

Research Article

Failed Early Childhood Attachments and the Subsequent Disruptive Use of Social Media as Contributing Factors to Later Life Development of Extreme/Radical Ideologies

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Abstract

Extreme and radical ideologies have become the primary ideologies in virtually every aspect of our social, political, business, individual lives. Given this development, an extensive literature review was conducted in order to identify the life experiences that influenced the later life development of extreme/radical ideologies. This literature review consistently identified both childhood attachments and excessive use of social media formats as being related to the development extreme/radical ideologies. These associations, however, were not validated by the use of research methodologies. In response to this shortcoming, a research protocol was developed to statistically define the relationship between childhood attachment, the use of social media and the later life development of extreme/radical ideologies. These initial findings either failed to identify any or, at best, very weak correlations between childhood attachment or extreme/radical ideologies and extreme/radical ideologies. In response to these findings, an additional set of analyses were developed that combined the attachment scores and the social media scores into a single composite variable. The new combined variables provided consistent significant correlations with the extreme/radical variables. The rationale for developing a combined variable was based on the complexity of the development of extreme/radical ideologies that was identified in the literature review. In summary, the findings provide social workers and mental health practitioners a clear mandate for their role in preventing the development of extreme/radical ideologies with in the family unit as well as promoting government involvements to provide the needed resources to facilitate macro level prevention strategies.

Keywords

Early Childhood, Attachments, Disruptive Use, Social Media, Extreme/Radical, Ideologies

1. Introduction

Extreme and radical ideologies have seemingly become the primary ideologies in virtually every aspect of our social, political, business, and our individual lives including violence in the home and on our streets. Given the significant impact of this development, it becomes imperative that, as a society, we become better able to identify and subsequently respond to

any early life experiences that foster the later life development of extreme/radical (EX/R) ideologies.

With this research goal in mind, a thorough literature review was conducted that sought to identify what the relationship is between a number of early life developmental factors that either facilitate or deter an individual from the

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subsequent development of extreme/radical ideologies. The various search criteria included but were not limited to key-word terms such as: causes of extreme/radical ideologies, childhood and extreme/radical ideologies, social media and extreme ideology, childhood attachment and extreme/radical ideology. The following summaries represent the findings of that review.

In 2019 the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations [14] identified key drivers, influences, and causal pathways that protect children from the later life risk of extremism. They identified such points as promoting social cohesion, peaceful conflict resolution and value development, through high quality education and as part of extracurricular programs. Additionally, the article spoke of the need for children to see themselves as connected and contributing members of society which contributes to the building of resilience. The article identified that when there is an absence of these real-life experiences, it is not uncommon that radicalization fills the void. *Frontiers in Psychology* in 2019 [25] published an article that identified what they believed were psychological mechanisms that led to radicalization. The *Journal of Social Issues* in 2022 [17] published an article identifying social exclusion as a predictor of radicalism. In a study of Hispanic children, Martinez, Roith, Sanchez, and Narbona [12] concluded that the boys of mothers with a low educational level, right-wing orientations, as well as those who most frequently attend religious centers, show more extremism, pro-violence, and illegal acts and attitudes.

Rand Organization in 2021 [5] published a lengthy research effort that examined multiple risk factors that might contribute to individuals joining extremist organizations. They suggested that there is ultimately a wide range of factors, such as family dynamics and social backgrounds, that put some people at risk of radicalization.

The Government of the United Kingdom in 2024 [8] did identify several early childhood factors that were felt to lead to radicalization. They included factors such as a sense of not belonging, issues at home including the lack of parental attachment and the lack of self-esteem as preludes to later life radicalization. De Neve [6] also spoke of how childhood traumas might serve as a factor in predicting future ideologies. Fraley, Griffin, and Roisman [7] research stated that children as early as 1 month can become influenced by parental behavior. In another article, Sikkens, et al. [22] identified the role of parent-child interactions as predictors of later life ideologies. Those factors included: rejection, ignoring, applauding, and discussion of extremism.

In addition to the above findings, a further literature review frequently identified two specific developmental experiences, failed early childhood attachment and the disruptive use of a broad range of social media formats, that were associated with the subsequent development of extreme/radical ideologies. Summaries of the most relevant literature related to early childhood attachment and the development of later life extreme/radical ideologies, are as follows. Koleva and Rip [10]

researchers found that securely attached children, as adults, were able to embrace and respect differences in others while the other two attachment styles, anxious resistant and anxious avoidant, were significantly less capable of doing so. Researchers Weber and Frederico [28] found that those having failed childhood attachment see the world as a dangerous and threatening place and strive for the goals of conformity, tradition, security, and social control. Even the father of attachment theory, John Bowlby [4], established that early childhood attachments provide the child with the ability to respond favorably to subsequent risks and other developmental factors that the child might experience later in life. Salzinger, et al. [19] affirmed these findings and supports the belief that attachments are predictors of behavioral outcomes.

Similar results were also found with regards to the relationship between the use of social media and the subsequent development of extreme/radical ideologies. The National Institute of Justice [13] identified five findings that provided insight into how the internet and social media promote radicalization outcomes. Three of the findings included the following statements: First, spending more time online and on specific platforms increases an individual's risk of engaging in hateful content. Second, an individual's online interactions with others increases their risk of exposure to hateful or potentially radicalizing content. And third, an individual's beliefs, characteristics, and behaviors increase their risk of exposure to hateful or potentially radicalizing content.

Seraphin, Frau-Meigs, & Hassan [21] in a UNESCO study identified how social media is an attractive means of disseminating extremist narratives. They referred to this process as 'identity fusion' and, as such, it leads to the individual's personality gradually being overshadowed by radicalized group identity which, in turn, leads to the endorsements proposed by radicalized extremist groups.

Binder and Kenyon [2] conducted an extensive literature review that uniformly recognized the critical role played by social media formats in the process of developing radicalized and extreme ideologies. They summarized their findings as follows: "In sum, the Internet provides several functions and mechanisms that allow for online radicalization, and likely so in the absence of actual social interaction. However, that there is also general agreement that a combination of online and offline processes is seen as most effective in the furthering of the radicalization process."

Youngblood [29], in another research article, identified how social media platforms provide extremist groups the unique opportunity of being able to convey their ideological values with large audiences in a manner that otherwise are not be available to them. He further states that the extremist groups can readily identify new media groups as regulators clamp down on or restrict what is allowed on existing groups.

Hong and Kim [9] in researching the impact of social media as it relates to the U.S. House of Representatives, identified that the politicians who had extreme ideologies had more Twitter followers than other politicians and, as a result, social

media contributed to a higher level of political extremism. They summarized their findings by stating that political polarization is especially problematic due to the use and impact of social media.

Although this literature review was informative, it did NOT provide empirical support that either the failed childhood attachments or the disruptive use of social media formats ALONE were the basis for the later life development of extreme/radical ideologies. In summary, the International Journal of Educational Research in a 2021 [18] article stating that “very little is known about how violent extremist practices are learned”.

However, in contrast to the literature review, prior research conducted by Stacy [23] has clearly identified significant correlations between failed early childhood attachments and numerous other subsequent non-resilient behaviors. Additional prior research conducted by Stacy and Conn [24] has also identified the development of disruptive use of social media formats as a result of failed early childhood attachments.

Based on the findings of the literature review, the prior research cited, and this researcher’s own prior research efforts, it becomes apparent that early childhood attachments serve as a key element in a broad range of the later life developmental behaviors. And it is based on these findings that this researcher further believes that early childhood attachments may also be the catalyst for the later life development of extreme/radical ideologies.

1.1. First Research Objective

It was the intent of the first objective to ascertain, based on the literature review, if there was a significant correlation between failed early childhood attachments or the disruptive use of social media formats and the later life development of extreme/radical ideologies. The first objective analyses included the various attachment variables as well as the various social media variables. These variables were then analyzed with regards to not only the total (male and female) extreme/radical ideology variable but also included the extreme/radical variable’s three subgroups of Individual, Business and Governmental.

1.2. Second Research Objective

Acknowledging the declaration of Sabic-El-Rayess [18] regarding the difficulty in fully understanding how extreme/radical ideologies develop, a second set of analyses was conducted utilizing a JOINT variable of both the early childhood attachment variables and the disruptive use of social media variables into a single variable, referred to elsewhere in this manuscript as a composite (Comp) variable. Given the complex nature of how extreme/radical ideologies develop, it is believed that a research effort of this nature was warranted. It was hypothesized that failed early childhood

attachments are a catalyst for numerous non-resilient later life behaviors, which in this case would be the disruptive use of social media formats which then establishes a ‘breeding ground’ for the development of extreme/radical ideologies. This composite variable was then analyzed against all of the research participant’s extreme/radical variables.

2. Materials and Methods

The following methodology and the subsequent recruitment of research participants was approved by the university’s Review Board. In conducting the research, the researcher made use of four standardized questionnaires and one newly developed questionnaire. The first two standardized questionnaires were the two Inventory of Parents and Peer Attachments (IPPAs) questionnaires. They were used to assess an individual’s level of early childhood attachment to their mother/mother substitute and their father/father substitute. These two questionnaires were developed at the University of Washington and are available from Armsden and Greenberg [1]. They have been repeatedly tested and validated. The IPPA questionnaires were developed to assess an individual’s perceptions of both the positive and negative affective/cognitive dimension of their relationships with parents and particularly how well these experiences serve as sources of psychological security. Their theoretical framework is found in attachment theory. Three broad dimensions are assessed by the IPPAs. They are the degree of mutual trust, the quality of communication and the extent of anger and alienation. Each questionnaire involved 25 questions that were scored on a five-point Likert Scale of “Almost never or never true (scored as 1 point) Not very often true (scored as 2 points), Sometimes true (scored as 3 points), Often true (scored as 4 points), and Almost always or Always true (scored as 5 points). The outcome of each participant’s completion of the questionnaires was completed by simply adding up the numeric values of the responses while realizing that the negative questions had to be reverse coded.

The measuring of reported use of social media formats made use of the 27 question Social Media Disorder Scale (SMDS). It was first published by and remains available from van den Eijnden, Lemmens, Valkenberg [26]. As with the IPPA questionnaires, this instrument has been repeatedly tested and validated. The general 27 questions are further broken down into 9 clusters, with each cluster made up of three questions. The nine clusters reflect measurements of: Preoccupation, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Persistence, Displacement, Problems, Deception, Escape, and Conflict. A more detailed description of the nine clusters can be found on Appendix 2. The nature of these clusters is deemed significant in that each cluster has a unique set of behavioral characteristics associated with it. Knowing these unique behavioral characteristics of each of the clusters helps a practitioner identify specific intervention strategies. This questionnaire makes use of a five-point Likert scale with the values of:

Almost never true (scored as 5 points), Not very often true (scored as 4 points), Sometimes true (scored as 3 points), Quite often true (scored as 2 points) and Almost always true (scored as 1 point). In responding to the SDMS questions, the participants considered a wide range of social media formats including but not limited to the following: Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Diggs, Flipboard, YouTube, Vimeo, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Kik, YikYak, Grindr, Swarm, Plague, WhatsApp, Ello, Skype, Google+, Google Hangouts, etc. As noted, this list does not include traditional academically focused sites.

The third instrument used in this research is a questionnaire designed to measure extreme/radical ideologies. After considerable searching, this researcher was unable to find an established questionnaire that was designed and tested to meet the research's need. In response to this limitation, the researcher did identify several established, though limited in scope, questionnaires that, when combined, provided an adequate measure of a respondent's position on a number of ideological social issues. These included questionnaires developed by Pew [16] Ozer and Bertelson [15] and Lameris [11]. This 30 question questionnaire is capable of being broken into three 10 question subgroups identified as Individual (Ind), Business (Bus) and Government (Gov). The questionnaire was scored on a seven-point Lickert scale of Strongly disagree (scored as 1 point) Disagree scored as 2 points), Somewhat disagree (scored as 3 points), Neither agree nor disagree (scored as 4 points), Somewhat agree (scored as 5 points), Agree (scored as 6 points) and Strongly agree (scored as 7 points). Prior to its administration, the questionnaire was pretested on volunteers. Based on their feedback on both the total male and female extreme/radical variable, as well as on each of the 3 subcategory variables, it was determined that the questionnaires provided a valid determination of the individual's ideological position. A copy of this questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3.

2.1. Research Population

The research population consisted of 289 university students who were registered for an Introduction to Psychology course at the university. This course was chosen because it is a general education level course that enrolls students from a wide range of disciplines within the university. It also has traditionally enrolled students who range from first year students to students who are near the completion of their studies at the university. This provided a reasonably broad range of research participants. Selecting research participants in this manner has been proven to be an effective strategy as experienced in research efforts of Stacy & Conn [24] and Black-Hughes & Stacy [3]. It is also supported by published research including that of Fraley, Griffin, Roisman and Belsky [7] who identified the age of 18 as the age when individuals have established their social ideologies. Simply stated, research supports that the development of so-

cial/political ideologies often takes place as an individual enters their late teens and continues to be refined as they move towards their early adulthood. These findings support why the use of a university population is an ideal population to ascertain if the lack of early childhood attachment and/or disruptive use of social media formats are factors that can predict later life development of extreme/radical social ideologies.

In order to partake in this research, students who are enrolled in the Introduction to Psychology class are required to choose between writing a brief research paper or participating in a university sponsored research project. Shortly after the onset of the semester the students were presented with these options. In completing their participation in the research, each student accessed the needed research documents by clicking on a specified university link. On that link there was a thorough description of the research, an acknowledgment of voluntary participation, and the required questionnaires. From that link the research participant simply entered their responses electronically to the five research questionnaires. Research participants completed their input to the questionnaires in any setting of their choice. Once completed, the results were recorded by Qualtrics software which were then converted to an EXCEL format and ultimately to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) format.

2.2. Demographics of Research Population

The demographic sheet was completed by each research participant provided statistics on several factors. Included in these factors were age (18-25 years old), race (Caucasian 90%), and gender (151 males, 126 females, 12 failed to respond).

2.3. Conducting the Research

In conducting the research, the following documents were completed.

1. Read a statement describing the nature of the research, the questionnaires to be completed, and that their participation was fully voluntary.
2. Filled out the demographic questionnaire that asked for the student's age, sex/gender, race and the college within the university structure.
3. Completed the two attachment (IPPA) questionnaires that requires the research participant to reflect back on their early childhood relationship with their mother/mother substitute and their father/father substitute
4. Completed the SDMS questionnaire that identifies the use of various social media formats.
5. Completed the fifth instrument, titled the Ideological Questionnaire, used in this research. This questionnaire is designed to measure the presence or absence of extreme/radical ideologies.

A thorough set of analyses were conducted once the questionnaires totals were recorded and the results had been en-

tered and imported into the SPSS format. Individual analyses were completed independently of other variable analyses and by doing so there was no need to conduct a Bonferroni test. The initial analyses examined the correlations between the IPPA variables and EX/R variables as well as the correlations between the SMDS variables and the EX/R variables. The second set of analyses involved the joining of the IPPA variables with the SMDS into a single composite (Comp) variable. The composite variable was established and was then analyzed relative to the EX/R variables. A complete listing of the variables used in these analyses can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Research/Analyses variables.

IPPA variables (attachment)	Male and female total scores
	Male only total scores
	Female only total scores
	Subgroup Individual
SMDS variables (social media)	Male and female total scores
	Male only total scores
	Female only total scores
	Subgroup Government
SMDS Clusters (Social media Clusters 1-9 variables)	Male and female total scores
	Male only total scores
	Female only total scores
	Subgroup Business
EX/R variables	Male and female total scores
	Male only total scores
	Female only total scores
	Subgroup Individual
EX/R Individual, Government, Business subgroups	Male and female total scores
	Male only total scores
	Female only total scores
	Subgroup Government

3. Results - Findings

SPSS bivariate correlation software was used in completing the analyses.

Descriptive statistics for each of the variables identified in Table 1 can be found on Tables 2, 3 and 4. The range of scores did support the use of the analyses that were performed on the available data.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics - Attachment.

	Mean Score	Range of Scores
Total attachment (male & female)	96.6	33-137
Male	98.3	33-137
Female	94.8	58-133

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics - Ideology.

	Mean Score	Range of Scores
Total (male & female)	96.6	33-137
Male	98.3	33-137
Female	94.8	58-133
Subgroup Individual		
Total (male & female)	33.4	13-56
Male	33.8	13-56
Female	32.7	19-49
Subgroup Government		
Total (male & female)	31.4	10-49
Male	31.8	10-49
Female	31.8	15-46
Subgroup Business		
Total (male & female)	34.1	12-49
Male	34.7	12-49
Female	33.5	23-43

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics - Social Media.

	Mean Score	Range of Score
Total (male & female)	54.3	27-102
Male	52.7	27-102
Female	55.3	21-99
Cluster 1		
Total (male & female)	6.9	3-14
Male	6.7	3-14
Female	7.1	3-13
Cluster 2		
Total (male & female)	6.8	3-15
Male	6.5	3-13

	Mean Score	Range of Score		Mean Score	Range of Score
Female	7.0	3-15	Total (male & female)	4.8	4-14
Cluster 3			Male	4.6	3-13
Total (male & female)	5.0	3-13	Female	4.9	3-14
Male	4.8	3-13	Cluster 9		
Female	5.1	3-13	Total (male & female)	3.8	3-11
Cluster 4			Male	3.9	3-11
Total (male & female)	6.9	3-15	Female	3.5	3-8
Male	6.7	3-15			
Female	7.1	3-15			
Cluster 5					
Total (male & female)	9.1	3-15			
Male	8.4	3-15			
Female	9.8	3-15			
Cluster 6					
Total (male & female)	6.9	3-14			
Male	6.7	3-13			
Female	6.8	3-12			
Cluster 7					
Total (male & female)	9.9	3-15			
Male	10.2	3-15			
Female	9.8	3-15			
Cluster 8					

3.1. Researcher's Note to Reader

When viewing [Tables 5 and 6](#) numerous abbreviations are displayed. In most cases the meaning of an abbreviation is obvious. But two of them need additional clarification. The abbreviation 'Comp' represents the composite variable which is the joined total of each individual's IPPA and the SMDS questionnaires. The other term 'Tot' represents the total/combined score of both the male and female respondent's score for the variable that is associated with the term 'Tot'.

As for the first research objective regarding if either the IPPA or SMDS variable(s) were significantly related to the EX/R variable(s), there were limited and mixed results. The analyses the IPPA variables did not establish any significant correlations with any of the EX/R variables. With regards to the relationship between various SMDS variables and EX/R variables, there were a total of 11 analyses that were identified as being very weak but were still significant ([Table 5](#)).

Table 5. Correlations for the SMDS totals and SMDS cluster variables and the total EX/R and its 3 subcategory variables - Individual, Business, and Government.

	Med Male & Fem	Soc Med Fem	Soc Med Male	Soc Med Clust 1	Soc Med Clust 2	Soc Med Clust 3	Soc Med Clust 4	Soc Med Clust 5	Soc Med Clust 6	Soc Med Clust 7	Soc Med Clust 8	Soc Med Clust 9
Tot EX/R	r.094	R.075	r.106	r.054	r.060	r.049	r.085	r.072	r.085	r.039	r.087	r.167
Ind	r.107	r.125	r.104	r.104	r.091	r.099	r.106	r.100	r.106	r.111	r.011	r.111
Bus	r.020	r.031	r.060	r.034	r.012	r.011	r.029	r.020	r.050	r.046	r.008	r.003
Gov	r.026	r.036	r.013	r.070	r.034	r.060	r.029	r.008	r.001	r.023	r.056	r.067

Defining terms used: Soc - Social: Clust - cluster: Med - Media: Ind - Individual: Bus -Business: Gov Government: Fem - Female

The interpretation of these finding is interesting. It does demonstrate that a weak but still significant correlations do exist with regards to how social media use can begin to contribute to the later life development of extreme/radical ideologies. However, as noted in [Table 5](#), these significant correlations are restricted almost exclusively to the EX/R subgroup

titled Individuals.

The second research objective sought to determine if a composite variable that joined IPPA and SMDS variables yielded significant results when analyzed against the EX/R total and the three EX/R subgroup variables. When preparing the analyses relative to this objective, it was necessary to

recode the values listed in the IPPA questionnaires. This recoding was required so that the numeric values for both the IPPA and the SMDS variables were consistent in assigning point totals. As illustrated in Table 6, significant correlations, though varying in intensity, were identified in all of the analyses that were conducted. The analyses also included the nine composite clusters of the joined IPPA and the SMDS variables as well as the three subcategory variables of the EX/R questionnaire. In reviewing the contents of Table 6, another factor becomes quite apparent. The strongest correlations are ones that involved the total populations (combined male and female participants) of both the composite variable and the total EX/R variable, and secondly, the total composite (combined male and female participants) variable and the EX/R Individual subgroup variable. The other two EX/R subgroups, Government and Business, also generated signif-

icant correlations but they were quite weak. It is believed that this may be a factor in that the mean age of the research participants was 20 years old and they most likely had limited exposure to either the business or government issues that are prevalent in our society. A second set of analyses was conducted that separated the male from the female research participants. Consistent with the previous findings, when completing these analyses, the separate male and female totals were analyzed against the individual male and female totals for the EX/R variables. The results were virtually identical to the findings listed in Table 6. Given these findings, the second objective of this research was fully supported and the findings clearly demonstrate that the composite variables that join the IPPA variables with the SMDS variables do provide robust significant correlations with the EX/R variables.

Table 6. Correlations of Composite variables with EX/R total variable and sub variables.

	Comp Total	Comp Clust 1	Comp Clust 2	Comp Clust 3	Comp Clust 4	Comp Clust 5	Comp Clust 6	Comp Clust 7	Comp Clust 8	Comp Clust 9
Tot Ex/R	r.579	r.538	r.538	r.570	r.568	r.570	r.570	r.561	r.574	r.568
Ind	r.376	r.327	r.329	r.324	r.330	r.319	r.325	r.318	r.325	r.325
Bus	r.130	r.113	r.119	r.117	r.112	r.109	r.115	r.119	r.114	r.112
Gov	r.176	r.127	r.129	r.124	r.130	r.119	r.125	r.128	r.125	r.125

Defining terms used: Comp - Composite is the full term and it refers to the combination of the appropriate IPPA and SMDS total as well as the 9 clusters questionnaire scores: Clust - refers to the variable Cluster: Tot - refers to the total male and female questionnaire scores from both the Comp and the EX/R variables: EX/R - refers to the Extreme/Radical Ideology questionnaire: Ind, Bus, and Gov - refer to the Individual, Business and Government 3 subcategories of the EX/R Ideology questionnaire.

3.2. Limitations

Due to the limited number of research participants, the limited range of ethnic backgrounds, and to some extent, the environment from which they were selected, does present some limits on the ability to generalize the finding to other more diverse populations. But, despite these limitations, the research does provide considerable insight into the development of extreme/radical ideologies and, as such, it will hopefully encourage similar additional research with other designated populations.

4. Discussion

This research clearly demonstrated how the lack of early childhood attachments can be the foundation for numerous later life human developments including the disruptive use of social media formats which then, in turn, can be the breeding ground for the development of extreme/radical ideologies. It also suggests that this pattern of development begins at an early age, and often matures by early adulthood. This belief is supported by the fact that the research participants mean age was only 20 years old.

The research further established that there is synergistic influence of how multiple childhood behavioral experiences, when joined together, can be much more influential in later life behavioral developments than a single early life experience. In essence this research reinforces Aristotle's declaration that the 'whole is greater than the sum of its parts' which, in this research, means that the combination or whole of attachment failures and the disruptive use of social media formats is greater than either of these developmental factors taken individually.

4.1. Conclusions

As stated previously, it was not the intention of this research to identify interventions that facilitate effective treatment for individuals who are exhibiting extreme/radical ideologies. It is, however, designed in a manner that helps identify what early life experiences lead to later life development of extreme/radical ideologies. The researcher believes it has been effective in establishing this belief. This researcher also acknowledges that not every individual who has experienced failed early childhood attachment turns to disruptive use of social media and then becomes an extremist. However, this research does support the reverse of that belief in that there is a significant reason to believe that the vast majority of individuals who exhibit extreme and radical ideologies did, in fact, experience failed early childhood attachment and as well as the disruptive use of social media.

This researcher further acknowledges that traditional correlational research is unable to fully validate causal research relationships. But correlational research does provide a foundation for additional research that, in this case, could provide insight into what intervention strategies would be most effective in addressing the sequence of events that lead to later life dysfunctional behaviors.

4.2. Implications for the Social Work and Other Mental Health Professions

Given the findings of this research as well as past research conducted by Stacy [23], Black-Hughes [3] and Stacy and Conn [24] regarding the significance of early childhood attachment, it becomes apparent how this research can be utilized by the mental health professions. Positive childhood attachment has consistently been proven to be a protective factor against numerous later life risk factors, including criminal behavior, chemical dependency, failed educational success and the disruptive use of social media. And now, based on this current research, early childhood attachment is seen as a first step protective factor with regards to progressing to the disruptive use of social media and ultimately to the development of later life extreme/radical ideologies. Thus, as Benjamin Franklin in a 1735 declaration stated that “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” has stood the test of time in this research effort.

This finding further provides a clear mandate to all mental health professions to exercise substantive influence at the local, state and federal level to ensure that adequate funding is available that provides for programs to meet the universal need of assuring all children have access to strong attachment figures. To date, an excellent example of this is represented by the efforts of Kate Middleton, Princess of Wales, effort to assure all children are afforded secure childhood attachment experiences. Once more, research of this nature leaves little doubt about the benefits gained when childhood attachments are secure. Once a proper amount of attachment is accom-

plished, then there is a high probability that the child will remain resilient and able to overcome the risk factors to which most all children are, at some point, exposed to.

4.3. Implications for Social Workers/Mental Health Practitioners

In addition to the above macro level needs and as indicated in the following example, this research does provide both support and effective assessment tools for mental health practitioners. The author of this manuscript has served in academia for numerous years but has also maintained a 40 year pro bono family focused private practice. It is for this reason that the term ‘social workers/mental health practitioners (SW/MHP)’ seems more appropriate than the term ‘researcher’ used when discussing the implications of this research for mental health practitioners. This SW/MHP’s private practice is based primarily on court referrals. On a regular basis, the local county’s family court judge refers cases to this SW/MHP when the court determined a family was in a crisis state. The crisis state often involves numerous issues including parent-child altercations, failures in school, use of illegal chemicals, failed relationships, etc. In order develop an appropriate diagnosis and treatment plan this SW/MHP completes a thorough bio-psycho-social intake interview. As a critical element of the intake process this SW/MHP also makes regular use of the IPPA and the DSMS questionnaires, the same questionnaires that were used in the current research. The SW/MHP found these questionnaires to be extremely helpful in identifying what issues were underlying the family crisis. This was especially true when measuring the level of parental attachment that the child was experiencing as well as identifying which of the 9 clusters of the disruptive use of social media scale were involved. These two assessment tools, along with other intervention strategies, provided the starting point for an effective resolution of the family’s issues.

In addition to this SW/MHP’s role as a family focused practitioner, he has, while being the warden of a state correctional institution, also maintained and conducted group sessions with inmates, where the focus was on identifying ‘criminal thinking errors’ that allowed the inmates various excuses for their criminal acts. Here too, the SW/MHP made use of several diagnostic tools, including the IPPA questionnaires. In the vast majority of the 100 s of men who completed the IPPA questionnaires, there were near universal failed childhood attachment experiences. Subsequent to the completion of the IPPA questionnaires, the SW/MHP helped the inmates work through how these early life experiences had shaped many of their subsequent self-destructive behaviors. These two experiences are brought to light in order to establish two points: first how valuable these diagnostic tools are and second to demonstrate the importance of early childhood attachment.

An additional requirement for mental health practitioners

is the need to stay current with contemporary research, such as this research. This is especially important for practitioners not only in their private practice but it is also equally important for SW/MHP who serve as faculty for future practitioners.

One additional development that hopefully derives from this research is that other SW/MHP are inspired to recognize the importance of practitioner focused ongoing research. This researcher, himself a practitioner, recognizes that other mental health practitioners have a great deal to contribute to the development of both effective interventions and prevention treatment strategies.

This research, by its very nature, was not intended to provide treatment strategies for those individuals who already have embedded extreme/radical ideologies. This decision is consistent with the research of Vermeulen, et. al [27] and Schulten [20] who have already stated that the development of effective intervention strategies is difficult to establish given the complex nature of the underlying pathologies that support an individual's reliance on their use of extreme/radical ideologies.

In summary, the primary goals for this research were first, to better understand how early childhood experiences have a dynamic influence on later life behavioral tendencies. Which in this case is how failed early childhood attachments are often the first link to later life disruptive use of social media formats which in turn leads to the greater likelihood of developing radical/extreme ideologies. And second, to recognize and utilize basic intervention strategies that can interrupt the later life potential of extreme/radical ideologies being developed.

Abbreviations

BUS	Business
Clus	Cluster
Comp	Composite
EX/R	Extreme/Radical Ideologies
Fem	Female
Gov	Government
Ind	Individual

IPPA	Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment Questionnaire
Med	Media
SMDS	Social Media Disorder Scale Questionnaire
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
Tot	Total
SW/MHP	Social Workers/Mental Health Practitioners

Ethics Statement

Ethical clearance for this study was granted by the Institution Review Board at the Michigan Technological University, Houghton, Michigan, 49931, USA.

Author Contributions

Peter David Stacy: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

Kyla Richardson: Data curation, Methodology, Resources, Software, Visualization

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Data Availability Statement

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this research can be found in the included the manuscript or [Tables 1-6](#).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Appendix

Appendix I: Ideology Questionnaire

Ideology Questionnaire: Simply darken the circle that reflects your position on the statement.

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Somewhat Disagree 4-Neither Agree nor Disagree 5-Somewhat Agree 6-Agree 7-Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Most people in this country have a lifestyle and culture that is necessary to change totally. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| 2. It is necessary to totally change the economic system that is the basis of society. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| 3. Those who think like me have to thoroughly change the foundation of our own life (economy, job, consumption, well-being). The rest of the society can do what they want. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| 4. It is necessary to do away with the democratic form of government if we want to have a decent society. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| 5. I, and those who think like me, in fact share nothing with the rest of the society. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| 6. Those groups in the society that don't support the good and correct life should be deprived of their rights | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| 7. It is a waste of time to try to find common solutions with those whose thoughts about life are completely different than ours. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| 8. It is wrong to make compromises with what oneself stands for. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| 9. In the end, there must be a confrontation – one can't forever live peacefully, side by side with people who live a completely different life than they are obligated to live. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| 10. Income redistribution is more important than economic growth. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| 11. It should be made easier for employers to lay-off employees. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |

12. The average income tax rate for high incomes should be increased. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
13. Landlords should be free to charge any rent they want to charge. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
14. In order to safeguard national security, the government should have access to all communication data in the country. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
15. The government should cut spending on unemployment benefits. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
16. Women should be able to decide themselves about abortion. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
17. Borders should be closed for asylum seekers. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
18. Good performing students should receive study grants from the government. Bad performing students should pay higher tuition fees. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
19. In order to protect the rights of workers, labor unions should have more power. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
20. A person that refuses to work should not receive a welfare grant. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
21. Minimum wages should be abolished. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
22. The government should protect domestic markets, for example by taxing imports. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
23. Even in times of recession, the government should invest in military defense. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
24. Government is almost always wasteful and inefficient. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
25. Government regulation of businesses usually does more harm than good. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
26. Poor people today have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing anything in return. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
27. Most corporations make a fair and reasonable amount of profit. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
28. Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing, and health care. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
29. Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
30. The government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦

Appendix II: SMDS 9 Subgroup Details

Preoccupation ... regularly found that you can't think of anything else but the moment that you are able to use social media again?

Tolerance ... regularly felt dissatisfied because you wanted to spend more time on social media?

Withdrawal ... often felt bad when you could not use social media? Persistence ... tried to spend less time on social media, but failed?

Displacement ... regularly neglected other activities (e.g., hobbies, sport) because you wanted to use social media?

Problems ... regularly had arguments with others because of your social media use?

Deception ... regularly lied to your parents or friends about the amount of time you spend on social media?

Escape ... often used social media to escape from negative feelings?

Persistence ... often felt tense or restless if you weren't able to look at your messages on social media?

Conflict ... had serious conflict with your parents, brother(s) or sister(s) because of your social media use? (van den Eijnden, et al. 2016)

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