Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science
https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-021-09620-0

REGULAR ARTICLE

The Necessity to Recognize Processes of Radicalization from a Socio-cultural Perspective

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Accepted: 20 April 2021

Abstract

The current paper investigates Psychoanalytic, Cognitive, Behaviorist, and Socio-cultural theories and critiques how they have (or might have) contributed to the study of radicalization. The paper asserts two arguments that lack emphasis in the current radicalization research: 1) radicalization refers to a process, and does not always refer to violent behavior; 2) radicalization research needs to pay tribute to socio-cultural, political, and historical context while designing research and discussing findings. These two points are essential to extend the concept of radicalization and to be sensitive to different research contexts and populations. Currently, the conceptualization of radicalization appears to be generalized to violent action among minority groups (mainly Muslims) in limited contexts (mostly Western countries). The article claims that Psychology can better contribute to this diverse field of interest with its well-established theoretical contributions to the understanding of human beings and its compassion to seek differences amongst people across different contexts.

Keywords Radicalization · Psychology · Socio-cultural theory · Extremism · Violence

Introduction

This paper provides an understanding of psychology's theoretical contribution to the topic of radicalization, which is a topic of many other different disciplines (e.g., political science, sociology, anthropology, law, etc.) have explored. This paper investigates psychology's foundational theories and seeks how they have (or might have) contributed to the study of radicalization from a psychological perspective. The need to conduct such critical assessment emerged after reviewing the existing radicalization

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Published online: 26 April 2021

research and finding politically incorrect conceptualizations of radicalization and lack of information on individual research contexts. The paper asserts two arguments that lack emphasis on the current radicalization research. First, radicalization refers to a process and does not always refer to violent behavior. Second, radicalization research needs to pay tribute to the socio-cultural, political, and historical context while designing research and discussing findings. As modern psychology has become more and more sensitive to the contextual differences, the article stresses the importance of using socio-cultural theory to be sensitive to different research contexts and populations researchers study. The socio-cultural school of thought also has the potential to extend the concept of radicalization beyond violent and extreme behavior. To understand more about how psychology approached the concept of radicalization, which is defined as going back to the roots, the current article will attempt to delve deep into the main theories of psychology—Psychoanalytic, Cognitive, Behaviorist, and Socio-cultural–and critically assess their contribution to the radicalization literature.

How Psychology Theorizes and Studies Processes of Change: Stage and Non-Stage Theories

The current paper would like to establish one point about radicalization before starting to focus on psychological theories: the term *radicalization* refers to a process rather than to a static state. Radicalism is not an endpoint that individuals arrive at. Also, radicalism does not always involve behavior, let alone a violent one. Unfortunately, a quick assessment of the literature revealed that the confusion about the use of terms such as terrorism, violent extremism, political violence, and radicalism persist among scholars who review and study the topic of radicalization from a psychological perspective. It is not surprising, for example, to read a review titled as Theories in Radicalization and find relevant resources seeking 'causes of terrorism' or 'links between violent extremism and contributing factors' (see, Kruglanski et al., 2019).

If radicalization is a process, then learning about how psychology has approached processes involving behavioral, emotional, and cognitive change might help theorize the phenomenon further. Modern psychology refuses to believe that the human psyche has a fixed way of being (Martin & Sugarman, 2000). The field, now, acknowledges that humans are influenced both by their life experiences and genetic makeup, which are, in turn, continually adapting to humans' surroundings. The way psychology approaches humans' quest to change differs based on *how* it believes the change in life occurs. Whether change happens continuously or discontinuously is one of the fundamental questions of psychology and very much influences one's theoretical stance. Section below gives a brief introduction to the stage and non-stage theories in psychology.

Stage and Non-Stage Theories

Theories that accept discontinuous perspective regard change as taking place in stages. Stages are theoretical constructs. Described as stage theories, theories that use such distinct constructs emphasize qualitative changes in thoughts, emotions, and behaviors and organize differences that happen during the course of change rigidly. In other words, according to the stage theories, change is sudden and follows a path in the same way across all humans. For instance, a stage theory of radical behavior would specify an ordered set of categories into which people could be classified (e.g., Islamist, nativist, etc.) and would identify the factors that can trigger movement from one category (e.g., perception of discrimination) to the next (e.g., group membership). Given such theory, a social scientist could identify critical stage or stages and focus resources on understanding factors that would move people to the next stage. If the primary motivation is to intervene during the process of the development of radical behavior, a theory that successfully describes these stages makes possible the matching of interventions to individuals and the sequencing of interventions.

Under the stage theories, what humans are likely to do at approximately what state, level, or age is emphasized, but not how or why they do it. The process is undisclosed and mostly unknown. Theories that claim that process of change follows a continuous path, the ones we can call non-stage theories, accept that individuals are *becoming* and *being*. People move from one state to another, not always sequentially and naturally, but very much influenced by the socio-cultural context they are in and their interpretations of it. Stage theories that focus on the existence of qualitatively different stages often miss many of the continuously changing observable phenomena that are of importance in human life cross-culturally. For instance, the way a woman with a minority background experiences discrimination is qualitatively different from another woman with a majority status experiences discrimination. The place (e.g., in Europe, in a diverse city, rural town, etc.) and the time (e.g., during childhood, in the ’60 s, etc.) the two women experience discrimination also matters for a detailed analysis of how and why they feel that way. Stage theories lack the level of contextual sensitivity needed to examine different and similar patterns in the process of change across various circumstances.

Both the stage and non-stage theories have become popular in psychology as they offer a method to understand human thoughts, emotions, and behavior, and most importantly, they are testable. Especially stage theories often invoke internal processes as causal factors, advancing hypotheses difficult to confirm/disprove with empirical research. Stage theories are helpful for scholars to reproduce and modify existing models. Such models conveying psychological processes in a step-by-step fashion have a strong influence on policies and intervention strategies, as they offer easy to understand and less obscure action to reverse undesirable human behavior. On the one hand, what counts as an undesirable human thought, emotion, or behavior across different contexts is very much debatable. On the other hand, only a few thoughts, emotions, or behaviors are well-established to be objectionable not only by law but also from a moral stance. For instance, to act violently despite knowing that

it would hurt someone else to do so is principally considered offensive and unsolicited. Because many of us accept that behaviors that hurt others *should not* be tolerated, what contributes to such actions to become in existence has turned out to be a critical topic to investigate.

Many models about radicalization claim that it is a process through which individuals become increasingly motivated to use violent means to achieve the change they desire in society and politics. Given the increasing statistics of violent extremist and terrorist actions in the past 30 years in a global world, understanding "*what goes on before the bomb goes off*" has become very intriguing for social scientists to respond to what has been accepted as a global problem. (Sedgwick, 2010). Accordingly, many psychological studies of radicalization have oriented themselves toward either identifying the phases or contributing factors that lead to violent behavior or mapping the characteristics of individuals who were identified as terrorists. However, not all radicalization necessarily leads to violence, nor radicalization is always negative (Bjorgo & John, 2009; Fraihi, 2008). Only a few individuals who radicalize participate in violent behavior as there exists a distinction between accepting radical ideas and actively participating in violent acts as a result of those ideas (Wilner & Dubouloz, 2010). Horgan (2009) suggests that examination of violent radicalization requires a shift in focus from "the pursuit of *profiles* to the mapping of *pathways*" and from a search of "root causes to the identification of *outer qualities*" (Horgan, 2009: 1). The following sections will select the four psychological schools of thought—Psychoanalytic, Cognitive, Behaviorist, and Socio-Cultural – to assess and inform theories of radicalization.

Psychological Approaches Explaining Who Radicalizes and How

Radicalization theories are diverse, though not necessarily antagonistic to each other. Instead, each model addresses a somewhat different aspect of radicalization or depicts it from a distinctive disciplinary perspective at a different level of analysis. Psychology—the study of individuals' beliefs, thoughts, emotions, and behavior, may be uniquely positioned to assess and inform theories of radicalization. Each of the four psychological approaches selected for this critical paper focuses on different aspects of the human psyche and attribute reasons for their difference across humans. Taken independently, each offers a valuable conceptualization of radicalization experience. Taken together, however, certain commonalities emerge. These commonalities indicate factors that are deemed important contributors to radicalization.

Psychoanalytic Approach. The psychoanalytic approach originally stems from Sigmund Freud, who is considered as the father of psychology. This approach emphasizes the self (ego), which is influenced by less conscious impulses and needs (id), and by internal criticism and ideals (superego). The theory claims that there is a direct link between one's childhood experiences and the events that adults experience, and the psychoanalysis aims to interpret existing tensions within the human mind. In other words, psychoanalytical accounts of human behavior emphasize the implicit motivations of the current being while also providing explicit accounts of

emotional processes (Craib, 1989; Kristeva, 1991). In a clinical setting, such interpretations either reduce the tension or allow memories to make sense for the adult. Interpretations of cases that share common strains or behavior patterns allow psychoanalysts to profile and understand the human mind by generating testable predictions. For example, psychoanalytic readings of ablution claim that it might predict obsessional-compulsive disorder among Muslims (Lifton, 2007).

Psychoanalytic theory is considered as the first to examine how the human mind works and how we become who we are. The latter inquiry is especially important for this review for emphasizing the process of becoming. While the Lacanian approach to psychoanalysis offers a more contemporary interpretation of radicalization (Browning, 2018; Eberle, 2019; Ejdus, 2017; Kinnvall, 2018), at its core, the theory claims that process of change happens discontinuously, in stages, and the extent to which we resolve each stage successfully bears crucial implications for the future. An individual might get stuck or *fixated* in a stage and experience difficulty moving ahead to the next one and portray psychological abnormality or crisis later in the process. Psychoanalysis claims that mental abnormality can determine or explain behaviors and motives.

Theoretically, the psychoanalysis is not interested in studying the `normal' and always works backward, which means that the work starts from what is considered as the end of the process. The above section discussed how violent thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are considered damaging both for the individual and the ones being impacted by them directly. In the meantime, for a thought, emotion, or behavior to be considered abnormal, one other condition is for them to be rare among other humans. Thus, according to the psychoanalytic approach, when they take violent forms, radical thoughts, emotions, and behaviors might be identified as abnormal. Given that violent radical activity can be clearly defined as 'abnormal,' the psychoanalytic approach has had much to contribute to the understanding of violent radicalization. By this logic, the case this article made earlier—not all radicalization is negative—would not be accepted by the researchers who ground their work on psychoanalytic theory. Thus, many who claimed to have studied radicalization from psychoanalytic lenses (Adorno et al., 1950; Lifton, 1961; Post, 1998; Rogers et al., 2007; Silke, 2003; Strenger, 2015; Taylor, 2004) had to suggest that extremists and terrorists are psychologically abnormal and that radicalization process can be understood by studying extremists and terrorists.

Psychoanalytic literature might be valuable for two reasons: 1) it complements to cognitive and social psychological models of political violence, especially in considering the unconscious and symbolic aspects of intergroup political and ideological conflicts and 2) it provides a template for clinicians who may encounter early signs of radicalization in patients before any organizational affiliation and tactical measures take place (Cohen, 2019). Although classical psychoanalytic concepts such as the Oedipus Complex and the Death Drive have generally fallen out of favor in clinical practice, they are still used by philosophers, literary critics, and psychoanalytic sociologists to understand the connection between individuals and social conflicts (see Kristeva, 2018). However, over the years, psychoanalysis and its applications have been strongly criticized for being unscientific and not sensitive to the diversity of human contexts. Unfortunately, many researchers and 'experts' who suggest that

terrorists are psychologically abnormal tend to be the ones with the least amount of contact with actual terrorists compared to those with a direct contact who find that suggestions of abnormality do not stand up to close examination (Silke, 1998). Trying to be established as a hard science that relies on empirical evidence, modern psychology has denied the psychoanalytic theory, which is very case-based and insufficient to draw generalizable conclusions applicable to many individuals.

Cognitive Approach. Psychologists have generated a variety of perspectives to explain how our thinking and learning changes. Cognitive theories in cognitive psychology investigate mental functions and processes of the human mind. These theories aim to explain how individuals learn and adapt to new environments and constraints, construct the world, and apply their knowledge. There exist two core ways that cognitive theories differ from each other. One is that some models propose continuous changes in understanding while others suggest stage-like changes. As stated in the above pages, many psychological theories that aim to explain processes of change share this point of difference. The second difference is that some emphasize personal and interpersonal experiences (e.g., moving around in the world, relationships with peers, etc.) while others highlight the biological maturation of specific mental capacities. Cognitive approaches claim that a few necessary perceptual abilities – such as the ability to distinguish figures from the ground – are inborn. Still, beyond these, the bulk of perceptual development is founded in the interaction between action and experience in the world. Thus, interactive experiences help to construct our understanding of the world, space, time, and so forth. Perhaps one crucial claim all constructive theorists have is that humans have the ability and power to decide how to construct their understanding. In other words, they do not passively process whatever information and opportunity they are being provided, but instead, they direct and attend their perceptions with a purpose, which is to understand the reasons behind their observations.

In terms of radicalization literature, what endpoint forms the focus of analysis has important implications for the study of cognitive radicalization. What changes happen in the way individuals think that we might consider important to track down in the radicalization process? First of all, we must remember that cognitive theorists must believe that all action—moderate, angry, very angry, and even violent—is the product of reasoning. Accordingly, what people do and how they express their thoughts may be used as important sources of information for researchers to examine the cognitive processes of radicalization. Once we accept radicalization as a way to express one's views (Adam-Troian et al., 2021; Kaya, 2020), we start arguing that freedom of speech is absolute and that individuals can express their opinions, even violence, as long as they do so by peaceful means. As Neumann (2013) argues, such an Anglo-Saxon approach does not see extremist beliefs as the endpoint or as being problematic. The parameter, then, would be any perception or belief that would show a way of thinking that is more distinct than the rest. For instance, an argument against democratic principles in a democratic society is neither violent nor forbidden but could indicate radicalization. There is a disagreement over whether it is thought or behavior that constitutes a threat, and whether non-violent radicalism is, or is not, a threat (Sedgwick, 2010). A cognitive theorist then must decide what constitutes a distinct way of thinking or action that might affect others negatively and then search

for contributing factors (e.g., age, gender, religious beliefs, ideologies, etc.). In reality, however, this paper observed that many psychologists who approached the topic of radicalization from the cognitive perspective consider radicalization as a process that leads to violent behavior, which then needs to be combatted. The current literature tends to criminalize or pathologize political beliefs or dissent, even though freedom of thought is considered being an inviolable human right in democratic and pluralistic contexts (da Silva et al., 2019). The endpoint, the last stage of the thinking process, is considered as the very last rationale behind the violent behavior. Thus, it is safe to say that the existing literature does not seem very open-minded about accepting radicalization as a way of thinking, despite the very thing that it studies: how the mind works.

Among many topics such as memory, language, attention; perception and beliefs have received the most consideration among the psychologists who study radicalization from a cognitive perspective. As a pioneer, Doosje et al. (2013) identify personal uncertainty, perceived injustice, and perceived group threat as contributors and determinants to having a radical belief system. In a comprehensive review conducted by Van den Bos (2020) later, experienced group deprivation and perceived immorality appear as the fundamental elements that can drive Muslim, right-wing, or left-wing radicalization. Perceiving that things are fundamentally unfair involves a threat to the worldviews of most people (Van den Bos & Miedema, 2000). These perceptions can lead to intense emotions and to what psychologists call "hot cognition" (Kunda, 1999), a combination of cognitive perceptions and emotional responses that can impact the radicalization process (Van den Bos, 2018). Three psychological functions: 1) individual's self-esteem, 2) group identification, 3) ideology, and religion are found to be related to individuals' perception of unfairness. Low or delicate self-esteem is known to be associated with rigid thinking (Jordan et al., 2005) and motivates various forms of defensive behavior in order to strengthen self-worth (Pyszczynski et al., 2003, 2004). When the feelings of being part of a particular group are coupled with the perception that one's group has been mistreated, this can lead to the impression that the situation is dire and that the group and its cause are vulnerable and in danger of extinction (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008).

The symbols of injustice (flags, banners, iconic photographs, etc.) can also connect experiences of injustices with the current perception of deprivation and other existing forms of injustice (Van den Bos et al., 2009). Especially for a member of a minority group, such symbols interconnect a history that recognizes past injustices committed against the group and reminds the person unfair treatments conducted by the majority group. For example, certain symbols, memories, and myths were key in influencing radicalization among North-African Muslims living in Britain (Githens-Mazer, 2008).

In trying to understand essential components of the psychology of radicalization and the steps the thinking process takes, some claim that rigid thinking and certain beliefs appear prominent among radicalized individuals. Rigid thinking and personal beliefs may function to safeguard radicalizing individuals from the information they do not want to hear (Rokeach, 1960) and the need to understand things might lead them to engage in illusions of knowing (Fernbach et al., 2013) because

it might lead them to construct meaning and plan their behaviors in persistent ways (Kay et al., 2014).

Related to rigid thinking, dogmatic intolerance is another phenomenon researched by radicalization researchers. Dogmatic intolerance can be defined as preference to disregard other ideological beliefs that differs from one's own (Van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2017). Van Prooijen and Krouwel (2017) found that rigid thoughts and beliefs can predict dogmatic intolerance—the tendency to disregard other ideological beliefs that differs from one's own—among both left-wing and right-wing extremists. Another study seems to suggest that cognitive disclosure and support for authoritarianism is more common among right-wing individuals than left-wing ones (Jost et al., 2003). Overall, the current findings suggest that both left-wing and right-wing extremist views can predict dogmatic intolerance (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003), while having religious beliefs per se did not show predictive effect on having the conviction that one's beliefs are the only true ones (Hansen & Norenzayan, 2006).

Behaviorist (Learning) Approach. Behaviorism is grounded on the idea that psychology could become just as scientific as physics, chemistry, and other hard sciences by ignoring the subjective reports of conscious experience and focusing on observable (and sometimes unobservable, such as thoughts and feelings) behavior. For a traditional behaviorist, the human mind is a *black box*: we know what goes in and what comes out of it, but we do not need to be concerned about the relationship between the inputs and outputs. Based on this claim, any individual can learn a behavior. In fact, Watson (1878–1958) has stated that he could teach a person to be a thief, a doctor, or a farmer by using the basic principles of learning, such as rewarding, reinforcing. Using the same learning principles, behaviorists also claim a person can unlearn existing behaviors. This approach offers no space for the agency of individuals, but only accounts for factors that "force" them to push toward or withdraw from a behavior. A behaviorist must believe that all action—moderate, angry, very angry, and even violent—is the product of outside forces (e.g., rewards, punishments, etc.).

Behaviorists certainly helped to place psychology on firmer scientific footing by promising that change in behavior can be modified and, therefore, have very much influenced educational and intervention policies historically throughout the world. Behaviorist scholars claim that radicalization and deradicalization are mirror images of each other, and the processes that support deradicalization reverse those that promote radicalization (see Kruglanski et al., 2014). Although this position was challenged in the literature (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2018; Horgan, 2009), it is no wonder that deradicalization programs are all based on the behaviorist approach. Deradicalization programs aim to decrease individuals' commitment to ideological goals and pursue alternative objectives to the ones they have learned previously. Not only does such "evidence-based" programs might close the space for important debates about issues that are causing understandable frustration among radicalized individuals, but it also means that authorities tend to respond only to those deemed moderate voices or the usual suspects (Briggs et al., 2006).

More up-to-date thoughts on behaviorism argue that individuals participate in the development of personal knowledge and that learning is a dynamic process of

interpretation, integration, and transformation of personal experiences (Transformative Learning Theory). What's relevant for this review is the radicalization process that is necessarily associated with changes in behavior and the factors that relate to those changes.

Research in psychology has long established that attitudes do not easily translate to behaviors. In a review of literature on the relationship between attitude and behavior, Wicker (1969) noted, "Taken as a whole, these studies suggest that it is considerably more likely that attitudes will be unrelated or only slightly related to overt behaviors than that attitudes will be closely related to actions" (p. 65). The weak relation between attitude and behavior is especially evident with attitudes relating to rare behaviors. For instance, depressed people might have suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives, yet only a small minority ever act on these thoughts. Likewise, feeling angry about feeling discriminated rarely translates into protests (Klandermans, 1997). Similarly, radicalization to violent opinions is psychologically a different phenomenon from radicalization to violent action. As Borum (2011: 30) has argued, "Radicalization—the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs—needs to be distinguished from action pathways—the process of engaging in terrorism or violent extremist actions."

Bringing both the cognitive and behavioral approaches, McCauley and Moskalenko (2017) offer the two pyramids model. Consistent with research on attitude and behavior, the two pyramids model of radicalizations represent radicalization of opinion separately from the radicalization of action (Leuprecht et al., 2010; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2014).

The opinion pyramid (Fig. 1) represents the stages one goes through when becoming radicalized cognitively. At the base of the pyramid are individuals with no interest in politics (*neutral*); higher are those who have political interest and cause but do not find violence as a legitimate method to reach the political goals

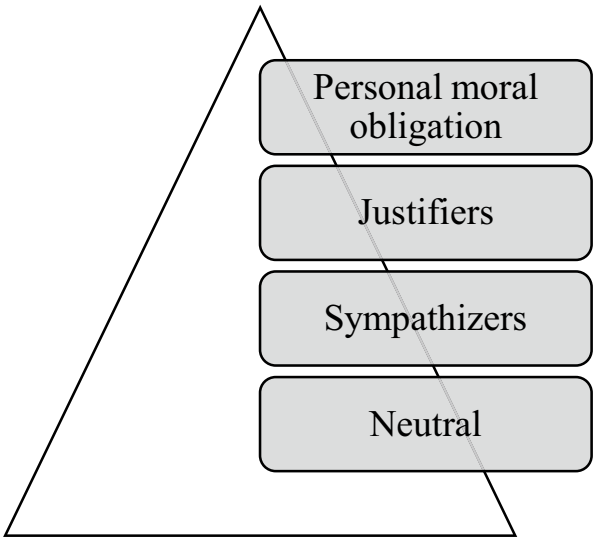


Fig. 1 Opinion Pyramid

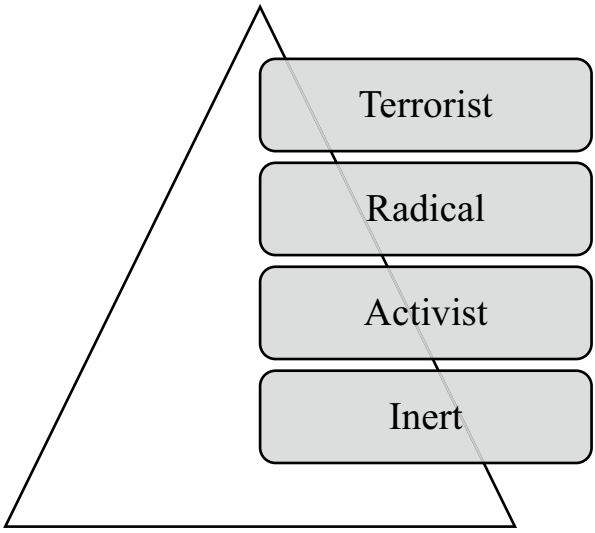
(*sympathizers*); higher are those who justify violence for political cause (*justifiers*); and at the apex of the pyramid are those who feel *a personal moral obligation* to take up violence for the cause.

The action pyramid (Fig. 2) is what concerns the behaviorist approach. At the base of this pyramid are individuals doing nothing for a political group or cause (*inert*); higher are those who are engaged in legal political action for the cause (*activists*); higher yet are those involved in illegal activities for the cause (*radicals*), and at the apex of the pyramid are those engaged in an illegal action that targets civilians (*terrorists*).

According to McCauley and Moskalenko (2017), an individual following the pathways in the two pyramids can skip levels in moving up and down during the process of being radicalized. In other words, this theory is designed as a non-stage theory. The two-pyramids model assumes that 99% of those with radical ideas never act. Conversely, many join in radical action without having radical ideas. They suggest that four individual-level mechanisms (love, risk and status, slippery slope, and unfreezing) and three group-level mechanisms (polarization, competition, and isolation and threat) can bring radical action in the absence of radical ideas (Mccauley & Moskalenko, 2011).

The major implication of this approach is the reminder to distinguish psychological factors leading to the radicalization of opinions from those leading to the radicalization of action. Such distinct focus is promising as it assures a robust measure of validity. Furthermore, it is well-supported that emotional reactions play a role in radicalization to action (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). Therefore, adding variety of emotions into our assessments might be necessary to widen our horizons and strengthen our analyses. For instance Becker et al. (2011) showed that while anger was positively related to legal protest and activism, having experienced contempt was positively related to radical action. Emotions appear to be as central to

Fig. 2 Action Pyramid



motivating political behavior as any other factor and present an avenue for future empirical research (e.g., Bal & van den Bos, 2017; Van Stekelenburg, 2017).

Socio-Cultural Approach. Overall, it seems that it took a while for psychologists to study processes of change in context. Fortunately, with emphasis on different practices in different cultures, a necessity to understand human psychology in context has emerged (Vygotsky, 1978), moved the discipline away from general models (Strickland, 2000), and brought the appearance of second psychology (Cahan & White, 1992). According to this wave, human psychology can be explained only in terms of its social, historical, and cultural context. The human mind is not inside the skull anymore, and it could be understood by looking at its involvement in the world.

The cutting edge of contemporary scholarship in psychology is attempting to integrate information from several levels of the organization involved in the ecology of human experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). Such an approach points to the fact that it is essential to consider the physical and social environment within which changes occur (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). What is the vital and perhaps most important component of the environment so we can understand whether it is optimal for a particular developmental asset or not? Culture. In its most general sense, the term culture refers to "an adaptive process that accumulates the partial solutions to frequently encountered problems… It is the process in which our everyday cultural practices are enacted." (Hutchins, 1995: 354).

From this definition, we can conclude that culture does not merely provide isolated norms, standards, values, or codes that are stabilized. It forms integrated patterns that make the job of a researcher almost impossible to document of its variations. Moreover, it is fundamental that we consider that human activity involves complex and shifting divisions of experience within cultures (Daiute, 2014). As a result, no two members of a cultural group or no people experiencing the same context can be expected to attribute the same meaning to the experience. What psychology can do is to conduct culturally sensitive studies, which can help us study patterns and determine the ideal environment in the variations of experiences. It is important not to focus on cross-cultural variations in the products but understand the role of culture in the process of change (Cole, 1995).

How does one study the role of culture using the socio-cultural perspective? Socio-cultural perspective encourages researchers to look beyond individual motivations and interests. Vygotsky (1978) suggests culturally derived artifacts/tools (e.g., language, signs, maps, symbols) mediate human functioning thus, contribute to cultural variations. By studying the use of such artifacts/tools, we can understand how certain mental processes, like radicalization, progresses across and also within cultures. While studying processes of radicalization in different cultures is important for demonstrating the importance of widening our perspective beyond individuals, it is also essential to reveal how individuals make sense of the existing cultural repertoires using cultural tools available to them. It is this two focal points, search in between and within cultures, that make socio-cultural perspective distinct than the sole cross-cultural angle.

Our times and our contexts should not necessarily be the case for every human being in the world. Two studies focused on radicalization in different places and

time periods might be helpful to reflect on the importance of context in which radicalization occurs. For instance, after closely examining the economic and political context in Nigeria, Johnson (2019) argues that the majority of people (specifically, unemployed young men) who show signs of radicalization do so because they have no job prospects and therefore no chances for acquiring wealth and a better life. After claiming that their livelihoods are threatened by globalization, Johnson (2019) asserts that the ongoing conflict in the region since the 1990s led citizens of the Niger Delta to find a way to have a voice in how the natural resources were extracted and how the profits were distributed. Another example of a contextually sensitive examination is a study of Kurdish radicalization in the 1970s Turkey. The study claims that repression of the state and the dominant nationalist discourse forbidding assertions of ethnic identity might have created a context where Kurdish people started to radicalize (Ercan, 2010). This analysis asserts that political opportunities for claiming ethnic rights were almost impossible in the 1970s Turkey and the restrictive context and the history of oppression might have contributed to the escalation of radical acts among Kurdish individuals. These two studies show that making conclusions about general human psychology from the studies solely conducted in Western societies in "optimal" environments (Rogoff, 2003) is not enough for us to enhance our knowledge. History, philosophy, politics, geography and economics also have major influence on the ways in which individuals experience processes of change. The socio-cultural approach, therefore, claims that there is no such thing as a unique, inevitable, or desirable endpoint of cognitive, behavioral, or emotional change for every culture, every context, and for every individual.

Some scholars acknowledge that pathways into radicalization are multilevel and involve layers of factors, including intra-individual, community-based, and contextual with global ideological forces (e.g., Ferguson & Binks, 2015, Ferguson & McAuley, 2019a, b; Ranstorp, 2016; Ravn et al., 2019). In addition, while many radicalized individuals share similar experiences, there exist research accounts that show no direct link between becoming ideologically and politically radicalized and engaging in extremist violence (Della Porta & La Free, 2012; Ferguson & McAuley, 2019a, b). Such accounts that challenge the previously confirmed constructs must urge researchers to forego positivistic and normative claims. Twenty-first-century psychology requires critical thinking about the discipline's foundations, along with a robust and sensitive analysis of how individuals in different contexts experience the radicalization process.

In order to search dynamics underlying radicalization, Jensen et al. (2016) compiled 70 factors that were found to be associated with the process in the past. Called as antecedent factors for radicalization, they ranged from intrapersonal to group-level factors (Jensen et al., 2016). The analysis of 500 possible combinations of 70 causal mechanisms revealed that having a sense of belonging to a community that has been collectively victimized is key to setting the contextual environment for radicalization to be possible. Mind the wording; the finding is far removed from any deterministic claim. Rather, it emphasizes the potential vulnerabilities perceived and shared by a group of communities have in creating a context for radical individuals. To conduct an analysis that is perceptive to the socio-cultural and political differences, researchers need to prioritize designing studies that open the space for research participants

to express themselves freely. Only this way, researchers can recognize the variety of individual experiences while detecting contextual differences.

The importance of a comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach for the study of radicalization is also crucial for the implications the research might have in integration efforts. To date, research-led and government-led initiatives address the challenge of integration through a combination of education, training, cultural and religious dialogue that helps members of small communities to integrate into majority societies. Research or government-led initiative that is deaf to the socio-cultural norms and the local economic and political realities not only have little chance to be accepted by individuals who already have a high perception of grievance but also might widen the trust gap between those individuals and authorities. Therefore, a socio-cultural approach might also have a lot to offer to those who plan to move beyond understanding the radicalization process in a unique context and study patterns of differences and similarities with others who share similar characteristics.

Conclusion

This paper supports Voutryas (2016: 235) in claiming that radicalization, "is not something positive or negative, but should be seen as a moment that opens up a field of various possibilities." Such an unbiased and welcoming approach to defining the area of interest will inevitably bring more curiosity and more nuanced findings to the research field. The current literature on radicalization is very difficult to comprehend for several reasons. It is this paper's claim that the first reason is the wide range of disciplines that have studied the topic using different operational terms. It is inevitable to review and include writings from different fields, focusing on different aspects of radicalization, using variations of definitions and perspectives from, again, different fields. These writings do not necessarily compete with each other. In fact, I noticed that they are often stripped from their discipline specific jargon, portrayed as anonymous, or autonomous with the objective of acknowledging the interdisciplinary characteristic of the field of interest. There are a vast number of theories written and formulated specifically about radicalization, but they are often portrayed as new and/or combination of claims. Thus, perplexity about what it means to be radicalized still persists in the literature. Perhaps the persistence of confusion and ambiguity is expected and normal, but can also be overcome by considering radicalization more broadly with the help from contemporary Psychology. The current article declares that Psychology can better contribute to this diverse field of interest with its well-established theoretical contributions to the understanding of human beings and its compassion to seek differences amongst people across different contexts.

Second trouble in radicalization literature is the assertions that research findings make on humans' radicalizations processes in general. People radicalize about different issues in different ways and variations. It is very difficult to decide what appears to indicate a form of radicalization, and it is often not possible to examine the radicalization process of individual overtime. This difficulty results with many

conceptual models that keep appearing in literature with little to no cross-sectional or longitudinal findings, which would be useful to document processes of radicalization. It is this paper's claim that such difficulty can be overcome by using the very core, field-specific theoretical constructions that existed before the term radicalization was politicized and Westernized. Among all the theories explained in this paper, socio-cultural perspective emerges as a good alternative for considering that radicalization is a mental activity rooted in the interpersonal contexts within which it develops.

For instance, if a psychologist believes that the environment one lives in has the utmost impact on them exhibiting unwanted behaviors and thoughts, they would be expected to recommend ways for society to prevent such unwanted behaviors and thoughts. If a psychologist approaches the concept of radicalization with internationally and culturally sensitive lenses, they will gather as much information as possible about the context their research participants are situated in. In sum, a theoretical position needs to be taken before formulating a hypothesis and designing a research study. Perhaps that is the most important conclusion that can be drawn from this paper.

Acknowledgements This review was prepared in the scope of the ongoing EU-funded research for the "PRIME Youth" project conducted under the supervision of the Principal Investigator, Prof. Dr Ayhan Kaya, and funded by the European Research Council with Agreement Number 785934. Thanks are also due to Ayhan Kaya, Ayşe Tecmen, and Catarina Kinnvall for their critical and constructive reading of the text.

Declarations

The author has received research grants from European Research Council. The paper does not contain any studies with human participants performed by the author.

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