

How to tackle extremism among the young and radicalised

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Researchers have brought together a group of young people from

opposing environments to find out how they respond to Islamist and extreme right messages.

Extremism, radicalism, extreme right and extreme left. While these terms may seem politically charged and potentially divisive, extremism isn't confined to one race, religion or political ideology. With the intensification of terrorist activities worldwide since the early 2000s, there has been increased research on radicalization. Such studies have mainly focused on the security angle, but recent years have also seen research aimed at tackling hateful extremism. To effectively counter radicalization, it's crucial to understand its scope, origins and causes, as well as its psychological, emotional and social dynamics.

The independent Commission for Countering Extremism has published several [academic papers](#) on the threat from the far right and the far left in the United Kingdom, including one by researchers from the University of Manchester. Supported by the EU-funded DARE project, this research team engaged with and interviewed young people with Islamist views on the one hand and extreme right ones on the other. According to a news release by the University, the team "encountered individuals who expressed the desire to just 'sit opposite' those on the other side and 'have a talk with them.'"

The same news release adds: "Three young people from each side were invited to participate in mediated dialog. ... None of the individuals who took part considered themselves to be radicalized or 'extremist,' but their associations would lead them to be considered as such."

The participants gathered at a 1-day session to "express their own deeply-held views, as well as listen to those of the others. At the end of the first dialog, the participants spontaneously invited each other to visit their respective home cities. This led to a second and third dialog, designed to create a space for meaningful contact in each of those cities where there

was also an opportunity for less structured contact and just getting to know one another on their own terms."

How to prevent extremism

Researcher Dr. Ajmal Hussain says their work focuses on recognizing and building the participants' "desire for openness, movement and critical inquiry in order to prevent the solidifying of extremist attitudes or behavior," rather than changing their attitudes. The team plans "to develop the mediated dialog method into a set of resources that can be used more widely by community and youth workers to counter extremism of all kinds."

The other papers published by the Commission focus on the banned terror group National Action, identification of the modern far right targeting the mainstream with anti-Muslim politics, an overview of the far right and the use of innovative polling methods to explore far left attitudes. In addition to these papers, the Commission published the results of a call for evidence based on 3 000 responses from the public during the period between November 2018 and January 2019. The participants were asked to share their experiences and views on extremism. Over half of them said they have witnessed [extremism](#) in some way.

The ongoing DARE (Dialogue About Radicalisation and Equality) project aims to understand the social and psychological processes leading to radicalization. It focuses on people aged between 12 and 30 who are seen as being receptive to radicalism and hence are a key target of recruiters. DARE partners hope to develop practical tools to increase the resilience of individuals and communities to radicalization.

More information: DARE project website: www.dare-h2020.org/

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