

“Ethnic Socialization and the Onset of Radicalization” The Case of Turkish-Dutch Youth in the Netherlands

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Introduction

In a time in which ethno-religious identities have increasingly become under threat, Muslim minority youth in the west face complex identification processes. Over the past decade, the Netherlands has witnessed processes of political polarization in which issues of culture and ethnicity have become pivotal (Moors et al., 2009). Public opinion about immigration tends to meet the extremes as for instance demonstrated by standpoints of Dutch citizens emphasizing assimilation. At the national elections in 2010, about 15 per cent of the electorate supported a Dutch far-right populist party (PVV Freedom Party) that openly accuses Islamic immigrants of their backwardness and aims for a monocultural Dutch society. Furthermore, research amongst Dutch majority youth showed that they consider maintenance of minority cultures as a rejection or even a threat to the Dutch majority culture (Verkuyten, 2002). In such context of polarization and pressures to assimilate, risks may emerge for radicalization in Muslim youth. Muslim youth may experience stigmatization and begin to distance themselves from Dutch society, or they may clash with other ethno-religious groups whom they felt have discriminated against them (Moors et al., 2009).

Radicalization is more prevalent amongst adolescents and young adults (15-30 years) and trends show that youngsters radicalize at a younger age (Buijs, Demant & Hamdy, 2006; Slooman & Tillie, 2006; Sageman, 2008). The developmental tasks of adolescence, such as developing a personal, social and political identity and forming new relationships render adolescents susceptible to radical beliefs. Furthermore, Muslim minority parents have to cope with the task of balancing the preservation of cultural and religious traditions and identity with adaptation amidst a rather hostile 2

national climate. Research amongst western majority youth underpinned the importance of parental influence on the values and attitudes of their children, including attitudes towards other ethnic groups as well as inclinations to (right-wing) extremism (Duriez et al., 2008, Noack & Kracke, 2000). However, parental socialization in relation to radicalization in minority children seems to be an under researched field. Few studies have examined how parenting by Muslim minorities, particularly their education about cultural diversity and ingroup relations, has been affected by hostile climates (Pels & De Ruyter, 2011). Since it is theoretically plausible that parental attitudes and practices in Muslim minority parents influence youngster's attitudes and behavior *vis-à-vis* different ethno-cultural groups, this study aims to explore this aspect of parenting. To be able to support parents and educators in helping children to negotiate contexts characterized by high ethnic and cultural diversity and conflict, more knowledge is needed about processes of ethnic socialization.

In this study we aim to investigate whether parents' ethnic socialization practices influence their children's radicalization process and which mechanisms may play a role in this relationship. More specifically, the study examines whether parents educational expressions of democratic ideals could be protective against radicalization in their children and vice versa, if parental messages of mistrust towards other ethnic groups may render their children susceptible to radicalization. Turkish-Dutch Muslims are among those who are being targeted in the populist islamophobic discourse, hence they were selected as a case for studying processes of ethnic socialization in relation to radicalization.