering the cost of political involvement, by providing information on how to engage in politics, discussing specific issues, and by asking peers to mobilise in specific political causes (Klofstad, 2007: 180). In the last case, requests for mobilisation by participants with prior experience was found to be more effective (Klofstad 2007: 180). These observations may well have relevance in the context of student societies where questions arise about the relationship between debating ideological matters and practical involvement in the group or in wider political mobilisation.

Poteat and Spanierman (2010) tested the influence of peers on prejudicial attitudes towards homosexuals and other races in an analysis based on college students. Operationalising two ideological concepts, social dominance orientation (support for inter-group dominance) and right wing authoritarianism (support for tradition and hierarchy), they found that peer ideology was a more important predictor of attitudes in individuals than their own ideological beliefs (Poteat & Spanierman 2010: 507). This may have ramifications for assessing the drivers of an individual's extremist attitudes: peers and other group members play an important role.

Knoke's (1990: 1058) analysis of US-based survey data from 1987 argued strongly for the inclusion of network effects in the analysis of political behaviours, claiming that 'structural relations are critical to shaping Americans' behaviour'. This, Knoke argued, was evidence of intra-group persuasion:

Being embedded in a strongly partisan political environment and talking about political matters with others are significant factors in national electoral participation. For members of voluntary organizations, participation and local political activities are mobilized by discussions with other association members. These results are consistent with a theory of persuasion processes, that is, when people interact extensively with others, they mutually create normative expectations that influence one another's political thoughts and deeds. The more consistent the social forces carried through these networks, the greater its members' adherence to the collective sentiments. (Knoke 1990: 1058-1059)

Several explanations have been put forward to explain the mechanics of socialisation, all of which seek to explain how peer group members become similar in their expressed views and behaviours. The starting point for Weerman's work on delinquency, for example, is that behaviour is a learning process that can be reinforced by various rewards and punishments at the hands of the group (Weerman 2011: 257). Ryan (2001: 1136) points to three processes that may work to underpin peer influence effects: social reinforcement or peer pressure to perform well or behave badly; providing role models for individuals to identify and attempt to emulate; and subtle means such as gossip or humour.

Campbell (1980: 325), drawing on work by Festinger et al (1950), also describes three mechanisms governing group influence: valence, means control, and power field. Valence is the 'social reality' created by peer groups. For the individual, the group is a testbed for the reasonableness of their ideas (see social comparison theory for an expanded theory). A further form of influence is means control: through shame or praise the group can set relevant goals for individuals governing their aims (see also Ryan 2001). Festinger et al, also nuanced these mechanisms by suggesting the 'power field', a sphere of influence specific to the group based on its own activities. For example, an individual may look to one set of peers in their professional life, another to establish social standards. Campbell went on to further specify that group influence was contingent on the relative importance of the issue discussed in the group, and the group's value to the individual. Testing these conditions, he found support for the idea that group influence on political attitudes is modest, but increased for highly visible issues, such as race, and issues which were held to be more important by the group (Campbell 1980: 342).

In another study of the political influence of peer groups, Campos et al (2015) found no evidence that individual political identification was influenced by the political identification of peers. Individuals in the team's 'natural experiment' – which controlled for selection biases based on peer similarities – did not come to identify politically with those in their assigned group. However, the team did find that, where peer groups were more politically engaged, individuals' political affiliation moved from the extremes to the centre of the political spectrum (Campos et al 2015: 19). In a different vein, those researching group polarisation (Sunstein 2009; Everton 2015) concluded that, where groups and the individuals within them engaged with one another intensively and become insulated from wider society, they were more likely to adopt polarised views and to move to the political or religious extremes. Everton (2015: 210) suggested, furthermore, that the types of beliefs also contributed to the collective process of polarisation and becoming more extreme:

[C]ertain religious beliefs and practices, in particular those that heighten the social tension between groups and society, can help facilitate this process. And when these are combined with apocalyptic beliefs that see the wider society as beyond redemption, the probability that groups will engage in violent behavior increases. (Everton 2015: 210)

Other theories try to further explain the mechanics of peer influence within groups. **Social comparison theory** suggests that humans are driven to assess their own abilities and opinions. As

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these very often cannot be measured objectively, people compare their own abilities and opinions with those around them. This observation has a number of consequences for the influence of peer groups on members. Where individuals cannot access a social or objective comparison, their own opinions will become unstable (Festinger 1954: 119). The tendency to rely on social comparison was also thought to decrease where the available social comparators differed radically in some way from the individual, e.g., where they held very different views (Festinger 1954:120). Festinger (1954: 124-125) also distinguished between abilities, which were difficult to change due to physical constraint, and opinions, which could be altered to match group opinions with few consequences. He (1954: 129) predicted a longer-term process of stratification in which individuals who were 'incomparable' were edged out of the group.

People, then, tend to move in groups which, in their judgement, hold opinions which agree with their own and whose abilities are near their own. And they tend to move out of groups in which they are unable to satisfy their drive for self-evaluation. (Festinger 1954: 136)

Along similar lines, but more externally focused, **social identity theory** suggests that a significant part of self-identity comes from group membership (Tarrant 2002: 111). This translates to a tendency to evaluate a subject's own peer group positively, and external peer groups more negatively: intergroup discrimination. Social comparison is one mechanism that maintains positive self-identity.

Qualitative analysis of the experiences of young people excluded from school have also supported a social identity interpretation. Where the need for belonging cannot be fulfilled through conformist means, in the context of school teacher approval, then young people are compelled to form attachments with groups outside of the recognised social system (Cullingford & Morrison 1997: 73). For young people unable to gain recognition through academic performance, the recognition of peers acquired through performing deviant acts (giving in to **peer pressure**) can be a substitute (Cullingford & Morrison 1997: 74).

To test the theory of peer pressure in the context of adolescent peer groups, Tarrant (2002) gave a specially constructed questionnaire to five classes of students asking them to evaluate their own, and another, peer group. The results highlighted the role of peer-groups in adolescent lives in terms of the time spent in the company of peers, but also confirmed the theorised relationship between personal identification and evaluations of the peer group (although there was no such relationship between self-identity and negative evaluations of outgroups). Conforming to peer pressure has been seen as part of child development, with the need for attachment to a wider group increasing from childhood to early and middle-adolescence, and then decreasing as ego develops (Ryan 2001), although quantitative results indicate that this trend is also subject to other external influences (Brown et al 1986: 521, 528). Early adolescence is also the time when peer groups become most important in an individual's life as they spend less time with parents (Ryan 2001: 1136).

Overall, while there is good reason to seek out and form relationships with individuals similar to ourselves, the available social science literature also views peers as being influential on our own ideas and behaviours. From the perspective of this review, interacting with peers and being a member of a group is likely to have a reinforcing effect on ideological belief, and may, in some circumstances, be a way to introduce and adopt new ideological positions. This may arise through discussion and norm setting behaviours, but it can also be reinforced by group membership itself, as is the case in social identity theory where non-group members are viewed less favourably.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

At a theoretical level, explanations of peer influence all share a common problem, that it is difficult to disentangle the similarities of peers from selection effects (Ryan 2001: 1136; Urberg et al 1997). In other words, does being friends with someone make them more like-minded, or do like-minded people befriend one another and make it easier for them to share beliefs and behaviours? Longitudinal studies have found that both are important (Ryan 2001: 1136).

Among the earliest to introduce a longitudinal design was Kandel, who conducted a survey of 957 adolescent friendship pairs through the New York school system, some stable and some unstable, over two time points. Kandel found that both selection and socialisation effects were in operation simultaneously, and pointed to a tendency in cross-sectional research to overestimate the importance of socialisation effects, failing to consider fully the role that initial similarities played in friend selection (Kandel, 1978: 434). Cheadle & Schwadel (2012) analysed longitudinal data collected in seven small US schools to better understand shared religious characteristics between friends. Their results placed greater emphasis on the role of socialisation as the key process in the development of religious similarity, but they also reported that both socialisation and selection effects were occurring (Cheadle & Schwadel, 2012: 1209). Ryan (2001) focused on the influence of peers on the motivation and academic attainment of 331 US seventh grade students (11-12). She observed a tendency for students to affiliate with peers with similar levels of academic attainment to their own, and that over the course of a year student attainment would reflect the attainment of peers, although there was an overall drop for the year as a whole (Ryan 2001: 1146). Peers also influenced motivation, with students in peer groups that disliked or liked school moving towards the opinions of the wider peer group, although peers were not influential on how useful school was perceived to be (its utility value) (Ryan 2001: 1146).

Snyder et al (2005) summarised research on deviancy training by suggesting that deviant behaviours stemmed initially from aggressive behaviour first developed in the home. This was then reinforced through a process in adolescence during which peers were selected on the basis of shared anti-social traits, such as aggression. Talk, endorsement and active participation or collusion in deviant acts then further reinforced deviant behaviours (Snyder et al 2005: 398). Snyder et al (2005: 398) further distinguished between overt deviancy linked to early onset deviant behaviours, and more covert forms of deviancy, such as drug-taking, lying or stealing, which were more influenced by peer groups.

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Urberg et al's (1997) longitudinal study of cigarette smoking and alcohol use has suggested a more complex model of peer influence, differentiating between best friend relationships and wider social networks, as well as drawing on research suggesting that selection effects may have been underestimated as explanations of peer similarity. Best friends were found to be more influential on specific types of behaviours, including initial cigarette and alcohol use, suggesting that more distant friendships may have a lesser impact on such behaviours (Urberg et al 1997: 841).

The way young people perceive peer groups is not static however, and changes over time. O'Brien & Bierman (1988) used a qualitative approach, interviewing young people about their own views of the influence of their social group. Seventy-eight students of various ages were asked to describe their school peer groups, and then asked a further set of questions on the emotional ramifications of acceptance or rejection by these groups (O'Brien & Bierman 1988: 1361). Younger subjects (pre-adolescents) were found to describe peer groups in a behaviour-focused way, suggesting that such groups were seen through the lens of common behaviours. In older, adolescent children, peer groups were seen as more far-reaching, talked about in terms of dress-codes, illicit behaviours, attitudes and values (O'Brien & Bierman 1988: 1363). Equally, older subjects reported that peer group membership was more important to their own sense of well-being (O'Brien & Bierman 1988: 1364).

Further interview-based evidence gathered from UK higher education students also points to how peer groups can evolve over time and between contexts. Brooks (2007: 696) reported that subjects saw university relationships as being deeper and more serious than those experienced in early institutional settings. For the subjects, friendship also took on a new emotional significance, providing support for students in times of difficulty and stress related to their degree. Friendships provided a source of support external to the main, academic focus of the institution. The novelty of the emotional depth of these relationships was linked by Brooks to the lack of family support often available in the university setting (Brooks 2007: 698-8). Brooks also identified university friendships as providing a source of social learning for students, allowing them to be more confident in developing their own ideas and identity, for example, by removing previous negative connotations related to working hard or performing well (Brooks 2007: 698). This also extended to discussing politics and developing their own political ideas (Brooks 2007: 699).

PEERS, EXTREMIST TRANSMISSION AND TERRORIST ENGAGEMENT

The role and influence of peers in extremism and terrorism is frequently mentioned in passing in academic studies, its importance often noted or assumed rather than examined theoretically or in in-depth empirical studies. Travel by clusters of personal friends and online acquaintances, as well as close relatives, to join the Islamic State or to fight with other Islamist groups in Iraq and Syria has brought the subject to the fore (Dawson & Amarasingam 2017; Mahar 2014; Webb 2017). As might be expected, the role of friends and more distant peers has also been discussed in research on terrorist networks and affiliation to extremist organisations. Attention has been given variously to relational ties that predate involvement in extremist groups, the formation of small ideologically-

focused cells, the social process of peer recruitment, and the facilitation of connections between individuals and global networks, and travel to foreign fields. Occasionally, the protective role of peers is discussed or the contribution they make to helping friends to disengage from extremist positions or membership of groups or to desist from participation in terrorism.

In this section the aim is to examine the peer-to-peer transmission of ideas, beliefs, values and practices in the contexts of extremism and terrorism. The challenge is to identify to what extent intra-generational extremist transmission occurs, what is transmitted and how, by whom and in what situations. Later in the review we turn to universities and prisons, two locations where young adults in particular are identified as being at risk of radicalisation. Here, the focus is on the place of peer-to-peer learning and influence. What roles do peers play in helping one another to forge an identity, experience belonging and solidarity, move from the status of outsider to insider, be recruited into a cause and course of action, get the necessary knowledge and know-how, and have the means to engage directly in terrorist acts?

Peers, ideological transmission and the transaction of terrorism

Relationships between peers – especially young males (Sageman’s (2004) ‘bunch of guys’) – are clearly important for the transaction of terrorism. Even lone actors let slip details to kin and peers, or tried to recruit others (Gill et al 2014). Trust between individuals is vital (Hafez 2016), and a period of testing – of the relationship as well as degree of commitment of a newcomer – is commonplace (Maher 2014). Trust is enhanced when a relationship is based on a long-term friendship, on the recommendation of a friend or senior figure, or on a period of observation. Hafez (2016: 16) refers to ‘preexisting bonds of trust and personal interdependence’. Once established, other things may follow: access to information, an invitation to join a cell or inner circle, recruitment to a team, a willingness to facilitate travel or provide resources. Writing of those who travelled to fight in foreign battlefields, Holman (2016: 1-2) suggested this concerns the *process* of mobilisation, the ‘how’ rather than the ‘why’ of radicalisation. *How* this is achieved is very much an issue of peer relationships, trust and the expansion of social networks. But at its heart, as Atran (2010: eBook) attested with reference to the plotters behind the Madrid bombings, the process of mobilisation often relies on the tried and tested bonds of ‘a hodgepodge of childhood friends, teenage buddies, neighbourhood pals, prison cellmates, siblings, cousins, and lovers’.

In her research on Kenyan recruitment to al-Shabaab, Botha (2014: 915) drew attention to the movement’s success in ‘transferring “my” grievances to “our” grievances while at the same time providing a sense of belonging within the organization against a common “enemy”’. The role of peers in recruitment was evident, with the majority of members joining with friends, and going on to recruit other friends. Peer pressure was important, but so too were existing emotional ties and access to people over time, leading to the gradual but repeated exposure of potential recruits to the extreme views of their friends (Botha 2014: 900-901).

Peer relationships were shown to be significant in mobilisation in western contexts too. In research on young Germans’ susceptibility to foreign fighter recruitment, Reynolds and Hafez (2017) weighed

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up three arguments – integration deficit, online radicalisation, and social network mobilisation – finding the latter to be most persuasive. Their network analysis showed that more than 80% of profiled fighters originating from North Rhine-Westphalia had pre-existing peer relationships with ‘at least one fighter, recruiter, supporter, or Salafist scene leader before their departure to Syria and Iraq’ (2017: 17). Furthermore, 80% were connected to the German Salafist scene (not to mainstream Muslim organisations). There was significant evidence in their study – and in other German analyses – of bloc recruitment (2017: 21).

Although ideological transmission ostensibly may play little part in the social and practical aspects of mobilisation, it is often involved in earlier or later stages, for example, in the formation of an inner circle and the development of trust (Everton 2015), through the rallying call of a religious leader (Botha 2014), or at later points when hurdles to entry have to be crossed and tests passed through a show of ideological commitment (Maher 2014; Reader 2000). Further, as Holman (2016: 6) argues, the most trustworthy facilitators are those who are ‘ideologically-aligned’ and committed, rather than ‘ideologically-neutral’ and principally in it for the money. Also worth noting is that, although socialisation-based theories of homophily (see above) suggest that newcomers will become similar in thought and behaviour to peers already operating in the network (longer-standing members of cells, recruiters, facilitators, leaders), they are also subject to its power relationships. Those in the network may participate to a greater or lesser extent in a common ideology, but their uneven status is likely to mean that behavioural norms, central teachings and key values are transmitted from those with more authority, charisma, knowledge and seniority to those with less (but see discussions about ideology and power in relation to ‘leaderless resistance’, e.g., Jooisse 2017).

- Functional peer networks of various scales, types and degrees of cohesion have repeatedly been reported in research on terrorism:
- peer groups bound together by solidarity and moral commitment, such as those in the Provisional IRA and Red Brigades (Bosi and Della Porta 2012)
- jihadist networks based on loose clusters of friendship and kinship ties including the Madrid bombers (Atran 2010) and the Hofstadgroup (Schuurman et al 2015)
- self-starter cells or cliques, such as the Hamburg group (Atran 2010; Everton 2015) and the London bombers (Kirby 2007)
- informal study circles, face-to-face and via social media (Everton 2015; Maher 2014), and more tightly knit and insular political and religious groups, such as al-Shabaab (Botha 2014) and Aum Shinrikyo (Reader 2000)
- groups of friends and acquaintances from Portsmouth, Manchester, Cardiff and Coventry in the UK who became fellow travellers bound for the Islamic State (Webb 2017); and likewise from North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany (Reynolds and Hafez 2017)
- and those who shared accommodation, such as the Tunisian al-Qaeda-affiliated group (the ‘Buccinasco Pentiti’, Vidino 2010).

Some of these collectivities were found to be more organised than others; and some more reliant on key individuals, such as facilitators, connectors or leaders. However, more often than not they were found to have shared the following features: an adaptability to circumstances, their ability to connect to other networks, their loose and flat structure, their reliance on pre-existing relationships of kin or friends, the fluidity of those involved, and – to a greater or lesser extent – their like-mindedness and common aims.

The place and significance of ideology, and the means and timing of its transmission also differed across networks. Some individuals joined – alone or in a small group – after already being drawn into extremism and committing to a cause (whether through a process of self-radicalisation online or through involvement in an extremist cell or more established group). Some grew up in a radical milieu, adopting the grievances and attitudes of wider family and friends borne variously out of locally-held resentments, diasporic memories and connections, or a longing for political recognition. Others came in through criminal networks and were only later exposed to radical ideology; some were converted to religious extremism whilst in prison. Many were friends first, and only co-conspirators later. As Atran wrote of the core group of 9/11 terrorists,

[T]hey radicalised one another... in schmooze sessions, sometimes in the mosque, but more often in dorms and cafeterias, halal butchers shops and fast food eateries, barbershops, campus steps, and libraries. (Atran 2010: eBook)

What provided coherence for them and often for other terror cells was not only extremist ideas, beliefs and feelings (weakly or strongly held), but a deep commitment to each other as fellow warriors, martyrs, rebels or revolutionaries, and an empathy and outrage for the suffering of a wider, often more distant group of victims. Such personal commitment and empathy, whilst clearly relational, has a sacred quality that may reflect radical ideas about the requirement to take on the suffering of others, to stand together on the battlefield and to die together as brothers or martyrs (Francis 2015). It may operate as a moral imperative for extreme action and may entrench conflict and violence (Atran and Ginges 2012). The transmission of ideology and performance of solidarity are intertwined in the expression of such commitments.

Peers, protective factors, disengagement and desistance

As well as having the potential to draw individuals into extremism and terrorist violence, bonds between peers and peer influence have the capacity to create resilience in the face of radicalisation, and may help people to disengage or desist. There has been less discussion of this in the terrorism literature, but several researchers make it their focus. Where relevant, we allude to the relationship to ideological transmission.

In an examination of why some people do not get involved in terrorism, Cragin (2014) found evidence of several protective factors and developed a conceptual model of ‘non-radicalisation’. Following his review of the literature, he cited the absence of necessary social ties, alongside moral repugnance,

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perceived costs, and the perceived ineffectiveness of violence as reasons why some people resisted recruitment and were not drawn into violence.

Primarily, some evidence exists that the absence of reinforcing social ties can inhibit individuals from becoming terrorists. That is, individuals might be attracted to radical mindsets but without friends or family around them who encourage violent behavior, they channel that mindset elsewhere. (Cragin 2014: 345)

Loss of social ties may also contribute to disengagement, with broken relationships having the potential to turn people off participation or membership and to discourage further involvement.

Other research has suggested that new relationships and networks are as important as the loss of old ones to the process of disengagement. In a study of current and former members of Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiyah, Hwang (2017) found it unsurprising – given the importance of social ties for recruitment and involvement in the movement, that new ties were cited along with other factors as significant in the process of disengagement. She found that,

The building of new friendships offered new narratives for perceiving the 'enemy'; refocused priorities from jihad and/or revenge killing toward family; challenged previously held views; offered new opportunities to expand one's horizons, and highlighted instances where a senior's rhetoric was at odds with their personal behavior. (Hwang 2017: 284)

Such relationships seemed to have offered members the opportunity to rethink their ideological baggage, to challenge (at least internally) the views of colleagues, and to question the link between official discourse and the move to violence. The presence of new acquaintances, different role models and access to other networks enabled a break in the normative cycle of ideological transmission and the intervention of alternative ideas, beliefs and values.

It is noteworthy, however, that in another study of multiple push and pull factors for disengagement, 'the role of moderates in persuading individuals to disengage does not seem to be a common pull out of terrorist life' (Altier et al 2017: 324); moderate peers outside the movement were cited as a key factor in less than 20 per cent of cases. In the same study, however, shared ideology was thought likely to play a role in inhibiting individuals' susceptibility to pull factors such as 'amnesty, financial incentives, interactions with moderate peers, family demands and desires, careers, etc' (2017: 322).

From the place of social ties for resistance to involvement in terrorist networks and for disengagement from them, we turn finally to the 'critical role of friends in networks for countering violent extremism' (CVE) (Williams et al 2016). Those best placed to notice signs of potential involvement in such acts were likely to be friends.

However, in the first of two studies, the authors found evidence of:

a potential, and critical, disconnect between those friends and local CVE-relevant service providers. That disconnect is a barrier to 'vicarious help-seeking:' a barrier hindering individuals from shepherding those in need of help to appropriate services. (Williams et al 2016: 47)

People were concerned about and fearful of the repercussions of reporting or seeking help for friends, whether from law-enforcement agencies or community-based CVE providers.

In a second study, Williams et al (2016: 55) applied a 'well-known model of bystander intervention' to the problem of predicting vicarious help-seeking. They found that,

the degree to which associate-gatekeepers care about their relationships with prospective help-recipients (as distinct from caring about the other person's well-being, per se) appears positively correlated with the degree to which associate-gatekeepers fear damaging that relationship. This, in turn, appears negatively correlated with associate-gatekeepers' intent to intervene. (Williams et al 2016: 61)

Their level of identification with their friends was deemed likely to negatively impact upon their willingness to intervene, as well as 'their ability to recognize violent extremism in the making' (2016: 62). This clearly has implications for the tailoring of CVE interventions.

There is modest but increasing evidence then that bonds between peers and peer influence have the capacity to create resilience in the face of radicalisation, and in some cases help people to disengage from extremist movements.

SUMMARY: PEER TRANSMISSION AND INFLUENCE

Individuals tend to form relationships with others similar to themselves (homophily). The research literature suggest that this is the result of two processes: selection and socialisation. Selection effects can be explained by the ease and certainty which people similar to ourselves can offer, though external factors may also influence the available pool of like-minded friends. However, many social science theories predict that, once associated, individuals will come to resemble each other in both thought and behaviour (socialisation effects). Where empirical research has been conducted, this has generally found evidence for both selection and socialisation processes. At the same time, empirical work has struggled to account for differentiation in peer groups e.g., the presence of relatively few best friends, multiple group identities, and changing group trajectories.

Peer groups have been discussed variously as a source of norms for individuals, a source of peer pressure, and sources of identity for individuals. However, evidence for peer group influence on the political attitudes and affiliation of individuals is modest at best.

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From a security perspective, we can expect those with an interest in extreme ideologies both to seek each other out and to influence those around them, especially in closed groups insulated from wider society.

Peer relationships have been reported as a source of mobilisation and engagement with terrorism in multiple studies. However, it seems that peer relationships can also be an important source of ideological restraint, for example by providing moderate ideological benchmarks that contrast extreme ideas and cuing activists to rethink their beliefs.

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, education – a key medium for secondary socialisation – has been at the centre of debates on the preparation of young people for their roles as citizens in a diverse and global society, and as independent decision-makers and critics. This discussion has focused primarily on the curriculum, especially on citizenship and religious education, but it has also involved school and university ethos and mission, not least of all in the case of faith-based institutions. In the twenty-first century in the UK, concerns have been raised about the possibility of educational institutions being hijacked for political or religious purposes, specifically for confessional indoctrination or extreme ideological transmission. Furthermore, since 2015, as part of their role in safeguarding pupils and students, such institutions have had a statutory duty, under the UK Government's Prevent strategy, to identify and support those vulnerable to radicalisation, and to put in place measures to prevent them being drawn into terrorism and/or violent extremism.

Across the UK there have been attempts to radicalise vulnerable children and young people to develop extreme views including views justifying political, religious, sexist or racist violence, or to steer them into a rigid and narrow ideology that is intolerant of diversity and leaves them vulnerable to future radicalisation. (West Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board 2015: 1.4.33)

Schools and universities are institutions in which children and young adults are socialised and – through both educational and social processes – are exposed to ideas, values, practices, but also attitudes and influences, both from teachers and peers. As this suggests, transmission is both 'vertical' (top-down, from teacher to pupil, though occasionally bottom-up), and 'horizontal' (between those of a similar age or status, peers in other words).

According to their age and stage of development, students are expected to be challenged by new ideas, but also to be able to process them critically and ethically. By its very nature, the educational process at all levels invites children and young adults to try out new ideas and be experimental, and to learn about diverse practices, norms and values as well as more established ways of thinking and doing things. As such, children and young adults are considered to be open and potentially vulnerable to extreme messaging and other influences. Educational providers are charged with the responsibility to protect those in their care, though it is evident that from time to time individuals abuse their positions. Teachers and students at all levels of education are necessarily involved in power relations through which a variety of influences can be exercised and felt, including those relating to ideology. In these contexts, peers may help protect one another from such exposure, they may be critical friends, but occasionally they too may be links in a chain of extremist transmission.

This section presents an overview of education as a tool of ideological transmission. It is not the role of this review to set out different theories of education and learning (some aspects of which have

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been considered above and in the previous report, *Ideological Transmission I: Family*). Instead, its aim is to consider what role education plays in the transmission of ideas, beliefs, values and practices, particularly between peers, and to precis some of the academic debates surrounding this issue.

EDUCATING THE GOOD CITIZEN

Schooling is a national project and a practice of the state, preparing young people for adulthood [...] But generally in national education systems children and young people are addressed as adults-to-be who need to be raised and educated to be “proper” citizens able to exercise their rights, duties and responsibilities in acceptable ways [...] [T]ypically schools are expected to produce citizens in the nation state, familiar with a common culture, common language, common history... (Gordon et al 2000: 9, 12, 20)

Individual schools enact this in diverse ways, some laid down by national or local policy – such as issues of school governance, management, employment, training, assessment, equality and diversity – and others particular to the school, such as ethos, mission, and statements on behaviour, dress and bullying. However, as Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (2000) noted, in their study of English and Finnish schools, the process of citizen formation takes place among peers, in an intra-generational process, as well as between teachers and pupils. The classroom, the playground and other school settings all become locations for peer-to-peer engagement, though students must be cognisant of the boundaries and limits that operate both formally and informally within the school (Gordon et al 2000: 162).

Another way in which young people’s role in the educational process has been acknowledged has been in the shift from passive to active participation and from teaching to learning (Niemi 2002, 2009). School and university students are no longer seen as blank slates awaiting instruction by teachers; their socialisation is acknowledged to have begun in the home and to have been subject to the culture of the family and wider kin networks. When they enter an educational setting, they do so with already acquired ideas, beliefs and values as a result of their exposure to the norms and attitudes of family members, everyday cultural practices, and – in many cases – formal religious or political nurture. This necessarily forms a significant part of their learning context.

Furthermore, the very notion of ‘learning’ conveys a sense of student agency in which learners rather than teachers take centre stage; students become ‘active’ and ‘self-regulated’ learners (Niemi 2002, 2009). It follows that what is transmitted and imbibed within learning environments extends beyond the teacher-pupil relationship and the classroom to peer-to-peer relationships and informal times and places such as breaks and the playground, after-school clubs, cafeterias and the student union. Niemi argued that,

Out-of-school/extra-curricular activities should be given much greater significance. Many of the experiences of ‘flow’ and exhilaration in learning are currently experienced outside formal learning contexts rather than within them. Young

people who 'fail' within school can, and often do, develop their identities and gain peer approval through unconventional activities that provide the experience and enjoyment of learning. (Niemi 2009: 6)

Learning, in childhood, adolescence and emerging adulthood, is not confined to educational institutions, but transcends their boundaries, especially in relation to learning between and among peers.

The role of education in acquiring political and religious beliefs and becoming citizens has been heavily embedded in the assumptions made by education scholars. This is often enshrined in accounts that emphasise the potential for education as a normative good, such as its capacity to improve democratic participation. Some accounts of education seek nothing short of revolutionary change, and see education as an important tool in achieving this. For example, McLaren and Farahmandpur (2001) advocated a form of 'revolutionary pedagogy' heavily embedded in bringing about social justice:

Revolutionary pedagogy works towards creating a context in which freedom from the enslaving subordination of the individual to the crisis-prone nature of capital accumulation replaces the arid realm of necessity, where the satisfaction of social need replaces the entrapment within the division of labor, where the development of the creative capacities of the individual replaces the laws of capital and landed property, where worker self-rule and the free development of individuals replaces the current entrapment in the bureaucratization and atomization of social life. (McLaren & Farahmandpur 2001: 148).

Other approaches take up a similar baton, but often from a less radical perspective. Schattle (2008), for example, adopted an explicitly ideological approach to education, seeing schools as venues for developing new civic values. Although stopping short of declaring an educational interest in 'global citizenship' as being part of a full-blown 'globalism' ideology, Schattle identified several common clusters between them. The principles of global citizenship, meaning a fundamentally different conception of citizenship not reliant on geographic location, can be taught through a range of curriculum subjects such as language and history, he suggested (Schattle 2008: 73):

'Just as schools have long served essentially as seedbeds for youngsters to pick up the habits of 'good citizenship' within local and national political communities, the educational arena naturally emerges as fertile ground for global civic ideals to take root.' (Schattle, 2008: 76)

Less radical still has been work that focuses on concepts of citizenship and how education can be used to reverse what has long been seen as a democratic decline in some circles (Kisby & Sloam 2012). In particular, there is extensive interest in how education can be used to ensure students become 'good' citizens. Galston (2001: 217) argues that good citizens are made, not born, and that the making of a good citizen is dependent on the kind of society they are in. So, good democratic

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citizens require competencies related to functioning ably in a democratic society. Campbell (2006: 195-6) viewed civic duty as being entirely socially constructed and thus open to influence from both unexpected events, and through education. Schools, he argued, have the potential to become 'seedbeds' for democratic norms such as civic duty and voting (Campbell 2006: 180).

One way in which these issues can be addressed is through explicit citizenship education. Kisby and Sloam (2012) linked the increased interest in citizenship education to a wider sense of democratic decline, pointing to falling levels of participation in elections and parties, as well as declining levels of political trust. Citizenship education, they argued, provided an opportunity to address the 'demand-side of political participation', helping citizens to become more active in political life (Kisby & Sloam 2012: 68). To support this agenda, they (2012: 80-83) argued for a common citizenship framework in the four nations of the UK consisting of a focus on political literacy, experiential learning, compatible democratic institutional structures, and reform of the supply side of the equation. They suggested that the school environment was in effect a dry run for participation in the more complex political life that follows:

In our view, school pupils need to be able to participate in the life of the school so as to learn individual responsibility, gain relevant experience of working with others with alternative perspectives and develop skills of decision-making. Schools cannot be fully democratic, but they can allow students to participate significantly in making decisions.
(Kisby & Sloam 2012: 83)

Recent evidence from the UK also suggests that the role of citizenship education may be more significant in establishing political competencies. Based on an analysis of six dimensions of citizenship, and taking advantage of the natural experiment afforded by the statutory introduction of citizenship education in England but not the rest of the UK, Whitely (2012: 18) found a positive association between exposure to citizenship education and political efficacy, participation and knowledge.

However, some have questioned the extent to which explicit citizenship education can be used to build democratic capacity. Galston (2001) highlighted questions over the role of formal civic education in delivering citizens. He noted that institutions outside of formal education have long been understood to fulfil an important role in political socialisation (see previous report). Furthermore, general educational attainment, not just civics, also influences the extent to which individuals participate in democratic societies (Galston 2001: 219). Galston also drew on research from the US, arguing that informal civic education in non-explicitly political classes may be as important as education designed specifically to engender citizenship (Galston 2001: 227). Similarly, Campbell (2008: 441) theorised that classroom norms are connected to civic ones, with open classrooms that support debate and tolerate dissension, regardless of subject, more likely to instil in students a tolerance for the messy ambiguities of democratic politics. Challenging teachers and discussing current political and social issues are thought more likely to produce students better able to manage democratic processes (Campbell 2008: 440).

Explicit citizenship education has also been challenged by researchers focusing on how the concept of citizenship is being implemented in schools, specifically asking what kinds of citizens citizenship education is geared to producing. In the UK, the Crick Report, which introduced citizenship as a subject in UK schools, was accused of offering no definition of the contested concept of citizenship (Watson 2004: 263). This inevitably led to unresolved questions about the nature of democratic citizenship, for example the correct balance between representation and direct participation (Galston 2001: 218). Equally, questions remain over the levels of political knowledge required to operate as good democratic citizens, although Galston (2001: 218) suggests that a rough consensus exists around the idea that individual citizens do not need to be policy experts, only that they require a level of 'basic knowledge'.

Westheimer and Khane (2002) noted a range of perspectives that have been used in educating for democracy, ranging from traditional approaches to civic education that rely on procedural understandings, to those that incorporate acknowledgement of tensions, or the need for structural change (Westheimer & Khane 2002: 239). In turn, they (2002: 240) identified three ideal types of citizen: personally responsible citizens, with an understanding of their own responsibilities; actively engaged, participatory citizens; and more critical, justice-orientated citizens. These different types of citizenship are derived, in part, from different types of civic educational experiences (Westheimer & Khane 2002: 264).

Biesta (2008) noted the different ways in which citizenship could be constructed in schools, and used the example of the Scottish government's approach to citizenship teaching to illustrate some of the ways that it could vary depending on government and location. Arnott & Ozga (2016) reviewed Scottish education policy, concentrating on the influence of the Scottish National Party and the role of education in political rhetoric and policy texts. They concluded that, for the Scottish National Party, education policy was a venue in which they could put forward their understanding of Scottish nationalism, including establishing the idea of Scotland as a learning nation, progressing towards independence (despite the loss of the 2014 Independence referendum) (Arnott & Ozga 2016: 262).

Empirical research comparing the delivery of citizenship education in UK and Danish schools based on (non-representative) interviews and classroom observation suggested that the composition of schools could have a real impact on how citizenship is taught and discussed. The presence of young people with from other parts of the world throws into sharp relief some of the issues confronting the teaching of citizenship education (Hahn 2015: 113-114). Hahn (2015: 113) also noted that external events can play a role in raising these issues in the classroom, citing the Danish cartoon affair as an example of how discussion of a news story in the classroom can have implications for the understanding of citizenship. In Hahn's understanding the classroom is one of several venues that play a role in child socialisation:

The model envisions the ways everyday lives of young people in homes, schools, and communities are nested in a wider social and political environment containing public

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discourse about societal goals and values. As students interact with peers, family members, teachers, and more abstract socialization agents, such as the media, they construct meaning of the social, political, and economic concepts and values they encounter. (Hahn 2015: 96)

Hahn's (2015: 96) study focused on the roles played by teachers and schools in 'provid[ing] opportunities for transnational youth and their peers to learn about enacting citizenship'.

In some studies attention has been directed away from teacher perspectives to the active discursive and practical processes used by children and young people in schools and other contexts. Linguistic anthropologists, for example, have examined the communicative practices by which young people mediate the cultural politics of citizenship. They have shown how,

[C]ultural citizenship practices are centrally embedded in youths' everyday semiotic practices; citizenship is achieved not only in saliently 'pivotal' moments of voting, finding employment, or becoming naturalized as an adult, but in mundane practices relatively early in life, such as playful conversation and classroom activities. Investigating such mundane performances of citizenship is important, as it leads to an understanding of how institutional discourses and resources necessarily enter the lives of citizens and non-citizens, how these discourses and resources mediate experience, and how individuals recirculate semiotic forms in their moment-to-moment engagement in citizenship practices. (Reynolds & Chun 2013: 474)

As Reynolds and Chun (2013) have noted, young people necessarily imbibe and engage with institutional discourses in schools and beyond, but they explore and contest them in their own ways and in engagement with peers. Ideological transmission among peers is illustrated in how young people from diverse backgrounds enact the national and state pledge in US high schools (Chun 2013), or position themselves and others using 'race talk' (Koven 2013), or broker their connections to one another and negotiate inclusive/exclusive notions of the nation (Tetreault 2013). These identity practices show how young people influence and learn from one another whilst also constituting themselves and others as citizens or outsiders.

EDUCATION AND RELIGION

After the family, educational institutions – primary and secondary schools, and universities and colleges at the tertiary level – are considered to be the chief location for ongoing socialisation, including religious, spiritual and moral education. This is acknowledged to include both inter-generational or 'vertical' transmission (i.e., from teacher to pupil) and intra-generational or 'horizontal' transmission (from peer to peer).

The transmission of religious ideas, beliefs and values in an educational context will be discussed below in relation to religious education (RE) and faith schools. Sections examining critical perspectives

on the ideological role of education in citizenship teaching and RE, and peer influence in universities and student societies will follow.

In the UK the longstanding involvement of churches in the provision of state schooling and religious education, as well as faith schools, stands in contrast to the classical liberal secular view that state institutions should be largely free of religion, and that religion and confessional education should be consigned to the private sphere (Knott 2013: 36). Religious education (RE), in some form or other, has been a compulsory subject since the Education Act of 1870 (Knott 2013: 46). Its place in a broad educational curriculum seems assured, despite the introduction of a variety of secular alternatives, such as moral education, ethics, philosophy, personal, social and health education, and citizenship education.

Since the mid-twentieth century, there has not only been an educational shift from teaching to learning, but – in the case of RE in particular – from instruction to education, with important ramifications for the transmission of ideas, beliefs and values. The term ‘religious instruction’ was used initially to refer to the process of passing on knowledge and practice of a single religious confession, generally protestant or Catholic Christianity. In the 1944 Education Act (England and Wales), this was superseded by the term ‘religious education’ which referred instead to non-sectarian teaching about religion. In later decades, RE was understood to impart knowledge of a variety of religions, although Christianity continued to be prioritised (see Education Reform Act, 1988). In national guidance, RE was understood to have several purposes: to provoke challenging questions; to encourage pupils to explore their own beliefs; to enable them to build their sense of identity and belonging; to develop respect for others; and to prompt pupils to consider their responsibilities (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2010: 8).

Despite RE being a compulsory subject (though not part of the national curriculum), schools have had some freedom in how they teach it, subject to locally agreed syllabuses and national guidelines (Knott 2013: 46). This has led to some stark contrasts in education about religion in schools. Ipgrave (2012) outlined three broad approaches. *Doxological approaches*, founded on faith in God, are present in schools with a religious orientation, for example in faith schools. *Sacramental approaches* remain open to the possibility of God, but typically involve a demarcation between religious and secular spaces. Finally, *instrumental approaches*, which are inherently sceptical, view religion as something to be adapted for social and educational reasons, not as an objective in and of itself (Ipgrave 2012: 32). Schools (and teachers) differ in their approach to religion and how it should be taught.

The introduction of citizenship education in England in the mid-2000s raised questions about the future provision of RE. Some enthusiasts for citizenship education had argued that it should take the place of RE in secular state schools (e.g., Hargreaves 1994; cf. Jackson 2003). Exponents of the two argued about which was the most appropriate avenue for the education of responsible, globally aware citizens (Jackson 2003; Knott 2013). Citizenship education and RE were often seen to be in tension with one another, with competing perspectives – spiritual and secular – on world events (Knott 2013: 48). Watson (2004) also noted such tensions in comments made by teachers of the

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two subjects. Some viewed the introduction of citizenship education with alarm, as an attempt to replace and further secularize religious education, whilst other RE specialists considered citizenship to be an opportunity to expand their own subject domain to cover the new terrain (Watson 2004: 260).

Research on the transmission of religious and political ideas, beliefs and information in schools has by no means been confined to questions about the mode of communication between teachers and pupils (instruction or education, for example) or to curriculum content (e.g., in respect of RE or citizenship education). How young people learn about religion and make it meaningful, as they interpret their own and others' experiences and as they dialogue with one another, has also been discussed (e.g., Jackson 1997; Jackson 2012). Even children of primary school age have been shown to be active communicators and learners when it comes to their own and others' religious identities, beliefs and practices, as Ipgrave (2013) revealed in research on interfaith engagement in the RE classroom. Children's discussions exposed 'a high degree of religious literacy', which Ipgrave (2013: 48) accredited to encounters with friends and classmates, and their own faith community socialisation and experiences.

From their conversations it was evident that they had acquired a facility with religious concepts and language and a theological interest. They included in their speaking ideas of God coming down to earth, the possibility of living gods, questions of divine punishment and forgiveness, the indwelling of God's spirit, and God's purposes for humankind. They engaged with the narratives of three faith traditions (Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity) and positioned their own religious understanding in relation to the words and meanings they had assimilated from encounters with each of these. They generally showed empathy for the religious viewpoints of others and were able to work with them. (Ipgrave 2013: 48)

Learning and the transmission of ideas, beliefs and values in the context of primary school RE is clearly not restricted to teacher-pupil communication. Peer-to-peer interactions and influence are important too. However, Ipgrave cautioned against assuming that what children express in the classroom or playground is a full representation of what they mean or how they see themselves or others:

It may be that certain meanings and forms of expression are avoided by students because they might meet with misunderstanding (cognitive barriers) or negativity (attitudinal barriers) from their dialogue partners. (Ipgrave 2013: 47)

As this case suggests, among other objectives RE is expected to support young people in the exploration of their beliefs and development of a sense of identity and belonging. However, it is the provision of religious schools that perhaps makes the greater contribution to the continuation and renewal of faith-based identities. The desire of religious parents to bring up their children as practising Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and so on, with a knowledge of their religion, its teachings,

practices and values, has led some to lobby for faith-based schools, whether controlled and funded by the state or the independent sector (Parker-Jenkins et al 2005).

Writing of Jewish schools in the UK, Valins (2003) has noted disparate agendas: the agenda of policy-makers who support faith-based schools because of higher academic standards, and that of community leaders who see faith-based education as a tool for building identities. For example, Jewish day schools were 'viewed as key mechanisms in the defence of Jewish identities and (ideally) the promotion of religious ways of life' (Valins 2003: 237).

Valins (2003: 243) also pointed out that parents often have complex reasons for choosing to send their children to faith-based schools, with school ethos not necessarily a priority. Academic standards were a key motivator for many, with the religious aspects seen as a necessary accommodation to be made. Flint (2007) saw faith-schooling as simultaneously supportive and undermining of community cohesion. The harms of largely mono-cultural faith schools, he (2007: 261) argued, could be seen as outweighed by the academic gains for ethnic minorities.

Seen as beneficial by their supporters, faith schools are deemed problematic by others (Ameen & Hassan 2013: 11).

The problems with faith schools are not just isolation and segregation but the early labelling of children as having confirmed religious identity (Davies, 2009: 191).

In their assessment of the educational defensibility of faith schools, Ameen and Hassan (2013) listed other possible objections: social division, intolerance and indoctrination. However, they argued that 'secular Eurocentric schooling in the UK can no longer masquerade as an ideologically neutral space' (Ameen & Hassan 2013: 16). Such secular schools are no less indoctrinating than those which are faith-based. Ameen and Hassan concluded that the social goods – of inclusion, anti-racism and tolerance – could be fostered equally successfully in faith schools as in non-denominational ones.

These scholars argue that schools – whether faith-based or secular in orientation – can be a medium for the transmission of ideological positions. Faith schools are not alone in expressing a religio-political and moral ethos. In a key public controversy in the UK in 2014, it was non-denominational rather than faith schools that were claimed to be open to extremist ideological influence and indoctrination. The case (later referred to as 'Operation Trojan Horse') began when a leaked letter – the authenticity of which was disputed – exposed an undercover Islamist campaign to influence the governance and curriculum of five non-denominational state schools in Birmingham. This led to a government inquiry to examine evidence of extremist infiltration. The report, compiled by Peter Clarke (2014), did not identify extremism at the level of school governance, but found that there were 'a number of people, associated with each other and in positions of influence in schools and governing bodies, who espouse, endorse or fail to challenge extremist views' (Clarke 2014: 12). Evidence was found in these non-denominational schools of a narrow politicised form of Islam, of intolerance, anti-Western rhetoric and segregationist views.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

In addition to critical discussions of religious schooling, citizenship education and RE, several deeper critiques suggest that the education system has been in some way co-opted, or is in the process of becoming so, whether by national governments, elites or interest groups. In this sense, schools are deemed to have become a medium for and enforcer of ideological transmission.

Coppock (2014: 117), for example, cites Foucault in conceptualising schools as 'key site[s] of disciplinary power' focused on creating future subjects that can be shaped and governed. Examples of the disciplinary control of education are discussed by Osler (2009) on the issue of UK citizenship education in the context of racial justice; Picower (2009) on the 'tools of whiteness' deployed by white teachers in their protection of hegemonic racial discourses; Philips (1998: 43) on the use of 'official histories' in the history curriculum; and Giroux (2002: 427) on the increasing commodification of education.

A common refrain among scholars has been the extent to which educational materials used in schools can be interpreted as supportive of one ideological viewpoint or another (Davies 2009: 187). This is not limited to texts explicitly on religion and politics. Empirical work on teaching materials and interviews with educators in the context of Argentina and the Falkland Islands, for example, revealed the potential for subjects such as geography to make very strong statements about national identity and belonging (Benwell 2014). Material such as maps of territory, as well as discussion about the armed forces and the after-effects of the 1982 Falklands War all allowed institutions to impress upon young people a sense of national identity.

An analysis of science textbooks identified implicit ideological biases within texts and teaching approaches. Knain (2001) argued that science teaching in Norway promoted an overly-individualistic understanding of science and the scientific process, and underestimated the roles of debate within contemporary scientific communities in producing knowledge. He also argued that science education was socially constructed based on the wishes of a variety of stakeholders, some more effectively represented than others:

Science education necessarily contains values, because nature does not automatically provide what is to be taught, and for what purposes. [...] Furthermore, various stakeholders in science education (e.g. students, parents, teachers, politicians, scientists) have different interests in science education and different views about what counts as true or proper science education. Some stakeholders may win the struggle and so regulate science educational discourses, whereas others are left out. (Knain 2001: 320)

In some cases such critiques have been linked to normative positions which advocate that teachers have a duty to challenge the failings of the education system. Hickling-Hudson (2011), for example, describes a world in crisis brought about by the failure of capitalism, environmental and social issues, and ethnic and political strife. Arguing that solving these issues requires a genuinely global understanding, she states that contemporary educational forms that are largely the relics of

colonialism are not up to the task, and describes the traditional model as inflicting ‘intellectual and material violence’ (Hickling-Hudson 2011: 453). Her vision is of the classroom as a venue for challenging Eurocentric understandings of the world (Hickling-Hudson 2011: 454).

Buzzelli and Johnston (2001), who analysed the concept of authority in classroom teaching, identified two broad schools of thought: a traditional school in which the teacher is seen as an authoritarian, and a more radical one that attempts to downplay a teacher’s authority (Buzzelli & Johnston 2001: 874). They (2001: 874) argue for a middle way, suggesting that – regardless of the pedagogy in use – the teacher retains authority both as the director of events within the classroom, and as a source of knowledge. This raises questions about power relationships in teaching, and specifically the role of teachers as the gatekeepers of legitimate forms of knowledge (Buzzelli & Johnston 2001: 875).

Coppock (2014: 117) too questions the balance of power, arguing that child development research has focused too heavily on the role of adults in influencing children while denying children’s status as fully-fledged political actors. This has had the effect of treating children as ‘human-becomings’ rather than ‘human beings’, she suggests (Coppock 2014: 117).

Issues of power and agency in education have been a matter of critical concern among scholars, with teachers, the education system, governments and nation states seen variously as protecting the status quo, controlling the ideological tenor of the curriculum, legitimizing knowledge, conducting events in the classroom and preventing children from developing into active learning agents. These disciplinary processes reinforce the idea that schooling broadly remains a process of vertical transmission from teacher to pupil (though see Iprgrave above), with the latter being a malleable subject to be formed in accordance with norms and values designated by those in power.

A key area of critical intervention among scholars of education has been the UK and other governments’ counter-terrorism strategies as they impinge on schools, universities and young people. Coppock (2014), for example, analysed the toolkit *Learning Together to be Safe*, published by the UK Government in 2008. Whilst acknowledging that the principles and objectives contained within the toolkit were relatively innocuous, she referred to the toolkit as ‘an exercise in disciplinary normalisation of the British Muslim child aimed at producing a governable subject – “the enlightened, moderate Muslim”’ (Coppock 2014: 123). Farrell (2015), researching student teachers’ responses to the incorporation of the Prevent agenda in the RE curriculum, noted their antipathy. Querying why it was suddenly necessary to teach ‘fundamental British values’, his interviewees expressed the view that RE should retain its critical edge, continue to engage with diversity, and resist becoming a tool of state policy. He advocated a shift from an RE based on politically neutral discussions of idealised world religions, to a more critical perspective that could allow RE to more readily engage with debates about global politics and religion (Farrell 2016: 295).

Other approaches have similarly warned against the intertwining of government strategies and education. Drawing on experiences of educating Irish political prisoners, O’Donnell (2016: 70) focused on some of the more pragmatic reasons for resisting what was seen as the encroachment of

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state security and intelligence agendas into the educational space: radicalisation is an insufficiently well-defined concept; discourses which frame children as vulnerable risk pathologising those who dissent; and students are likely to detect and rebel against attempts to indoctrinate them, even when they appear superficially to comply.

Lynn Davies (2009) has written extensively about the relationship between education and extremism, nevertheless recognising that the former is not a panacea for tackling the latter (Davies 2009: 184). A high level of education is no guarantee against involvement in extremism or acts of terrorism. Furthermore, schools as institutions are not all-encompassing: as much networking takes place outside the school walls as does inside them (Davies 2009: 185), allowing for peer-to-peer transmission. Davies (2009: 192) argues for an approach she characterises as 'critical education', based on secularism and a commitment to human rights, diversity and ambiguity, which develops critical thinking and active citizenship. She criticises faith schools and some forms of RE for reinforcing ideas and beliefs about specific religions and identity politics, and therefore of leading potentially to conflict and extremism.

Extremism is founded on the notion that there is one right answer, truth or path, and that there are no alternatives. Conversely, critical education is founded on the principle of accepting multiple realities, feeling comfortable with ambiguity and searching for multiple truths, not one truth. (Davies, 2009: 192).

Critical education, she argues, can be reinforced by a range of practices in schools, from restorative justice approaches to encouraging student activism (Davies 2009: 194-200).

What these critical perspectives have in common is an understanding that education is not a neutral arena, but one that can be co-opted and used for various ends, often well intentioned, but also flawed in so far as they reduce the freedom and agency of teachers and students, and may require compliance and conformity rather than imagination and critical skills. We have discussed them here because they reflect the view that education is not a neutral or transparent medium, and the curriculum is not free from ideological influence. Critics show how a variety of political and religious interests affect education and schools; furthermore, their own standpoints and norms provide further evidence that education and educational research is not value-free.

RELIGION, HIGHER EDUCATION AND STUDENT SOCIETIES

University or college provides the opportunity for young people to experiment away from their families, communities and religious organisations, and to forge their own identities. This stage – from 18-30 years – is often referred to as emerging adulthood (Arnett 2000, 2004). It is associated with key changes that have occurred in the West in recent decades (Singh 2012; Smith & Snell 2009): increasing participation in higher education, delay in marriage and family life, career instability, and need for ongoing parental support. Despite continuing engagement with family members, this stage sees a lessening of bonds, more independent decision-making, increased receptivity to new ideas

and worldviews, and – according to Smith et al (2011: 16) – ‘intense identity exploration’. This involves soul searching, a reconsideration of inherited beliefs and practices, experimentation with new ideas, and participation in peer networks (Singh 2012; Smith & Snell 2009; Smith et al 2011). Significant arenas for identity exploration, as Singh (2012) shows in his study of young British Sikh adults, include religious youth organisations and camps, online networks and student societies, and it is the last of these that we will focus on here. Something they all share, however, is the medium of peer-to-peer transmission. Ideas, values, identity practices and opinions circulate between young adults of similar status, often though not exclusively with common interests, backgrounds and technological skills.

Although emerging adulthood and university attendance might be assumed to be a secularizing stage when young adults lose interest in or even reject religion altogether, this is not generally the case. Rather, the evidence suggests that religious identity is greater among university students than those who do not attend. Uecker et al’s (2007) US study found that university or college offered a protection against losing one’s religion, with those not going on to higher education more prone to religious decline. Research on Christianity and student faith in England (Guest et al 2013a), including a survey of 4,300 university students and qualitative research in five institutions, revealed the importance of Christianity as an identity marker, the diversity of Christian orientations, beliefs and practices, and the role of student societies. When compared with 2010 data from the British Social Attitudes survey (BSA) for a similar age group (18-24 year olds), the proportion of those self-identifying as Christian was nearly double in the university study (51.4 per cent compared to 28.5 per cent in the BSA); of those identifying as having ‘no religion’, the university figure was 34.0 per cent, approaching half that of the BSA response, of 64.9 per cent (Guest et al 2013b: 214). In both US and UK studies, the level of religious participation was relatively low, compared with religious identity.

It may well be the focus among university students on religious identity rather than practice that brings student societies to the fore in the research literature and public debate (in comparison, say, to prayer spaces and places of worship). This interest has been compounded, however, by the link that has been made between such societies, and radicalisation and extremism, chiefly but not exclusively in relation to Islamist extremism (Christian fundamentalism, Zionism and far right ideologies have also been seen as a risk, see Guest 2013a; Student Rights 2017). Welch (2015) has noted that ‘Islamic extremism on campus is troubling higher education systems around the world, including many Muslim nations’, and has highlighted the activities of extremist organisations and preachers in universities in the Middle East and South East Asia. In the UK context, Guest et al (2013a: 1) have cited multiple occasions, since the mid-2000s, in which Christian Unions have been involved in public conflicts over issues relating to gender, sexuality and other religions; think tanks have reported on the influence of radical Islamism on university campuses and in student societies (e.g., Centre for Social Cohesion 2010; Quilliam 2010); and other forms of campus-based ideological extremism have also been identified (Student Rights 2017).

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One London-based student society cited in relation to these issues was City University's ISoc which was the subject of a case study by the Quilliam Foundation in 2010. Drawing on ISoc's sermons, posted online, and interviews with officers, members and other students and staff, researchers identified extreme statements on *shari'ah* law, the position of women, Shi'a Muslims, Jews and homosexuality, as well as the endorsement of offensive *jihad* and extremist preachers, and the re-posting of their writings (Quilliam 2010: 6-13). A conflict between the ISoc and the University's student newspaper and its journalism lecturers was discussed (Quilliam 2010: 15-18), as were tensions between the Society and university authorities in relation to prayer space for Muslim students (18-23). Interviews with LGBT, Jewish and women students found verbal evidence of stigmatisation and intimidation by some ISoc members (Quilliam 2010: 29-31), whilst some Muslims interviewed said they felt their views had been stifled (30-32).

The UK Government's Prevent Review in 2011 stated that nearly a third of those convicted of al-Qaeda related offences had been university or college educated, and that Islamist organisations and speakers had targeted universities with large numbers of Muslim students and their student societies (HM Government 2011: 72-73). More recently, data on school and university education was collected by Webb (2017) for the Henry Jackson Society. In *Spotting the Signs of Radicalisation*, Webb profiled 29 young people from the UK 'who travelled, or attempted to travel, to work with extremist groups or fight for armed Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq between 2013 and 2016' (2017: 9). On the evidence of these profiles, she (2017: 66) judged 'real-world relationships' with family and friends involved in extremism to be critical, with some of these relationships being formed in educational institutions, particularly in high schools (77-79). Along with religious institutions, Webb (2017: 77) suggested that 'educational institutions can provide forums in which extremists can socialise, even if the schools themselves play no role in the radicalisation of the students'; she (2017: 77) also found that some universities had seen two or more students leave or attempt to leave the UK to join an extremist movement (though connections with particular high schools were more in evidence). Peer socialisation within educational and religious institutions was deemed by Webb to be significant in the mobilisation of these young extremist travellers.

In addition to their longstanding commitment to protect freedom of speech, since 2015 UK higher education institutions have had a statutory duty under Prevent to safeguard students from radicalisation and recruitment to terrorist organisations, whilst student unions, as charitable bodies, are now required to mitigate against the risks associated with external speakers. Universities have responded with a 'safe campus communities' campaign (Universities UK 2017), and the National Union of Students with guidance for its member bodies (National Union of Students 2011).

The link between higher education institutions and extremist radicalisation has not been accepted without challenge, however. Critics (e.g., Allen 2015; Brown & Saeed 2015; McGlynn & McDaid 2016; Saeed & Johnson 2016; Song 2012), including the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) and the National Union of Students (NUS), have pointed out that, whilst a terrorist may have studied at a particular university, this does not constitute evidence that they were radicalised there, that they were part of a university network of extremists, or that they had influenced others.

Focusing on a hard-line minority, critics have argued, has taken attention away from the vast majority of students not drawn to extremism, who may in fact have resisted the influence of extremist leaders or speakers (Brown and Saeed 2015; Saeed & Johnson 2016; Song 2012). Furthermore, according to Brown and Saeed (2015), such an approach endangers the very spaces – student societies – in which young people may engage with peers in critical debate and activism.

In her ethnographic study, *The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman*, Inge (2016) examined the formative experiences, decision-making, commitments and identity practices of a group of young women in the UK who turned to Salafism (a radical and, in this case, non-violent form of conservative Islam). For those interviewed, this period of ‘conversion’ to Salafism overlapped with time at university, either beginning with a period of study and exposure to other like-minded Muslim seekers, or including time spent weighing up the advantages and disadvantages before embarking on such a course of action (Inge 2016: 162-163). Their comments illustrate the critical questions with which young female Muslims approach their engagement with university Islamic societies (see also Lynch 2013; McGlynn & McDaid 2016).

The young women Inge interviewed saw university as ‘a fresh start, a chance to reinvent oneself and re-evaluate goals’ (2016: 80; see also Song 2012), but one that – for all its social benefits – could be culturally alienating (especially its drinking culture and free mixing between the sexes). Furthermore the course content – whether involving secular western philosophy and law or evolutionary theory – could be challenging, even *haram* (forbidden) (Inge 2016: 167).

Inge introduced one young woman who described a period of experimentation and informed decision-making undertaken with new friends.

[She] described a process of earnestly seeking her purpose in life during her university years. Along with a group of Muslim girlfriends, she went from talk to talk – all of them, she said, were ‘trying to find themselves’ and to resolve their Islamic identities. Confused by the ‘melting pot of ideologies’ they encountered on campus, they tried to make sense of it by researching Islam together... The friends would transfer allegiances when ‘it didn’t sound right’. This eventually led them to a Salafi ISOC splinter group. (Inge 2016: 81-2)

This young woman and some of the others interviewed by Inge expressed a range of feelings and experiences from their early months at college. For one, this was a period of exposure to Muslim diversity: “It was only when I got to college I realized there was different types of Muslims, you know – I’m being serious! ... It was something that I was not taught.” (Inge 2016: 77). This diversity – which was confusing to some of the young women – was also experienced at the level of ideological rivalry between preachers, through the emergence of splinter groups, and the range of views on offer from moderate to extreme (80-81). In their search for a form of pure Islam, they were repeatedly frustrated by the focus, not on Islamic knowledge, but on current affairs and global grievances (81).

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With reference to Al-Muhajiroun (an Islamist movement prevalent within some university student societies in the period prior to Inge's study), one young woman illustrated the importance of outward hospitality to young seekers like herself: "They welcome you, they take you and they take your number, they become friends with you, and it's just it was a lot more open [than some Salafi groups]." (Inge 2016: 85) However, she also revealed the power relations at work in such movements, and potentially in university societies more generally, when she said of one leader:

"He had the big beard, trousers were above the ankles, he was much older than us, he seemed like he was much more knowledgeable than we could ever be, and we were just these two little girls." (Inge 2016: 79)

Despite the ostensible status equality within student societies, hierarchies (generally male) and power relations were evident (see also Quilliam 2010). Nevertheless, university peers offered practical, emotional and ideological support and friendship for young Muslim women in their quest for Islamic knowledge and faithful practice.

Although these women and some of the other Muslim students interviewed by researchers (Quilliam 2010; Song 2012) periodically witnessed extreme statements, opinions and behaviours in ISocs, they displayed a degree of pragmatism, resilience and critical judgement in their encounters. Both those who joined ISocs and those who did not (Song 2012) saw a value in Muslim students having the opportunity to gather together for prayer and socialising, to explore their Islamic identity, and be involved in student activism and charity work.

SUMMARY: EDUCATION, PEER RELATIONS AND IDEOLOGICAL TRANSMISSION

Education has been at the centre of debates on the preparation of young people for their roles as citizens in a diverse and global society, and as independent decision-makers and critics. Schools and universities are understood to be institutions in which children and young adults are socialised and exposed through teachers and peers to ideas, values, practices, but also attitudes and influences. Transmission is both 'vertical' (top-down, from teacher to pupil), and 'horizontal' (between those of a similar age or status). 'Learning' encourages student agency. School and university learning environments extend beyond the teacher-pupil relationship and the classroom to peer-to-peer relationships, and into informal times and places such as breaks and the playground, after-school clubs, cafeterias and the student union.

The educational process has been seen as inviting children and young adults to try out new ideas and be experimental, and to learn about diverse norms, values and practices as well as more established ways of thinking and doing things. As such, children and young adults are considered to be open and potentially vulnerable to extreme messaging and other influences. Nevertheless, peers may help protect one another from exposure to undue influence; they may be critical friends, but occasionally they too may be links in a chain of extremist transmission.

The school environment has been seen by some educationalists as a dry run for participation in the more complex political life that follows, and by others as an arena for establishing political competencies. Critics have questioned the effectiveness of citizenship education, and asked what kinds of citizens it is geared to producing. The process of citizen formation also takes place among peers, in an intra-generational process, as well as between teachers and pupils.

Britain saw a shift in the first half of the 20th century from religious instruction to religious education. In national guidance, RE has been understood to have several purposes: to provoke challenging questions; to encourage pupils to explore their own beliefs; to enable them to build their sense of identity and belonging; to develop respect for others; and to prompt pupils to consider their responsibilities. Research has examined how young people learn about religion and make it meaningful through their own and others' experiences and through everyday dialogue with one another. Even young children have been shown to be active communicators and learners when it comes to their own and others' religious identities, beliefs and practices.

Religious schools are held to contribute to the continuation and renewal of faith-based identities, but critics have argued that they are divisive, exclusive and potentially disruptive of critical thinking. However, other scholars argue that *all* schools – irrespective of whether they are faith-based or secular in orientation – can be a medium for the transmission of ideological positions.

Issues of power and agency in education have been a matter of critical concern among scholars, with teachers, the education system, governments and nation states seen variously as protecting the status quo, controlling the ideological tenor of the curriculum, legitimizing knowledge, conducting events in the classroom and preventing children from developing into active learning agents.

A key area of critical intervention among scholars of education has been counter-terrorism strategies as they impinge on schools, universities and young people. Critics argue that they may stifle debate, target certain groups and risk pathologising dissent at the expense of conformity.

The period now known as 'emerging adulthood' is associated with increasing participation in higher education, delay in marriage and family life, career instability, and the need for ongoing parental support. Researchers have found that, despite continuing engagement with family members, this stage sees a lessening of bonds, more independent decision-making, increased receptivity to new ideas and worldviews, and 'intense identity exploration'. Evidence suggests that religious identity is greater among university students than those who do not attend, and that university or college offers a protection against losing one's religion.

Nearly a third of those convicted of al-Qaeda related offences have been found to have studied at university or college, and student societies have been judged to be vulnerable to penetration by ideological extremists. However, the link between such institutions and radicalisation has been questioned. Researchers and student organisations have argued that a number of individual cases does not constitute evidence that student societies are seats of radicalisation or extremist networking. Focusing on a hard-line minority, critics have stated, has taken attention away from the

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vast majority of students who are not drawn to extremism, and to the protective role of student societies in providing places for prayer and socialising, identity exploration, and student activism and charity work.

PART III: PRISONS, PEERS AND IDEOLOGICAL TRANSMISSION

Part III deals with ideological transmission between peers in the context of prisons. It begins by outlining some of the theories commonly used to explain prisons and inmate behaviours. The section then goes on to review work that deals more explicitly with the role of religion in prisons before considering academic works that focus specifically on prison ‘radicalisation’ – the transmission of extreme political and religious beliefs within prisons. The section concludes with a case study focusing on Whitemoor prison based on an extensive report authored by criminologist Alison Liebling (and others) on behalf of the Ministry of Justice.

EXPLAINING PRISONS

Despite being a now well-established practice, imprisonment as a form of punishment is a relatively new development and one that is still developing. Originally, prison was merely a holding area before those imprisoned could be transitioned to punishment, often involving actual bodily harm (Foucault, 1977). Sykes (1958: xi) noted that prisons were adopted as a modular solution to criminality, allowing greater variation in sentencing tied to specific crimes. In addition, the role of prisons continued to develop reflecting trends in society. The opening of London’s Pentonville Prison, for example, has been interpreted as marking a shift in thinking, the ‘stark and austere design’ chosen to communicate a sense of ‘deprivation’ and regularity rather than the inflicting of physical punishment (Jeweke & Johnston 2007: 184): ‘the architecture of incarceration has always been underpinned by a belief that prison design has a moral influence – both on inmates and on the community at large.’ (Jeweke & Johnston 2007: 191)

Baker and Roberts (2005: 130) analysed the development of the ‘new punitiveness’ defined through the lens of globalisation. They argued that the adoption of consumer values by populations has driven more severe sentencing and has extended the use of imprisonment. This development has been reflected in figures which show prison populations on the rise. A House of Commons briefing report identified a two-fold increase in the number of prisoners per capita in England and Wales between 1900 and 2015, with marked growth since the mid-1940s (with four consecutive years of decline in the 1990s) (Allen & Dempsey 2016: 5). Scotland exhibited a similar trend, with an increase between a low of 36 prisoners per 100,000 in the population in 1941, to 184 per 100,000 in 2011, but with a small decline between 2011 and 2015 (Allen & Dempsey 2016: 19). Figures for Northern Ireland dating back to 2000 show an increase from 82 to 124 prisoners per 100,000 in 2014 (Allen & Dempsey 2016: 23).

Prisons can be seen as what Goffman (1961) defined as ‘total institutions’. Total institutions are those in which a select group are cut off from the outside world and live a formally administered life. Goffman identified a range of total institutions with shared characteristics that included asylums, barracks, some schools, and prisons. He further identified a split between the group termed ‘inmates’, those who are cut off, and the administrative staff who continue to engage in the social world outside (Goffman, 1961: 18). Prisons are also systems of ‘total power’ (Sykes 1958:

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xv). Prison guards hold tremendous power over inmates, the monopoly in the use of force, and the right to give rewards and punishments. In theory guards can also disrupt organisation within the population, for example by confining leaders, although they are following goals set from above (Sykes 1958: 41-2).

However, the concept of total power has become a somewhat unstable footing for the analysis of prisons. Sykes (1958: 46-7) identified prison guards as holding power, but lacking the corresponding authority in the eyes of prisoners. There is no acknowledged right of guards to rule. Although many of the systems that allow guards control over prisoners are still in place in prisons, they have also been eroded by attempts at penal reform and increasing concern for the rights of prisoners. Prison guards hold power, but there is no corresponding sense of duty to obey from inmates (Sykes 1958: 46-7). Equally, violence is not an all-encompassing tool to encourage obedience and can only check immediate revolt, not longer-term problems (Sykes 1958:49). Bowker (1977: 15) too acknowledged the limits of physical force in compelling long-term obedience and the lack of authority held by prison guards. Loss of duty and the long-term ineffectiveness of violence leave a system of rewards and punishments as the key motivating tool for guards (Sykes 1958: 50).

As a result, prisoners cannot be seen as completely at the mercy of the prison regime, rather they have agency and are free to act within the constraints established by the prison system. Studies have focused heavily on the development of social relationships between prisoners, what has become known as the study of prisoner subcultures. The dominant debate in this field has concerned the origins of prisoner subcultures and the extent to which they have reflected the realities of life within a prison regime, or imported existing structures from outside: indigenous origin model versus importation model (Bowker 1977: 28; Marranci 2009: 66). Liebling et al (2011: 58) have also referenced this debate, arguing in the context of the Whitemoor prison experience that both models allow for a heightened role for religion in prisoner experiences as a form of support of which they have been deprived.

Certainly, prison subcultures have been found previously to be heavily influenced by external events and structures. In the case of prisoners with an ideological motivation, there are often existing struggles which may characterise social relations within prisons. An example from the UK is the formation of prison groupings in Northern Ireland along the lines of various sectarian factions. Cohen and Taylor (1981: 188) argued that previous criminality could be a good predictor of the role prisoners would take within prison societies. Indeed, they (1981: 158) noted that, on entering prison, prisoners do not shed their existing identities, and that they often joke about the labels that are placed on them inside. Bowker (1977: 10) similarly viewed external identities as shaping relationships in prison, speculating that prisoner relationships were likely to reflect a degree of homophily, with prisoners selecting as friends those who resemble them on grounds such as race or criminality.

Bowker (1977) also identified the role of the prison regime as influencing the social structures that develop inside. More aggressive regimes, Bowker argued, were more likely to lead to social

structures in which more aggressive prisoners took on leadership roles (Bowker 1977: 10). Sykes (1958: 14) stressed that prisons were non-mechanical, but instead that they operated on the basis of complex social relationships. In prisons, according to Sykes, external status symbols were stripped away and prisoners were subjected to new social orders. Prison, he argued, was designed to inflict deprivation, including the loss of goods and services, the loss of liberty, the loss of autonomy, security and heterosexual sex (Sykes 1958: 65-78). Sykes argued that, confronted with the pains of imprisonment, prisoners took on specific roles within the social structure of the prison. Some of these roles were divisive, serving to alienate other prisoners by improving the lot of the individual at their expense. Cohesive responses, Sykes stated, could have a similar effect for the group as a whole, improving the lot of the entire prison by providing a supportive social solidarity (Sykes 1958: 107).

Other accounts of prisoner subcultures have framed debates in different terms. Bowker's (1977: 21) account of the development of literature on penology emphasised the connection between illegitimate means and subcultures. The theory stated that, deprived of access to legitimate goals (anomie), prison populations will seek illegitimate means to attain goals such as wealth, power and status. Prison subcultures are consequently orientated around prisoners who can access illegitimate means, such as violence or contraband. In this case, the term 'anomie' refers to the differentiation of access to legitimate means to achieve aims. It recognises that some groups are better placed by virtue of class, status and economic resources to achieve aims by legitimate means. Cloward and Ohlin (1998: 150) argued that this process was mirrored in illegitimate means amongst criminal populations. In particular, just as legitimate means rely on having the right conditions and connections to access them, so to do illegitimate ones (151). Cloward and Ohlin (1998: 152) further differentiated between learning structures, i.e., the ability to acquire skills, and performance structures, i.e., being in an environment supportive of such behaviours.

IDEOLOGY IN PRISONS

Faced with deprivations, prisoner subcultures have been seen to encompass a range of coping strategies to better deal with prison conditions. Cohen and Taylor (1981: 144-156), for example, identified a range of forms of resistance in prison, ranging from attempts to improve a prisoner's own conditions, to escape planning. These forms of resistance were often linked to external ideological struggles e.g., civil rights issues, to help prisoners to contextualise and make sense of their crimes (Cohen & Taylor 1981: 169). Ideology in this context can be a form of sustenance for prisoners facing long jail terms, and may be an important source of self-esteem (Cohen & Taylor 1981: 171-172). Cohen and Taylor noted that sociological studies of prison have often started from the point of a striking lack of resistance to prison authorities on behalf of inmates, describing prison as a balanced social system in which the prison authorities rely on a narrow clique of prisoners to maintain the status quo, with prisoner power being directed towards maintaining the status quo rather than challenging the authorities: adaptation over resistance. (Cohen & Taylor 1981: 141). In contrast, Cohen and Taylor argued that such approaches are too dismissive of prisoners' efforts,

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and that accounts are typically ahistorical (Cohen & Taylor 1981: 144). Ideology in particular is seen as an important frame for resistance, and as it is often denied to prisoners, who are written off as criminals – then efforts to resist are delegitimised (Cohen & Taylor 1981: 144).

Likewise, religion has also been framed as a potential coping mechanism for those imprisoned. Clear et al (2000: 55-56) proposed a conceptual framework that differentiated between the experience of religion in prisons as an individual or group phenomena. At the most basic level, religion is deeply personal and so only really experienced by individual inmates in a highly idiosyncratic way. However, religion in prison also constitutes a group phenomenon, an organising principle for (some) social groups within the prison. Maruna et al (2006) framed the issue of prison conversion in the context of self-narratives. Imprisonment sits alongside other life events such as divorce and the loss of a child in its capacity to disrupt individuals' understandings of their own self-narratives, challenging how they make sense of their past and future (Maruna et al 2006: 180). The future in particular may be difficult to understand for inmates facing long sentences. In this context conversion narratives can help inmates to create meaning from their experiences:

The conversion narrative can integrate disparate and shameful life events into a coherent, empowering whole, renew prisoners' sense of their own personal biography, and provide them with hope and a vision for the future. (Maruna et al 2006: 180).

Based on their empirical work conducting life-history interviews with prisoners, Maruna et al (2006) also emphasised the legitimacy of the conversion narrative. Suggesting that religious conversion behind bars was a time-tested trope, they argued that conversions are widely 'recognized and respected as legitimate narratives in Western society' (Maruna et al 2006: 180).

Clear et al (2000: 58) distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic orientations, in explaining the role of religion in prison. Intrinsic orientations were thought to aid in explaining how prisoners had become imprisoned, and how they could turn their lives around (Clear et al 2000: 58). As part of this, religion was seen as a coping mechanism to allow prisoners to deal with guilt and to atone for their crimes (Clear et al 2000: 59; see also Maruna et al 2006).

Religion was also highly valued among inmates for its ability to provide a complete template for an alternative to the life that resulted in imprisonment (Clear et al 2000: 61). The final intrinsic reason was the innate sense of peace that religion could provide a prisoner: 'inmates value faith because it provides a type of freedom within the walls of the prison.' (Clear et al 2000: 62). This point was strongly echoed in Marranci's (2009) ethnographic work on Muslim prisoners:

The more my research progressed, the more it became clear that my respondents did not turn to Islam because of their acquaintance with the Qur'an (in reality, very few could understand it) or any other literature, or because of indoctrination (as many journalists, and even prison officers, believed). Instead, turning to religion, in an environment that imposes an unusual loss of control over one's life, helped them to make sense of their lost

freedom. Indeed, an eschatological explanation of their imprisonment and spending what most perceived to be a 'useless life' marked by boredom, helped to fight back nihilism and alienation. Marranci 2009: 13

Extrinsic functions of religion were seen as being more orientated towards the external environment. These factors included safety of inmates in both an immediate physical sense, and through establishing connections to a wider group within the prison (Clear et al 2000: 65). Clear et al noted, however, that Islam differed in their (US) sample, seemingly moving far more towards a devotional, than a security, orientation (Clear et al 2000: 66). In addition, religion was held to provide inmates with access to material comforts otherwise denied or made extremely costly by the prison regime (Clear et al 2000: 67). Religion also provided them with access to outsiders, including opportunities to meet women (Clear et al 2000:67). Religion was also noted as creating a bond between prisoners and allowing for a degree of social intimacy (Clear et al 2000: 69). Clear et al (2000: 57) saw religion in prison as being shaped by individual prison cultures, and thereby manifestations of religion would differ according to the prison regimes. For example, in a violent prison religion may become more associated with protection. Clear et al (2000: 57) maintained that there was no 'universal prison religion'.

PRISONS AND RADICALISATION

There has been rising public and policy concern over the potential for prisons to play a role in developing support and recruits for violent Islamism. There have been several high-profile cases, including the 'shoe-bomber' Richard Reid and Toulouse killer Mohamed Merah, in which prison has seemingly played some role in an individual's path towards violent action (McEvoy et al 2007: 298; Andre & Harris-Hogan 2013; Awan 2013: 377; Jones 2014: 75). These concerns are reflected both in the popular press (Harper, 2016), and in government (Prime Minister's Office, 2013). Most recently, the Ministry of Justice has announced a crackdown on 'extremist behaviour' within prisons (Ministry of Justice 2016). There have also been well-documented cases of published extremist material that suggests recruiters should target prisoners, with Awan (2013: 377) citing *Military Studies in the Jihad (Holy War) Against the Tyrants*, as an example.

A summary report in 2016 of the Acheson Review (the full report is classified), on prison radicalisation in the UK, framed the issue as one developing in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks of 2001, and in particular as a result of the growth in terrorism-related offenders following the passing of anti-terrorism legislation in the aftermath of the 2005 7/7 attacks (Ministry of Justice and National Offender Management Service, 2016). The Terrorism Act also changed the character of prisoners being held: there were fewer prisoners who had committed terrorist attacks, and more prisoners arrested in the planning stages, a mixture of 'self-starters, fund raisers and proselytisers' (Pickering 2012: 13). It should also be noted that some prisoners arrested under terrorism legislation are beginning to come to the ends of their sentences (Pickering 2012: 11; Awan, 2013: 372). Currently, a policy of dispersion is in place, designed to ensure that particularly charismatic offenders do not become unduly influential within individual prisons (Ministry of Justice and

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National Offender Management Service, 2016). The report recommended that this policy be altered, and that prisoners of particular concern should be held in specialist units and subject to de-radicalisation interventions (Ministry of Justice and National Offender Management Service, 2016; see also Marranci 2009). Obtaining adequate resources to do this kind of work has been seen as an unresolved issue (Awan, 2013: 373). The Acheson Review, based on the summary report, was clear that: 'IE [violent and non-violent Islamic extremism] is a growing problem within prisons, and a central, comprehensive and coordinated strategy is required to monitor and counter it.' (Ministry of Justice and National Offender Management Service, 2016) Subsequent to the review, the setting up of three specialist centres for the segregation of extremist prisoners was announced in April 2017 (Ministry of Justice 2017).

Jones (2014: 75) identified several claims made about prison radicalisation: including that prison provides a captive audience of young potential recruits, that terrorist recruiters are keen to exploit prisons, and that combining ideological and non-ideological prisoners will result in a toxic mix and a greater threat. Certainly, the prison estate is not immune from the events outside. As one researcher working with Muslim prisoners during 2001 noted:

On 11 September 2001, I was on a wing in Prison 1 undertaking interviews of prison officers when news broke of an attack on the Pentagon by terrorists. Prisoners were relaying the news across the wings and between the cells; I was later informed by a governor of the attacks on the World Trade Center. (Quraishi 2008: 456)

The same researcher later remarked on a shift in perceptions of his own research, on Muslim prisoners, among guards, with several questioning its legitimacy, and by the researcher himself, who reported feeling less confident in the post 9-11 climate (Quraishi 2008: 456). Other research from inside UK prisons has also suggested that the impact of a growing sense of insecurity and threat was serving to damage relationships between prisoners and guards, with prison guards in particular growing suspicious of internal hierarchies they saw as organised around external terrorist hierarchies (this could not be confirmed by the researchers) (Liebling & Straub, 2012: 18).

Others account have been less certain that prison radicalisation is significant. One study of counter extremism policy within the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) lamented the lack of hard evidence for prisons as a venue for radicalisation, suggesting that beyond the fact that a number of violent Islamists have spent time in prison, there is little hard evidence of the ideological impact of imprisonment (Pickering, 2012: 9; see also Jones 2014: 81; Neumann 2010: 26). A particular problem has been the failure by some governments and prison regimes to distinguish between radicalisation and the adoption of purist forms of Islam (e.g., Salafism) while in prison (Neumann 2010: 27; see also Marranci 2009: 15). Hamm (2009: 669), in his overview of the literature on prison radicalisation, divided comment into two camps – alarmist, which he dismissed as having little to do with existing work into prison religion, and more sociologically grounded research which suggested that religion in prisons might be expected to make adherents less vulnerable to radicalisation, not more. Ultimately, Hamm adopted a middle way, arguing that

there are cases of prison radicalisation occurring in the US, despite the vast majority of Muslim prisoners finding their faith a useful structure to support reform (Hamm 2009: 672).

Likewise, Marranci (2009: 4) also noted the extent to which media representations of imprisoned Muslims have often been constructed entirely within the frame of terrorism and security with little acknowledgement of the recent dramatic increase in the number of Muslim prisoners:

Rather, newspapers and TV programmes have decontextualised the pre-incarceration lives of Muslim prisoners, their differences, their crimes and their religious (or non-religious) experiences within and outside prison, to instead offer an alarmist, stereotyped, picture of Muslim prisoners as a threat to our security. (Marranci 2009: 4)

The stereotypical picture of a Muslim prison population radicalising within the UK's jails was, according to Marranci, largely fanciful. For Marranci, extremism is not an observable phenomenon that governments and regimes are able to monitor or observe, more a deeper process. The real danger, Marranci argued, was that government and prison regime responses may make the problem worse rather than lessening the attractions of extremism (Marranci 2009: 17). At the time of Marranci's (2009: 5) study only one percent of Muslims imprisoned in the UK were there for terrorism-related offences (this remains the case).

Both Awan (2013) and Pickering (2012) held radicalisation to be an issue, with experiences in prison leaving Muslims vulnerable to extremism. Pickering highlighted the difficulties facing prison authorities in distinguishing between genuine religious practice and support for terrorism, and the risk of exacerbating problems by making bad judgements (Pickering 2012: 13; see also: Liebling & Straub 2012: 19, and Marranci 2009: 83).

An important theme in recent studies has been the need to properly contextualise anxieties about prison radicalisation within the prison environment. Whilst Jones (2014: 75) acknowledged the rise in concern, he held the view that the debate around prison radicalisation had been skewed and based on assumptions. McEvoy et al (2007: 298) alluded to the importance of differentiating between those prisoners who were part of an ongoing external conflict, and those who developed affiliations whilst in jail.

Marranci (2009: 46) was keen to divorce Islam from the idea of criminality, pointing out that the increasing overrepresentation of Muslims in the prison system was in part explained by socio-economic factors, not least the large percentage of young people in the Muslim population in the UK. He (2009: 68) also argued that the prison system could weigh more heavily on Muslims: Muslims in prison might be at greater risk of victimisation from other prisoners and guards on the basis of both their religious affiliation and also their race. Post 9/11 and 7/7, life for Muslims in prisons became more difficult as media and popular concerns over prison radicalisation boiled over (Marranci 2009: 82).

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Spalek and El-Hassan (2007: 101, 106) suggested that the high levels of conversion to Islam within prisons in the UK was to be expected given the population: young males with troubled pasts, as well as the high-levels of disillusionment with other religions. They also reported beneficial experiences from conversion in prison (Spalek & El-Hassan 2007: 109-110). Islam was framed as providing structure and self-discipline for converts and a sense of belonging (see 3.4 below). Marranci (2009: 12) similarly noted that before entering prison those in their sample were largely non-practicing Muslims, and that this changed quickly when faced with the fear of confinement. He noted that

The experience of fear provoked by the prison environment has shaken prisoners' own certainties. My respondents reacted to this emotion in two main ways, leading to two different modes of 'experiencing' Islam. The first way (among a minority) is what we can call the 'feeling of wonder' [in which] Islam became an 'act of faith' which could link their autobiographical-self to their experience of prison. (Marranci 2009: 107)

The second, more common way was through 'cognitive opening', allowing Islam to become more 'an act of identity than of faith' which helps provide prisoners with answers to questions posed in and by their new environment (Marranci 2009: 107-108). Marranci found that, for this second, larger group, Islam was ideological as well as emotional, with most 'divid[ing] the prison world into Muslim and non-Muslim, halal and haram, and Islamic and un-Islamic' (2009: 109), and driven by hate and anger as well as fear. This 'radical dualism' was witnessed in prison staff as well as inmates, and Marranci (2009: 110) concluded that it had more to do with the prison environment than radicalisation by extremist individuals or literature.

Liebling and Staub (2012: 16) also suggested a similar finding based on research in UK prisons, with a growing cadre of young men finding themselves facing extensive sentences, possessed of an oppositional street culture, and with a reducing set of external options open to them other than Friday prayers. Although the majority of those studied clearly rejected extremism, the researchers also observed the often ill-conceived and ephemeral nature of status in prison hierarchies:

What was clearer was the awe in which some high profile prisoners were held by younger prisoners, and the lack of clear reasoning about this sense of status or its meaning: leadership qualities were attributed to some prisoners by those looking for guidance. Those 'with trainers' [shoes], with influence, or with charisma, were appealing. (Liebling & Straub 2012: 19)

Some approaches have also identified existing prison cultures as a check on the growth of extremism within the prison estate. Jones (2014: 93) has argued that, where terrorist prisoners are the minority inside prisons, they will be forced to work within and adapt established prison cultures rather than expand their own support bases. In addition, external social barriers may also serve to inhibit radicalisation in prisons, with prisoners concerned or apprehensive about mixing with extremists (Jones 2014: 95). As a result, in some circumstances, prison may offer a chance for

offenders to disengage with terrorism. Jones (2014: 95) takes this as support for a continued policy of dispersion.

Political extremism can also take on different meanings in prison cultures divorced from external struggles. Spalek and El-Hassan (2007: 108-109) noted the security aspects of Islamic identities in prison, linking religious identity to wider 'hierarchies of identity' within prisons, suggesting that an Islamic affiliation carried a great deal of weight in some prisons that could protect adherents from threatened or actual violence. A similar theory to explain prison radicalisation with reference to internal subcultures was proposed by Awan:

In prisons, inmates will be searching for an identity and one that allies them with other inmates who are deemed to be more powerful and have a considerable reputation. It can also mean prisoners who feel that they do not have an identity and, therefore, have become isolated and feel a need to join a gang or group where acts of violence are justified. (Awan 2013: 375-376)

Neumann (2010: 28) argued that a distinction needs to be made between the phenomenon of Muslim prison gangs and that of radicalisation.

Like traditional prison gangs, Muslim prison gangs are based on religious (sometimes also ethnic) affiliation and provide members with a strong sense of identity and in-group loyalty. Moreover, they allow members to articulate their grievances and protect them against other gangs or groups of prisoners. Muslim prison gangs rarely include convicted terrorists, nor do they generally seem to have a good grasp of the Islamic faith or extremist ideology, and it is questionable to what extent their members have internalised, or genuinely committed themselves to, either. Nevertheless, 'cut and paste' versions of radical Islam frequently form the basis of their 'ideology', and particularly notorious terrorists are frequently glorified and held up as heroes. (Neumann 2010: 28)

Whilst Hamm (2009: 672) too linked prison radicalisation to gangs, he argued that, where radicalisation occurred in US jails, it did so between inmates and was conditional on the state of the prison estate in the US. A continuing theme in much of this research has been the poverty of the resources available to various prison services (Neumann 2010: 2; Hamm 2009: 682; Liebling & Straub, 2012; Awan 2013):

As resources are expended in the search for prison outsiders, the root causes of radicalization – overcrowded maximum security prisons with few rehabilitation programmes and a shortage of chaplains to provide religious guidance to spiritual searchers – are ignored. (Hamm 2009: 682).

CASE STUDY: WHITEMOOR PRISON, UK

In 2011 a group of researchers from Cambridge conducted a study of staff-prisoner relationships in HMP Whitemoor, a high-security (category A and B) prison that held around 400 prisoners and had a further 400 staff. The study was a response to an apparent decline in relationships between prisoners and staff from an earlier study in 2001. Faith and radicalisation were not specified in advance as subjects of study, rather they were themes that emerged during the conduct of the research itself. The major findings of the report were that relations between prisoners and staff had deteriorated. In large part this was seen as a result of emerging identity issues within the prison. Religious provision was felt to favour Muslim prisoners, and staff were felt to lack professional confidence in dealing with Muslim prisoners. A number of 'key players' (Liebling et al 2011: v) were thought to be influential within the prison, but this was not directly evidenced. The authors also noted a tendency amongst staff to overestimate the risks of extremism and to misinterpret fundamentalism and extremism. Although the report highlighted the presence of influential extremist prisoners, it also noted that high levels of conversion within the prison were largely explained by an 'urgent' search for meaning amongst prisoners, by the lack of other options, and by factors such as gang membership (Liebling et al 2011: iv).

Muslims were found to be the most prominent group within the prison population at Whitemoor, but the dynamics underlying faith relationships there were obscure and 'non-transparent' (Liebling et al 2011: 59). Interviews with prisoners revealed accounts that echoed some of the already well-recognised accounts of the role of religion in prison, for example as an answer to a search for meaning:

Because if you're in prison and you're at your lowest, you've got no hope, giving yourself to somebody who you think's a higher being who can sort everything out for you and make it better. It's like a drug that takes you. (Prisoner, quoted in Liebling et al 2011: 60-61)

Liebling et al (2011: 65) characterised some of these externally focused behaviours as an 'exchange process' in which prisoners could derive benefits from conversion. Islam in particular was seen as a complete religious system, able to provide prisoners with structure and answers (Liebling et al 2011: 61). This was seen as important in a system in which prisoners often felt intimidated and an impending sense of 'existential crisis' when facing long sentences (Liebling et al 2011: 63). In many ways conversion was seen as a readily available answer to a series of pressing and immediate problems facing prisoners.

Or a loner, you know, he converts and all of a sudden he's got friends, people you know wishing him good luck and, God be with you and brother and all the rest of it, it might be the first time in his life that he's been part of something. (Prisoner, quoted in Liebling et al 2011: 64)

The authors (2011: 65) also saw value in religion for prisoners with violent or abusive backgrounds.

The reactions of non-Muslim prisoners and staff were also noted. Liebling et al (2011: 66) described their responses as being akin to envy, with many interviewees emphasising the material benefits derived from conversion over and above the intrinsic benefits. As one non-Muslim prison officer described it:

Half of these people are not Muslims at all. They've got swastikas and racist things down. Tattoos about all the different organisations they've been in. They just join which scam is powerful at the time. Because they're just going with the gangs that can cause the most havoc, and are the most evil, and the most dangerous. I think some of them do it because they enjoy the bandwagon, and they like the violence, they like the glory. And the others are joining because they have to. They just want more support. They want more backing. They want more muscle. They want more danger. (Officer, quoted in Liebling et al 2011: 66-67).

Liebling et al (2011: 67) distinguished a fine dividing line between the Muslim faith support network in the prison, and a group operating more as a gang. The line between these groups was identified as being complex and contested between prisoners and staff.

I believe some people turn Muslim for protection as well. I feel a lot of people do that, and that's the wrong reason to do it, I don't agree with that at all. One thing it says in the Qur'an is basically if you see another brother getting attacked you should always intervene and try to stop the fight and that's what it is, so I think that's why a lot of people is converting into Muslims because they feel like in case they're getting attacked by somebody, or they've got a problem with some person, or it's a gang thing, yeah, so they feel like if they become a Muslim now, that person over there can't attack me because the brothers will stop it from happening. A bit of a shield, to protect themselves, that's what it is really. (Prisoner, quoting in Liebling et al 2011: 69)

Turning to violent extremism, Liebling et al (2011: 70) suggested that support for terrorism, fused with gang culture, had become part of a trend within the prison system. This was widely recognised as a kind of performance rather than a genuine ideological expression; support for terrorism was seen as offering instrumental benefits and providing an edge of danger to Muslim groups in the prison (Liebling et al 2011: 71). The authors also saw adoption of terrorist identities as part of a broader rebellion against prison authorities and in some cases wider society.

I think a lot of people use Islam as a way of expressing their anger towards society, expressing maybe their own anger towards incarceration. There's obviously people that turn to Islam in prison not because they believe in God, not because they believe in Islam and they want to follow the true faith, but because they're angry at society and they want to somehow ... [it] makes them feel good, because in their own way they're part of something that is attacking the very society that's incarcerated them, and I think

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psychologically that might give people a bit of a kick, or maybe it's more about politics than religion. (Prisoner, quoted in Liebling et al 2011: 71-72)

Several of Liebling et al's interviewees also reported coercion as playing a role in conversion. This was framed as 'heavy advertising' by Liebling et al (2011: 73) in which Muslim prisoners would make approaches to new prisoners and outline either the benefits of conversion, or in some cases the harms of remaining outside the group (Liebling et al 2011: 74). In addition, prisoners reported at least one case where violence was used as a punishment for a prisoner who left Islam, and was threatened in other cases (Liebling et al 2011: 75). These accounts also produced outrage amongst some of the Muslim prisoners interviewed who highlighted that forced conversion was forbidden in Islam (Liebling et al 2011: 75).

Regarding radicalisation, Liebling et al's work identifies a real risk, and notes that prisons are places of vulnerability. This risk was understood by both prisoners and guards and was described as being all pervasive inside Whitemoor, affecting relationships between staff and prisoners, as well as among prisoners (Liebling et al 2011: 94). The authors wrote:

What made prisoners vulnerable to fundamentalist or radical religious views was the notion of 'filling a void'. Most of those who toyed with the idea, or who felt tempted to convert to Islam (these processes were a long way from radicalisation) did not consider themselves to be 'typical' candidates. What charismatic Muslim 'key-players' were capitalising on when 'advertising' or propagating their faith was – apart from fear and pressure – the need individual prisoners felt to find an identity and a meaning in (prison) life. According to prisoners' accounts, they targeted prisoners who seemed 'lost' or who were in search of something transformative, who were ready to change or re-invent themselves. These prisoners were 'open to what was on offer', and religious leaders offered themselves as trustworthy guides. (Liebling et al 2011: 93-94)

However, there was little first-hand evidence of radicalisation identified in the report, and what information was forthcoming was recognised as from coming second-hand accounts (Liebling et al 2011: 92).

SUMMARY: PRISONS, PEERS AND EXTREMISM

Prisons are environments where a high level of control is exercised but prisoners retain some agency and autonomy, often resisting the controls place upon them. Debate is ongoing as to the formation of prisoner social relationships: it is not clear how much the external world impacts on prisoner relationships (imported), or how much social relationships are responses to the prison environment (indigenous).

Imprisonment sits alongside other life events such as divorce and the loss of a child in its capacity to disrupt individuals' understandings of their own self-narratives, challenging how they make

sense of their past and future. Through its provision of ideological and emotional support, religion can be an important coping mechanism for prisoners faced with deprivation. It can have intrinsic functions, focused on self-improvement, personal transformation and inner peace, or extrinsic ones, for example, by enabling solidarity with other prisoners or producing better treatment from staff. Religion, in this case Islam, provides protective factors which help prisoners face their fears and come to terms with their new environment. It can also play a role in desistance from crime and rehabilitation.

A radical dualist (us v. them) mentality has been witnessed in *both* inmates and prison staff, and attributed to the prison environment rather than radicalisation by extremist individuals or literature. The difficulty for prison authorities in distinguishing the dangerous from the pious, the potentially violent ideological extremist from the convert to Salafi Islam, has been acknowledged.

There is evidence of both prisoner vulnerability and peer pressure to convert for individual or group benefits, but these need to be distinguished from radicalisation into violent extremism. Conversion more often results from personal motivation and need than from pressure from others.

The convergence of religious and gang identities in prison has been highlighted, calling into question the extent to which radicalisation is the appropriate framework for the analysis of prisoner behaviours.

Existing prison cultures have been identified as a potential check on the growth of extremism within the prison estate. Where terrorist prisoners are the minority, they will be forced to work within and adapt established prison cultures rather than simply expand their own support bases.

Prison overcrowding, the lack of staff resources, and shortage of rehabilitation programmes are mentioned as contributing to the potential growth of extremism in and beyond prison. Although there is potential in prisons for radicalisation, and prisoners are acknowledged as vulnerable, there is little hard research evidence of widespread prison radicalisation. Claims of prison radicalisation tend instead to come from second-hand accounts.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

This is the second report in a series of synthetic reviews on ideological transmission produced by Kim Knott and Benjamin Lee from the *Ideas, Beliefs And Values In Social Context* CREST programme.

Where and how are extremist ideologies transmitted and young people radicalised? This programme of research improves our understanding of where and how extremist ideologies are transmitted and young people are radicalised, in order for de-radicalisation strategies and counter-narratives to be better designed and targeted. It is led by Professor Kim Knott at Lancaster University.

Through original research, knowledge synthesis and transfer – including workshops and roundtables, the programme aims to improve understanding of the conditions under which extremist ideologies are transmitted, individuals and groups are radicalised, and a minority make the move to violence.

Better knowledge of the process, locations, events and relationships involved in ideological transmission is vital for future development and targeting of interventions, disruption, and counter-narratives.

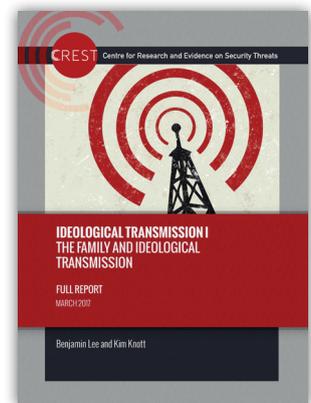
OUTPUTS

The first report in the series, *The Family And Ideological Transmission*, focuses on the family as a context for ideological transmission, and includes case studies on extremism and terrorism.

You can read the full report at: <https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/family-ideological-transmission/> or read the executive summary here: <https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/executive-summary-ideological-transmission/>

The Ideas, Beliefs And Values In Social Context programme has also produced an array of guides, such as *Understanding the far-right landscape* and *Sunni And Shi'a Islam: Differences And Relationships*

You can find all the reports, guides, articles and other outputs from this programme here: <https://crestresearch.ac.uk/projects/ideas-beliefs-values/>



For more information on CREST
and other CREST resources, visit
www.crestresearch.ac.uk

The logo graphic consists of three concentric, semi-circular red arcs on the left side, partially overlapping a solid red circle. The word "CREST" is written in white, uppercase letters across the red circle.

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