Tina Wilchen Christensen (2015) 'When Good Intentions are not Enough - A Successful Mentor-Mentee Relation requires a Deliberate Practice' in *Psyke & Logos* (1)

Abstract: Inspired by a neo -Vygotskian approach, this article discusses the use of a mentoring scheme at EXIT, a Swedish organisation supporting neo-Nazis' disengagement from the extremist right. EXIT links mentees – individuals in the process of leaving the extreme right – to mentors – employees who are former neo-Nazis. The article illuminates why good intentions and a shared past between mentor and mentee are not enough for a development-oriented relation to occur; supporting mentees struggling with the outcomes of their involvement in the extremist right requires a deliberate practice. The main argument of the article is that for mentors to contribute to mentees' development and reintegration into democratic society, they need to have contextualised and reinterpreted their own narrative of (dis)engagement and to combine it with a deliberate practice when interacting with mentees.

Key words: mentoring scheme, situated learning, development, identity-processes, right-wing extremism

When good intentions are not enough
- A successful mentor-mentee relation requires a deliberated practice

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Introduction

Violent acts committed by extremists from the far right and religious groups have drawn increasing attention in Europe in recent years. Events such as the murders committed by the National Socialist Underground in Germany, the serial killings of individuals of immigrant background in Malmö and numerous demonstrations involving members of far-right groups have fed the fear in European societies at large that the far right is on the rise[1].

Anders Behring Breivik's attack in the summer of 2011 drew worldwide attention to the extremist and racist right movement in Scandinavia, yet in spite of the attack in Norway, the extremist right movement in Sweden is significantly larger than is the case in Norway and Denmark. Right-wing extremists are not a threat to democracy, according to reports from the Ministry of Justice in Sweden, but they still attract adherents (Stern 2014).

An outcome of the increased recruitment of youth into extremist groups is also a growing awareness of people's desire to leave extremist groups and the difficulties involved. Studies reveal that a

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[1] Preventing and Countering Far-Right Extremism: European Cooperation, COUNTRY REPORTS, Ministry of Justice, Sweden and Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2012.

process of disengagement and deradicalisation is as complex as the one leading to the initial radicalisation (Horgan 2009, Bjørgo and Horgan 2009, Stern 2014, Barrelle 2010). This understanding has prompted exit programmes to be established in increasing numbers in Europe. One of these is EXIT, a Swedish organisation providing support to individuals seeking to leave the extremist right. EXIT uses therapeutic dialogues and activities to support the mentees in developing alternative world views, self-understanding and identity. The organisation's primary support of their mentees, whom they describe as their clients – subjects in the process of leaving the extreme right – is to connect them to a mentor, a coach – an employee who has been part of the extremist right. The aim of this article is to discuss EXIT's use of mentoring schemes in their support of former neo-Nazis[2]. The articles argue that the shared past between coach and clients is not enough for coaches to be able to underpin the clients' reintegration into democratic society. The coaches and their personal experience as former right-wing extremists need to be embedded in a practice, meaning EXIT's certain way of approaching the clients, for them to be able to support clients' development, defined as a definitive change of self-perception and social understanding.

The article is inspired by the cultural-historical school and a neo -Vygotskian approach, which conceptualises action and agency as having recourse to symbolic structures of meaning (Reckwitz 2002). I use this complex of theories in a heuristic way to point out how EXIT's coaches support their clients'[3] development by interacting with them. This approach enables me to identify how development occurs as an outcome of interaction between individuals and their social and natural surroundings, mediated though culturally defined devices (Wertsch 2007, Holland et al. 1998).

The article starts by providing a brief introduction to the radicalisation process and moves on to present EXIT, which is part of a larger youth centre in Stockholm called Fryshuset. As well as the main problems EXIT's clients are struggling to overcome in the process of leaving the extreme right-wing behind. Next, I detail how the coaches' – as "formers" (former right-wing extremists) – 'sense of the game' plays an essential role in EXIT's assessment of potential clients and interaction with them. Then I describe how EXIT uses activities to build up basic trust between clients and coaches, which EXIT perceives as crucial for clients' openness towards the coaches and their support. Finally, I argue how the combination of a trustful relationship, specific forms of dialogue and activities trigger the clients' transformational process. I conclude by pointing out conditions

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[2] I use the terms 'right-wing extremists' and 'neo-Nazis 'as synonyms, although I am aware that not all right-wing extremists are neo-Nazis whereas all neo-Nazis are right-wing extremists
[3] This article is a result of a PhD project at the Department of Psychology and Educational Studies at Roskilde University in Denmark.

crucial to be conscious of when using mentoring schemes to support people in the process of leaving the extremist right behind.

The challenges of a (former) extremist right-winger
Right-wing extremists are characterised as *extreme* due to their rejection of the core ideals of liberal democracy, equality and tolerance and to their considering inequality between people as a natural principle. They also reject the ideals of deliberation and voting in common decision-making. People who advocate the ideology perceive violence as a legitimate means to pursue political goals and approve of the use of non-democratic measures such as harassment and violence against political opponents and others. In this case, the concept of an extremist is thus relative to democratic society and its values[4].

Investigators and practitioners involved in investigation and prevention of terrorist attacks have focused on developing a checklist of qualities that will enable them to predict what the next terrorist is likely to look and act like. Yet, efforts to pathologise the terrorist have resulted in simplistic explanations that obscure the complexity (Horgan 2009:4). In extremist and terrorist studies, radicalisation has become understood as the result of a process which makes individuals add such significance to their identity as political activists that they advocate on behalf of the group (Bjørgo and Horgan 2009, Horgan 2009, Barrelle 2010, Karpantschof 2007, Christensen 2009). Approaches to radicalisation have therefore in recent years moved from micro-level explanations found in psychological studies in particular and the effort to map presumed inherent qualities characterising individuals who become extremists and terrorists to a focus on group dynamics and processes. The reason is, that it is perceived as doubtful that a profile could tell anything meaningful about why or how someone seeks to become involved in extremism in the first place, because it is highly probable that any terrorist profile is rather a reflection of the radicalisation process a terrorist has already gone through than a characteristic of the individual (Horgan 2009).

Most extreme groups have a high turnover, and most members do leave at some point. Whether violent or non-violent, there appear to be commonalities if not universal processes involved in leaving intense closed groups, which is, among others, the issue of identity (Barrelle 2010, Bjørgo 2009).

To develop into a right-wing extremist means to go through a process of radicalisation, which reflects repeated social and psychological interactions with an ideology, the community of practice it engenders and the meaning that is derived by the individual (Horgan 2009:8). The Nazi movement in Sweden is described by coaches at EXIT as a political sect, in which members are

schooled in black and white thinking, notions of a conspiracy against society and the idea that everyone outside the group is an enemy to be fought. The movement seems to offer the possibility for the individual to metaphorically 'take on' or 'step into' a pre-established role or identity they 'just' have to fulfil. The emotional sides to being a right-wing extremist also offer very intense feelings of hatred, aggression and highs of adrenalin. The different kinds of actions, the developed identity and the ideas that former participants have been immersed in for a long period of time are some of the issues former participants leaving right-wing extremist groups often need support to handle (Lodenious 2014 in Christensen 2014 B in press).

Being part of a group on the extremist right can thus create social disability for the individuals in the form of difficulties in resolving conflicts and managing stress, and the individual might continue to perceive violence and aggression as legitimate tools when interacting with others, since violence has so far been used as a legitimate tool to solve conflicts.

Due to these issues, some former participants in right-wing extremist groups need support to develop alternative world views and social skills when they disengage in order to enter a different world. Yet, as the quotes below indicate, it is a great challenge to support people with difficult lives and help them undergo radical changes.

'[5]*Jeff* (a coach) *has work with a very difficult guy; he has killed someone and is very damaged... He explodes with anger at less than nothing, you know, he becomes a victim, he becomes furious and is a very strong guy and very unbalanced. And I ask Jeff,"Do you like Preben* (the client)*?" "Yes". It comes so fast and I think it's what keeps the two together. After all, he has succeeded in giving this guy some tools so he will not do time again, he can stop himself and he doesn't get into fights anymore as the first thing he does when he enters a pub. He (*Perben) *is a guy who has tattoos all over his head and has been a hopeless case since he was 15. I think it is partly because Jeff has used CBT; he has had one year of training in CBT* - Cognitive behavioural therapy - *and has worked with these techniques. But I also think that Preben feels that he has for the first time formed an alliance with a human being and Jeff holds on ... Jeff may well feel that it will be difficult to let go of this guy because when will this treatment end?... I think we as a group have different roles, but I think there is love for the clients, that they like them and here* (at EXIT) *you can build on that, which you can't do in the social services or in therapeutic relations'* (Interview transcript of employee at EXIT 2012)

==The quote touches upon core issues in this article such as EXIT's linking of situated learning processes to trustful relationships between coaches and clients.== Preben, the client in the above quote has come to value Jeff, his coach. For this reason he has become open to Jeff's support, which is aimed at creating a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978) to help Preben change his

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[4] This paragraph is based on Klemens Kappel's lectures at The Danish Institute for International Studies on 17 - 18 September 2014. Kappel is director of the Department of Philosophy, University of Copenhagen.

habitual violent behaviour. This is done by introducing Preben to alternative strategies, which Jeff has learned through his own training in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and his work as a coach. The bond between the two plays an all-important role in the client's courage to try different approaches. The fact that the coach has previous experience in the extreme right makes it easier for the client to identify with him, as the client perceives their shared experience as being of paramount importance to their relationship. For the coach, the common past is just <u>one</u> aspect of EXIT's multifaceted practice of bolstering clients' desire to disengage and strengthen their self-understanding and social skills. Yet, identification based on a shared past, the desire to help others on the basis of one's own experiences and empathy with a fellow human being is not enough for a successful mentorship to develop.

Initially, a shared past is crucial, but EXIT's detailed knowledge of the target group, the individual client and the coaches' specific approaches to clients are decisive factors for a mentorship to have a life-changing impact on the client with a past at the extremist right wing.

Fryshuset, EXIT and the frame around client support

EXIT is an integrated part of a larger institution called Fryshuset: the "cold store" (cold-storage warehouse). Fryshuset is a type of youth centre in Sweden that comprises a number of projects with the overall goal of empowering youngsters through activities, the building of social relations and interaction with adults (Carlberg 2008:80). Fryshuset is based in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmo and together the centres offer 50 different projects, sports and cultural facilities. EXIT has grown out of Fryshuset's practice of building organisations by involving motivated people and pooling them with employees with various competences (Christensen 2014 in press). The organisation is just one of the many social projects, NGOs and organisations linked together under the auspices of Fryshuset in Stockholm.

During 2012 I did fieldwork at EXIT for two months, following their everyday routine, participated in two educational sessions for the staff and conducted a total of 21 interviews of clients and staff, lasting one to three hours each with 15 people in all. I have interviewed 11 clients in total, who are a mixture of people who were clients up to ten years ago, while others have just become one.

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[5] This quote is from a recorded and transcribed interview that took place at EXIT in 2012 with a social worker.

EXIT's approach to people involved in the extreme right is that their reason for joining such groups is <u>not</u> because they hold extremist views; rather, they *acquire* extremist views because they have joined the groups for other reasons (Bjørgo 2009).

EXIT's staff members' positive experience of working with right-wing extremists in the process of leaving the White Power Movement has led them to extend their work to clients who want to leave organised street and (motorcycle) gangs, who are in need of much the same support as former neo-Nazis. This work is now taken care of by the sister organisation Passus, which works according to the same assumptions and methods but is aimed at gang members. EXIT's and Passus' staff work as a team from the same office (Christensen 2013, 2014 A, and 2014 B).

In Fryshuset's as well as in EXIT's and Passus' perspective, members of street and biker gangs, criminal groups and extremist networks are all perceived as having a destructive lifestyle and anti-democratic behaviour in a democratic society as members of these sorts of groups deny other citizens their democratic rights through, for example, surveillance of political opponents (extremist right), blackmail (gangs) and violence or the threat of it.

When Fryshuset explicitly defines a lifestyle as destructive, they also explicate that other life conditions are perceived as normatively better. One – of several – (see Christensen 2014 in press) of Fryshuset's explicit values is: *We provide encouragement, confidence and responsibility, which creates knowledge and self-esteem that highlights the individual's inherent power* (my translation in Christensen 2014 B, footnote[6]). Through stated values like this, Fryshuset points to conditions they perceive as essential for the individual to achieve self-fulfilment and empowerment, rather than presenting a model for 'how you ought to live your life'. These explicit values provide Fryshuset, EXIT and Passus with an ethical basis they can refer to when they point out critical issues present in the figured worlds of gangs and extremist political groups that hinder individuals in developing self-esteem and life quality. A *figured world* is a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation connected to a social practice in which particular characters or actors are recognised, significance is assigned to certain acts and particular outcomes are valued over others (Holland et al. 1998: 52). It is a cultural base framing individuals' improvisation as they develop in a heuristic manner (ibid). Therefore, the meaning systems clients have developed as an outcome of their participation in gangs or extremist groups must be dealt with in their disengagement process as they influence their reactions and their behavioural and thought patterns, which they often need support to alter.

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[6] http://fryshuset.se/om-fryshuset/vision-och-vardegrund, I have translated it from Swedish into English.

Since the coaches[7] are former neo-Nazis themselves, they have experienced what seem to be common factors in a disengagement process: threats from former friends, feelings of loneliness, aggression, violent reaction patterns, distrust of people and lack of job opportunities (Bjørgo 2009, footnote [8], Christensen 2014 A). However, the coaches' participation in EXIT's and Passus' daily practice and their work with clients have led them to identify themselves as coaches (Christensen 2014 in press).

EXIT's approach to clients

Several of the informants had experienced how they would have certain feelings of aggression before entering the extremist right wing and how these feelings had become much stronger through participation, making their everyday life full of conflict, aggression and hate towards other people. Another experience common to all the informants among present and former clients was that participation had led to a strong increase in the aggression they built up inside themselves. The more aggression they felt, the less room there would be for other emotions, and over time, they would move towards an emotional state consisting of two very dominant feelings: aggression and hate.

In order for the client to develop other kinds of emotions than aggression and hatred, the coaches, when working with the clients, involve them in different activities, for example, museum visits, weightlifting, walk and talk, going to cafés and playing paintball. These activities are means to allow the clients to experience alternative activities, to identify new interests in which to become involved and to develop new social skills and thus different emotions from aggression and hatred. The activities are introduced as EXIT perceives personal change as an outcome of the individual's repeated participation in a variety of activities that give rise to diverse emotions and thereby new connections in the brain. This, as several staff members explained, is a precondition for people to be able to develop new ways of (re)acting (Christensen 2014 in press).

The core of EXIT's work is client support, drawing attention to the term *client* and the line EXIT draws between humans and their actions. *Client,* several coaches are convinced, was introduced by one of the first leaders of the client programme, Ingrid, a social worker, who was recruited to EXIT and added her lifelong experience from work in therapeutic institutions to the organisation's practice. Nowadays the term *client* is used in a habitual sense, but only seems to have significance

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[7]I describe coaches as males only, as I have only meet one women who had been engaged as coaches at EXIT. She stopped being a coach after a short while, but continued as a lecturer. Clients, most often men, misunderstood her interest in them and responded as if she had an intimate interest in them instead of 'just' being their coach. The other woman has only had one client for a number of years and is not part of EXIT per se.
[8] http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/are-you-looking-to-break-away-from-your-nazi-gang-exit-deutchland-bernd-wagner

for the employees as a means for them to avoid referring to the *clients* as *formers*, implying that you can never really leave your past identity behind, which works contrary to EXIT's starting point. EXIT's methods of involving the client in alternative activities to alter the person's self-understanding and social skills in a sense make humans equal to their actions. But EXIT insists on their clients' humanity irrespective of their actions by postulating that a line should be drawn between people's actions and people as human beings. By this moral stance EXIT avoids falling into the trap of dehumanising others, by defining them as demons on the basis of a judgment of their actions and ideological convictions. In this way they also counteract the extremist right wing's postulation of some people being more human than others because they consider inequality among people to be a nature-given principle (Bjørgo 1997). Through their acknowledgement of the clients' humanness EXIT also opens the door for them to reenter the community and the organisation confirms their stance in the collective responsibility of creating a society for all humans (Lippestad 2013).

The coaches' goal of interaction with their clients is intended to support the clients' motivation to disengage as well as to encourage them, through new situations and dialogue, to enter a *zone of proximal development,* which is… the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky 1978: 86). In line with this approach, EXIT does not perceive people according to the everyday perception of identity as linked to an inner core, which leads to the obvious characterisation of people who use violence or threats as stupid, uncaring or evil. On the contrary, in EXIT's view, people who act in such ways do so because they have not learned other strategies of handling themselves in the situation. EXIT thus turns the perception of acts into a question of mastering behavioural strategies rather than a sign of character. In this way, EXIT approaches identity like Dorothy Holland et al. (1998:31) 'as a sign of self in practice, not as a sign of self in essence'. This perspective opens up new opportunities for individuals, as they can alter themselves by (inter)acting in different ways as they develop a better self-understanding and sensitivity towards the unspoken norms of social life. Clients regard the coaches as role models; therefore the coaches' narratives also become a mediating device for them (Holland et al. 1998). A mediating device is a tool for reflection constructed by assigning meaning to an object or behaviour as it develops within a locus of social activity (ibid.). Clients identify with the coaches, who are former neo-Nazis and/or gang members who have become experienced coaches, the coaches thus constitute a mediating device for the clients by introducing 'a way of doing things' the clients can draw on for further improvisation.

In the next section I shall focus on how the coaches' 'sense of the game' as former right-wing extremists and/or gang members is an essential part of EXIT's assessment of potential clients. This approach also points to how the subject's heuristic development is linked to sediment from his/her past experiences (Holland et al. 1998).

Coaches' 'sense for the game' needs to be contextualized to become useful in EXIT's practice

By becoming members in a figured world individuals acquire bodily know-how and social and cultural competences through what Jean Lave (1996) describes as a situated learning process. Over time, the process shapes the participants' perception of a culturally defined context of action, as issues of central importance in their particular realm of reality are pointed out to them by more experienced participants (Hasse 2002, Holland et al. 1998). There are many figured worlds and the coaches' personal narratives involve having left the figured world of the White Power Movement to become integrated subjects in a different one: EXIT (Christensen 2014 in press). The coaches' sediment from past experiences conditions their history-in-person upon which they now improvise, which positions them to be able to act 'in between' two figured worlds using knowledge from one world – the extremist right – but interpreted through the practice learned in a different one: EXIT. Due to their past as gang members and/or right-wing extremists, coaches at EXIT and Passus have a bodily know-how as well as social and cultural competences that give them a 'feeling for the game' (Bourdieu: 104-105 in Holland et al. 1998) in these environments. This 'sense of the game' in different culturally defined worlds (ibid., Christensen 2014 in press) is the competence that gives the coaches a significant position at EXIT, as they can switch between the perspectives of the figured world of the extreme right or gang and the one as a coach in EXIT.

Because of their past, the coaches know the symbolic and material artefacts that evoke the figured world of the White Power Movement as well as the possibilities and constraints of that world. The coaches' personal experience of the process in and out of the extreme right has become conscious knowledge through the disengagement process they have gone through, which implies an expanded notion of their narrative of participation as well as a transformation of their self-understanding (Christensen 2014 in press). The coaches also keep themselves updated about the extremist right scene through news on the internet, books and rapports to maintain a present-day frame of reference they can use in their assessment of potential clients and when interacting with them. The coaches' strength is the unique combination of their own experience of participation in the extremist right

with the methods learned through their work as coaches, which also makes them interpret their past differently (Christensen 2014 in press).

To become clients at EXIT the individuals mainly contact the organisation themselves, while some are referred to EXIT by youth workers, police officers, teachers or family members (Bjørgo 2009, Christensen 2013). Using formers gives legitimacy to the organisation in relation to the target group (ibid.) even though right-wing extremists' awareness of EXIT's existence becomes ironically underlined when staff, as a former client told, are referred to as; *'idiots, fucking pigs, fucking communists, fucking Jews'* and other words in order to dehumanise them.

When EXIT is contacted by people doubting their participation in the extremist right, the coach asks questions that support the potential client's doubts during the first conversation. As a coach explained when asked what he means when he talks about planting a seed of doubt:*'You have to try to get as much information about him* (the potential client) *as possible and try to adjust the information: What will actually be a seed of doubt for this person? Usually something that they cannot voice in their environment, something they have been thinking about and you can provide more information that kind of…let's say they have been thinking about; "Are we really going to win this war? Or is this struggle really contributing to something?" And then you can say, "Well, when I was a Nazi 15 years ago, we said this and this", and he will say, "Well, we say the same thing now", and then you go, "Oh, is that so? Maybe not much has happened in 15 years?! Where do you see yourself in 15 years? Is this just a record repeating itself? Because they say that they are really gaining ground and now is the time to fight and they have been saying that for 15 years, so…"'* (interview transcript 2012).

As Jeff – the coach – explains, he is confirming that 'Yes, there is reason to leave this environment', since he indirectly makes it clear that it is going nowhere. Jeff's assessment is based on his insight into the environment since he knows that it is impossible for the members to show any signs of doubt. Yet he also uses approaches from his work as a coach by not starting an ideological discussion or in any other way explicitly telling the potential client what to do; rather he presents things in such a manner that the client can make the decision. As he says:

'I am not telling them why they should quit. It is more them telling themselves why they should quit if they have doubts. Usually you cannot voice doubts in these environments because if you start voicing doubts you become a security risk and you are not trustworthy anymore, so you probably won't move up in the hierarchy. So that is one of their biggest problems: that they don't have a place where they can actually confess, where they can say;"I am really tired of the struggle; I don't

want to hate anymore; I don't want to listen to this propaganda – it depresses me"' (interview transcript 2012).

Embodied knowledge of the target group is double-faced

Before EXIT can assess whether a person can become a client, he/she first has to meet two coaches, who try to get as detailed an overview of the person as possible. The initial phase is very important as a failed client case, one coach explained, is often due to issues the coach has not been aware of. In the initial meeting the coaches, amongst other things, wishes to find out about potential threats against the individual, as they can become dangerous for the staff as well. They also identify potential substance abuse, psychological issues and the person's personal network – as this is an asset during the disengagement process. This information is important, but the client's motivation is paramount for his/her possibility of leaving the extremist right wing. Afterwards the coaches discuss their impressions and any information they have received from other institutions the person has been in contact with, with the staff at EXIT and Passus. EXIT cooperates with different institutions when dealing with clients with psychological issues or substance abuse.

This observation from a meeting illuminates how the coaches' personal knowledge of the clients' figured world gives them a very detailed frame of reference when discussing client cases, which benefits other employees, who in turn can contribute with their own particular insight.

'Hilde (a social worker)*, Gunnar* (a coach and former gang member) *and Karl* (the only coach who has not been involved gangs or the extremist right) *are discussing whether they should take on a man involved in a gang as a client in Passus. They are trying to ascertain where the potential client has been. They can see that he has apparently been in Malmo, Gothenburg and Stockholm. Gunnar: I am always sceptical when people have been in Malmo, especially if they leave the city; there's a reason why they leave. In Malmo there are people from the Balkans whom the young ones look up to. We do not know who he has tipped off, what kind of network he has and what else he might be involved in'.*

To know about the similarities and differences of gangs in different cities in Sweden and by identifying what they do not know, Gunnar is outlining points of references for the staff. He makes them aware that there is a difference between gangs in Stockholm and Malmo and he identifies what they need to find out to avoid their lack of knowledge about the client becoming a security risk for them. The meeting continues; *'Gunnar perceives Malmo as something entirely different. He says, "It's a whole different ball game than Stockholm". Hilde also asks Gunnar if he thinks there might be drugs involved, as she thinks the potential client has too much money. Gunnar rejects this*

idea, explaining, "They (the gang) *would not use him in that connection if he's placed where he is in the hierarchy"'* (field note 2012). The coach's own experience of the hierarchical structure of gangs enables him to assess the client's potential role in it, which would be hard to identify for anybody without an insider perspective of gangs and what the hierarchy entails for the individual member. Because of the coaches' embodied insight into the figured worlds of gangs and/or the White Power Movement, they asses the information about clients differently than an outsider, who would not know where in the hierarchy a member selling drugs would be placed. But insider knowledge can also be a challenge for the coaches, as will become evident.

The clients' awareness of the coaches having been members of gangs and/or the extremist right also adds value to the clients' perception of the coaches' judgement. During a meeting two coaches discussed the difficulties involved in determining when to be firm with a client. Gunnar explained that gang members face direct consequences of their actions in the gang. Gunnar – who had left a gang five years earlier – argued that clients should not think that they can manipulate coaches in EXIT/Passus without facing consequences immediately. Jeff did not agree with this standpoint. He described how a client had annoyed him by repeatedly bragging about his position in the White Power Movement and how he had the potential to become a leader like Adolf Hitler. Jeff, who has been a coach from EXIT for about ten years, said; *'You can't just say right to his face, "You are nothing, you don't even have the potential to become a scout in the movement!" He was a boy, 14 years old, and I was so sick and tired of listening to him bragging. I had enough and answered him harshly with the result that he became frightened. Afterwards he thought that I was an idiot. I lost contact with the boy, who is now still in the movement – it is often difficult to estimate how to react and when to be firm or not'* (field note 2012). As the clients knows that the coaches have been members themselves, the coaches' words in this respect are harder for a client to brush aside and may also hit harder, as the words have a different legitimacy than they would coming from a social worker without a background in the extremist right. The quote also emphasises how difficult it is for coaches to determine an appropriate reaction to clients who often push the limits in their interaction with them. The coaches' different perspectives on which strategies they find appropriate might be an outcome of their individual history-in-person (Holland et al. 1998). For example, the amount of time that has gone since a coach has disengaged <u>might</u> have an impact on their views on the question of firmness.

The shared past of clients and coaches is an advantage when coaches have a reflective attitude towards their own 'sense of the game' and how they use it in their assessment of and interaction with clients. As the last example shows, trust is a key issue in supporting clients, as a lack of

confidence between coach and client can disrupt the relationship. EXIT's approach to encouraging clients to trust the coaches is the focus of the next section.

Clients 'trust is a prerequisite for their openness to guidance

EXIT's perception of the individual's identity as a 'sign of self in practice' (Holland et al. 1998) places great importance on the social milieu the individual acts in. Therefore, the relationship between coaches and clients is the core of EXIT's client support. Joint activities for coaches and clients create a possibility for clients to see the coaches' actions in a given situation. By objectifying the situation, clients may use the experience to direct their own behaviour when they are in a similar situation, thereby turning the situation into a mediating device.

The coach Jeff's recounting of difficult client cases reveals how trust between people cannot be hurried; it grows out of joint activities and dialogue over time. As this coach's experience shows, EXIT is very deliberate about instigating a trust-building process since trust is the foundation on which everything else in the process depends. Jeff recounts, '*The first thing we do is we try to establish relationships, to establish a kind of basic trust. But with this guy... it usually doesn't take me long, but with this guy it took me six months to get to the point when he actually asked me, "What do you think of this?". I was like, "I think this and this," and he said, "I will take that into consideration". It took me six months just to get that: "I have to listen to what you actually have to say", and before that I didn't really try to change anything. I just tried to get to know him, work out with him, go to the supermarket with him, trying to make him feel comfortable and safe*' (Interview transcript 2012).

Going to the park, the supermarket, working out or any other joint activities are, as the quote indicates, important as shared experiences that help people make some sense of each other, which is the first step in a long process of trust building. The client's statement of taking Jeff's opinion into consideration is a sign that the client values Jeff. This leads him to acknowledge Jeff by paying attention to his points of view and their relation in a different way than previously.

EXIT uses physical activity to trigger the trust building processes, which opens up the possibility for interaction that can lead to a zone of proximal development. Such a zone becomes possible when the interaction allows for understanding, coordination and transformation of different experiences and when one person's action generates and supports another person's initiative (Zuckerman 2007:43). For such interaction to occur the relation between client and coach in EXIT's perspective needs to be based on honesty and respect, which allow affection and trust to evolve. If trust does not develop, the client is introduced to a different coach. Even though the relationship

between client and coach is based on an emotional link, it is still a professional one as it evolves as an outcome of specific approaches and convictions.

Weightlifting as a means to create a zone of proximal development

EXIT uses weightlifting as a means of creating a zone of proximal development in a Vygotskian sense as several parts of the activity becomes a mediating device for the clients' alternative ways of mastering themselves. During an interview with the previous leader of EXIT, Ingrid recounts how she explained weightlifting as a therapeutic tool to the coaches, to help them perceive the parallel processes she thinks take places during a session by pointing out how it is about working out but also embodies building trust, self-esteem and so on. Clients often do weightlifting to fill in the gap left after leaving the gang or the extremist group. However, as she says, it also engages the client in a joint activity, creating a situated learning process with the coach[9]. Ingrid's identification of the parallel processes for the coaches emphasises how work with clients transforms not only the clients but also the coaches. Through weightlifting, clients and coaches get closer to one another, initially in a non-verbal way, as they have to pay attention to each other and the barbell. This can create a zone of proximal development as lifting the heavy barbell involves the participants' awareness of each other's needs. The client needs to be attentive to the coach's needs, as he depends on him – which in turn requires attention, cooperation and trust between the two. Ingrid explains; '*Parallel processes involve a client such as Anders, who, like many of Passus' and Exit's clients, has had early experiences of shortcomings; they have had serious traumas, bad school experiences, a negative self-image and of course, poor self-confidence. When they work out with their role model, as coaches often become, they are given a lot of attention during the training session. I can also see that they are mentally guided. They are both guided and given attention and they also get immediate confirmation of their progress from the coach'*. The coaches have continued weightlifting after becoming coaches in EXIT. Now they use this competence to guide the clients and as a means for them to become calm and focused – in contrast to their previous experience, when weightlifting was, amongst other things, a means to build up a strong body to signal masculinity, strength and invincibility to others. When clients are given instructions, they must pay

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[9] Even though I have only heard about male clients being involved in weightlifting I do not perceive it as a male-only activity. Thai boxing is another sport offered to Fryshuset's staff and members of both genders and is just as demanding as weightlifting.

attention to what the coach is saying. This may position the coach as the experienced one, but as the activity is based on cooperation, clients and coaches are equally dependant on each other's help. Ingrid continues, '*So you could say that we go through the body to work with their minds and it is therapeutic because – as is very often the case in therapy – it's not words that liberate, it is the relationship, and to be noticed by the therapist is indeed very significant. I think you can compare this to what happens during weightlifting and the relationship that is created... and with our boys and guys you often have to start by going back to basics, which is a good method to use. It passes over defence... it is a parallel process as you hold on here, for it is a matter of life and death if you lose it'*. The barbell is often heavier when people work out together than it is when one person is working out alone, which makes coaches and clients dependent on each other's help. '*There really is a lot than can be compared with a therapeutic process as you go through the body to reach inside and gain the person's confidence, and then they might also have confidence to talk but also to be susceptible. When you exercise, tension disappears, restlessness, you may become a little more self-reliant, which also applies to coaches who often have similar problems. Then you go and have lunch and then you have this dialogue'*. By using weightlifting, EXIT allows clients to experience togetherness through a shared activity that is not only based on verbal communication. Moreover, the interaction avoids a face-to-face situation that some clients find uncomfortable. After working out, the coach and client eat lunch together – the significances of which I shall expand on below. Ingrid continues, '*The coaches have been in the same situation a few years back ...and I also think that it creates a sense of connection for both the coach and the client and that a lot of parallel things take place. So it's definitely not just training ... I have made it very clear that it is good to perceive it as a tool that creates change…you also learn to interact, I often think too, well it's like this: your turn and my turn, or like that: now I talk and you listen'* (interview transcript 2012).

The coaches' practice of supporting clients develops through their interaction with other members of staff, who, like Ingrid have made them aware of points of significance in their interaction with clients – like the parallel processes Ingrid identified.

Situations like the one mentioned above touch upon central issues in the cultural-historical school. According to Vygotsky (1983:145 in Cole 1996), any function in the cultural development of a person appears twice: first between people as an inter-psychic category (Ingrid pointing out signs of significance for the coach) and then within the person, as an intra-psychic category (the coach comes to perceive weightlifting as part of the trust building process). This underlines the notion that

social interaction engages people in a culturally situated learning process as signs of significance are exposed to us by more experienced fellow human beings. It is precisely by means of participating in social interaction that zones of proximal development occur as interpretations are first proposed and worked out (for example, when Ingrid explains the parallel processes for the coaches or a coach shows a client how to help him handle the barbell) and hence become available to be taken over by individuals (Wertsch 2007), which is also one path on the way to a common figured world.

The support of the clients is linked to a trustful relation because in EXIT's experience, trust makes zones of proximal development occur between clients and coaches. In EXIT's perception the meeting between the client and coach is a meeting in which individuals from peculiar figured worlds meet with the intent of helping the client develop alternative skills and a new understanding that will enable him/her to leave the figured world of the extremist right by becoming engulfed by a different one. Clients' trust in the coach is crucial as they are supported by the coach in upholding their decision to leave the extremist right and in the first tentative moves towards entering a different figured world. Through dialogue coaches help clients become reflective about themselves and through activities they make the client rehearse the particular repertoire of activities or scripts associated with different figured worlds. I will expand on this notion below.

The advantage of a shared history - when embedded in a practice
The coaches' shared experiences with the clients and their perception of them as important initially create advantages for the coaches as it facilitates the clients' identification with them. The clients' actions and the associated perspectives they have developed as neo-Nazis may seems odd from an outside perspective, which could make clients too distrustful to express them. However, clients' identification with the coaches encourages them to express their thoughts about ideological issues and other questions, which they might have refrained from if the coaches were not formers themselves.

Several clients expressed strong feelings of shame about their involvement in the extremist right, but knowing about their coach's previous involvement assured them that he would not and indeed could not condemn them. Former and present clients also emphasised in interviews how their coach understood them as, in their eyes, nobody else had before. As one of them explained, '*The insight the coach has into what it means to participate is not something he has read in a book*' but rather – as several clients made clear – '*something he knows from personal experience*' (interview transcript

20012). This enables him to discuss the emotional side of participation in the extremist right, a subject they long to discuss in the beginning (Christensen 2013).

The coaches are aware of the importance clients put on the shared past, but contrary to the clients, they only perceive it to have significance in the initial stages. As one coach explained, '*During the disengagement process it can be fruitful to introduce the client to other staff members, as the shared past can hinder the client's development by making the extremist right a recurrent topic of conversation*' (field note 2013).

To start a process of reflection, EXIT encourages clients to question what they believe(d) in, since the culture of the extremist right emphasises hierarchal thinking, discourages questioning and promotes an unequal perspective on humans with narrow standards for right and wrong. Clients may have been in these environments for years and even though they are leaving the group behind they may remain ideologically convinced. However, the coach Jeff finds it important to be very conscious of his approach when he has dialogues with clients about ideological issues. He starts by identifying the ideological perspective of the client, but is at the same time very aware of NOT getting engaged in any explicit ideological or related ethical <u>discussion</u>. As he explained, '*People in the extremist right say stupid things such as, for example, that the Holocaust did not take place just to infuriate you. Then you pay them your full attention and let them gain control of the discussion – and you. Though such discussions you also open op for the possibility that clients will position you in their black and white worldview, which either reduces you to a friend OR an enemy. Jeff tries, as he says, to remain "grey" by not letting the client get a clear picture of his conviction in order to avoid letting the client gain control*' (field note 2012).

The clients' difficulties vary, but since the coaches spend time on building a trustful relationship with them, they also have the possibility of identifying in greater detail the individual client's thought and behavioural patterns as well as his/her frame of reference for activities, hobbies, wishes for the future and the specific issues he/she is struggling with.

Because of the well-defined rules of dos and don'ts in the extremist right, the clients have come to perceive the world and others through a rigid perspective as well as their own emotional distinctions. Through their interaction with the coach, clients also become aware of what they are already doing – and perceive as natural – as the coach introduces them to new norms and values and questions things the client takes for granted. This approach makes clients reflect on their patterns of behaviour and thoughts. For example, interviews with a former client reveal how she, through interaction with her coach, became attentive to the fact that she never used to tell her friends in the

White Power Moment about her difficulties at home nor showed any signs of distress. This made her realise that she had become accustomed to blanking out when she was with her allies.

The potential of treating 'everyday' activities as a pathway to personal development

Clients need support with diverse issues; some need help in sorting out the emotional side of having been devoted members of the extremist right by having nuances added to what made them open towards the sense of belonging that plays a huge role for many of them. Whereas others who have long experience of institutions such as 24-hour care centres and who have served time for extended periods of their life are in need of very basic training in doing everyday things. As Ingrid told about a client, '*He has been in institutions all of his life, he couldn't go shopping as he didn't know how to enter a shop*'. Therefore, he did things like this with his coach during the initial phrase, when they also got to know each other. Ingrid continued, '*He has always just been served food; somebody else has cooked, cleaned up. How do you do it?! Do you throw it out when you have only eaten half the food? What do you do? I can't eat any more: Oh, you can put the rest in the refrigerator!*' (interview transcript 2012). The quote also illuminates how our daily life is a patchwork of different events that we have come to perceive as natural things to do by having strong routines that indicate the appropriate action. But people tend to forget how they initially became accustomed to these things by doing them in collaboration with more capable peers and by repeating them over and over again. When people engage in such everyday situations they develop what Holland et al. (1998) describe as a script, which indicates a very basic idea about a given event; a heuristic means people use to guide their behaviour. Scripts specify in a very rudimentary way the appropriate people to participate in an event, the social roles they play, the objects that are used and the sequence of actions and causal relations that apply (Holland and Cole 1995:101). The moment individuals have a vague sense of an appropriate action, they can enter into the flow of the particular event with a partial knowledge that will be enriched by the situation and that they will refine during the repetition of the event (Cole 2003:133). Becoming accustomed to the different events makes it possible for individuals to act in appropriate ways as they develop a basic script of the appropriate action. The behaviour associated with, for example, the event of 'going to a restaurant' will over time be routinised and begin to feel natural for the individual. People's specific expectations of what will happen when they enter, for example, a restaurant and their role, make complex joint activity possible. By involving clients in different situations, coaches can help them develop a sense of the particular event as well as a partial knowledge or basic script. Taking clients to a restaurant

also means inviting them into a zone of proximal development as coaches can show them 'what to do in this situation' by using themselves as an example of 'how to act'. Jeff describes how he behaves as a coach when going to a restaurant with a client:

'We ate lunch and I tested him too: how does he act in a social environment where he is not comfortable? We came to the restaurant and I tried... because I wanted to place him in the centre of Stockholm at rush hour, when there are lots of people...to see how he was able to interact with other people, queueing, and stuff like that. He kind of froze and I had to kind of help him by saying, 'Oh, don't you know what food to get? We can choose from this and that, and I am going to go and sit at that table over there, and have you seen the cutlery?' Jeff speaks in a light and encouraging tone, illustrating the episode. He continues: *'He was like, "Well, I haven't seen it yet,"'* Jeff's voice is now low and insecure as he plays the role of the client. *'Okay, I will ask someone where it is'* – again in a load and secure voice – *'I was the role model, showing him that if you don't know what to do in this environment, ask someone! But this is not my natural... this is not how I would do it if I were a private person. I would just...because I now have to walk around and be like; "OH, THIS IS...OH I DON'T KNOW WHAT FOOD TO GET... AND EXCUSE ME WOULD YOU..." stuff like that. It does not really come naturally to me, but I can do it in specific situations just to...kind of; how do you do stuff in an environment where you haven't been before? Is it strange to go up to the bar and say, "Hey, where's the cutlery?" And they go, "It's over there", "Okay, thank you. Can I get a coffee afterwards?" and they go, "Well, the coffee is over there", "Oh, is it free?" and they go, "Yeah, sure". I know it is free but I will ask anyway just to...'* (interview transcript 2012).

The situation entails a wide range of different emotions and actions the client needs to handle as well as the more specific situated learning of how to act in the situation. He is afraid of being in this particular neighbourhood in Stockholm without his comrades from the extremist group he used to be with, as he has been involved in clashes with the extremists left here. He also has to handle his impatience while waiting in line and he needs to let his thoughts and actions enter the flow of the question of 'what is going on in the restaurant and how am I supposed to act?'

The coach models his behaviour, as he describes it, for a zone of proximal development to occur. Jeff emphasises that he would not have behaved like this as a private person and that the idea behind the visit is to investigate the client's reaction to waiting in line with lots of people and to help him 'becoming a customer' in a restaurant in Stockholm by letting him experience and model his actions on Jeff's. When Jeff realises that the client is freezing, he starts improvising to show the client what to do on the basis of his partial knowledge of 'going to a restaurant'. He explicates his action by pointing out the artefacts involved and demonstrating how to behave when 'being a

customer' in a restaurant. In this way, the visit invites the client to develop, as he needs to handle his expectations and his actions and at the same time learn how to enter the flow of the event with hardly any knowledge – which is why he needs guidance in the situation. The coach's behaviour might become an icon of reflection for the client, as Jeff in this situation can be the mediating device he can use as a heuristic means to improvise from the next time he enters a restaurant (Holland et al. 1998).

To talk about everyday life as a means to dissolve a totalitarian world view

Besides doing activities with clients, coaches are also very aware of the power of talking, yet still embedded in a certain practice, creating a reflected approach for the coaches' part. Coaches talk to clients about specific situations to help them develop a broader perception of everyday situations and to become aware of the clients' expectations before involving them in a given situation. Clients have been accustomed to a black and white worldview with well-defined rules of dos and don'ts, combined with the framing (Snow et al. 2007, Christensen 2009) of modern-day Sweden as a society whose members are possibly enemies to be fought. They have often been discouraged from questioning this perspective on the world since, as mentioned earlier, doing so renders an active extremist right-winger suspicious within the movement. Therefore, clients' basic expectations of how to act in public spaces do not correspond to the basic script, which – for the sake of convenience – can be perceived as shared by average persons. In contrast, clients' expectations towards using public transport might be based on a rudimentary script in which their narrow norms for acceptable behaviour are used as an unreflective pretext for conflict-seeking interaction with other passengers on the bus. Since clients are in the process of entering a different figured world with different and potentially more nuances than what they have been use to, they need to become aware of their own expectations towards others and the reasons behind them. Through discussions with clients about, for example, an upcoming trip on the subway, coaches can help clients enrich their perception of the situations. Jeff explains a dialogue with a client: *'... normalising behaviour, just modelling behaviour, talking about how people interact with each other on the subway and how you should relate to that and saying,"Well, people are idiots, people will be in your way, people will do this and that, people are not as nice as they should be, but you know". But you can't...I am usually...I try to be really polite in public spaces even though I am...I cannot expect that from everyone else. That is a choice I make and I can't judge people because they don't live up to my standards; they have their own standards. My standards are not universal and when I start telling that to a client, he goes, "What, what do you mean? If you are nice to someone they should be nice*

to you"; "Well, I can't choose that for them"; "That is kind of common sense"; "Well, I kind of agree with you but you know you have to..." (interview transcript 2012) .

As mentioned, the coaches are careful not to discuss ideology with the clients. However, through dialogues like the one described above, the coach makes the client aware that reality is not one to one, in the sense that what the client does does not make everybody else do the same or act according to his expectations. Reality is more complex than that, which the coach points out by emphasising that one's own standards are not universal. This is also in an indirect manner to argue against the essence of the Nazi and extremist right wing ideology of a universal standard for all, which they promote as if it once existed in a utopian golden age that, according to them, has been lost due to globalisation, immigration, multiculturalism or other processes.

Jeff also shows the client how he is part of the context if he chooses to be polite, but that it is <u>his choice.</u> He also makes it clear that the client cannot expect everybody else to act like him.

In dialogue with clients, EXIT's coaches also use the practice of putting things into perspective by giving the clients concrete examples from their own daily lives, as when Jeff continues:

'...I started talking about when you have different kinds of perspective on things, for example, you like to have a really clean house and I say, "Well, my girlfriend and I, she likes to clean a lot and it takes me about two weeks before I see that we need to clean. It takes my girlfriend about two days, so my tolerance for when we need to clean is much higher than hers, which makes her clean more often and we discuss that and that is not a problem...". So I try to take that discussion into public transport. Like his tolerance for how you behave towards others is really high, whereas other people's tolerance about how to behave in public spaces may not be as high as his. What are we going to do? Are we going to go out and hit everyone and tell them, "Excuse me, the standard is this high?" We could do that for the rest of our lives and people would probably not do it anyway and the only thing that would happen is that he and I would probably go to jail eventually. So we tried to, even though you have thoughts about people and how they correlate to you and... because in his world everyone else was an idiot that did... that was not as nice as I am...well, no, they are not, but can you expect that from them? Maybe not. "How do you mean?" "Well, people are different, they have different values".

Jeff hereby gives the client an example from his own life, dragging the client into a process of reflection, by showing how he negotiates about 'how to do things' with his girlfriend to find a shared standard as well as clarifying why they have different standards for cleaning. He thereby points out how individuals have diverse values, find different things important and perceive things in different ways. This is yet another opposing argument to the black and white agenda of the

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extremist right and re-enforces Fryshuset's idea of how we can all live together if we develop common standards.

Clients need to internalise this approach to others as a means to develop. The coaches also make it clear that it is impossible to try to enforce a universal standard, which would require continuous sanctions that would not make the situation less hopeless but would also result in them both going to jail. The argument also shows how a different way of acting in your daily life implies questioning the ideology of the extremist right that clients to a greater or lesser extent have promoted and been inspired by. Jeff indirectly exemplifies why the ideological goal of universal standards is an eternal lost cause.

To make clients enter a zone of proximal development some coaches encourage them to write about their day in a journal according to a model of reflection in order to identify they feel grateful for as well as things they need help to tackle or apologise for. Then the client and the coach can go through the issues together. Ingrid, in reference to the model, said that several clients had referred to the three words of 'thanks, help and sorry' by asking her; *'How does that string of words go?'* This underlines how the three words become a symbolic mediation for the clients, providing what Holland et al. (1998:38) refer to as a *symbolic bootstrapping*. By helping clients objectify themselves in the context of different actions and incidents during an ordinary day the words become a tool for clients to gain a better understanding of their perception of the day and their own behaviour and struggles. Objectifying themselves is thus a means for clients to become aware of what they already do so they can change their actions and transform themselves.

The aim of the coaches' different approaches is to encourage clients to become more expert at being socialised into an existing social order (Wertsch, 1998) characterised by different figured worlds. This requires mastering diverse rudimentary scripts in order to feel comfortable and included. This is in EXIT's perspective decisive for the individual client's further development towards an alternative non-destructive lifestyle and identity.

Conclusion

Due to the particular issues clients are struggling with as a result of the participation in the extremist right, it is crucial to support them in gaining a better insight into themselves and society at large by interacting with their coaches. The coaches' support of the clients' engagement in other sorts of activities and ways of interacting improve their understanding of themselves and other groups and individuals in a societal context, all of which seems to reduce their aggression and potential use of violence.

For coaches to support clients' development, they need to have undergone a process of disengagement in which their own narrative of engagement and disengagement has been enriched. Moreover, they must use a deliberated practice for approaching the clients. Clients need to become engaged in the relationship with their coach and to join new activities if they are to enter into a developmental process that is aimed at creating self-esteem, giving them the courage to participate in activities in diverse milieus and to try out alternative strategies for action. Therefore, coaches need to be aware of the significance of their own past as they need tools and knowledge about how they can make the client enter a zone of proximal development through joint activities and dialogue. The zone of proximal development present in the different activities the clients become engaged in through interaction with the coaches comprises the individual steps that can help the clients develop basic scripts, understood as rudimentary indications of action. These can make the clients part of a different figured world than that of the extremist right wing they are seeking to leave.

Even though mentoring schemes are often based on a shared experience between mentors and mentees, or in this case, coaches and clients, a shared past and the desire to help others is, as the examples show, not enough for a successful mentorship to emerge. Having a shared past with the coach may hinder the clients' further development if the past is not used in a reflective way by the coach. In cases such as those described above, good intentions are important, but supporting clients who are struggling with personal narratives of failure and marginalisation, as well as the particular issues that are outcomes of their involvement in the extremist right, requires a conscious approach as there are many potential pitfalls.

Research on the processes facilitating disengagement from extremist groups has identified numerous issues which are divided into *push* and *pull* factors; *push* factors relate to negative social forces and circumstances that make it unattractive to remain in extremist groups, whereas *pull* refers to factors attracting the person to a more rewarding alternative (Bjørgo 2009: 36 - 43). This article moves one step further as the analysis of the situated learning process being an outcome of the relation between coach and clients adds new insight into the particular identity formation process being an essential part of the disengagement process. The neo-Vygotxskian approach makes it possible to detail how, by being introduced to different material and immaterial artefacts, former right-wing extremists develop sensitivities towards new worlds. The articles identify the many steps involved in an identity formation process, the social skills and the development of sensitivities required for people to enter new figured worlds. The identification of these skills and how to convey them to the clients are exactly the approaches that can support motivated people in entering alternative worlds rather than extremist groups or gangs. The approach enables me to identify how

development occurs as an outcome of interaction between individuals and their social and natural surroundings, mediated through culturally defined devices.

In spite of the commonalities if not universal processes involved in leaving intense closed groups, terrorism and extremism are always specific to their local cultures and political settings, and so are the initiatives supporting former terrorists or extremists to disengage. Therefore, programmes, models or practices that work in one country will not necessary prove beneficial in another (Bjørgo and Horgan 2009). Yet, a mentoring scheme can support people who have been part of different sorts of (destructive) subcultures in developing alternative identities, provided that the symbolic realm informing the specific type of clients is indeed very well understood by the mentors.

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