YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRAJECTORIES THROUGH RADICAL ISLAMIST MILIEUS:
COUNTRY LEVEL REPORT GERMANY

Neustadt and beyond

DARE
Dialogue About
Radicalisation & Equality

SARA NANNI

DARE: Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality

Young people's trajectories through radical Islamist milieus: Country-level report

Germany

Neustadt and beyond

Sara Nanni

University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf

Contents

Executive Summary

The research on which this report is based was carried out in a city in the Rhineland, a region in western Germany with a significant population of people who refer to themselves as Muslims and a significant neo-Salafist network, which is known beyond the region. Participants in this study were approached for interviews during events in the Rhineland, in online settings, or via intermediaries.

The aim of this research was to understand trajectories through Islamist milieus including pathways of non-radicalisation and non-violent radicalisation. Observations and interviews in the field were conducted in 2018 and 2019. During that time, 18 interviews were conducted with 13 male and five female respondents aged between 16 and 30 years. Six defined themselves as converts and most respondents grew up entirely in Germany.

Respondents differ in their current or former connectedness with radical neo-Salafist networks in the Rhineland and beyond, as well as in terms of physical and mental proximity to what is described as radical neo-Salafist narratives. Based on existing empirical work, respondents have been classified as complete distance, factual distance, and factual closeness to mainly non-violent neo-Salafist interpretations of Islam.

The following three key findings are presented in this report:

1. All respondents associated radicalism with illegitimate violence, while their definitions of illegitimate and legitimate violence differed.
2. Experiences of economic inequalities and experiences of racial discrimination do not appear to facilitate radicalisation, while experiences of political inequalities somewhat facilitate radicalisation.
3. Only young adults who face significant biographical challenges and have access to neo-Salafist interpretations of Islam are either adopting non-violent neo-Salafist positions and/or joining such groups. Access to radical interpretations alone does not facilitate radicalisation. The nature of the biographical challenges of the young adults who joined neo-Salafist groups and/or shared these groups' interpretations varies. The intensity of these challenges is less important than the subjective meaning these challenges had/have for the respondents.

During the field research, two other important observations that are indirectly linked to the original research design emerged: first, most respondents who face racist discrimination in their daily lives simply endure it and do not take individual or collective action to cope with it or combat it; second, none of the respondents have closed world views or opinions that cannot be challenged.

1. Introduction

There is no consensus around a single definition of the term 'radicalisation' across the disciplines that address this phenomenon (Neumann, 2013: 874). In 2013, Maruta Herding described empirical research on Islamist[1] radicalisation in Germany as hesitant and argued that models of radicalisation are often not empirically supported (Herding, 2013a: 21ff). The situation in 2020 has changed only slightly. A series of publicly funded research projects aiming at actual fieldwork in Germany have started work in this area[2]; some of them have already published first results (Forschungsnetzwerk Radikalisierung und Prävention, 2020). Additionally, studies from German security authorities such as the Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt et al., 2016) provide better insights, too. Nevertheless, summaries of existing research rather than empirical studies still dominate the publications on radicalisation in Germany.

There is a vast amount of international research on radicalisation. Useful overviews of the origins and development of this body of work are provided by Kundnani (2012), in terms of the political context of radicalisation research, and by Borum (2011a) in relation to the key theoretical propositions, models and empirical studies in the field. Work on Islamist radicalisation has been shaped by the understanding of radicalisation as an individual's linear or recurrent evolutionary process. This process is often described as having a starting point *t1* and a, sometimes provisionally, ending point *t2.* At *t1,* the individual is not (yet) defined as radical while in *t2,* the individual has become radical. A lot of research has focused on the radical individual at *t2* and their path to a state of *violent* radicalism. Consequently, everything that has or might have happened between *t1* and *t2* has been examined as factors of violent radicalisation. The factors identified in this modelling and research are then, sometimes subliminally, described as potential factors of vulnerability and summarised as such. This understanding of who gets radicalised, such as the unequally treated, the abused, the indoctrinated, or those on a religious journey, and who does not has become the basis for policy advice, including measures of prevention and repression. This understanding, however, is mostly not evidenced using empirical data or reflected upon in a systematic way (Logvinov, 2019: 17).

Some researchers see Islam itself as the most important cause of violent Islamist radicalisation, while others try to negate connections between Islam and radicalisation, as Logvinov (2012: 39) rightly points out. Some empirical studies focus on the role of religion within processes of radicalisation and create a more differentiated picture such as Aslan et al. (2018a) for the German speaking field. One important variation of Islamist radicalism that today dominates the Islamist milieus is neo-Salafism[3], often referred to as Salafism, too. Wiktorowicz defined it thus:

> Salafis are united by a common religious creed, which provides principles and a method for applying religious beliefs to contemporary issues and problems. This creed revolves around strict adherence to the concept of tawhid (the oneness of God) and ardent rejection of a role for human reason, logic, and desire. Salafis believe that by strictly following the rules and guidance in the Qur'an and Sunna (path or example of the Prophet Muhammad) they eliminate the biases of human subjectivity and self-interest, thereby allowing them to identify the singular truth of God's commands. From this perspective, there is only one

---

[1] Throughout this work, the word *islamist* is not spelled with a capital letter in order to clarify the difference between the religion *Islam* and the political ideology, *islamism*, which is connected to Islam but does not represent it.

[2] https://www.demokratie-leben.de/foerderprojekte/forschungsvorhaben.html#c13049

[3] A convincing plea to use *neo-salafism* rather than *salafism* as a term is found in *Salafismus: Fundamentalistische Strömungen und Radikalisierungsprävention* by Ceylan and Kiefer (2013). The word *neo-salafism* is also used when quoted concepts of other authors use the term salafism because the phenomenon to be described is not different and should be named uniformly.

legitimate religious interpretation; Islamic pluralism does not exist. (Wiktorowicz, 2006: 207)

Although the original typologisation of (neo-)salafism by Wiktorowicz can be legitimately criticised for several reasons (Wagemakers, 2014), it is still a good starting point. Based on Wiktorowicz typologisation, German (neo-)salafists are classified by Wiedl as purists, mainstream (neo-)salafist, radical (neo-) salafists and Jihad (neo-)salafist (Wiedl, 2014). The German Office for the Protection of the Constitution keeps an eye on jihadi and radical neo-salafist as well as some mainstream neo-salafist protagonists without making sharp distinctions between one and the other (NRW Innenministerium, 2015). Classifications depend on the rather volatile structures of the neo-salafist scene at a specific place in a specific point in time. Although not always clear in the field, distinguishing at least between non-violent neo-salafism and Jihadism[4] is analytically and practically necessary as they differ in their attitudes towards violence as a political means (Lohlker et al., 2016). In order to at least take this distinction into account, the word 'violent' is added in cases which do not refer to non-violent neo-salafists.

Within the DARE project, *radicalism* is defined as: the active support for fundamental – system-changing – political change. *Radicalisation* can therefore be defined as the process of an individual or a group that starts to actively support – system changing – political change that they had not supported previously. In this study – which seeks to understand neo-salafist (non-)radicalisation - the degree of (non-)radicalisation is defined as the relative distance or closeness of an individual to neo-salafist narratives and groups.

Researchers have looked at the phenomenon of neo-salafist radicalisation from different angles. El-Mafaalani (2014: 355) described neo-salafism as a subculture of young Muslims. More broadly, radicalisation is associated with common phenomena of adolescence, such as a strong desire for a sense of belonging (Glaser et al., 2018b: 12ff). Social dynamics such as peer pressure and opportunity structures (Aslan et al., 2018b: 264ff) are considered to have a significant influence on individual decisions, especially if connected to radicalisation opportunities that are given online (Hohnstein and Herding, 2017). On a micro level, biographical experiences (Logvinov, 2019: 17ff) and challenges, as well as actual experiences of inequalities are discussed as having an effect on individual paths to radicalism (Glaser et al., 2018a: 12ff). In the context of the DARE project Poli and Arun (2019) produced a comprehensive overview of many qualitative studies on the relationship between inequalities and radicalisation, focusing on these questions.

We start, therefore, from the recognition that there is no valid model of radicalisation that explains *all* or even *a majority* of cases. While a series of relevant factors have been identified, the direct relationship between any individual radicalisation vulnerability factor and the outcome that the individual becomes radicalised is not proven, while a simple accumulation of factors does not provide a valid explanation of radicalisation either. Thus, we need more research that explores the interaction between potential factors of radicalisation. To understand the general dynamics of radicalisation, moreover, we must also understand outcomes of non-radicalisation and non-violent radicalisation. Radicalised people between t1 and t2 often experience poverty, discrimination or/and biographical challenges, but these same experiences are found among people who do not radicalise or who do not support violent radicalism.

Questions that I try to answer in this report are: How do young people understand radicalisation and radicalism? How do sustained inequalities and perceived injustice impact upon radicalisation? And why do most people with militant beliefs not engage in violent action? What is the role of social media and the Internet in radicalisation processes? How do ideological and extra-ideological factors in radicalisation shape radicalisation trajectories? What are the differences in (non-)radicalisation processes for different genders?

---

[4] Jihadism can – of course - be non-neo-salafist, too.

In order to understand *non-radicalisation*, it is necessary to study people who experienced poverty, discrimination or/and biographical challenges, but who have not become radicalised. While violent radicals come from all ethnic backgrounds, and converts play a significant role in violent networks, it is nevertheless widely assumed that holding Islamic beliefs in *t1* is a potential factor for radicalisation (Roy, 2009: 11). As a result, my research was trying to identify young Muslim adults who *may* have experienced poverty and/or discrimination, and/or had biographical challenges rather than interviewing individuals who had already been radicalised.

In order to understand *non-violent radicalisation*, it is necessary study people who are engaged in networks labelled as radical by public authorities and who do not support violent radicalism. The (probably) largest, presumably non-violent islamist network in Germany is a rather loose network that is labelled as neo-salafist and includes specific gatherings, known personalities and known places such as shops and meeting-points. To draw comprehensive conclusions about both groups - people who experienced poverty, discrimination or/and biographical challenges, but who have not become radicalised, and people who are engaged in networks labelled as radical, I[5] tried to contact individuals in a milieu shared by both groups: young Muslim adults in and around Neustadt.

2. Setting the scene

2.1 Historical context: Muslims in Germany and German neo-Salafism

Germany experienced its first major immigration of Muslims in the 1960s, when it cooperated with governments of various countries in establishing formal guest worker programmes. These programmes were to bring so-called '*Gastarbeiter'* (guestworker) to Germany on a rotational (and temporary) basis. The most important groups of migrant workers were Italians and Spanish (mostly Catholic), Greek (mostly Orthodox-Christian), and Turkish nationals (mostly Sunni Muslim) (Bade, 2011: 154ff; Fülling, 2019: 36ff; Rahlf, 2015: 46ff). Other Muslim migrants invited to work in Germany's booming economy were Moroccans and Tunisians (Fülling, 2019: 36f). Between 1955 and 1973, almost 10 million people – of various origins - immigrated to Germany (Schimany and Baykara-Krumme, 2012: 45).

The term *Gastarbeiter* implied a limited time of stay in Germany and an expected return to the country of origin. However, in practice, many Gastarbeiter stayed and became part of German society, starting families, or bringing existing families to join them, in Germany (Fülling, 2019: 37). Initially, a *Gastarbeiter* could be given contracts of no more than two years. Later, after pleas from industry, people stayed for a longer period of time; some 3.8 million actually never left the country (Schimany and Baykara-Krumme, 2012: 45). Today, the children of the original *Gastarbeiter* have children too and in sum, these are about 6.7 million people, or 8% of the population in Germany. Additionally, some 1.5 million young people[6] in Germany, aged 15-30 years, have a migration background[7] from countries with which the Federal Republic of Germany had programmes from the mid-1950s onwards.

In addition to the immigration of Muslims due to the *Gastarbeiter* programme, other Muslim migrants came to Germany for various reasons and in various ways, from Lebanon, the Balkans, Palestine, Iran,

---

[5] Considerations and decisions made in the project are referred to as decisions within the 'the DARE-project'. This is mainly true for the overall research design. Some preparations were done by the German research team that includes Prof. Fabian Virchow, my colleague Benjamin Kerst and me. In this case I refer to us as 'we'. The research itself was conducted by me, Sara Nanni, and I refer to myself as 'I'.

[6] Own calculations based on data from Statistisches Bundesamt (2018: 63ff).

[7] A person with *migration background* is defined by German authorities as 'A Person has a migration background, if them self or at least one of the parents has not had German citizenship by birth.' Own translation DESTAT, S. 4)

Iraq, and Afghanistan. In 2015, a lot, but not all, Syrian asylum seekers and refugees, who immigrated to Germany in large numbers, were of Muslim faith. In the same year, German authorities estimated the number of Muslims living in Germany to be between 4.4 to 4.7 million people (Stichs, 2016: 5). Of these, around 776,000 young people (between the ages of 15 to 30 years) [8] have a migration background from a majority Sunni Muslim country.

Although there are no official data on these groups, it can be assumed that most Muslims in Germany are Muslims by birth, by being the child of at least one Muslim parent or having grown up in a Muslim family. Exact, or satisfactory estimates of, numbers of Muslims born into Muslim families or of converts to Islam (from another or no religion) living in Germany are not available because the local and federal governments only systematically register the religious affiliation of people of Christian faith [9].

Unlike the Christian churches in Germany, Muslim communities are not supported by the public authorities in their efforts to collect donations from their members [10]. To date, only one Muslim federation is accepted as a public body: Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat. Others do not fulfil the criteria or did not apply for that status (Muckel, 2017: 77ff). This does not affect Muslims freedom of religiosity in principle. However, it deprives Muslim organisations from resources that other communities, Christian and Jewish ones in particular, have. Germany is not a fully secular state as religious public bodies and special rights are integrated in media, education and industrial law (Muckel, 2017: 80f).

Debates about the place and status of Muslims in German society have been exemplified by recurrent debates about the legality and legitimacy of teachers wearing headscarves, enforcement of coeducation of Muslim young girls in physical education at school (Muckel, 2017: 104f), and an ongoing securitisation of Islam that did not begin with 9/11, but was heavily pushed by it [11] (Ceylan and Kiefer, 2013: 73).

Policy around religious affairs has become an issue again since empowered Muslims on the one hand and Islamist terrorism in Germany on the other hand have challenged German society, law, and politics. Overall, *other* religious communities such as Christians and Jews have enjoyed increased *positive* attention, while *restrictions* have been imposed on *Muslim* communities (Speer, 2017: 142f).

The policy towards Muslims and their organisations started changing when society and the state realised that migrant workers of Muslim faith stopped being guests and became a permanent part of German society. This shift also explains why the umbrella organisation of Turkish institutions called DİTİB, which is financed and controlled from Turkey, was initially appreciated, but has since been criticised (Speer, 2017: 100).[12] The initiative from the German Federal Government to establish a kind of official platform for Muslim communities called 'Deutsche Islam Konferenz' (German Islam Conference) has not been recognised by all Muslims. This initiative was rightly criticised as an attempt to establish a kind of organisation and profile of Islam that conforms with the idea of Islam held by German state authorities

---

[8] This is the result of my own calculations based on data from Statistisches Bundesamt (2018: 63ff).

[9] A discussion of the lacking data in Germany can be found here:
https://fowid.de/meldung/religionszugehoerigkeiten-deutschland-2017. Authors estimate that some 5 % of the population in Germany are Muslims.

[10] After World War Two, the German government and the Christian churches concluded a concordat that obliges the German State to collect taxes for the churches. It was meant as a compensation for unrightful expropriation during the Nazi-Regime. In Germany you cannot be a member of a Christian church without paying these church tax.

[11] On the contribution of social sciences on the securitisation of Islam see Schirin Amir-Moazami (2018).

[12] DİTİB in German: Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für *Religion e.V.*/ The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs.

(Speer, 2017: 135). This initiative by the German government to incorporate Muslim communities can be described as driven by mistrust and misunderstanding.

In general, Muslim associations and communities have been cooperating with public authorities, but the levels of such cooperation vary from one region to another. Such cooperation also depends very much on the initiatives and the engagement of local protagonists from both sides. The federal government in particular has been rightly criticised for a too heavy focus on integration and security (Müller, 2018: 185ff; Fülling, 2019: 14).

Since the mid-2010s, neo-salafist networks, some supporting and some not supporting violent action, have become very popular among young people. If one is to believe official numbers, they are more important than other islamist groups in terms of numbers of supporters (Ministerium des Innern des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2019).

In the 1960s, neo-salafist interpretations of Islam became more popular globally. At that time, Saudi scholars started to propagate their version of Islam (Wahhabism) in every corner of the world. Wahhabism in turn strengthened neo-salafist interpretations (Steinberg, 2012: 2) as both schools of thought are spiritually very close (Ceylan and Kiefer, 2013: 83f).

It is unknown who translated neo-salafist literature into German for the first time (Lohlker et al., 2016: 203). The first islamist organisation in Germany that gained public awareness was not neo-salafist; it was the Turkish dominated Kaplan Movement that emerged in the early 1980s. Others, such as Front Islamique du Salut, Hisb-ut-Tahrir, and Hezbollah have gained followers in Germany in the 1990s, too (Ceylan and Kiefer, 2013: 71ff). The first Hamburg Cell who based its activities on an existing Al-Qaida network in Germany, became known after their members carried out the attacks of 9/11. (Steinberg, 2014: 55). The first islamist terror attack on German ground, however, was committed in 2011 by a supporter of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (Steinberg, 2014: 10ff), a violent neo-salafist organisation, mainly active in central Asia, but with supporters in Germany.

In Germany, neo-salafism as a movement became important only in the mid-1990s. At that time, the neo-salafist Imams Hassan Dabagh (aka Abu l-Husain) and Muhammad Bin Husain (aka Abu Jamal), who preached in the city of Bonn (Rhineland), became active, and attracted followers, in Germany. In the mid-2000s, the movement grew stronger when both Imams adhered to/spread neo-salafist teachings of Islam, first in Berlin and Bonn, later in other cities like Frankfurt and Cologne. New preachers such as Pierre Vogel and his mentor, Ibrahim Abou Nagie, both from the Rhineland, organised a lot of activities and started attracting more and more followers. Later, Vogel and Nagie fell apart, and with them the whole scene, due to arguments about militancy. Around the same time, a prominent Jihadist group Milathu Ibrahim started its work in Berlin and later expanded it to Solingen. It is one of the networks that has been active in the wider context of this research. It was the driving force behind the German read-campaign. In this campaign, islamist activists distributed translations of the Qur'an and spread their interpretations (Steinberg, 2014: 186ff). While violent neo-salafism has had several strongholds across Germany, the Rhineland region has played a significant role in spreading neo-salafism in Germany, with its organisations, important protagonists, and innovative recruitment events in Solingen, Cologne, and Bonn (Käsehage and Antes, 2019: 106ff); (Steinberg, 2014: 357ff)[13].

---

[13] A more detailed description of the violent neo-salafist movement in Germany in the 2010s can be found in DARE report 'Interactive radicalisation Country level report Germany' by Fabian Virchow (2020).

2.2 Contemporary context

Islam is an established part of German society and culture. However, in recent years, society in Germany has had an ambiguous relationship with Muslims and Islam. On the one hand, schools in some German states are now offering Islamic instructions at school, which corresponds to equal rights for Muslim pupils (Kiefer, 2005: 94f). In general, matters of diversity, in ethnic background, religion, or gender, have become more visible in public discourse and legislative action. In 2006 Germany passed the German General Equal Treatment Act ('Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz'), its first law that guarantees equal treatment and enables legal claims for people that are discriminated by public and private bodies and individuals. Many schools in Germany are taking part in a programme called 'Schools without racism', In addition, a wider range of society than before has been discussing the absence of people of colour in positions of power. Racism, and not only so called 'integration problems' that target people of colour and others who are othered, is recognised by more and more people as an important problem in society. On the other hand, the on-going revelation of the crimes of the right-wing terror group NSU has brought to light the inherent racism that has led the original investigation down the wrong path. Instead of investigating all possibilities, public prosecution and police were searching only within the immediate surroundings of the victims, who were targeted by the terrorist because they thought they were foreigners and of whom most are Muslims. This led to the victims' families being charged with allegations of involvement in organised crime (Högl and Weßnigk, 2016). Another example of the inherent racism towards Muslims in particular is the way that German politicians talk about the role/status of Islam in Germany. In 2010, for example, Christian Wulff, then Federal President of Germany, argued that 'Islam is part of Germany'. Only some years later, Horst Seehofer, Secretary of State for Home Affairs, rejected that statement. This started a controversy about the essence of that sentence. Some ultimately question the legitimate status of Muslim individuals as German residents or citizens, particularly those who have lived here most of their lives. Interestingly, this level of scrutiny is applied only to those of Muslim faith. Former Gastarbeiter from non-Muslim nationalities do note face constant questioning of their residency or citizenship status. There is no debate about whether or not German citizens of Italian, Greek or Russian origin, or their religion or culture, legitimately belong to Germany or not. When this public debate started, the nativist movement Patrioten gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes ('Patriots against the Islamisation of the Occident' or PEGIDA) gained support in Germany. This movement believes that western cultures are threatened by Islamisation and see Islam and Muslims as evil. For some months the movement organised demonstrations in various cities of Germany (Virchow, 2016: 543ff). In 2017, the anti-Muslim populist party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) also gained 92 seats in the national parliament. Both of these developments were driven by strong anti-Muslims sentiment in German society (Zick, 2017: 39ff). Armir-Moazami argues that this racialisation of Muslims is facilitated by politics, media and academic discourse (2016: 21ff). This racialisation is often combined with the imagination of a violence prone Islam, one that contradicts democracy (Schiffauer, 2008: 55ff, Cavallar, 2017: 101ff), or with other negative stereotypes and biases (Foroutan, 2011: 14).

North Rhine-Westphalia in general is one of the hotspots of all – purist and political/Jihadist – forms of neo-salafism (Dantschke, 2019: 64), even though Muslims in North Rhine-Westphalia are not significantly different from Muslims living in other regions of Germany. One third of the Muslim population of Germany lives in North Rhine-Westphalia (MAIS NRW, 2010: 7); some 80 % of them are Sunni (MAIS NRW, 2010: 43). About 1.3 million Muslims live in NRW. Unfortunately, there are no meaningful statistics about how many Muslims in North Rhine-Westphalia are children of immigrants and have not migrated themselves. The administration estimates that at least one third of Muslims in North Rhine-Westphalia, probably many more, were born in Germany (MAIS NRW, 2010: 52). Muslims in North Rhine-Westphalia live in households of 3.8 people in average, which is much higher than the German average of 2.1 people (MAIS NRW, 2010: 57). On average, they are more religious than German Muslims nationwide, and women more

so than men (MAIS NRW, 2010: 62). More than a third of them pray daily, while about 17 percent do not pray at all (MAIS NRW, 2010: 66). Employment among Muslims in North Rhine-Westphalia is at around two thirds, which is slightly below average compared to national numbers (MAIS NRW, 2010: 108).

From 2014 onwards, German security agencies focused their investigations on violent neo-salafist networks that recruited fighters for ISIS in Syria and Iraq. After Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri proclaimed the Caliphate, neo-salafist networks focused mostly on recruitment for ISIS. Today, all neo-salafist networks in Germany are less visible than in the early 2010s, but some seem to continue to organise their work and meetings online. In North Rhine-Westphalia, for example, several associations run as charities are under observation by the regional Office for the Protection of the Constitution, due to their former alliance with Jihadist oriented protagonists and groups as well as convicted Jihadists. These associations have their centres in cities in the Rhineland and in the Ruhr region. Police raided some of their facilities in 2019. Some Jihadist groups such as 'Milathu Ibrahim' and 'Einladung ins Paradies' (invitation to paradise) were banned in the early 2010s.[14] Some of the neo-salafist organisations publicly distanced themselves from allegations that they support Jihadist groups. Even if their distancing from Jihadists, or at least from Jihadists close to ISIS, is authentic, they might still be considered political neo-salafists. Furthermore, according to the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, some of them have active relations to leading Jihadi activist personalities (Ministerium des Innern des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2019: 216ff). In 2019, the only organisation openly linked to Jihadist neo-salafism that is active and visible in North Rhine-Westfalia is Al Asraa, a group supporting Jihadist prisoners (Ministerium des Innern des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2019: 230).

While the military defeat of ISIS has ended a major recruitment momentum for Jihadist Neo-Salafism in North Rhine-Westphalia, the authorities are warning of new dangers. For example, authorities in North Rhine-Westphalia expect some 110 adults and another 80 children to return from Syria and Iraq (Ministerium des Innern des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2020). It is expected that some of these Germans citizens who had emigrated into ISIS territory, in addition to ISIS supporters in Germany who have not been to Syria, will plan attacks in North- Rhine-Westphalia. During the time of my field research, a jihadist from Cologne was convicted for planning a terror attack with the biological weapon Ricin (Oberlandesgericht Düsseldorf, 2020). In the first half of 2020 alone, there were five convictions for supporting islamist terrorism in North Rhine-Westphalia (website of Oberlandesgericht Düsseldorf).

2.3 Locating the Neustadt milieu – Distown and beyond

Distown[15] is one of the less desirable areas in Neustadt. The district is close to other residential areas in Neustadt and to some industrial and commercial areas. The district does not have many tranquil areas. In some places, poverty and drug abuse are clearly visible. Distown is located in the one part of Neustadt that in general is less desirable than other areas. It serves as a residential area for mainly working and middle class individuals and families.

Distown's social structure differs from the average Neustadt social structure in many ways: the district is home to more young adults and minors than in Neustadt on average. Almost one third of the population under 65 is less than 15 years old. The proportion of the population with a migration background is higher than the average in Neustadt as is the number of people without German citizenship. Since religious affiliation is not captured in German census data, the presence of Muslims can only be estimated to a

---

[14] The most up-to-date and detailed overview on neo-salafist networks in Germany is presented by Käsehage and Antes (2019).
[15] Names of places of fieldwork and respondents are pseudonymised.

certain degree based on the migration background of people living in Distown. Alongside people from Poland and Greece, a large group of people with Turkish and Moroccan origin live in this area. Far less children than the local average are going to the Gymnasium[16] after Elementary School, which means that their access to higher education is limited.

Before and during the time of the fieldwork, the local newspaper has frequently covered criminal incidents in Distown, such as a very unpleasant murder, fights among adults and robberies before and during the time of the fieldwork. However, this is rather symptomatic of the district's press coverage. Reliable data on crime in the district does not justify the above average reporting on criminal incidents from Distown. As a result, the image of Distown as a dangerous district is reproduced in everyday conversations by people living in Neustadt, many of whom already have certain negative stereotypes about Distown.

By the time of my field research, neo-salafist presence in the area was low. Before my field research began, street da'wa – approaching strangers on the street and inviting them to Islam - were run in that district as well as in nearby districts. One school had banned the wearing of niqab and burqa in the school playground some years earlier when some mothers wore these. However, two neo-salafist locations are situated within or next to the district, making neo-salafism visible in daily live for people in Distown. While there are no known violent incidents in the district caused by or instigated by Jihadist or neo-salafist groups, the district is generally attractive to agents of radicalisation because many young Muslims live there. In addition, we assume that the presence of neo-salafist groups and actors in the area – who can be points of positive or negative reference – makes young people think about issues of how to interpret the Quran and how to live as a Muslim.

3. Field research

3.1 Data collection

A total of 21 interviews were conducted. In two cases, interviews could not be included in the research as declaration of consent was ultimately either not given or withdrawn. In one case, the interviewee did not fit the criteria for the set of respondents; this interview is counted as a field diary. In sum, 18 interviews meeting the DARE criteria were analysed; based on that material respondent memos were written as well memos on the time in the field. In total, 22.5 hours of audio material was available for analysis. No video recordings were made. Field diary entries vary in length and importance, and there are 17 overall. Still images are part of these field diaries. Around 50 of them have been taken during the fieldwork. Further material such as newspaper articles and flyers about upcoming events in the field were collected and related to the other material.

---

[16] In Germany, pupils are split into – basically - three groups after elementary school. Accessing higher education requires 'Abitur', some kind of baccalaureate, that is traditionally given by Gymnasiums only. While in recent years this practice has changed slightly and other school offer Abitur as well, Gymnasium remain the most prestigious form of school that offers good perspectives for those pupils who are able to get through it.

Table 1: Dataset

	Number	Total length or brief description	Average length
Respondent memos	18	1-2 pages	n/a
Audio interviews	18	2 792 minutes (22:34 hours)	155 minutes
Video interviews	0	0	0
*Field diary entries * (total)*	17*	n/a	n/a
Still images	<50*	Images of events and of political stickers Screenshots of publicly available social media content	n/a
Moving images	0	0	n/a
Other data	<50*	News articles online and offline Flyers about upcoming events	n/a

field diaries and other data are of different importance to the final analysis and have not been analysed systematically but have been used in order to complement the interviews

3.2 Access and researcher-respondent relations

After the target milieu was defined, professional contacts and direct approach helped to identify potential gatekeepers.

3.2.1 Approaches that did not lead to interviews

Local authorities were not interested in supporting access to potential interviewees, for instance via schools or youth clubs. They argued that those places must remain protected spaces for young adults, in which they could act out without any behavioural expectations associated with academic habitus. Local Muslim communities were not able to help in a timely manner or were not interested in providing access from the very beginning. In both cases, due to the limited duration of the project, it was not possible to build enough trust to overcome mistrust or doubts. In addition, I approached a social project that was run in schools where our target milieu could have potentially been found, but I was not able to establish contact to the target milieu in a timely manner. Direct contact during a local event (a gathering of the Muslim community) did not lead to interviews either. I also approached students from our university, as many of them come from the region and some may have come from the target district in Neustadt. This generated several interested responses, but did not lead to interviewees in my target group. Direct approaches at potential places of radicalisation were also not successful. I then posted messages on online platforms in order to reach out to young Muslim adults who might be considered Muslim influencers linked to Neustadt or to potential protagonists and places of radicalisation in Neustadt. Due to time restrictions, it was not possible to build enough trust to get interviews with most of them.

3.2.2 Approaches that lead to interviews

Other approaches eventually led to interviews in the target milieu. The approaches and the kind of respondents met through these approaches differ from each other in a way that might affect my research findings. Therefore, I will distinguish between these two groups throughout the report.

Group 1: Through a professional contact, I got access to a social worker who works with young adults of our target group in an area that was defined as a possible target area because of its socio-structural composition and territorial proximity to potential actors or places of radicalisation (see above). These young adults were invited to get to know me and the project before individual meetings for interviews were arranged via a messenger. The social worker introduced me to two groups of young male adults,

both living in Distown, at different points in time. Via another social worker in Neustadt, I made contact with to two female respondents living in [Distown]. All 13 respondents are from mainly Muslim working class families. They differ only slightly in terms of social and ethnic background and therefore form quite a homogenous group.

Group 2: Through two events that both focused on Muslims' daily lives in Germany and online contacts, I connected with five additional respondents, three of which are female and two male. These respondents do not live in the main target areas, but are affiliated with Neustadt in general and with potential actors and places of radicalisation in Neustadt and beyond. They differ from the first group in terms of social and ethnic background and living situation.

3.2.3   Field relations and dynamics

Interviews with Group 1 (see above) were made possible by the trust I had built with the social workers who facilitated the contacts. This trust was mainly possible because of the social workers' own experiences and their interest in helping the research community gather new information about why some young adults radicalise while others do not. Messenger communication and calls prior to interviews as well as communication during interviews also built trust between the respondents and researcher. In three of the interviews, the respondents and I were unable to establish a trusting, open dialogue. Respondents were either very shy and could not open up during the interview or were very eager to make a good impression.

Interviews with those in Group 2 (see above) were possible because of the trust I built with the respondents, either during the events attended or during online communication. In one case, another person was involved who had been in contact with the interview partners before and encouraged them to do the interviews with me. Building trust with these respondents was more time consuming than with respondents of Group 1. In two of the interviews, the respondents were very keen to make a good impression.

Some elements of my own cultural location were critical in establishing good rapport with respondents. I identify as a binational German heterosexual, cis woman, mother of one, non-religious, politically interested, and open natured. I have a third generation migration background from a Muslim minority country in Europe (Italy) and am from a mainly working class family. The two latter dimensions of my identity helped to access individuals in Group 1, regardless of gender and faith. During the interviews, some respondents talked about 'white Germans' without additional nationality or identity as a group that did not include either them or me. Being a woman also helped to gain access to the women in Group 2, as they were less open in mixed-gender settings during my fieldwork. Being a mother also facilitated talking about family issues from different perspectives during the interviews. This actually proved to be important in almost all interviews. However, being a woman seems to have had a negative impact on accessing male Muslim influencers. Also, being non-religious and non-Muslim seems to have had a negative impact on accessing the field directly at potential places of radicalisation and also via official Muslim community stakeholders and representatives.

Due to restrictions in time and resources, accessing hard-to-reach respondents via an additional peer researcher was not structurally integrated into the study. Nevertheless, all male respondents were informed that a male researcher could join the interview. None of the respondents made use of this offer. Some interviews were conducted at the respondent's home to make them possible. It is also possible that further interviews would have been secured with some hard-to-reach persons with whom I had built trust for some time had it been possible to extend the fieldwork period.

The interviews were based on the DARE interview guidelines. In most cases, the interview began with a short introduction by the respondents and with some questions about their family and daily life.

Depending on how the dialogue evolved, further questions from the schedule were asked in a more or less chronological way. As many of the interviews were combined with a shared meal, I ran through my interview schedule for blind spots while respondents were eating. Very often, this was a chance to get a fresh take on issues that had been mentioned before but could be elaborated in greater detail.

3.3 Ethical practice

3.3.1 Informed Consent

Respondents were told that they or/and their parent would have to formally agree on participating in the research project by signing a document indicating their consent, at the very beginning of every first single or group contact. This was understood by respondents as the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was a trending topic at that time, and most respondents had heard of it before. Most interviews were conducted after the respondents had formally consented by signing the consent form. Some respondents consented verbally and subsequently sent the signed consent form via mail. Two interviews with minors could not be used for the research and were deleted when the parents' verbal agreement prior to the interview was not confirmed/withdrawn. All respondents read the participation information sheet very carefully. Some even asked for a copy of the consent form, which was provided. None of the remaining 18 respondents withdrew permission to use the interview.

3.3.2 Ethical issues

Several ethical issues emerged while preparing for the interviews and preparing to access the respondents, as well as during and after the interviews. These ethical issues concerned legal questions, data protection, and my security as well as the security of (potential) respondents. However, listing ethical aspects in detail would contradict the principle of anonymisation. All ethical issues were discussed with the chair of the DARE project's ethics committee, Fabian Virchow, and we agreed on how to handle each individual situation. The risk of stigmatising respondents as a result of the research was discussed within the whole research team in the fieldwork preparation phase of the project.

3.4 Data Analysis

I followed the DARE data analysis procedure and added two additional level 2 nodes: 'who am I', as a category of unspecific information about the self-perceptions of respondents beyond categories of gender, class, and ethnic identity; and 'media', as a category to capture various stories about media use. In light of the respondents' answers, both categories were necessary and useful for further analysis. In total, 3,544 text excerpts were analysed in 28 level 2 nodes and 169 level 1 nodes.

Some respondents revealed very individual biographical elements that others, such as state authorities, childcare authorities, social workers, and friends, might also be aware of and might therefore reveal their identities. We opted, therefore, to anonymise this information in order not to endanger respondents or undermine the overall anonymisation process. The first step regarding the anonymisation of biographical data was to not mention the respondent's name. In this study, we decided also not to provide a pseudonym to respondents since repeated mention of a pseudonym can allow the identification of respondents, especially by peers. As a large number of this project's respondents are friends or know each other, this was a challenge. Not being clearly identifiable to friends and acquaintances is important in cases in which peers do not and should not know about biographical challenges or attitudes that have been mentioned during the interview. This is especially important in those cases where ethical issues arose. The downside is that not giving respondents a name can lead to a somewhat more detached view of the people involved and thereby alienating readers. There is a risk of denying subjectivity to (some)

respondents, that has the potential to dehumanise respondents, too. For what concerns my research, to give respondents unique pseudonyms while also maintaining a high level of anonymisation would lead to a report with unsatisfactory analysis because a lot of information would need to be described in less detail. I hope to have found the right balance in this report. Instead of my name and the pseudonyms of the respondents, when citing passages from interviews, I use 'Q' for 'question' and 'R' for 'respondent'.

While I was diligent in giving a voice to as many respondents as possible in my research's node memos, practical considerations governed decisions over which quotes to choose to illustrate my analytical arguments in this report. Often, I chose a quote because it expressed the issue at stake more precisely or in its entire complexity than another quote would. This allowed me to address several dimensions in one paragraph rather than in three or four. As a result, some respondents are less visible than others especially those whose statements were less precise or less complex or who tended to focus on one issue.

3.5 Socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set

The set of respondents consists of five female and thirteen male respondents. Thirteen respondents are currently engaged in some kind of education: vocational or academic secondary education, post-secondary vocational training or university-level education. Five have finished their education. One graduated from university, two completed their general academic secondary education, and one has finished their vocational secondary education. Of those thirteen still pursuing their education, eight are in full-time training. Out of all respondents, six work part-time, one works full-time, two are currently unemployed, and one combines work and part-time training. Only two of the respondents talked about having a parent who works in a profession requiring an academic education.

Figure 1: Number of individuals living in respondents' homes
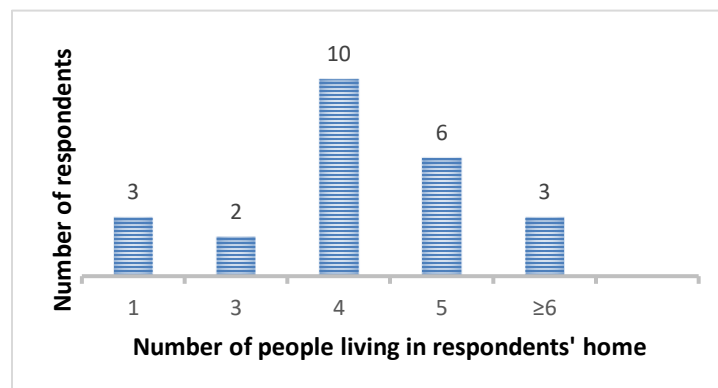
Ten respondents live at home with both parents, three live at home with a single parent, three respondents live without any family members, one lives with peers, and one lives with a partner. Nine respondents are single, one is married and lives with their spouse, three are engaged but not living with their fiancés, and five have partners but are not living with them. Among those fifteen not living alone, one respondent lives with eight people in one household, two respondents live with six people in one household, six respondents live with five people, four with four people, and two with three people.
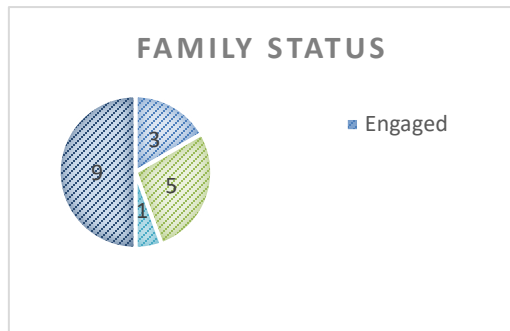
Figure 2: Family status
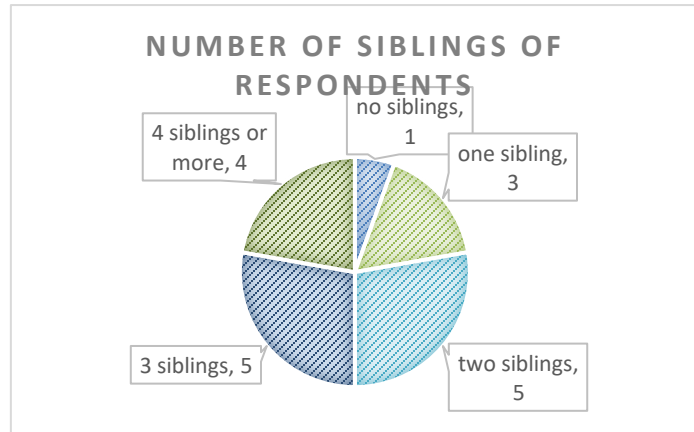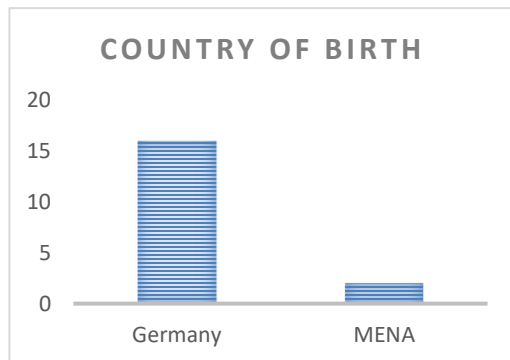
Figure 3: Number of siblings of respondents

FAMILY STATUS

NUMBER OF SIBLINGS OF RESPONDENTS

Figure 4: Country of birth

COUNTRY OF BIRTH

One respondent is a parent of one child. One respondent is an only child, three have one sibling, five have two siblings, five have three siblings, four have four or more – up to six – siblings. Brothers and sisters are counted as siblings if both parents were identical to the respondents' parents or the respondent grew up with them. In three families, these distinctions were meaningful. All other fifteen families can be described as being traditional, including siblings from the same parents growing up in one household.

Ethnicity has been understood in this study as a socially constructed understanding of cultural origin. Attributing ethnicity to respondents was based on the respondents' description of self and perception of others as agreed upon within DARE. Among the respondents, one identified as black, five as having Central European backgrounds and twelve as having MENA (Middle East, North African) backgrounds. Sixteen were born in Germany, one in Morocco and one in Turkey/Kurdistan. All respondents are Muslim-Sunni. Six define themselves as being converts, three of them grew up in Muslim or religiously mixed families. Religiosity was attributed to the respondents based on their own understanding and self-perception that often is defined in relation to others and the statements they made about their satisfaction with their practices. Based on that, ten respondents are categorised as believers and partly practicing while eight are believers and fully practicing. Practices vary among the respondents and do not necessarily fully correspond to the more widely used differentiation between partly and fully practicing. Practising or partly practising does not refer to objective practices but to subjective self-perceptions of religiosity and practicing.

4. Key findings

In this chapter, the findings of this study are presented in four sections. In Section 4.1, the typologisation of respondents in the study in terms of their proximity to neo-salafist narratives and groups, is outlined. Setting this out first means that, in subsequent sub-sections, the connection can be drawn between the *experiences* that the young people had, *the way they dealt with these experiences* and their *closeness to and distance* from neo-salafist attitudes and group. Section 4.2 shows how the respondents think about people who are described as radical, how they see themselves in this regard and what they believe about why young people choose a violent or radical path. Section 4.3 deals with the connection between

inequality and radicalisation. It consists of three sub-sections considering economic, horizontal and political inequality. In each case, it is shown what experiences of inequality the respondents have had and how they have dealt with them. Section 4.4 explores the contacts respondents had with radical messages and how they responded to them. Differences in dealing with them are attributed to biographical experiences - beyond the experiences of inequality - which are also presented and analysed here.

4.1 Typologising the respondents

The analysis in this report is premised on an initial typologisation of the respondents, which is presented here. This allows us to see - after each substantive sub-section – if there is a connection between the experiences that the young people had, the way they dealt with these experiences and the degree of (non)radicalisation of respondents, which is understood as the relative distance or closeness of an individual to neo-salafist narratives and groups.

Labelling people as being radical or holding radical beliefs has a huge impact. In the media, academia and politics, this label is used to mark individuals or associations as problematic and often call for acts of prevention and/or repression directed towards those identified as targets. The primary aim of this research was not to find out if and to what extent respondents could be legitimately labelled as radical, but to understand young people's experiences in society and their interactions with entities that institutions label as radical, e.g. individuals and groups, narratives, and actions. Yet, significant differences among the respondents exist when it comes to their beliefs or affiliation to organisational structures as well as other people labelled as radical. These differences are important in order to be aware of the respondents' enormous heterogeneity when it comes to their relationships to radicalism as a religious and political phenomenon.

During my field research and my analysis of the empirical data generated through the 18 interviews and several field notes, two main differences emerged among the respondents that are relevant to understand radicalisation. First, the most obvious point where respondents differ is their current or former proximity to radical neo-salafist networks in and around the Rhineland, as they are referred to in the official record by the regional Office for the Protection of the Constitution (see 3.2.2). Second, respondents differ in terms of physical and attitudinal proximity to what is said to be radical neo-salafist protagonists and narratives – again – as they are referred to in the official record by the regional Office for the Protection of the Constitution (see 3.2.2).

I developed a typology consisting of three categories to describe respondents' distance to radicalism: a) complete distance; b) factual distance; and c) factual closeness. It reflects the empirical data and does not include possible combinations of physical and attitudinal proximity/distance that none of my respondents fits into. It is a toolkit to analyse the data of *this* research rather than a typology that is applicable for research on (non-)radicalisation in general.

Table 2: Respondents' distance to radicalism

	Physical proximity	Attitudinal proximity	Proximity to networks	Number of respondents
Complete Distance	Yes	No	No	8
Factual Distance	Yes	-	No	5
Factual Closeness	-	Yes	Yes	5

Physical proximity means, that respondents spend their daily lives living or working in an area where known neo-salafists live and neo-salafist organisations can be reached easily. Attitudinal proximity means, that respondents do share at least some views or narratives that are typical for neo-salafist narratives. Proximity to networks means, that respondents are having contact to neo-salafist organisations, work for them or are part of these networks. There are three combinations of factors that lead to the three categories, presented in further detail here:

a) Complete Distance: Eight of the respondents spend their daily lives living or working in an area where known neo-salafists live and neo-salafist organisations can be reached easily. They neither hold beliefs that are part of heterodox[17] conspiracy theories easily connectable with neo-salafist narratives[18] of good and evil nor refer positively to neo-salafist personalities or other neo-salafist points of references. They are not having contact to neo-salafist organisations at all. In terms of numbers, this is the largest group in this study.

b) Factual Distance: Five of the respondents spend their daily lives living or working in an area where known neo-salafists live and neo-salafist organisations can be reached easily. Some of them have or have had some kind of attitudinal proximity to neo-salafism, sharing views on the supremacy of Islam or hold anti-Semitic attitudes. One respondent refers positively to a neo-salafist protagonists. Four more can be described as holding or having held beliefs that are part of heterodox conspiracy theories easily connectable to neo-salafist narratives of good and evil. None of these five has or has had a hermetic neo-salafist or islamist worldview. They are not having contact to neo-salafist organisations at all. In terms of numbers, this is the largest group in this study.

c) Factual Closeness: Five respondents do *not* spend their daily lives living or working in an area where known neo-salafists live and neo-salafist organisations can be reached easily. All of them have or have had some kind of attitudinal proximity to neo-salafism. They referenced neo-salafist institutions and savants. They have or have had connections to neo-salafist networks such as having participated in solidarity actions for jihadist prisoners, being involved in a business activity linked to a neo-salafist organisation, being members of a neo-salafist women's group, being close to important neo-salafist protagonists in [Großstadt], and being active for a neo-salafist organisation. Yet, respondents from this group do not have identical viewpoints on theological questions such as legitimate use of violence or the theological status of music; neither are they living their lives in the same way. Only two of them refer to themselves as being neo-salafist/Salafi Muslim. However the intensity of the connection with jihadist or neo-salafist groups differs significantly among these five respondents.

I will provide a brief conclusion at the end of every key finding based on the previously introduced typology of the three different types (complete distance, factual distance, factual closeness) in order to understand what impact specific experiences and reflections have or haven't on the respondents closeness to radical structures, narratives and actors. As such, this research project is not meant to be a comprehensive study of Muslim youth in Germany in general and the various approaches they have while interacting with what is considered radical. Rather, it evaluates the results of a qualitative study with 18 young Muslim adults from [Großstadt] and beyond in the Rhineland. Building a typology of respondents may nevertheless help us understand more about dynamics of non-radicalisation, deradicalisation, and radicalisation, especially those dynamics that prevent young adults from getting attracted to or even convinced by certain narratives or from factually joining networks that are considered radical.

---

[17] Anton et al. (2014: 14) refer to heterodox and orthodox conspiracy theories to mark their nature as socially constructed legitimate or illegitimate knowledge respectively.

[18] A short and up-to-date overview of those narratives is given by Sold and Abay Gaspar (2019: 40ff).

4.2 The violent radical and Me

One of the key concerns of the DARE project is to elicit respondents' own understanding of radicalism and in/equality. This sub-section shows how the respondents think about people who are described as radical, how they see themselves in this regard and what they believe about why young people choose a violent or radical path.

Many respondents talked about islamist radicalism in relation to Islam and their own religious convictions, putting it in some sort of continuum – where they would represent moderate Islam while islamist would represent an extreme - or rejecting the relationship between radicalism and Islam. As a result, the following section will discuss the respondents' definitions, concepts and understanding of Islam and their perspectives on their own religious beliefs and practices.

4.2.1   The radical

None of the respondents expressed a genuine understanding or provided a clear definition of what they think radical or extremist means and what it does not. Almost all respondents mentioned fragments of definitions that relate to concepts discussed elsewhere in society such as clothing, legitimation of violence and strict gender understandings. These fragments refer to a broad range of concepts; some definitions of some respondents reference religious practices or political attitudes of other respondents such as wearing the *niqab* for women, not giving hands across gender borders, being strict on alcohol or music. Accordingly, being radical is relational in the sense that someone is seen as radical in relation to someone else, but not in absolute terms. Most respondents perceived being radical as something negative, although some question the legitimacy of this connotation. Despite such differences among respondents, it may be noted that respondents talked about radical groups and individuals from two different perspectives: a) the radical as a perpetrator of (illegitimate) violence, coercion, discreditation, and exaggeration in general; and b) the violent radical as a victim of society or as a victim of islamist recruiters in particular.

4.2.1.1 The radical as a perpetrator of (illegitimate) violence, coercion, discreditation, and exaggeration

Many respondents attribute the label radical to *the use of violence* as a mean to achieve political, ideological, or religious goals. Almost all respondents consider violence, as a political, ideological, or religious tool, to be illegitimate. Talking with respondents about the illegitimacy of violence was easy as long as we spoke about concrete attacks, particular groups or networks. Most respondents considered terrorism to be illegitimate. Some had come to this conclusion based on their own understanding of religion, others referred to a general stance of non-violence, and some pointed to negative consequences of acts of violence or the option that it might fail to reach its goals.

Interestingly, the respondents from Group 1 (complete and factual distance, see 4.1), described the violent radical during the interviews as having nothing to do with Islam. A female respondent said that she feels sorry for those who misunderstood Islam and were joining ISIS. A male respondent argued that he is 100 percent sure that what ISIS is doing has nothing to do with Islam. Another male respondent claimed that ISIS fighters would regret it heavily if they understood how wrong they were in harming others. Some respondents criticised the violence of ISIS and other similar violent organisations, saying that killing someone is not allowed in Islam in general.

> Because, just like the Qur'an says, 'One shall not kill.' Then it's clear you're not supposed to kill. You shouldn't hurt people's lives, you should show charity. It's also in the Qur'an. I even believe in the 10 commandments. So then, then there is, that is, a contradiction. That's not possible. It doesn't make sense.

This understanding is shared among most respondents from Group 1. One female respondent argued this in an interesting way; she says that taking the live of someone else is not justified as one cannot know whether or not this person would still have found their way to Islam. This is indicative of her adherence to the view that only Muslims can enter paradise, but refusal to be judged by human beings on that matter. She relates this idea to herself, when she says:

> That's [jihadism] not our religion. And it wasn't until later on that I realised, okay, it's not my religion. They [jihadist] say they're my religion, but they're not. Because they'd just kill me as well. And if they saw me, they would probably curse me because I am not what they imagine a Muslim woman should be, but in the end it is also important what you do behind closed doors. In a religion. And, they can't judge that. Only I can judge that, and then maybe God can.

Some respondents said they get angry every time they hear someone argue terrorism is rooted in Islam. They are sure that this is not the case. Some of the respondents think that islamist terrorists are not Muslims as they are acting in contradiction to their own religious understanding.

> Who says, for example, that in 2001 - the Twin Towers - it was Muslims? Nobody could prove it. They were, uh, perhaps only people who had Muslim religion, but who killed in the name of God, they are not Muslims. Because no Muslim can kill in God's name. Because only God alone may take a life and give it.

One male respondent actually stated that he can imagine that so called islamist terrorism is the work of anti-Muslim networks. He speculated about right wing networks recruiting people and paying them to commit acts of violence in the name of Islam in order to make ordinary people hate Islam even more. Some male respondents also thought that ISIS was originally created by the United States or the West in order to fight Bashar al-Assad, but that they then lost control of it. Another male respondent expressed understanding for people being angry about the anti-Islam work of the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo but considered attacking them physically to be illegitimate. He argued that the terrorist should not have killed the journalists but should have tried to manage the dispute verbally. Another respondent referred to this attack saying that the offenders killed Muslims too and that proves that there is a division among Muslim communities.

Some respondents, especially those that have a factual closeness to radical neo-salafist networks and/or narratives (see Section 4.1), did not criticise   violence as such and were careful to exclude islamist terrorists from the Ummah. At the same time, they described the way ISIS was operating as not illegitimate. It remains unclear whether or not these respondents ruled out any religious justification for violence against non-Muslims. Only one respondent said that he considered religious violence to have some basis in Islam. He says: 'Because you know, actually one does assume that jihad is a religious duty (…) And, I mean, which group is right, you know, that's another thing, well.'

This respondent had distanced himself from the neo-salafist scene in [Großstadt] some years ago. During the interview, he spoke at length about what he knows about Islam, but it remained unclear if he had fully dissociated from neo-salafism. He kept his distance at a time when security agencies were putting pressure on the regional scene. He had learned from some peers in his community that the police had raided their homes. He explained that he did not want to get into trouble and left the scene in order to evade repression. He had also started to feel alienated within the community when ISIS gained ground and some of his peers had started using hateful expressions towards non-Muslims and glorifying the excessive violence of ISIS. He stated that in terms of theological dimensions, he was not convinced of the legitimacy of the IS-regime, especially as its members were committing suicide attacks.

> I always thought that suicide bombers were haram. (…) so, this argument for suicide bombers

is also, theologically, has clay feet (…) Al-Magdisi and AbuKatada-AlFilistini, and there are a few who then say… but it is also only about analogy conclusion [method to interpret Islamic sources] about the Shafiitic analogy conclusion, that, well, suicide, so really to blow yourself away... so that you know, you really have zero chance of survival, no. Actually, this is hardly justifiable in Islamic terms, or very difficult, there are a few schools that make it, well.

Another respondent said that she would consider violence legitimate when fighting against invaders who want to take over your land. She named Afghanistan as an example, but without referring to theological justifications or naming Al-Qaeda. She reflected on the legitimacy of war as such, arguing that she is happy not to be the one who has to decide such questions. She said that ISIS has no right to use violence against others, as it was not attacked by someone. She also rejected the idea that ISIS' actions could be theologically justified. The same respondent said that she once supported a network for Muslim prisoners: Al-Asra. This network is mentioned in the annual report of North Rhine-Westphalia's domestic intelligence service as being supportive of convicted jihadists (Ministerium des Innern des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2019: 231). When I confronted her with this allegation, she explained her actions by saying that she assumes that these people need comfort and relief, too. She argued in length why she thinks that the letter she has sent to imprisoned jihadists might have had a positive or – in the worst case, neutral – impact on the convicts.

> R: Yeah. That. Yes, I understand what you want to say with that, but yes, in the end you don't know who is sitting behind bars and why and to whom you are actually writing and then the question arises whether, well, in the end, if I now write such a stupid letter and it gets to him and it is my handwriting and my personal effort for this person to make him happy, for the moment, then the question arises, ok, does the person now practically deserve it, if I write this to him now, or does he not deserve it? But, well, I have to say, I, I am a very harmony-loving person and I don't know, if I knew that the person practically, well, he is already in prison because of that and you can't know at all, whether the person might not be...

> Q: regretting?

> R: Yes, regrets or has guilt feelings or he knows what he did. Well, I don't know, you can't know that at all because, I mean. Even if, let's say, he's totally cold as ice, and doesn't see what he did wrong and is in prison now, maybe this little stupid letter can make him understand somehow, oh, maybe there are still nice people, so. you know, maybe somebody is interested in me after all. Maybe it'll have some influence. And even if not, okay, then I just wrote a stupid letter to a stupid person, but... but if they actually regretted it, then it could actually be a good thing. So I think I see it more like this. I was thinking very positively, or I was thinking, maybe it has more advantages than disadvantages, or, more... ...more positive effects than negative ones. Because even if an idiot like that gets it, okay, he's not gonna care. Whether he gets a stupid letter or not. Yeah, I don't know. Then I've used up my energy on something stupid, but in the end I don't know that either, I'll never know.

She did not take into consideration that a convicted jihadist may also feel empowered or supported in their action when getting letters from brothers and sisters 'outside'. Confronted with this perspective, she smiled those doubts away, saying that she only saw the positive impact. One could argue that her naivety was well-played and that she supported a jihadist network. Yet, her perspective on this activity fits well with my overall impression of her during the field research and of her understanding of why people get radicalised: they misunderstood Islam and got recruited because of their loneliness.

The element of *coercion* came up in a discussion about violence exercised by ISIS. Besides violent coercion, other forms of non-violent coercion exist, which are labelled as being radical by some respondents. One

male respondent argued that being radical is associated with being closed-minded and trying to coerce others to live an Islamic life. A female respondent who grew up in a non-practising Muslim family said that she tried to put pressure on her family, especially on her mother, to practise Islam – observing prayers and wearing modest clothing - as a reaction to her mother's criticism of her own religiosity. However, she had eventually ceased to do this having decided that it was neither effective nor fair. For her, trying to force others, attitudinally or physically, to practise religion in a specific manner might be considered radical.

Many respondents talked about *radicals as people who discredit others* – especially other Muslims. A male respondent claimed that discrediting others is the main characteristic of radicalism. Another female respondent considered the discreditation of others as an important element of being *radical*.

> So, radical, I don't know, radical... No. Well, radical, so, like I said, people, like from ISIS so that's radical to me, sick. Or maybe Nazis are radical to me. Anything that is exaggerated in terms of its beliefs. And harming others, so to speak. It's just that, egoistically speaking, 'I'm better than them and I have to do something about it' and so, I don't know, I find it really hard to describe this term radical.

Discreditation of others plays an important role in some neo-salafist ideologies and practices as witnessed by the respondents. Targets of discreditation fall into two different groups: the *kafir*, the disbeliever or the infidel, and the non-practicing Muslim who might be excluded from Islam via *takfir*ism (declaring another Muslim as not believing in the basic tenets of Islam and excluding them from the Ummah by doing so). Both practices, talking about others as *kuffar* (plural of *kafir*) or doing takfirism on others, are procedures not known in traditional Sunni Islam, and not even all neo-salafist interpretations of Islam include them. These practices are mostly spread in jihadi-neo-salafist circles. Some, but not all respondents have been confronted with these kinds of discreditation practices. After he converted to Islam, one respondent from Group 2 met an imam who often discredited others in these ways. This respondent is a convert and has non-Muslim parents; the Imam wanted him to either bring his parents to conversion or to disassociate from them:

> ...and then he told me that he just wanted to give me a bit of advice, and he just told me 'your parents are kuffar, and you have to save your parents from hell and they'll go to hell if you don't convert them', and he gave me a mission to convert all kinds of people. (...) and I should stay away from the kuffar and the kuffar, they want to lead me astray from the right path, um, and always only has kuffar, kuffar, kafir, so, the most frequent words he said were just like this, no, so, (...) he was also like this, yes, if his brother were no longer a Muslim, then that would no longer be his brother, he would have nothing to do with him, the father of [friend] confirmed that. So, 'yes, if my brother says that he no longer believes in Islam, then I wouldn't have anything to do with it, or something, unless he returns to religion'.

The interviewee felt uncomfortable about this situation and did not follow this advice. Later, when he was with neo-salafist groups in Neustadt, he witnessed some of his fellow young believers, whom he frequently met in the Arabic-speaking mosques of Neustadt, discrediting others with these patterns of takfirism and constructions of infidels.

Three male respondents from Group 1 reflected on their own behaviour and admitted that they used to do *takfir* on others and discredited others as being *kuffar*. According to one of the respondents, this was more to tease and bully others instead of a serious religious practice.

> For example, that he, and me, I also said, automatically at some point, unfortunately.... (...) we had the 4th friend, who always told us this and that, just for fun, so to speak. And made religious jokes. And then one of them just said, you are just an infidel, or a kafir. But

unfortunately we only realised later what kind of statement that is, or what kind of effect it has on us to make such an assertion, to label someone as an infidel. It's not a pretty sight. And... later we had also apologised, so [Hakan] and I. For all these statements, because it's just not right. Because we don't know in the end, ok, he laughed, because we don't know exactly how it really goes on in his heart. When we say something like that, or insinuate something like that, or exclude him with such statements. And yes.

The non-acceptance of discreditation of others is rooted in some respondents' education at home. Others named the youth club with its social workers as a place where the principle 'All humans are humans' was emphasised. Except for one respondent, who classified Osama bin Laden's role in history as important, all respondents evaluated radicals negatively and as distinct from their perception of themselves. At the same time, respondents did not picture radicals as monsters or dehumanise them.

Some respondents associated radicalism with *exaggeration* and an *overreach on religious issues*. Each respondent's own religious practice affected what exactly they considered as exaggerated. For one male respondent, this was be the practice of not shaking hands with women while for a female respondent this was wearing the hijab at home. Others said that fighting in general is a form of exaggeration.

4.2.1.2 The radical as a victim of society and the recruiters

While speaking about why someone would join ISIS, many respondents made efforts to comprehend that decision and to be understanding. Some respondents thought that radicals first and foremost are stupid or naïve. More common were statements that framed radicals as being victims, either of society at large or of islamist recruiters.

Radicals are seen as victims of society, for example, one respondent in Group 2, who had met people that later went to Syria, clearly named society as the culprit when she said:

> Because I always know that those who go in such an extreme direction, had some strange problems, and have no social environment, which in short, such people have always been the victims of society, that's how I always perceived it.

The same respondent outlined that she can understand the impetus to leave, as she felt the same once in her life when her situation at home was depressing and full of tensions. However, she never intended to join ISIS. Another female respondent from Group 2 said that she thinks radicalisation can be caused by experiencing discrimination and exclusion in combination with some kind of general negativity . A male respondent expressed that people who join ISIS are destroyed individuals even before they go there and that they may have had a troublesome childhood.

> That's the thing about all these radical islamists, they're broken junkies. All of them. Broken junkies, fucked-up junkies or whatever, who had no stability in their lives. You have, you're fucked up. I say I'll take you in and I give you my ideology. You look up to me, you like me, you love me for taking you in. I'm your role model, I will be one day, then I'll give you my ideology without you noticing, and one day you'll think like that.

As shown in this quotation, many respondents see radicalisation as ensuing from a combination of external, societal drivers of radicalisation and their exploitation by those who seek to recruit vulnerable individuals.

Radicals are seen as *victims of the recruiters*, too. When talking about why someone would join ISIS, most interviewees think that these people have been manipulated and used by that organisation and its members. This perspective focuses on the fighters not as killers and perpetrators of violence, but as victims of its ideology, as they sacrifice their lives to ISIS . One respondent argued that only people who

are tired of life would join ISIS. Another declared that he was asked to join Jihad, but did not want to end up as cannon fodder. He speculated that among those around him who left for Syria, at least one third had been broken individuals, maybe even suicidal. Another female respondent who supported Al-Asra said that those leaving for Syria got it all wrong and misunderstood Islam. Another female respondent from Group 1 talked about it in a similar way. Many other respondents did not refer to 'misinterpretation' and instead emphasised 'manipulation' by the recruiters instead.

One male respondent from Group 1 reflected on the relationship between leadership (a small minority in numbers) and the greater number of followers who have nothing to lose:

> There are also smart people, there were doctors and all sorts of things, they were also in IS. It isn't like that! But the majority is just like that [less intelligent]. Well, [ISIS] only got the masses because.... so there can be 100 people, highly intelligent people, without the pawns, like in a chess game, the 20 - 30 thousand other stupid people, who go to war without protection or anything else, nothing would be possible. Nothing at all. [...] It's like hypnosis. Like that. It's all they have. They know that nobody loves them in Germany.

Another respondent, who talked about someone he knew well and who got radicalised, described the path of that person as follows: 'Then later he came into contact with Islam, he watched videos, this Pierre Vogel, all kinds of things and then, got, so to speak, brainwashed. [...] He brainwashed himself.'

Some respondents consider converts to be more vulnerable to manipulation attempts as they do not know Islam very well and therefore can more easily be convinced of a jihadi version of Islam. One of the six respondents that call themselves converts supported this perspective on converted Muslims:

> Because if you convert to Islam and have nothing to do with Muslims and you only get to know them through the Internet. At the beginning you have no idea what Islam is really like, and then when people come to you, who do a good job psychologically, and convince you of it, 'yes, the media, they lie, there is not really a war here, no people are slaughtered here, it's all lies, people are turned on *haqq* [righteousness] and all that, so, rightful path, we always try to give all people.... it's really good here' and then of course they always send nice videos and stuff.

A female respondent thought that the question of belonging is most important and plays an important role in radical groups' abilities to create team spirit and a sense of belonging. She compared it to political groups and said that people would search for a way to make a difference. Other respondents named other potential incentives when reasoning about why someone would join ISIS. A female respondent who knew women who left for Syria classified them as being 'dolls':

> Q: When you noticed that people left the country, from this environment and you knew someone from seeing or something, did you feel threatened somehow? (…)

> R: Because I only had, would I have had contact with boys, maybe it would be different, but because they were just girls and I knew what they were like as people, I didn't feel threatened at all, because they were just so much like dolls.

> Q: Doll?

> R: Yeah, real doll, I would have imagined they just went there because, yeah, totally cool, then you get married, they somehow hyped it a lot, because you become the wife of a Muhadjid, of a fighter and because they are the superstars there, that's why I could imagine them to be housewives. Just like that.

This assessment suggests that in some cases, non-ideological motives may also play a role in the decision to join ISIS. Another male respondent who did not had any direct contacts to ISIS fighters or recruiters argued that mostly 'dumb' people would join such an organisation, but realised during our conversation that even intelligent people with a university degree were joining ISIS. He concluded: 'maybe, they need the thrill'.

Another male respondent, who had travelled to Turkey in 2019 and had met some former Syrian rebels, assumed that fighters from ISIS wanted to play heroes. He also blamed Muslim communities in Germany, arguing that most Sunni mosques – other than the jihadi groups – do not offer services in German for those who do not speak Turkish or Arabic fluently.

In sum, the interviewees share the overall perspective that people who are recruited for violent radicalism should be seen foremost as victims. Some respondents, a majority of them female, were speaking about those people in an empathic way. Some cited their experiences and linked them to experiences that they thought people who had been recruited by ISIS might have made. Nevertheless, most respondents focused on the recruited violent radicals as being deficient and different. They described them as being stupid, as losers who cannot get their lives together, being unloved and unable to love, instable, unaccepted by society, alone, or uneducated in religious questions.

4.2.2   The radical and me – Muslim identities under pressure?

Many respondents – female and male – felt compelled to talk about themselves personally during the interviews, which generated many insightful statements about their identity. As these data did not fit neatly into categories of 'gender', 'ethnic' or 'class' identity for which there were pre-determined codes in the coding tree, I created a new code to captures these varied reflections on self, which I called 'Who am I'. Characteristics respondents ascribed to themselves such as being humorous, thoughtful, silent, or offensive were coded here. Some respondents, albeit not the majority, mentioned these characteristics whilst talking about the fact that they had never felt inclined to use political violence or join a radical group. This suggested they were alert to the potential implicit construction within the research of possible connections between Islam, their religion and parts of their identity as Muslims, and islamist violence and, in this way, sought to disrupt such connections.

During the interviews, most respondents were asked explicitly what made them uninterested in violent radicalism in general and islamist radicalism in particular. Several respondents from Group 1 needed some time to reflect on this, as they had not thought about the question: 'Why not me?' before. The explanations given by the respondents corresponded to their ideas about why others joined radical violent groups such as ISIS. Nevertheless, the focus is more on individual capacities and characteristics then on their personal circumstances preventing radicalisation. It shows that these respondents have a positive image of themselves and their self-effectiveness.

Most respondents, male and female, referred to their personality and competences when asked why they think they were unresponsive to radical approaches. In line with the negative attributes they assume violent radicals may have, they formulate their own characteristics: being intelligent, being successful, being loved and able to love, being attitudinally stable, being accepted by society, being socially embedded, or educated in religious questions. One male respondent simply stated that he cannot be manipulated easily. Some other males interviewees argued that they would always check the plausibility and reliability of an argument themselves, especially if others want to sell *truths* to them. Male, but not female, respondents from both groups and from all levels of formal education gave being intelligent as a reason for being unimpressed by the calls of violent radicals. Some tried to explain in detail what kind of intelligence they thought they had, while others simply referred to it in general.

> Q: What do you think protects you from this [joining ISIS]?

R: My mind! [points to his forehead]

Q: Your mind?

R: [insists] My mind! [pointing to his forehead again]

One respondent who was involved in the neo-salafist scene in Rhineland, at the point when it splintered into jihadist and political neo-salafist wings, claimed that the literal interpretation of some violent neo-salafist interpretations did not satisfy him intellectually. As an example, he mentioned the image of Al-Masih ad-Dajjal[19], Dajjal being a person and not a system. He argues that people coming from Milathu Ibrahim – a group of jihadi-supporting neo-salafist in the Rhineland – were rather simple-minded and that he was never convinced on a theological level of the legitimacy of ISIS. Theological reasoning and a strong self-perception of being intelligent merge in this case. A female respondent referred to the disputes in neo-salafist scene at that time simply saying: 'I've always [...] stayed out of it all the time, because I never understood why I should go there, or why you have to do something like that.'

Another female respondent mentioned religious aspects and reasoning about the self as she reflected that it was sheer coincidence that she did not get involved with jihadism when she converted to Islam some years ago. She started saying that it was 'pure luck' and finished her reflection saying that, 'I can imagine that I would have said, at some point, I want to go there. But thank God I never got to meet those people, I still have common sense, I probably would never have gone there.'.

Many respondents, and most of the women among them, referred to their religious knowledge as an important factor for not being open for interpretations of Islam that they consider being radical, for example jihadi exegesis. Many have learned about Islam all by themselves, others mentioned that they received a religious education from parents, teachers, and in the mosque, but have also co-educated themselves.

One female respondent said:

> Because, that's a good question, why am I not radical? Because I realised relatively early what religion means to me. And also, when I went to the mosque, they didn't tell me that Islam means killing. For me, Islam is peace. Islam is peace of mind. That I worship a God. That's Islam to me, but not that I kill someone because they don't have my religion.

She also pointed out that until ISIS gained ground in Syria, she had not known that individuals existed who referred to the same religion she believed in while committing brutal acts of violence. She was also shocked that people misunderstood Islam in such a way. Another female respondent, who had been approached by neo-salafist Muslims and had received criticism from traditionalists for the way she practised her religion, made clear that such attempts can only be dismissed by someone who knows what Islam means for them. Some respondents referred to this idea of *neither exaggerating* nor *taking Islam too lightly,* although they had different definitions of what treading this middle way meant.

One male respondent argued that his parents, who adapted their Muslim lives to cultural and social circumstances in Germany, were good examples to him and his siblings and did a good job in preventing them becoming radicalised. Another male respondent from Group 1 said that he had not had a difficult childhood. Although he was not an easy child, his mother knew how to handle him and had given him love and understanding. The assumption that being loved is an effective prevention also came up in the answer of another respondent: 'So, I have a family. I'm loved too. (laughs) I would say so. That has a lot to do with it.'

---

[19] This is the Muslim version of the Antichrist, the personification of Evil, described for example in Saritoprak (2003).

The fear of having too much to lose to follow a radicalisation pathway came up in several interviews. One male respondent mentioned the concrete option of joining ISIS. He explained his decision not to do so, referring to an earlier reflection on his life. He said that once he had thought that joining a group involved in organised crime or some biker gang would be an interesting prospect, as he could live in a brotherhood and experience a sense of community and cohesion. However, he had come to the following conclusion: 'In the end, it only leads to crime and a minus in life. No way.' That's why, when the option of joining ISIS came up, he knew that he did not want to join them either.

Another male respondent explained his lack of attraction to a radicalisation pathway by the fact that he had too much to lose. In addition to all the negative aspects of participating in a war, he stated, his family and friends would not accept him when he came back.

> I mean, you would lose so much, in general, if it would come out, so, with me it would be a topic like that, everybody would know that and yes.... Assuming I would quit then, where would I go? Nobody would want to have anything to do with me anymore. I think that's what's keeping me from it.

This feeling of not wanting to lose everything, especially the ties to family, was articulated by another male respondent who had entered the neo-salafist scene and later distanced himself from it. He had witnessed radicalisation in his vicinity, but also repressive measures that followed. He added that despite all the differences of opinion, he did not want to move any further away from his mother, who had already been very critical of these developments. Another said that his mother had threatened him that if he became radicalised, she would no longer consider him her son.

One male respondent described that the preventive effect of the personal environment in a positive way:

> I think I am perfectly happy in Germany, so. Even if inequality, even if there is inequality here, that is not so relevant. If I don't get into a club, what do I lose? And I think my friends are like that, I was against it from the beginning, so. For me it was far away and terrible how one can do something like that. If a guy like that would come to me and try to persuade me somehow, there would be no possibility from the beginning, because I take something like that with a smile and reject it (clicks), I wouldn't do something like that. But what is it now, what really stops me from doing that? (gasps). My friends, I'd say.

Some respondents argued that violent radicalism is in stark contrast to their values like equality of people and respect for life. A few mentioned teachers or parents as agents of such values. Some others listed social workers, peers and '*the street'* when asked about where they got their values from.

Respondents face daily challenges that emerge from the tensions that inevitably arise when you grow up in a rather conservative Muslim family and a modern society at the same time. More tensions arise when this modern society holds a debate about whether Islam is the root of islamist violent radicalism or its most important challenge[20]. The modern and progressive dimensions of contemporary European society presents challenges to Muslims but also to other religious people living in it as well as those with conservative values (religious or not). Some respondents have been exposed to greater challenges than others, depending on their personal environment and the conflicting expectations within it. The greater the challenges, the more often these young people looked for spiritual explanations. Consequently, respondents reflected on these challenges and offered individual answers to them; part of that examination includes views and patterns of thought that are more or less connectable to radicalism.

---

[20] A debate that reflects the will of all those participating in this debate to *prove their beliefs* in the theological debate rather than to understand the complexity of this question (Logvinov, 2012: 39ff). The empirical data from the research conducted in this study do not provide a clear picture that could resolve that dispute.

However, the level of radicalism correlates neither positively nor negatively with a particular level or profile of religious practices.

Religious practices vary significantly among the respondents. There is a relevant difference between Group 1 and Group 2, and also between male and female respondents. While everyone in Group 2 performs the daily prayer, only the women and a few males of Group 1 do so every day. Fasting is common in both groups, as well as general rules on nutrition, in particular the renunciation of pork. Some of the male respondents drink alcohol, but try to do so moderately. Those male respondents who did not pray and consumed alcohol or weed, framed drinking alcohol or smoking weed or shisha as something negative.

Respondents who described tensions arising from being a Muslim, coming from a conservative family and living in a secular, progressive and liberal society seemed to deal with these tensions in three different ways. Most tend to dissolve this tension in favour of modernity by opting for a relatively modern lifestyle. However, they are still aware of the tensions between their modern lifestyle choices and the worldviews of their often rather conservative families. For example, many of the male respondents have girlfriends, but most cannot talk about that with their Muslim parents, as this young respondent from the Group 1 explained:

> R: Because, I noticed how it was with my brother. He was together with his girlfriend for five years. She wasn't a Muslim or a [nationality]. And so on. I don't want to experience the same thing as he did.
>
> Q: ‚What happened then?'
>
> R: Well, it was, a little bit, so much stress! My father says: 'yes, it must be a Muslim woman! blah blah blah! You are still too young!' Yeah. I'm not up for that, of course.

Most male respondents who live a fairly Western lifestyle including drinking alcohol, smoking shisha and weed, having girlfriends, and going to clubs do not question their identities as Muslims. In fact, they make it part of their Muslim identity. The following statement of a young male who grew up in a religiously mixed family exemplifies that, as he reflected about whether or not it is allowed to judge a Muslim woman who wears a headscarf and drinks alcohol:

> That' s what bothers me. It shouldn't bother me, because it's your life, but it does bother me a little. I mean, I drink alcohol too. Who gives me the right? I admit it, it bothers me. But I had no right to say that. So, I have to admit that, too.

Being authentic and coherent as a meta-category is more important for him than the actual decision one takes in the tension filled context of modernism and conservative interpretations of Islam.

Some young adults actively search for a way to navigate within these conflicting opportunities. This is true for converts as well as born Muslims. In a conversation about religious duties and practices, a male respondent said that he found it difficult to live in Germany in a Muslim way. He added that there is no positive atmosphere for Islam in Germany and that so far, he had not found a community that fitted his beliefs and practices. One female respondent stated that she feels as if she were living in an anti-religious society, where being religious means to be looked down on. She has been confronted with the false assumption that Muslim women are disconnected from reality and do not know the real world.

> R: As I said, it does not only concern Islam, it concerns all religions. In principle, as soon as you practice, you have to fight with your fellow human beings.
>
> Q: Because you are religious?

R: Because you are religious. Because people think, yes, he is too conservative. He can't have a say if he doesn't do parties, for example. I often have that [...] some people who, I say now, parties and so on, live a different life, have the opinion that I have little knowledge about life. Because I don't play this life.

This tension can be well illustrated with regard to the influencers she follows on social media. Among them are a modern Muslim comedy group called 'Datteltäter' as well as the neo-salafist preacher Marcel Krass. Even though they are on opposite sides of the spectrum in their views on Islam, they both talk about issues this female respondent considers to be important: the right to wear a hijab in public space and the right for women to have a proper place in mosques.

One of the male respondents admitted to not living a halal life. He can hardly reconcile with his past and present decisions. The possible punishment from God was on his mind while we were conducting the interview, even though it hadn't guided his daily actions. He is surrounded by criminality, mainly drug trafficking, and he feels both attracted and disgusted by this lifestyle – its opportunities for fortune and the risk of repression. He is interested in religious norms and practices but has little knowledge of them.

This tension between modern lifestyle choices and the tenets of conservative interpretation of *the* Islamic life is also unbearable for another respondent who faced biographical challenges when converting in his early twenties. Islam was an attractive conservative alternative to the life of his divorced parents. His father had left his mother for reasons he associates with modern images of sexuality, and his mother ended up drinking too much alcohol. From his perspective, (neo-salafist) Islam was the cure for the diseases that a modern society had sprung on him and his family. Nevertheless, in the meantime, he has turned away from this neo-salafist interpretation. It seems that he is in the process of religious reorientation within Islam.

Other respondents found a way to resolve this tension in favour of more conservative interpretations of Islam. Both male and female respondents presented critical perspectives on their parents' decisions to split up as well as their lifestyles and problems. Biographical challenges included parents' drug use and gambling addiction, violence of fathers against their wives and the family as a whole, a parent's suicide, beloved people leaving them, bullying, self-hate, and feelings of loneliness. One female respondent whose father is addicted to drugs and is violent thinks that he is owned by *djinn* (genies). She wants to learn how to cast it out in order to help her father (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Another female respondent who does not feel accepted as a Muslim in Germany decided to leave the country with her husband. A male respondent and convert seem to have easily arrived in his new faith and life by assembling his faith from all directions of Islam, liberal to fundamentalist. Another female respondent said that wearing a hijab protects her from going to places where she thinks a Muslim woman should not hang out. Wearing the hijab was the best decision she has taken in her live as it helps her being the person she – based on her faith – wants to be.

When asked what they would die for, few of the respondents mentioned their faith or God. Those who did – three from Group 1 and without close relations to actors or groups labelled as being radical – did not provide a theological explanation for just and unjust wars or their role in either of those. Their willingness to die for God does not come along with an over-all jihadist worldview. When asked about what 'dying for god/your religion' would look like, a female respondent argued she would rather die than convert to another faith, and two male respondents said that they would fight in a war for their religion. The following quote illustrates the ease with which respondents are dealing with this issue.

Q: Is there anything worth dying for?

R: Worth dying for? Yes, my family. (pause) And, well, as a Muslim, I have to say, I would, well, I can't now, I would, well, God would offer me: 'you die now and get to paradise' - I

would die. Because I'm a Muslim, I believe in paradise. And if I were assured that I would die, um, that I would get in, I would die. So. But. So now, so now in human terms so, my family.

Q: Mm.

R: Nothing else. No money in the world, nothing else in the world.

Q: But how, how could you find out, that hmm, then God would have to speak to you...

R: Yes, then I say, yes, exactly, so I know...

Q: God would have to speak directly to you.

R: 100% well it would just be the fact that it's him, not some psycho thing and he tells me, then I would do it. But that's impossible, so here's the thing. That's why, humanly speaking, my family.

Some respondents had experienced *being labelled as radicals by others*. A female respondent who wears the *niqab* was frustrated that others associate her with radicalism and spoke about several encounters in which she had to defend her appearance. Another male respondent was in trouble when he and some friends wanted to climb up on the roof of a building that turned out to be an administration building. Caught by the security and the police, they were immediately suspected of being terrorists because, as he thinks, they were perceived to be Muslims and potentially islamists, too.

Others had had experiences with takfirism – labelling someone as an unbeliever. Two respondents, who are friends with each other, were friends with someone who branded them as unbelievers. In his opinion, they had exhibited incorrect religious behaviour. One respondent explained that because of this, he ended the friendship. Another male respondent said that he had regularly called others k*afir*, but regrets it after a social worker made him think about it:

R: Oh yes, exactly, in the past I was also so radicalised so against, with Islam. so. I have really thought so badly about Christians too, well. and, the one who talked me out of it, and the one who talked me out of it - that's what I say - was [Tobias, social worker] (…). He really taught us all, so, really, God, I thank God that he brought me such a person, he really taught me to avoid such things. He really, really woke me up. He really, really woke me up, he woke me up. "That's not right. What are you talking about?" Like this.

Q: and, where did you get these prejudices from, if I may say so, actually?

R: From the street!

Both cases emphasise what another social worker told me: just a few years ago, it was quite common among young Muslims to do *takfir* on others, either as a joke or as an attempt to bully that person. The fact that so many of the respondents refer to the 'discreditation of others' as a characteristic of radicalism indicates that this common activity has lost some relevance. Besides the respondent above, however, none of the respondents explicitly told me where they had learned that such practices are not accepted by others. Therefore, the reason why this has changed remains unclear.

4.2.3 Conclusion: the relationship between thoughts on radicalism and radicalisation

All respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as complete distance (see 4.1) consider radical islamists to be outside of Islam. Some say it more clearly than others. Overall, they reject radical islamists' violence, politics, and narratives of discreditation. Some consider radicals to be victims of society, too.

Among the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as factual distance (see 4.1), some consider radical islamists to be outside of Islam. Others explicitly say they are not entitled to judge

that, although all reject radical islamists' violence, politics, and narratives of discreditation. Some consider radicals to be victims of society, too.

None of the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as factual closeness (see 4.1) explicitly consider radical islamists to be outside of Islam, although they all reject the violence perpetrated by ISIS, criticise its politics as being unislamic, and don't appreciate its narratives of discreditation.

Women are more empathetic with people who were taking the wrong path and joining ISIS. Almost all women but only very few men reflected on how someone gets to the point of fighting in Syria among ISIS.

In this set of respondents there seems to and non-violent radicalism as being part of Islam

4.3 Relationship between inequalities and radical beliefs

This section deals with the connection between inequality and radicalisation and is divided into three sub-sections addressing, in turn, economic, horizontal and political inequality. In each sub-section respondents' *experiences of inequality* are outlined before attention turns to *how respondents have dealt with those experiences*. At the end of each sub-section, and the section as a whole, the connection between the *experiences* that the young people had, *the way they dealt with these experiences* and *their closeness to and distance* from neo-salafist attitudes and groups is explored.

It is a widespread hypothesis that inequality facilitates radicalisation. Bakker's (2006: 43) study of European jihadists, for example, suggests they 'are often from the lower strata of society; and many of them have a criminal record'. However, the review and analysis of five cross-national population surveys within the framework of the DARE project has shown that survey data reveal no significant correlation between objective economic inequality and radicalisation; although the data do show a slight correlation between *perceived* injustice and discrimination on the one hand and radicalisation on the other hand (Storm et al., 2020). Categories of identity such as gender, class, race, sexuality, age, and religion are all mentioned as possible factors of inequality, but their relevance for radicalisation processes is not proven. Overall, there is no clear evidence that links inequalities based on the aforementioned categories of identity and radicalisation (Winker and Degele, 2010).

In this report, the analysis is confined to those forms of inequalities mentioned by respondents in the course of the empirical research: economic; horizontal; political. Economic inequality was raised by respondents in two ways. Some respondents talked about it incidentally while talking about biographical information or their families. Others, however, addressed this issue in a more systematic way while talking about the meaning of equality and radicalisation. Respondents were not asked directly about household income or the financial situation at home although information on this sometimes emerged in conversation with them. Horizontal inequality - a concept that refers to inequalities between subsets of society (Stewart, 2000: 249; Storm et al., 2020: 7), was addressed when respondents talked about their experiences of racial discrimination and anti-Muslim hate as well as, in some cases, gender discrimination. Being exposed to discrimination has been classified as one factor that may facilitate radicalisation, but the assumed dynamics have not been convincingly described nor analysed (Fahim, 2013: 43ff). Political inequality, defined as 'some individuals or a section of the society hav[ing] more power and influence over governmental and political decision-making and creat[ing] unequal outcomes which benefits themselves, despite following democratic procedures' (Salili, 2020: 2423) was addressed only indirectly by the respondents when they made statements about elites holding economic and political power. These statements are used as a proxy to understand the respondents' experience with political inequality. There were also cases in which different forms of inequalities were experienced at the same time.

The findings reported in this section suggest that economic inequality – whether objective, perceived or both – did not foster radical beliefs among the respondents in this study. The same is true for experiencing

horizontal inequality such as racism, discrimination, anti-Muslim hate or gender inequality. In contrast, it was found that political inequality may foster radical beliefs. However, this alone does not explain why some young adults factual connection to radical groups (see Section 3.1).

4.3.1   Economic inequality

Given the purposive sampling of the DARE project research design – and the focus on youth for whom the measurement of socio-economic status is problematised by their 'transition' status between childhood and adulthood - the project did not seek to compare objective measures of socio-economic status with the wider population or even whole youth population. Rather, respondents were prompted to talk about their occupational situation and that of their parents, their living conditions and leisure activities in order to gain insight into respondents' overall financial standing and their personal surroundings. This allowed respondents to talk about informal resources of income as well periods of temporary financial support from third parties and changes over time. This made it possible to identify experiences of economic scarcity and need, but also abundance, in order to understand better objective and perceived inequalities among the respondents and in relation to others.

In practice, respondents did not address economic inequality, as such, very often during the interviews but where they did, it gave insight into both their current economic situations as well as their expectations of the future. Overall, about two thirds of the respondents mentioned that they had experienced or were currently experiencing economic scarcity. The experiences of the respondents show scarcity can be rooted in the structural situation of the household, which only changes over longer periods of time or not at all. It can also be the result of a crisis that has led to rapid and often massive changes in an individual's or family's economic situation. It can be temporary or lead to a new normal. I discuss both kinds of experiences here before I explore coping mechanisms and correlations and non-correlations between experiences of scarcity and (non-)radicalisation.

4.3.1.1 Economic scarcity, needs and abundance

In order to understand the economic inequalities respondents face, it is important to look at both the structural economic situation (defined as the overall standard of living that persists over time) and situations of temporary economic crises, that had challenged respondents at various points in their lives.

The structural economic situation of many respondents was reflected in a relatively low standard of living. Many respondents reported that their household income was based on one person's earnings; in most cases, that was the father's income. With only two exceptions, single earners – fathers and mothers – were blue-collar workers. Their forms of employment ranged from having stable, long-term employment to experiencing frequent job changes or having several jobs at the same time. Most mothers were taking care of the household; if they earned some money, this was perceived as additional income for the family or as a necessary replacement in cases where the fathers' incomes were not sufficient, for example in the event of unemployment. Mothers were working as unskilled labourers or had only short-term training provided by the social security administration. In three cases, mothers were described as having a profession, implying formal training, a professional identity, and a professional life. In the other cases, mothers were described as simply having a 'job', implying for the sake of earning money rather than being engaged in something meaningful to them.

> Q: Yes. And what do your parents do for a living?
>
> R: My mother is, um, just at home, my father is a plumber.

Other respondents described the financial situation in their families as not being easy when they were younger, when there were more siblings living in the household, or when the father was the sole provider of income in the household.

One male respondent described his experience around being on holiday to explain the change in his family's income level. When he was younger, they travelled to [a country in Maghreb] once in two years by car, which had been a rather cheap way to spend the summer abroad and with their family from [a country in Maghreb]. Now, the family is going on more exotic holidays in other countries, including staying in hotels and travelling by plane. This was something that he enjoyed a lot.

One male respondent described his living conditions at home – where he shared a room with his adult brother in a rather small flat - as being a factor of alienation between him and his 'white German' colleagues.

Some respondents, who work or are in paid educational training, supported their families financially without questioning or criticising it. They considered this to be normal. When asked about his financial situation, one respondent explained:

> Yeah, well, I make 690 gross. That's 550 net. I have to hand over 100 of those off at home. 60 Euros are lost because of the ticket and then I plan to put 150 aside every month. That leaves me with 240 left over, like this. I often eat outside, that's the problem.

One male respondent stated that his father stopped working because he did not earn enough money to fulfil his family's needs. Now, the family received money from social security, and that was enough to cover the most basic needs when the mother's income was included. He argued that his father was too old to learn a new profession, especially with his very limited knowledge of German, which would make it even more difficult for him to find decent work. In contrast, his mother had a talent for learning languages and speaks German much better than his father although both have lived in Germany since before his birth.

Most respondents are not regularly employed; they are attending university, participating in or searching for educational training, or are about to finish school. One female respondent, a mother, and one male respondent, who had finished university recently, were unemployed at the time of the interviews.

Almost half of the respondents had part-time jobs, earning their own money while living at home and going to school. This money supplements to their paid educational training or helps them to finance their studies. One respondent worked in a full-time job and had an additional part-time job in order to earn some extra money. Some respondents used the money to pay for basic needs like clothes, food, and materials for educational training while others use it as a bonus to spend on leisure activities, holidays, and significant purchases such as a driving licence.

> Yeah, I wasn't working as a waiter for long, I was only working for a month or so, two months or so and I really needed clothes, you know. Pair of shoes and stuff. And my dad didn't say: 'Yes, give the money for us' but 'Yes, get yourself stuff, get yourself shoes'. So I just got myself a few things.

When talking about the future, many interviewees expressed the desire for no more financial worries. Very often, they mentioned the idea of having a lot of money without saying what exactly that would look like. When it came to more concrete considerations about the future, respondents mentioned the desire to find a job that suited their interests and financial needs, to finish school (at all or with a good degree), and to improve career prospects through further training. Some were more optimistic than others. For example, a student who grew up with three siblings and his single-parent mother described not experiencing financial shortages as great luck:

> Q: Um, what are your prospects for the future, how do you look at your future?

> R: Mine? I hope my studies… not: 'I hope it'. It's up to me! I have to get it right! I would be

able to do it, if I would make an effort, in my studies. If everything goes well, I would get my Master's [degree] and then work, earn good money. Build a beautiful family, yes, and just be happy. Happy, just be happy.

Q: Would you say become happy or stay happy?

R: Hmm, yes, well, I am happy that I live here like this, in Germany, I love this country more than anything, the most beautiful country for me, in the world, like this. But happy. You still have too many worries. Financial worries and worries about the future. That's why, when I have achieved this, then I can be really happy.

Other than the permanent financial situation, temporary economic crises had a significant impact on respondents' experiences with economic scarcity.

One young woman described a very fundamental form of scarcity among respondents. This woman left the country she grew up in because her family could not afford a lifesaving treatment. After her parents asked for financial support among their family circles around the globe, one relative from Germany adopted her so that she could receive medical treatment in Germany.

Other forms of scarcities have been caused by situations of addictions and divorce. Four respondents[21], three male and one female, talked about male relatives who were addicted to gambling, alcohol, and/or drugs. Their addictions caused major financial problems within the families including, in one case, eviction from the family flat. Addiction has led to the parents' divorce in one family and, in two other cases, the parents' divorce was pending. In another case, the addiction had led to a larger conflict within the family. Divorce itself had been the reason for economic scarcity in another family where the mother, who had a low income, continued living with both children. The respondent explained:

Well, my mother, um, is still a bit, yeah, I don't know how to describe it, well, she's satisfied with little, well, from her I also learned a lot to be satisfied with little and not really aiming for great brand clothes or something, or always having the latest, that's what I really learned from her, she herself always bought a lot at the flea market, bought used things, always said we don't always need the very latest. Yes, of course that's also because she doesn't earn quite as much as my father, and of course she always had to make sure that we could make ends meet.

It is interesting that the respondent did not question this inequality between his parents or how his parents dealt with it. He framed it into something positive: being frugal.

In the situation where the addiction of a parent had led to eviction from the flat, it caused a major conflict within wider family circles. Other family members, who helped the respondent's family to move to a new flat and paid their bills, began putting pressure on the respondents family to ban the parent who had been addicted (but no longer was). This was a price the respondent's family was not willing to pay for long, although they felt under moral pressure to do so. The respondent's family did not have financial problems before the crisis, however part of the respondent's family was engaged in crime, which had a strong emotional impact on the respondent. The respondent now felt even more responsible for his mother's mental health and his family's economic situation:

My mother always gave me money, right, but I always said to my mother: 'no, no, no, don't give me money, I have my own!' Because my mother should always have money with her! My mother should never stay at home or go out without money! Ever! If my mother has no

---

[21] In one additional case, addiction did not cause a financial crisis, probably because the family was generally well off.

more money, I'll give my mother money right now! 'My ATM card, here, take it, go outside!' I don't want my mother to live without money. That's what we all swore to ourselves. So, my brothers. If my mother has no money, either my brother gives it or I, whoever.

4.3.1.2 Dealing with scarcity, needs, and abundance

While many respondents have had similar experiences of economic scarcity, they dealt with it in different ways. The most passive way to deal with it was ignorance. Many respondents were not aware of their economic scarcity, or, even if they were, did not describe this scarcity in terms of inequality. One reason may be that most of them were living in areas where many people did not have a lot of money. Therefore, differences between them and others with more money were not that visible. Then, there are different ways to react to economic scarcity. As described above, some respondents took part-time jobs to reduce personal economic scarcity although they were still living at home. Others invested their time in school and education to build a better future. Emotionally, some respondents reacted with rage while others responded through (enforced) frugality or acceptance.

Although gender issues played an important role in the financial situation of most respondents' families, almost none of the respondents has reflected on their parents' income situation of in terms of gender issues or in relation to their own perspectives about their professional and family future. One exception is a female respondent who grew up with many siblings:

> Well, anyway, I have myself, I see that at home, my mother and my father, well, our parents get along with us quite well, well, really very, very well, I'm going to say, my greatest respect! With six children, I don't imagine it's that easy, even if I see that it works, I still think I won't have more than two children, and, for me, it is also important that we both work, that means, my partner and I, simply so that we can give our children the most beautiful childhood, but also, yes, I think, with money you can do so much, you can help charities, you can donate so much, you can help the family, the parents, or the siblings or something. So, you can just do so much. You can travel the world, that's why, well, I think it's important that we both go to work. Yeah, and I think that's so important.

Her way to deal with the scarcity she experienced, even though she did not express financial problems directly, was to envision a different future for her own family. She is very successful in school and has plans to go to university afterwards. She has the opportunity for social advancement and has chosen to take it. This is true for other male and female respondents as well, although they did not explicitly link their past experiences with their plans for the future the way this respondent did.

For example, the following male respondent's father was a migrant worker employed by the same company for over 30 years; something that his son is proud of. At the time of interview, the father had taken a part-time job as a taxi driver to make some extra money. The respondent explained:

> Yes, my dream job, it's always been to become a civil servant. Because the civil servants always have private insurance and no taxes or low taxes and […] as a civil servant you have the status, you cannot be dismissed, you can only be demoted. But, you have such an insurance for the job, that means, the job always stays with you.

A male respondent from the first group decided to pursue further training to improve his position in the labour market. He said that he had enough money only because he is still living at home. Although he likes his work, he wants to develop himself further because his career prospects are not that great. Another male respondent from the second group thought the same way but focused more on decent work than on purely financial issues. Some respondents are working in order to be able to spend more money and being less dependent on their families' financial means.

Respondents reacted emotionally to financial insecurity in different ways. Interestingly, while most respondents talked about financial problems frankly and described challenges as well, in one case only, a male respondent expressed deep frustration about it:

Q : What is unjust? Is there anything you think is unjust?

R : I think it's unjust when I look at other families, for example, when I look at, how shall I say, other families. If you think about it, why do they have so much more than we do? What have they done that we haven't done? Well, those are the things I think, that's just the way it is. You can' t change that. But it sucks the way it is. Because, actually, everyone should be the same. But... I think that's unjust, for example.

Q: Can you give an example of when you have felt 'I want to have that, too'?

R: [I want to have] No problems with money. For example, that now I have to go to my father every time, 'Daddy do you have two euros, daddy do you have ten euros. Daddy do you have maybe 100 Euro? I want to buy shoes, like this.' That I always have to ask him for money, I don't know, from these families or these kids. 'Dad, um...' They'll get it! They don't even really have to ask, because somehow they get it! Because I've seen cases where they get a sum of money transferred to their account every month, where I think to myself: 'You get money every month and you can do whatever you want with it?' That's kind of unjust. It's natural that their parents probably work something else, or are more willing to give more. I only ask my father for money when I need it. So, just like that, I do not want pocket money. Because I know that if I have it, I'll spend it on shit. I'll spend it on shit. But when I need money, I ask for it and usually I get it.

While this quote may be, in some way, be a classic example for someone who feels angry with others out of relative deprivation, it is not representative for the respondents in this research. The other reactions that can be described as accepting, enduring, ignoring or reframing are dominant. This respondent, too, in a way reframed his experience as being rightfully controlled by his father in financial matters because of his self-confessed irrationality.

One male respondent described his mother and himself as being frugal. This characteristic is in line with the religious beliefs he developed after questioning materialism on a societal and on a personal level.

The same is true for a female respondent who argued that she does not need a lot. She, too, has distanced herself in a way from materialism and modernity surrounding her at home.

One male respondent had internalised and accepted his economic scarcity:

Q: What would you say, how important was your district to you as a child and how important is it to you today?'

R: Um, I'm glad I didn't grow up in such a rich thing, in a rich neighbourhood, but more like this, average citizens. So. It was much more fun, everyone was on the same level, […] when we went out, we had maybe one Euro in our pockets, so, not ten Euros, as a ten-year-old. […] it was definitely, I think, better that way instead of growing up with boys who, I don't know, had the latest iPhone at the age of ten and dunno, and got everything, um, stuck up their ass. Yeah.

He did not question why he had less or why there were such phenomena as rich and poor, but argued that others, who have more, are 'stuck up their ass'. This kind of discreditation of others who are better off can be observed with other respondents as well. One male respondent declared that he would not like

his father to pay for his driving licence because he would be prouder if he had financed it himself through his part-time job. He, indirectly, criticised friends who got their licences paid by their parents.

4.3.1.3 Conclusion: The relationship between economic inequality and radicalisation

Among the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as complete distance (see Section 4.1), all except one had experienced structural economic inequalities. Within this group, four mentioned being frustrated with their economic situation. Others described their experiences of economic inequality of the present, some had surpassed them, and others referred to expected experiences of economic inequality in the future. None of the respondents had experienced economic inequalities associated with crises such as addiction, violence or divorce.

Among the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as factual distance (see Section 4.1), all had experienced economic inequalities. Experiences differ a lot and are, in three cases, linked to other crises such as health-issues, violence, and addiction. In two cases, economic inequalities are a structural problem.

Among the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as factual closeness (see Section 4.1), two had experienced economic inequalities. Both described their experiences as being rather moderate, and both say that in general, their parents were not making them miss anything during their childhood. In one case, experienced economic inequalities were linked to addiction and conflict. While experienced economic inequalities were structural in one case, the respondent did not talk about financial crises or traumatising events or experiences of relative deprivation. The other three respondents from this group did not experience economic inequalities.

Among this set of respondents, there is no link between economic scarcity and radicalisation. Respondents in all three groups had experienced scarcity. Within the group that is closest to radical networks (factual closeness), the relative share of respondents who did *not* have such experiences is actually the highest. Furthermore, there is no difference in the way respondents deal with scarcity on a practical level. They have jobs or downplay, accept, or are frustrated about it, but the way they respond cannot be convincingly linked to the respondent's attitudinal or factual proximity to radicalism.

4.3.2   Horizontal inequality & discrimination

The hypothesis that horizontal inequality such as discrimination, sexism and racism makes radicalisation more probable has emerged from research and has been taken up in by politicians and other political decision takers (Herding, 2013b). In my interviews, horizontal inequality was not discussed directly as an issue in as much as respondents did not think about this dimension of inequality when they were asked what inequality means. However, the experiences of racism, anti-Muslim hate, sexism, and discrimination that respondents had experienced can be considered to be milieu-specific experiences of horizontal inequality.

Almost all respondents see Germany as anti-Muslim, racist and discriminatory. The only respondents not to have had such experiences were the two white and male respondents. They are excluded from the discussion below. The non-white males and all of the female respondents experienced such inequality in interactions with the general public, with the police, at school with teachers, on public transport, at work and in nightlife. These experiences are discussed in the following section followed by an outline of respondents' coping mechanisms. In addition, correlations and non-correlations between experiences of horizontal inequality and (non-)radicalisation are explored.

4.3.2.1 Racism, Discrimination, Sexism, Anti-Muslim Hate

Some respondents indicated that they felt alienated or treated differently in different contexts. Experiences varied in terms of gender and ethnic background. The analysis presented below includes

experiences that the respondents had experienced directly themselves or had observed; they are not based on hearsay. Both male and female respondents described strong feelings of not belonging or not being treated equally or discriminated against in school. Male respondents felt teachers treated them unfairly in cases of misconduct. Female respondents felt judged and suspiciously eyed by teachers when they started to cover up. Respondents of both genders stated that they felt that teachers did not believe in their abilities. Several male respondents felt unaccepted or unequally treated in school. Several male interviewees told stories about being unequally punished for bad behaviour or being falsely identified as the perpetrator of such by teachers.

During the interviews, respondents indicated that not being accepted by other pupils because of their ethnicity was not an issue. One reason for this could be that all respondents attended schools and institutions with other pupils of the same or other ethnic minority backgrounds. Nevertheless, one male respondent felt that he was not accepted by either teachers or other students during his training because he came from a mixed background. He said that there were other students like him, but they assimilated more and were more accepted. This interviewee decided to drop out of his vocational school because of the unfriendly atmosphere he felt there. He was the only male respondent to experience this. Most of the respondents did not yet work for a living. However, one male respondent of Turkish background recounted his experience of discrimination whilst being interviewed for an apprenticeship. His potential future boss asked him for his opinion on Erdoğan and was annoyed when he not only refused to reply but challenged the legitimacy of her question. The respondent had told me earlier that he did not like Erdoğan because he makes Turkey less democratic and so it would have been easy for him to distance himself from Erdoğan in order to make a good impression at his future workplace. But he chose not to be judged by this and refused to answer and even confronted the interviewer with her inappropriate behaviour. He knew that it would not be lawful or legitimate to judge anyone for their opinion of Erdoğan. Some of the quotes from my interviews suggest that it was routine for young (black) people of colour to be approached by the police due to their appearance. One respondent stated that he was checked by the police every day when he was outside. He lived in an area [Distown] heavily monitored by the police as it was a hotspot for drug trafficking. He was upset about it, but felt he could manage it. Another male respondent felt wrongly accused by a police officer in his neighbourhood[22] and was very angry about it. However, he forced himself to remain calm because he knew that being violent towards the police would get him into great trouble. After interacting with the police, he was still very angry and engaged in harmful behaviour towards himself and later vandalised the property of others. Another male respondent said that he and his friends were always the first ones to be checked by the police when someone reported to the police that a group of young adults were rioting.

Another male respondent reported that a police officer insisted on asking him about his real nationality, and did not accept the respondent's claim that he was German. A similar incident was described by another male respondent who was with a friend who then was asked about what his real origin was by the police officer several times in a row. The interviewee said that his friend had slightly darker skin and looked more 'oriental' than him. He laughed at this racist incident with a third friend, although they both felt that their other friend was seriously upset when asked about his ethnicity. One of the respondents had witnessed two police officers dealing rudely and brutally with a black man. The male respondent

---

[22] This incident was not described by the respondent as inherently racist in as much as the police officer did not behave racially. The respondent was probably not singled out for his appearance either, as he was fair-skinned and more European looking. But, the area where he lived was described by another respondent living there as a target for police in general as it lay within an area with a very high percentage of people of Muslim ethnic backgrounds. Thus, it could be argued that this incident was nevertheless racist on a structural level, as it resulted as a consequence of the general racial profiling of the area.

regretted not having filmed the incident. He said that he is certain that the police officers abused their power. Another young male respondent felt treated differently because he was a Muslim when he climbed on an official building with his friends. All of his friends were Muslims as well, and the security staff immediately thought they were planning or committing an Islamist terrorist attack.

Female respondents did not report cases of racial profiling or being treated inappropriately by the police. They had not experienced being regularly checked by the police at the train station or in their residential area. A *niqab*-wearing woman reported that she was checked once by the police at the train station, saying that she and her husband were immediately surrounded by a handful of police officers. Since she did not want to unveil herself to the men in a crowded and public place, and no female officer was available, she was taken to the nearest police station to be examined by a female police officer.

Harassment or even aggression while using public transport was reported quite frequently. A male respondent, a Muslim of European origin with an intonation that is atypical of the region, was surprised when he was verbally attacked while he and a friend were using public transport. He was with a female friend who bumped into someone by accident. This person then grabbed her bag. When the respondent started to intervene, this person insulted him verbally with racist name-calling. The respondent told me that he struggled to control his aggression, especially when it came to protecting women and so it was remarkable that he did not go crazy in this situation. The situation deescalated after a third person, an old lady, intervened and confronted the racist aggressor. Other reports by male respondents about racist harassment while using public transport often began like this i.e. the respondent recounts not doing anything but being accused of having done something inappropriate, or being perceived to have acted inappropriately by someone else. This then led to racial insults, sometimes repeated insults, without any intervention by a third person. Female respondents did not report many incidents like this. Those they did report usually revolved around being subjected to racist comments without pretext or provocation. One female respondent said that she did not intervene when she witnessed a racist attack against a black man. She feared she would be the next victim of the assailant. Another female respondent stated that she was anxious about people staring at her when using public transport, as if they actively despised her.

For female respondents, the experience of being treated differently or excluded often started when they began to cover their hair and/or face. One female respondent stopped pursuing a hobby after she felt she wouldn't fit in anymore when she started wearing a hijab, as no one sharing her hobby wore a hijab. Another woman said that she changed her circle of friends after she started wearing a hijab without mentioning any direct connection with her decision to cover. She mentioned, however, that the friends she had now were all from the same background and understood her situation. Another female respondent argued that it was difficult to be religious in German society.

In general, female respondents felt they were more likely to be insulted because of their religion than because of their ethnic background. This was the opposite for male respondents. Most of their experiences focused on situations in which they felt judged as foreigners or having an Arab background, which could lead to problems or insecurity.

Many respondents cited the entry policy of clubs as a typical situation in which racist discrimination impacted their leisure time and identities significantly. One respondent talked about an incident when he and mostly Muslim friends wanted to party in a club: 'And before it was even our turn he [the doorman] shouted from far away: "you don't need to try it anymore, the organiser said, no more *kanaks*[23]"'.

---

[23] 'Kanak' is a slur used in German for people from various non-white backgrounds, it is both, a slur and a self-labelling of young people with mixed non-white backgrounds.

He later turned to the club owner, complained about the doorman's behaviour, and received an apology plus free admission to the club on a different occasion for him and his friends. The respondent was surprised that he had forgotten this incident when we first spoke about discrimination. The respondent said that 'despite this [apology and redress] it is still racism.' Actually, several male respondents mentioned this issue, of not being admitted into a club or facing doormen's racism.

Some respondents also associated the housing situation and urban design in general with ethnic discrimination. When asked about where they would like to live in the future, some respondents named a district that is known for being rich and white. One respondent even clearly justified this choice. He said that this district had the image of being home to very *few* foreigners. This was similar to an impression that another respondent had about this and other districts in the same area, describing them as being much cleaner and more beautiful than those he lived in.

Both male and female respondents perceived the way in which the media reported on topics such as Islam or migration as discriminatory. Politicians were also considered actors of discrimination. Both the media and politicians were considered incompetent to talk about these issues; both were described as painting a negative picture of Islam and migrants for no reason. Many felt that the media reported an incorrect picture of their own reality. As a result, respondents had started to question how reliable the media and politicians were in general. Some respondents also felt ignored by the media and by politicians when it came to dealing with hate crime towards Muslims. The respondents I interviewed after the Christchurch attacks[24] were particularly adamant that the media were not covering this sufficiently. Some argued that the political reaction would have been much higher if the victims had not been Muslims, but Christians or members of other religious groups. Another case that was highlighted was the shooting in Halle, where a man tried to attack a synagogue and when he wasn't successful walked to the nearest Kebab shop and killed two customers inside. They believed that the owner of the kebab shop had received less media attention than the Jewish community, even though his shop was also targeted for racist reasons.

All interviews took place before the attack in Hanau, where nine people were shot in and around shisha bars. The impact of this attack on young adults, especially the young men who often spend their weekends in shisha bars, should not be underestimated. Although most of the respondents were not afraid of being attacked in this way, they could relate to this incident because of their own experiences of being excluded and targeted based on their appearance and lifestyle. The effect on this study's young male respondents as well as all other black people or people of colour in Germany could be considerable, as shisha bars were considered a safe space for these populations. Such spaces are especially important for those who have been actively excluded from other places of leisure, such as the young men who were not allowed to go to a club (see above) and those who did not feel accepted in white spaces[25] and therefore avoided them.

Being discriminated because of their appearance has sunk deeply into some respondents' self-perception and self-esteem. A male respondent who grew up with his mother, who had a non-white Muslim background, and who has a German father talked about his relationship to his father when he suddenly he said:

> R: They're these cousins, I get along with them very well. When I'm there [with my father] we always hang out together. And the [cousin] is not... He is completely German. He's German. And he has no problem that I am still [non-white Muslim]. And he's very relaxed

---

[24] A man attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand where he shot 51 Muslims dead and wounded another 50. He streamed his actions online. Ideologically, he justified his actions by his hate of Muslims.

[25] White spaces can be defined, based on the approach of Elijah Anderson as 'settings in which black people [and people of color, S.N.] are typically absent, not expected, or marginalised when present' (Anderson (2015: 10)

about it.

Q: But otherwise, when you meet other people, is that a problem?

R: I don't know, it's just one of those things. Sometimes I have the feeling that you don't feel comfortable with it, because, you know that from, let's say, the media. We hear this from the [Muslims], then there is, like for example in Cologne this incident, back then on New Year's Eve. about refugees and so on. Sometimes you notice that many people are not [well] reacting to it. That's actually a pity. Because I didn't do anything to them. That's what it is. Many people think that I look so dangerous because of my appearance, which is not true. That's the kind of prejudice they have.

It is clear to the interviewee that people are prejudiced toward him because of his appearance: he is a tall, heavily built young man with black hair, brown eyes and a black beard. He expressed what many feel: that they are not only perceived by others as not belonging or as different, but that they are also seen as dangerous to society. The stereotypes that male respondents are confronted with range from being drug dealers and criminals to misogynists, violent extremists, or as someone who simply does not follow the rules.

When I was with a small group of young men, many of whom had been interviewed for this project, waiting at a railway station for more people, I witnessed myself one of the young men being wrongly accused by an employee of the train agency of having done something wrong. The railway employee shouted at the young man, who refused to admit to what he was being accused of, until he realised that the employee would not believe him anyway. Finally, he admitted that he would not do it again (even though he had not done it in the first place), and the train agency employee finally left. The young men immediately shouted at me: 'Now, you have seen it! This happens to us ALL THE TIME. They cannot distinguish one *Kanak* from the other'

Some conflicts, which male respondents reported without considering them discriminatory or racist, are also about being wrongly accused. For example, one of the respondents was accused of stealing at work, another one of hating women. A third was accused of being lazy at work and another of being unfriendly to customers. It remains unclear to me why the respondents did not consider these accusations – some of them serious – as racist, although from the outside, it seems unlikely that these kinds of accusations would have been made if the respondents had been white or female.

Respondents were also often confronted with hostility, racism, and discrimination in their private lives. This was true especially for those respondents who had converted to Islam. Often, they had to justify their choice and endure harassment and negative comments. But it was not only converts who were confronted with discrimination in their private lives. One respondent had been rejected by her Muslim parents when she started to practice Islam differently and started wearing an *abaya* – a shoulder to toe, often black overdress. Another female respondent had faced hostility in her mainly white and Christian neighbourhood. Other respondents had had to justify themselves to family members and friends who no longer accepted their religion and religious experiences. Some had lost friends and social contacts because they had converted or started practising Islam differently. Those who did not report hostility, racism or discrimination in their private lives, most of whom are non-white Muslims, have friends and family with the same cultural/ethnic background and lived in an area with many people of the same or similar ethnic backgrounds.

None of the respondents have been physically assaulted. However, most female respondents reported situations in which they felt physically threatened or very uncomfortable. For example, a female respondent wearing an *abaya* reported that a man outside a bar looked at her and blew smoke in her face when she passed by. Another female respondent wearing a *niqab* reported that someone deliberately

bumped into her at a station and almost pushed her down the stairs. Another female wearing a headscarf said she was walking past a group of young men when suddenly one of them jumped up and blocked her way, eying her up and down.

Some respondents associate *being German* with wealth or wisdom. The idea of the *unsuccessful foreigner* is deeply rooted in the self-perception of some respondents. A young, rather successful non-white male adult, who is about to graduate from high school, which makes his parents very proud, said:

> For example, I no longer see myself as an, well, [I am a] *Kanak* … nevertheless, [but] who can be smart. So I'm glad. That the image is not promoted any further, that Kanaks are all stupid and that only the Germans are good. Yes, I am glad.

One male respondent who works in a shop had several racist experiences with customers, but said that he has never felt unaccepted by his colleagues, although they sometimes give him strange looks because of his housing situation; he still shares a room with one of his brothers. He described the alienation he felt as the difference between being a 'foreigners' and being 'German'. In actual fact, however, the difference was primarily one of class, as he could not move out of his housing situation for economic reasons.

Furthermore, he believed that gentrification in Neustadt is a politically intended process aimed at getting the poor to leave the city. He added some thoughts about the overall distribution of wealth and population in Neustadt, too:

> I also have a feeling that it's somehow planned, maybe it's a conspiracy theory, I don't know, but, the [East], there just live many, many more 'Germans' than in the [West], that's clear. Well. And somehow, the [West] looks much, much poorer than the [East]. As if that was planned.

Another respondent reported an experience during an excursion with his sports team. The 'Germans' had more money for eating out, while the 'foreigners' had much less and had had to eat in the canteen of the hotel.

4.3.2.2 Dealing with Racism, Discrimination, Sexism, Anti-Muslim Hate

Reactions to and coping mechanisms to deal with racism, discrimination, sexism, and anti-Muslim hate vary widely, but none of them are violent or genuinely hateful. Confronting or addressing discrimination and racism at a political or societal level is not an option for most respondents. The coping strategies do not differ between the sexes, although the contexts of discrimination, violence, and hate speech were very different. None of the respondents has a completely all-passive or all-active reaction repertoire, and the reactions differ more depending on the perpetrator, the personality of the victim, and the overall situation.

When discussing these issues on a more general level, one respondent would like to respond with direct physical violence against right-wing extremists, saying that 'it would have been nice to beat some Nazis' when participating in a counter-demonstration to a right-wing demonstration. Only one of the respondents stated that he had reacted violently to racist behaviour or attacks. Another male respondent reported that he had been violent from time to time in various other situations (see 0).

Interestingly, with one exception, none of the respondents talked about the possibility of political or social change. In some interviews I specifically asked about the chances for change once black people and people of colour were more strongly represented in the media and in politics. The answers ranged from obvious pessimism to indifference. One respondent had once participated in a demonstration against Pegida, but no longer went to such demonstrations and said that he was not integrated into that scene and simply

did not know when such events took place. Another had heard about the local alliance against racism and their demonstrations, but had never attended them.

None of the respondents report reflections within their families on this topic, although some of them talk about, for example, why their family's interpretation of Islam is not compatible with ISIS' ideology (see 0). There was no marked difference between the reactions of male and female respondents, except that all women are completely non-violent. Only one man has reacted violently to racism while all male respondents report being violent from time to time in various contexts. While being violent is part of most male respondents' overall set of reactions in diverse contexts, it was not a tool they use when being confronted with racism.

Respondents who have been exposed to racist comments or discrimination in public spaces have reacted verbally by confronting the perpetrator, ignoring it, laughing at it, objecting to its content – for example, when a young adult with a Kurdish background was mistakenly labelled as Arab in a racist insult – or by returning a rude statement. Such confrontations usually resulted in the silence of the perpetrator. Sometimes, such confrontations marked the beginning of a further verbal escalation; in one case, the situation escalated to physical violence.

Very few respondents had confronted racist or discriminatory behaviours by police or other authorities, such as teachers. Those who had done so were later silenced by the authorities. When talking about racist or discriminatory situations by authority figures, respondents showed more frustration than, for example, when talking about discriminatory behaviour by people they met by chance, although these situations were sometimes much more serious. None of the respondents had reported a specific situation to another authority such as the police or anti-discrimination institutions. Some of them tried to correct the injustice by suing internal authorities, such as the management of a club 0 or the head of a company. The latter situation yielded mixed results. Most respondents simply endured the discrimination or tried to overlook it.

When confronted with discrimination or hostility in their private lives, most respondents confronted people in a more or less direct way, depending on their personality. Most of them tried to simply explain and justify themselves. Some had ended friendships after they had converted or started to practice a particular version of Islam, because of feeling hostility and lack of belonging. Others have chosen to end friendships that no longer fit their religious lifestyle. Only once had those who had behaved in a racist way indirectly apologise for their behaviour after being confronted in a private context.

Many respondents - regardless of gender - chose to ignore instances of racism or discrimination, or tried not to take them personally. A black male respondent trivialised his experiences by saying that racism today is directed more frequently against Arab looking people and that he, as a black Muslim, probably experienced it less than others. Another respondent was somewhat irritated when I asked him if he talked about these issues with his friends and said: 'Yes, I told them about it, that it happened in this and that way. But it wasn't like we gonna do some crisis session now because of this.'

Many of the respondents preferred to assume an attitude of indifference. This is well represented by the following quotation from a young man who was insulted in a racist way whilst using public transportation: 'I mean, what should ya do? It goes in one ear and out the other. You can't change it.'

One respondent stated that he knew that people who insult others in a racist way often have issues with their identities, so he tried not to take it personally. Overall, most respondents were frustrated with the racism they were confronted with and experience within society, but have chosen to remain calm and not to take action. They try to be indifferent. Some respondents seemed less calm and cool; they still did not counter racism, but they were emotionally much more affected by their experiences.

A woman who talked a lot about concrete situations of discrimination, hate speech, and a general feeling of insecurity described a situation when she had been alone in a public space and in need of help. She had thought about whom of the passers-by she might ask for help. However, after looking at her intensely, the person she chose to turn to refused to help her. She was wearing a veil and obviously in need of help. The woman broke down emotionally and cried before managing to solve her problem by herself, albeit in a very complicated way as she did not dare ask anyone else for help, for fear of being rejected again. Shaken by the incident, she then went to someone she knew and who lived nearby so as not to be alone. However, even during the interview, I could see and feel that she was still struggling to cope with this experience from a few years ago.

Leaving the country was an option for some respondents, who mention this future reality in diverse contexts of the interview but not in the context of racist attacks or the political situation. They mentioned it rather as a lifestyle and interesting prospect for the future. A woman wearing *niqab* had been physically attacked at a train station, but did not react immediately. She had mentioned leaving Germany before in other contexts during the interview and came back to it again when talking about such racist experiences. Another respondent said that if one day the extreme right came to power, he would think about where to migrate. The feeling of not belonging to the white world – even without hate speech or aggression – was strong in a young man who said he would try to be especially nice to 'Germans' because he didn't want to give a *pretext* for harassment or discrimination. The same respondent described an experience he had when he went to a restaurant with his girlfriend.

> Q: Hmm, are there any places you don't like to go, where you say 'oh, I feel uncomfortable there'?

> R: [thinking] Yes, the other day I was... Maybe it's not like that, maybe it's just my thoughts. I was in a, [a nice area], and there are a lot of European people there. So they really look very European. And I went with my girlfriend to [Restaurant] and there were, may I say, almost only Germans there. [...] Yes, and I'm just 'the foreigner' and I went in there and everyone looked at me directly, like this, yes, I felt really uncomfortable, directly, yes. I told my girlfriend that I'm never coming back here. But, that probably wasn't the case. Maybe I only believe that. I mean, I work at [name of the business], 98% of the people there are Germans and they are all super nice, I am like that too, you know, we get along well with each other, but sometimes they look really strange, then they think I am from another planet, although I am a German just like them.

The respondent felt alienated. He thought about not going to a predominantly white space anymore to avoid feeling like that again. In general, he avoids white spaces. This also applies to another respondent who states that he was often harassed in the local party area – a district where there are a lot of clubs, bars and restaurants - and those situations escalated several times. When the police arrived, he was seen as the cause of the escalation, which caused him legal difficulties on several occasions. He said that the police always considered him the perpetrator and not the victim who was simply *resisting* racist harassment. He decided not to go to that party area anymore because of this dynamic. One respondent was unhappy that some of his friends reacted with violence to the racism he was also exposed to in the same the party area. He said:

> Yes, in the [party area] you get a lot of things, also from friends of mine who fight unnecessarily, against people who are drunk because they say something wrong and they are all like that. For example, I have a friend who's a bit darker. If some drunk tells him you're a nigger. Like this. Then he doesn't care if [the drunk person is] drunk or on drugs. Then he [my friend] feels attacked. So, you could say, rightly or wrongly, blah blah, you could put the pros and cons together again. But... Yes. So the guys [my friends] collect all the [criminal] charges,

> which I don't think is cool [good for them] at all, because they didn't do very well at school either. So. And then do something like that? Yes. Doesn't show much strength.

This quote shows another mechanism that some young men chose to cope with racist behaviour, namely to see the problem in the victim's behaviour and to play down the offender's behaviour. Most respondents did not talk about others in a negative way, but a few tried to distance themselves from other respondents or young people from their milieu by suggesting that they did not behave appropriately and were less integrated than they were. Some respondents even reproduced the racism others and themselves are victims of. One respondent said that he hated the Turks because of their overwhelming nationalism. Two male respondents who were friends and had the same ethnic background had a negative opinion of other people with the same ethnic background. One of them thought that he was not the stereotypical *Kanak*, because he is successful at school and behaves in a civilised way. He mentioned this several times. Another respondent said that he hated people from the Maghreb, although he himself has roots in that region. He said that people from there had various negative characteristics and did not behave in a civilised way. He was proud to tell me that all his friends said that he and his friends were not like everyone else who had a Maghrebian background. Less explicitly, the idea of 'not being like the other people from the Maghreb' was also taken up by a female respondent. During the interview, she distanced herself from her mainly Arabic-rooted neighbourhood that, as she believed, was less focused on education, although she did not speak explicitly negatively about her neighbours.

4.3.2.3 Conclusion: The relationship between discrimination and radicalisation

Among respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as complete distance and those whose proximity to radicalism can be described as factual distance (see section 4.1) , all have experiences of horizontal inequality such as discrimination, racism, and anti-Muslim hate, although intensity and frequency differ significantly.

Among the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as factual closeness (see Section 4.1), only the women have experienced discrimination, as both men from this group are white men. Intensity and frequency differ and are, in sum, lower than among the other two groups.

The women, in all three groups experienced similar reactions when they started wearing a *hijab/abaya/niqab* and reacted in different ways, according to their circumstances and personalities.

Male and female respondents who experienced discrimination reacted in very different ways, according to their circumstances and their personalities. No specific patterns of reactions among the three categories used in this study can be reported. Most of their reactions were passive; those who actively reacted to discrimination were both male and female and from all three categories.

Among this set of respondents, there is no identified link between horizontal inequality and (non-) radicalisation. Respondents in all three groups experienced discrimination. Within the group that is closest to radical networks (factual closeness), the relative share or respondents who did not experience horizontal inequality is actually highest. Furthermore, there is no difference in the way respondents dealt with horizontal inequality on a practical level. They generally ignored, downplayed, or accepted it. Some were frustrated about it, but the form of reaction adopted does not appear to be associated with the respondents' attitudinal or factual proximity to radicalism.

4.3.3   Political inequality – approach via proxies

None of the respondents talked about rejecting the German political system as such. Some articulated that they are grateful to live in a pluralistic society. The respondents do not describe their experiences in terms of political inequality when talking about being relatively disadvantaged politically. This is an

essential difference to economic inequality and horizontal inequality. The latter, especially, is experienced by most respondents on a weekly/daily basis.

Some respondents describe experiences that I sum up as political frustration, about democracy in general or specific aspects of it. Some respondents spoke about global powerful elites in contrast to meaningless ordinary people like them. Others described media, politics, and the state as hypocritical and as having bad intentions towards them or others. These statements can be described as (fragments of) heterodox conspiracy narratives[26] of varying degrees and differentiation. The content of these myths is presented here as well as the conclusions that some of the respondents have drawn for their personal lives. Finally, these findings are discussed again in relation to their distribution among the three classifications of respondents (see Section 4.1).

In order to understand the relationship between political inequality and radicalisation, both, political frustration and heterodox conspiracy theories serve as proxies that can make visible political inequalities.

4.3.3.1 Political frustration and heterodox conspiracy theories

Several respondents argued that political and economic elites control the planet and manipulate ordinary people in order to become richer and more powerful. When asked for concrete information about these (fragments of) heterodox conspiracy theories, all respondents played down these theories. Mostly, they only hinted at these theories and ideas, but did not articulate a coherent way of thinking or a tangible closed system of conspiracy narratives. But there was one topic that came up in various interviews and in different forms: anti-Semitic myths. For example, one respondent was convinced that nobody knows whether Hitler really killed 6 Million Jews. He thought that there were only 4 million, and that this lower number would make a difference. He also claimed that Jews used the Holocaust to get privileges in Germany. He was frustrated that he could not say what he wanted to say about Jews because of this. When asked what he wanted to say about them, he said that they owned the banks, and everyone knew that. Another respondent thought that the neo-salafist charity that runs projects in Palestine had attracted criticism only because Germany wanted to help Israel to keep the Palestinians under control. Another respondent doubted that it was a coincidence that there was an attack on Gaza right before the Christchurch shooting. He speculated that the latter incident happened to cover up the former.

One respondent said he started looking for explanations when he wondered about why war even exists. He was convinced that *those at the top* were controlling *us* to gain more power. He had heard from his teacher that Germany was not really unified after the end of the Cold War, but he could not reconstruct the exact explanation. He said that he had consulted authentic sources to learn more about what was *really* happening, but these sources were often taken offline because they did not want us to know about it. When asked who he thought they were, he said:

> Q: Who are *they*?
>
> R: For me *they* are people who are at the top. Those who are above the President. Some of them are the puppet masters, so to speak.
>
> Q: And who do you mean by that?
>
> R: Well, it's just my conspiracy theories, so to speak.
>
> Q: Ok. [laughs]

---

[26] Heterodox conspiracy myths can be understood as narratives of knowledge that are in opposition to hegemonic narratives of knowledge. An understanding of this concept that serves as basis for this definition can be found in Anton et al. (2014).

R: [laughs] There are for example the Rothschilds, hmmm, the Rockefellers, the royal aristocratic family from United Kingdom, so to speak, or Queen Elizabeth and so on and also certain other families.

It was important for him to know what is *really* going on and not to just live his simple life. But he also said that one should not spent too much time thinking about these things or getting information about them, because it could drive you crazy. This is exactly what another respondent explained. He described that some time ago, he experienced a phase where he was much more critical about *the system as such*. He holds similar anti-Semitic ideas about who *really* rules the world as articulated by the other respondent mentioned above. He also says that he is not interested in politics in general, that news is not created for people like him.

Other respondents also mentioned that the media are manipulative and biased. For example, there was no discussion about Israel's violence against the Palestinians. The most common manipulation expressed by respondents has to do with the media's portrayal of Islam. In most cases, it remains unclear what exact role the media could play in a global conspiracy against Islam. The only respondent who integrated this narrative into a religious interpretation is one from the *factual closeness* group. He said that he used to believe that Mohammed referred to the global political and economic elite when he talked about the Dajjal. He used to believe that Jewish people, or at least their elites, had sold their souls to the devil to gain more power on earth, and that Islam was the only power that could bring this system of *Dajjal* down. He still holds some beliefs that can be described as heterodox conspiracy theories, e.g. that very few people pulled the strings of power on a global scale. He said: 'And it is obvious that there are elites who control the fate of the world. It's almost like a conspiracy theory not to believe it. Sss. No. Of course it's politically incorrect.'

When asked how many people hold this power in their hands, he started reflecting with me, leading us to agree that there are probably some thousand people in the world who are really powerful. His strict interpretation of the coordinated nature of this concentration of power dissolved during the interview.

Other fragments of heterodox conspiracy theories, which have nothing to do with anti-Semitism, addressed the role of the state, local politics and the power of countries such as the USA, China, or Saudi-Arabia as well as the role of international businesses. They included also the idea that islamist terrorism can be carried out by people who hate Islam and want to prove that Islam is bad by pretending to be islamist (false flag operation).

Some respondents reflected on their way of dealing with political issues and seemed to try to distance themselves from them. They felt that thinking too much about politics would pull them down or drive them crazy. One respondent said: 'I think if you deal with political things, you just won't find peace with it.'

Most respondents who talked about politics had a negative image, which included hypocrisy, abuse of power, acting out of, or setting, false priorities. One respondent criticised Saudi Arabia for exploiting religion for political reasons and quoted Saudi's government saying that protests against them would violate Islamic law. A few were frustrated by the fact that right-wingers have been represented in the national parliament in Germany since 2017. They also expressed frustration about the climate crisis, environmental issues, and Donald Trump being the US president. One respondent had spoken with a social worker about what would happen if conservatives formed a coalition with the far-right AfD party. He asked a rhetorical question: 'What are you going to do about it?'.

He was also frustrated by the fact that politicians have taken on responsibilities that do not correspond to their competences – a former physicist as Minister of Defence for example. At the same time, he felt

empathy for Chancellor Merkel and said he would not want to be in her place either. Another respondent described what he used to think about politics as follows:

> Yes, we were just very critical of the system, I would say, so, we got very upset about politics and about how little is done for the youth and yes, also about capitalism and the whole corporations and, um, yes, the big arms companies and wars, that sort of thing, injustices in the world, yes.

Another respondent, a white female convert, used to have a negative image of *foreigners*, but since she did not want to be branded a Nazi, she never told anyone what she really thought about *foreigners*, which had further strengthened her aversion to them. It remains unclear how she thinks about these people now, as she criticises them for not practising Islam correctly but has distanced herself from her Ferman identity too.

Some of the women felt misunderstood by activists fighting against the *hijab* as a symbol of oppression, as none of them were forced to wear it. They regretted that women in Muslim majority countries were forced to wear hijab and called it *political,* using the word pejoratively.

Two respondents were affected by a raid in neo-salafist networks, and neither believed the allegations were true. One respondent thought that the raid was conducted in order to weaken the organisation, and the other respondent thought that these allegations were not be true because the leaders of the organisation would not be so careless and risk being caught.

4.3.3.2 Dealing with political inequality

Most of the few respondents who articulated their frustration with politics or presented (fragments of) heterodox conspiracy narratives while talking about politics have resigned themselves to having to tolerate the situation. This is similar to the ways many respondents deal with discrimination (0). But there were also more active forms of response. One of the respondents reported how she forced her father and brother to take part in the forthcoming European Parliament elections because she wanted to prevent AfD from being strengthened and because she wanted to ensure a future of the planet. She had been at several demonstrations against the war in Syria and at demonstrations organised by the climate-activist group 'Fridays for Future', but she said she did not like the atmosphere there. Another respondent stated that he is involved in a neo-salafist network to bring about change on a global scale. He is also planning to take part in a demonstration against the mistreatment of the Rohingya people in Myanmar. Another respondent joined a counter demonstration against an extreme right-wing demonstration and was frustrated when he saw that he could not beat up some Nazis because the police had separated the confronting groups. Another respondent had heard about a demonstration against right-wing hate and said:

> Well, I just know that sometimes there are demonstrations. '*Bunt statt Braun*[27]' and all that, they're left-wingers, right? But I think many of them don't know much about Islam or Muslims. They're more left-wing, but I think they're also a bit afraid of Muslims.

Two people interviewed indicated that they had decided not to vote in elections. One said that he did not want to empower people who do not fully reflect his views, and the other said that voting would not change anything and that he would rather spend his time in other ways.

---

[27] Literally translated, the name of the demonstration was 'Colourful instead of brown', referring to the brown shirts the Nazi Stormtroopers wore as a uniform. In contrast, colourful symbolises a diverse and pluralistic society.

4.3.3.3 Conclusion: The relationship between political inequality and radicalisation

Among the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as complete distance (see Section 4.1), very few expressed political frustration or reproduced fragments of heterodox conspiracy theories.

Among the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as factual distance (see Section 4.1), not all expressed political frustration, but all share (fragments of) heterodox conspiracy theories. The intensity and frequency differ a lot. This finding is not surprising because adhering to heterodox conspiracy theories or reproducing fragments of them is part of the reason for being grouped in the *factual distance* cluster.

Of the five (two male and three female) respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as factual closeness (see Section 4.1), both males and one female respondent expressed political frustration. Both men shared (fragments of) heterodox conspiracy theories. None of the women shared (fragments of) heterodox conspiracy theories. They expressed political frustration in a more concrete way.

Reactions to political frustration and action that may be related to (fragments of) heterodox conspiracy theories differed significantly, according to the respondents' circumstances and personalities, but no specific patterns of reactions among these three groups were identified. Most reactions were passive; those who actively reacted to political frustration were both male and female came from all three groups.

Nevertheless, there is a clear link between political inequality and (non-)radicalisation among this set of respondents. It is furthermore remarkable that among the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as complete distance, most did not even talk about politics, especially at a time when their entire generation is demanding climate justice. This may illustrate two things. First, young Muslims from a working class environment are not integrated into the most important social movement of their generation. Second, not being political at all seems to keep these young adults away from any ideas on how society should change, radically or democratically.

4.3.4 Conclusion: the relationship between inequalities and radical believes

This analysis has shown that the relationship between inequalities and radical beliefs is complex and that there is no direct causality or even correlation between the experience of inequalities and the adherence to radical beliefs or membership in neo-salafist networks.

Among the respondents, there is rather a negative correlation when it comes to economic inequality and membership in these networks. Those who have experienced little or no economic inequality or racism are those who tend to believe in neo-salafist narratives or heterodox conspiracy theories, or who believe in neo-salafist networks or are/were associated with them.

A slightly positive correlation can be observed when examining the relationship between political inequality and membership in neo-salafist networks. Political frustration and sharing heterodox conspiracy theories as proxies for political inequality was highest among those who are/were associated with neo-salafist networks. However, the empirical basis for this conclusion is rather thin, since most of the respondents did not speak about their political frustrations in detail. Additionally, the inequalities among the interviewees do not sufficiently explain why some of them are/were associated with neo-salafist networks.

4.4 Supply and demand? How young Muslims interact with neo-salafism

There is a broad supply of radical messages for young people in Neustadt. In this section, respondents' contact with radical messages – offline and online - and how they dealt with them are considered in detail. Some respondents were observed to display a *demand for political and spiritual orientation*. These are

also presented here and analysed in relation to their biographical experiences beyond those related to inequality. Finally, the respondents' perspectives on crisis and religion's role in healing will be examined.

4.4.1 Supply – availability of radical messages online and offline

All respondents have come in contact – online and offline – with content that could shape their political and religious understanding, views and behaviour through (potential) radicalisation agents from the neo-salafist spectrum. I will first discuss the offline contact, then the online activities reported by the respondents.

The role of potential *offline* radicalisation actors varies widely among respondents. Some of the respondents who lived in the same neighbourhood had had encounters with an old man who had approached them since childhood and tried to talk to them about Islam and being a good Muslim. As a group, the respondents talked about this person in front of me, and some of them also talked about him during the interviews. They did not know his name. They also did not know where exactly he lived, but they have given him a derogatory nickname that everyone in the neighbourhood associated with this person. The respondents did not remember what exactly the old man had spoken about, but they said that it was mainly about Islamic issues. They mentioned that when they were younger, they listened politely for hours – as they said – because they had been brought up to be friendly and polite to older people. They described the old man as scary and annoying and said that they were frustrated by these conversations because they could not go with their friends to play football or that they came home late for lunch as a result. These days, knowing what to expect, they tried to avoid these conversations and invent excuses to quickly break off the conversation.

Although it is not known whether this man was a spiritual missionary or a potential radicaliser, it is clear that the collective reactions of the male respondents from this neighbourhood to these encounters were negative. This reaction exemplifies most of the respondents' reactions to normative approaches from outside; they are seen as a hindrance to their enjoyment of life. One respondent, who converted to Islam while living abroad as a young man, was invited by a friend to meet with an imam, who retrospectively classifies as a *takfiri*. This imam told him to distance himself from his non-believing family if they refused to convert as well. He described this person as completely unpleasant in his overall appearance and communication style, and did not like the content of his monologue either. He said that he did not contradict the imam's words about *Kafir*, but tried to leave the encounter as soon as possible without being rude. It was his first impression of this kind of Islam, and he felt uncomfortable on a personal level. His discomfort differed from the experience of the other respondents, of interacting with the old man in their neighbourhood. This respondent was at the beginning of a religious journey, unlike the young adults who had no interest in religious issues. At that time, he was not attracted to *takfir*ism. Since this respondent joined more radical groups in the years following this encounter, it can be assumed that it was not the message as such that deterred him, but the overall unpleasant situation.

> …and then this imam, it was such a stocky one, with a flowing beard and a very fiery, aggressive face, and he gently gave me some tips, and he told me that: "your parents are *kuffar*, and you have to save your parents from hell and they will go to hell if you don't convert them […] well, so, and um, I only know, he had a very very bad breath and always spat when talking, right, and, and the whole situation was quite uncomfortable for me and I just always have it like that, hmmm, 'yes ok, I'll do it', because I just didn't want to see the guy anymore.

Another potential agent of radicalisation was a convicted follower of jihadism. This person was in prison, but then released during the period of my field research. His family lived in one of the neighbourhoods where I carried out my field research. Both male and female respondents from this neighbourhood described him as a polite and rather reserved person. They also spoke of his wife and children in a positive way. Some explained that they had met the family and described them as being friendly and a pretty

average family. When asked what they thought about the convicted man's crimes, some said that they do not know exactly what he had done, or that they considered his distancing from the scene to be credible, as well as his regrets about his actions. None of the respondents felt in danger because of this neighbour. One respondent said that he would try to keep his distance because you never knew if you could trust him or not. In general, it is interesting that the respondents did not judge these (potential) radicalisation agents based on what they knew about their ideological position, but on a more personal level. For example, one noted: 'he was always nice, he always said hello and smiled. And he always did [banal things]. I never, well, he never attracted attention in a negative way. Never. And I can't say much else about him'.

How these people behaved in direct relationship to the respondents was more important than their ideologies. This also applies to a neo-salafist organisation that was known to some respondents and with which some of them had direct contact. Although the organisation is monitored by state authorities and new accusations are made against it from time to time, none of the interviewees questioned the organisation's narratives.

> Well, I don't know, I don't have any deeper insights. But I can tell you how I perceive [organisation] and I have also got to know them personally, the people from [organisation], they are really all very warm and cosmopolitan people who are really in favour of peace […] and also keep out of political matters and such completely.

Only one respondent said that one could never know and should not trust them, even if they distanced themselves from violence. Some said that political and administrative measures against the organisation are part of anti-Muslim actions by the state. One respondent referred to celebrities who also supported the organisation as an indication that it was not problematic or dangerous. This kind of understanding of the legitimacy and illegitimacy of actors reflected the respondents' overall views on radicalism and their lack of a general overview of other neo-Salafist non-violent actors (see above). Nevertheless, most of the respondents did not frequent the spaces provided by this organisation, although they were easily accessible for many of the respondents.

The indifference towards this organisation can be interpreted as naivety towards the aims of the organisation. It also reflects some respondents' general mistrust towards security-relevant state organisations such as the Verfassungsschutz or the police, but it probably also discourages the respondents from joining the organisation. Apart from this possible deterrent, the potential suppliers of radical ideas determined the lack of interaction with them: the old man and the imam were simply unpleasant, and the younger convicted person did not approach them.

The role of potential *online* radicalisation actors varies widely among respondents. The most important difference is whether respondents were actively searching for content or passively confronted with it. All of them talked about being confronted with varying types of radical content, but in my research, I was unable to find out with what kind of content they were confronted at what time. Therefore, the impact of such offers cannot be reliably determined. Nevertheless, the research identified an interesting pattern, namely that those who actively searched online for spiritual insights or knowledge about Islam tended to display interpretations that are easily associated with, or identical to, those promoted by agents of non-violent neo-salafist radicalisation. It can therefore be assumed that most of these respondents either consumed neo-salafist content or content containing heterodox conspiracy narratives. Two converts mentioned the videos they had consumed in their search for more information about Islam before their conversion, and both referred exclusively to neo-salafist content originating from Da'wa organisations as well as neo-salafist influencers and Imams. For both, the online content was the first deep insight into Islam. In one case, a neo-salafist friend, who challenged the atheism of one of the respondents and asked him to watch a few videos, gave him the initial impetus to search for further explanations online. Offline

contact was crucial in this case, but the online content was important for further development. In the other case, the woman said it was god who had given her a sign that awakened her desire to learn more about Islam. The impulse came from within, and the online content was crucial to channel this impulse. She explained that she watched every German-language *Da'wa* video she could find on YouTube. She named a few that could be classified as neo-salafist. When she saw others receiving *Da'wa*, she was also convinced of the truthfulness of Islam.

> It was really, what really touched me were really these *Da'wa* videos. That sounds so stupid in German, that's 'missionary work', that's not really missionary work, that's missionary work, that sounds like a sect, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, they're standing with the paper, the Watchtower there, but yes, but that, what was always said, that was really always very simple, because you, Street *Da'wa*, that was just, um, among other things, just about this [organisation], I have also watched a lot of videos. And there were just people and asked questions. And these were also questions that I had in my head and then someone gave decent answers, so, meaningful answers. And that touched me completely, then and then I always had one or the other video and I was like, 'Yes, I am already convinced' [beams] 'Yes, yes, yes, yes, just yes'. [laughs] Yes.

She then converted, by herself. Her spiritual path has been exclusively online for a number of years, although she was already wearing the hijab and publicly identified herself as a Muslim. It was only when she realised that there was a Muslim Instagram community that she became involved in what could be called a spiritual social environment. One of the people she talked to online was a woman who encouraged her to wear her hijab in the more correct, neo-salafi manner. She felt empowered and did what was asked of her. She also had face-to-face contact with some people from the Rhineland neo-salafist scene. Although the path from online to offline was lengthy in this case, as it took several years, it is clear that the quantity and quality of online neo-salafist content and interaction alone can have a strong influence on people in search of spiritual insights. Two others – not converts, but highly interested in religion in their youth – did not name the exact content, but reported how the search for online content led them to neo-salafist online and offline networks. One of them explained that the online community was all she had when she was younger, and that her home life was a mess. She found out online about offline meetings of the scene by herself – lectures and talks –and joined them as soon as her parents allowed her to leave home alone, which she was not allowed to do during the phase when she was searching for spiritual enlightenment and identity. Neither of these two respondents were sceptical of any of the content they found, although one of them said that one should be careful today, as there were many ISIS followers around. Only one of the respondents said that he found all the answers to his questions online, although, he commented, that one of course should be careful, since there is a lot of false content online as well. However, his rather critical view of online content did not stop him from joining a neo-salafist organisation.

Those who did not actively search for religious or political content online were nevertheless confronted with this material. It was quite common for respondents to have received both official ISIS propaganda videos as well as journalistic videos showing the cruelty of ISIS from friends and peers. The young people shared the propaganda videos, not to promote the message of the terror organisation, but to show its barbarism. Respondents made no distinction between propaganda and journalism videos, saying that these videos were sent around on WhatsApp.

> Q: And, um, in the time when the ISIS has come up so high, there have been so many videos and so circulated, did you have any contact with it?

> R: Yeah, I've also seen several videos where heads are chopped off with machetes. Or, where

one person shoots several shots, all kinds of things, I've also seen videos.

Q: Do you remember how you got them?

R: WhatsApp.

Q: Via WhatsApp?

R: Was always sent further. This is how the shit spreads. I don't even use WhatsApp anymore.

Q: Did you also send them to others?

R: [clicks his tongue and shakes his head] [...] of course if somebody asked me, send the video, I sent it to him. That's nothing special, but, not in a way that I have now somehow sent something in my contacts, look at the video, look here, no!

One respondent explained that learning about ISIS fighters or related information was pure entertainment for him and that he received ISIS propaganda as a recommendation on YouTube, probably because he had seen some documentaries about it. One respondent said that a few years ago, he was approached on Facebook by someone whom he believed was connected with ISIS. He said that he simply blocked the person immediately and did not even respond to the first message. He did not explain his behaviour and said that he thought it was fake anyway. The reason he did not start interacting with this radicaliser might be related to personal characteristics such as not being very curious, not liking to leave his comfort zone, which might have led him to deal with social interactions in general in a more restrained, less open, way. An added reason could be that although he identified as a Muslim, he did not feel comfortable with this part of his identity as he does not practise prayer or speak Arabic. The agent of radicalisation approached him as a Muslim, using the Islamic greeting *salamaleikum*. The fact that he was not looking for something, such as spiritual explanations, meaning, or significance, and that he was generally less open-minded or interested in new things may have protected him and probably many of the other young adults interviewed in this study. Among those who were looking for something, however, not all of them necessarily interacted with neo-salafist interpretations.

4.4.2   Demand? - life crisis and biographical challenges

It was observed that there is a *demand for political and spiritual orientation* that some respondents have, which can be attributed to their biographical experiences - beyond the experiences of inequality. Life crises and biographical challenges can greatly disorient people. In a phase of disorientation, people tend to accept spiritual or ideological guidance that would not have been acceptable to them before. Crises are subjective and the effects depend not on the objective burden but on the subjective significance of a crisis for the individual (Filipp and Aymanns, 2018). It is therefore important to examine crucial life experiences of the respondents and their connection with (non-)radicalisation. Each experience is unique. Nevertheless, these experiences can be clustered into overarching themes in order to find patterns that can help us understand the dynamics of (non-)radicalisation. This section presents four such clusters based on the empirical data of this study: loss of fathers; abuse and neglect; lack of moral orientation; and parental superficiality and objectification. The experiences are described below before analysing to what extent there is a connection between these experiences, the way they are dealt with and the closeness and distance to radical groups and narratives.

The loss of the father - through death or withdrawal - was a recurring experience among the respondents. One female respondent's father killed himself when she was a small child after her mother announced to him that she wanted to end their relationship. In the interview, she said she only learned about it as a teenager. She wondered what her family might have told her about what happened to her father when she was a child, but she did not talk to her family about it. She explained she always felt that her father's death was a topic that should not be talked about. She knew he was dead, but she did not know why:

> Well, he committed suicide and, um, I didn't find out about it until very late. So, my mother was always very secretive about that, um, it. Um, yes. So. Sometimes when I grew up a bit, I don't know, I was maybe 18, maybe? Well, it wasn't that long ago. 17, 18 maybe, when I actually asked around, because I had no idea. Or, yes, I think I never really dared to really ask, um, because I was also very small and that's why [I asked] not; I noticed it so personally and maybe I suppressed it a bit. Well, I always knew, I always knew from a certain age on, I don't know when, that he died, but I didn't necessarily know how or what the circumstances were or why everything was so mysterious around him. So, I did not know. And when I asked her, she was quite open with me and said: 'Yes, I knew that you would ask me that sometime, well, then I'll tell you now. But don't think anything wrong, because I'm just telling you the way it was.' But yes, I think it's ok that she waited until I reached a certain age, until I think I can understand it, so to speak.

She said that the knowledge of her father's suicide did not emotionally burden her and that she thought she had handled it quite well. She further explained that she was now sensitive about this subject and saw people differently because she wanted to prevent others from taking their own lives. Later during the interview, she said that it was essential for her that someone leaves any interaction with her more positive than they felt at the beginning of it.

Another female respondent reported that she was close to her father when she was younger and had positive memories of her early childhood. Eventually, when she was a teenager, the relationship between her parents deteriorated. Her mother complained that she was not happy from the beginning and wanted to end the relationship, which plunged her father into a crisis. For several years, the father was violent towards the whole family and abused drugs. Once her father tried to burn down the apartment at night, risking the death of his family. Thankfully, he was stopped by her brother. Finally, her parents divorced, but conflicts persisted, and her father still had problems with drugs and was aggressive towards her.

One female and two male interviewees witnessed the divorce of their parents, two of them while they were teenagers, the other one in early childhood. In two cases, the mothers raised them as single parents, while the fathers lived alone, with a new family, not taking responsibility for their first children in equal shares. The third respondent lived first with her father and then with her mother. All respondents – those living with both parents and those living with one parent – said that they had a much closer relationship with their mothers and described the relationship with their fathers as distant. None of the respondents explicitly broke off contact with their fathers.

Abuse and neglect at home was a recurring motif among the respondents. A male interviewee whose mother started abusing alcohol after the respondent's father left her described his mother as psychologically abusive, exploiting him emotionally. The respondent explained that he started to misuse drugs. He described himself as really mentally ill during this time. After school, he left Neustadt and lived abroad for several years. At the beginning, the physical distance did not help him distance himself from the troubles in his family in the way he was hoping it would. It was only when he met religious people at university that he began to gain some emotional distance and heal internally, through Islam, as he explained:

> It was just like that, my mother drank too much alcohol. So she drank too much wine, right? And as a single child [...] I always had to listen to the problems, so to speak. I just had to fill several roles. My mother just dumped the whole frustration on me. And what an asshole my father would be and blah. And then he told me some details about what he wanted sexually and blah. And I thought to myself, I don't really want to hear all this [...] even two years later my mother started with this stuff again and again. No. And there were always situations that came up again and again. So instead of going to bed somehow, my mother waited for me in

the evening. No matter if it was two, three, four o'clock, to talk to me. Well. And then, then, she was always pretty tipsy from the wine [...] Well, I did, several times I also threw away bottles of wine, so to speak under the protesting shouting of my mother, then I threw away the wine, you know? When she had already had two bottles. And then she wanted [to talk for] hours, hours only, like how unfair life is, and what an asshole my father is, and so on.

One female respondent explained that her mother is mentally ill, a condition that has shaped the entire family and, above all, made her father focus on her mother rather than on her and her brother.

Well, my dad was really like that, he really loved my mum so much, I would still say today, he puts my mum above my brother and me, definitely. Well, maybe it was also because my mother always had these diseases, my mother didn't always have acute depressions, that she was always completely depressed or something, but always had these phases, that it was just a little bit better or worse. [...] And probably he has always put her above us, because she always had a lot of illnesses, she really has a lot of illnesses up to now, and it is getting more and more.

The respondent explains that she had a close relationship with her mother except when she was a teenager. The conflicts during this time revolved around what she was allowed to do and what not, such as smoking or using the solarium. Her mother wanted to control her appearance. She reflected on this by saying that this was not okay and understands that her low self-esteem during this time was largely related to her mother's controlling attitude. Nevertheless, she forgave her mother for being so controlling and said today that the only place she really feels comfortable is in her mother's house. Another female respondent said her mother treated her like a cat:

R: Because my mother, 'yes, do go there, just come home'. She treats me like a cat. 'Yeah, she'll come home eventually, right.' [laughs]

Q: [laughs] But that's true.

R: Yes, I don't have anything else, I have to sleep somewhere.

The lack of moral orientation and parental superficiality was a recurring experience among the respondents. Some respondents talked about the *beliefs* their parents have and judged them as not strong enough or not convincing enough. One male respondent talked about his father, who was into esotericism and behaved in a way that made him feel ashamed of him, especially when they were in public. He did not speak positively about his father or his mother. For example, when he speculated why his parents separated, he described the behaviour of his parents as childish and inappropriate.

Another male respondent spoke positively about his mother, who cares about him a lot, but he still feels distant from her because of her esoteric views and beliefs in the universe and its power. The same male respondent described his father as only superficially religious with the aim of being a good person, without asking himself *exactly* what that would mean:

R: He's definitely a very educated person also, also a very very critical person who also questions media and politics and stuff like that and has a critical view on it, definitely, yes. So, my mother is more like that, I would say, esoterically influenced, like, yes, some vibrations and energies from the universe and stuff like that. And my dad is, I think, more monotheistic-religious. [...] but he's not like that either, that he says, yes, I would have to go deeper into the matter and deal with it in a serious manner, [...] that he would say: 'Yes, in the end it's all the same anyway, and all that matters is to be a good person and that's what I can do.'

Q: But that's not enough for you?

R: Yes, the question is, how do you define 'good person', well, everybody can define that for himself, but where is the standard and where, well, ts. [annoyed] For me, for example, a good person is someone who clearly says, um, alcohol is harmful to society, let's say so in this way. Yes, and my father would never think of such things on his own. So, I think that's what religions are for.

He had questioned his own moral standards after he broke up with his girlfriend. He was the stepfather to his girlfriend's child, and the separation had hit him hard, emotionally, also because of the good relationship he had had with his former girlfriend's child. During this period after the separation, he was using alcohol and drugs and was involved with other women. He questioned himself and began a journey that led him first to Islam and, since he mainly informed himself online, later to neo-salafist groups. Although his beliefs were more liberal than those of these groups, he found a sense of belonging and moral orientation there; something that his family has not given him.

A female respondent said that her parents do not live according to Islamic principles, although they know they should. She was frustrated about this, but had stopped trying to convince her parents to live differently. For her, her parents' lack of religiousness was the reason why both parents are emotionally unstable. She was frustrated that they have no moral compass:

R: Why do you think your parents are so lost?

Q: Well, for me anyway the question is, they have nothing to do with religion, when I always ask them, yes, why are you living, what are you living towards, then there is no answer. With my father, for example, when I talk about death, he gets scared. He always says directly, ok, let's talk about something nice again.

Q: But not you?

R: Nope.

Q: Why not?

R: Because I try to do something for my hereafter. And they say: 'yes, we believe in it', and no, 'I am trying to' and then they say: 'I'm not ready, I, it's not my time yet.' I also talked to my father about that I would like to go on pilgrimage and I can't go without him, so Saudi Arabia lets me, wouldn't let me in there, then he said, for example, 'Yes, I am not ready to stand before my Creator.' I'm like, 'Dude, we're not going to die, we're going on a pilgrimage' (laughs). Yeah, something like that, he's always really afraid of it, but he still lives like that. And besides, maybe it's a little hard to talk about a future like that. Because it seems so far away for you [...]. You can also think about whether you might bring harm to other people in some way. At least that. Just maybe saying yes, I live for my children or no idea.

She describes her mother as being superficial, anxious and weak, her father as being aggressive, impulsive, brutal, and weak. The life she lives differed from her parents' lives in almost every way: she practised her religion while her parents are just claiming to be religious; she took responsibilities for her little sister while her mother seemed to be overburdened by that responsibility; she tried to learn more about Islam and challenges herself with 'gods expectations' while her father tries to ignore them; she accepted her parents deficiencies while her parents almost rejected her when they were under the impression that she was attracted by neo-salafist interpretations of Islam. She was giving moral orientation instead of receiving it.

In contrast, another female respondent felt like she had learned about Islam adequately from her step-father. She said that she learned the basics at home, but once she had more questions and her step-father

was not available because of professional obligations, she started to learn about Islam online. Today she thinks that her parents were too liberal – allowing, her for example, to go to parties. She did not judge her parents for that but explained that she would be more traditional about this with her children. She would also like to find a husband the traditional way, in contrast to how her parents met.

Being objectified was a recurring experience among the female respondents. Two women from the second group described processes of being objectified by others and of having low self-esteem concerning their bodies and physical appearance. Both said that strangers thought they were older than they actually were. Because of that, one of the two women would always buy cigarettes for others. It also led to an awkward feeling of being sexualised by men. One of them said she felt ugly when she was a teenager. Another of the female respondents in Group 2 felt judged by her peers for the clothes she wore. All three females talked about not having felt comfortable in their bodies and clothes before wearing traditional Islamic clothes. Wearing only a headscarf did not have the effect that other clothes had for them covering the arms, the neck and the derriere. All three started their journey by wearing a simple headscarf, then slowly expanding their coverage. They had ended up wearing dark coloured clothes that covered the entire body, typical in neo-salafist environments. During my field research, the women said they felt protected by this kind of clothing.

4.4.3 Dealing with biographical challenges - respondents perspectives on crisis and religion's role in healing

Personal challenges and crises among the respondents, often linked to family life, had led to significant need for political and/or spiritual orientation and finding a way to feel at ease. One female respondent explained that she joined a neo-salafist group despite thinking it was weird: 'Because I just had no other community, because otherwise I would have gone completely crazy, with my parents.'

Another female respondent said that the divorce of her parents had made her more interested in religious questions. After making the decision to convert, she wanted to gain permission from her mother. She was given permission and converted to Islam. After conversion, she became more and more traditional, because, as she explained, she did not know what 'real Islam' was before she met the right people online, who told her to cover up more traditionally, and taught her more about Islam. She started to wear the *niqab*, got married and became a mother. At the time of the interview, the respondent was about to leave Germany in order to live in a Muslim-majority country, something that she considered to be a religious duty. She said that the only thing that she would miss would be her mother. Her biography reads like a long story of asking her parents indirectly if they would care about her being absent. It started with her converting, which is something her right-wing father and brother considered a disgrace to the family, and was continuing as she was now planning to leave the country. Her parents did not resist her conversion, mostly because they did not take it seriously. Her parents did not object to any of her religious developments such as her turn towards neo-salafism (*niqab*, traditional wedding, being a young mother) or to her plans to leave the country. This respondent did not reflect about her choices in that abstract way but was persuaded that her choices have been inspired by god from the very beginning.

One male respondent explained that Islam had healed him from his mental illness and sufferings. He had been an atheist before he met a neo-salafist woman. He admired her and was impressed by her persuasion and belief. He slowly turned to Islamic practice, joining his Muslim friends for Friday prayer before converting formally. He felt that going to prayers made him feel relaxed. Doing the prayer was like a meditation that gave him relief. Once, he talked to God before going to the mosque, asking for a sign, and felt like all his pain was released from his body during the prayer. He still had his doubts but when he had a bad accident but was not hurt, he interpreted it as another sign from God: 'Also this sign, I got this as a warning, like God tells me, "Look, I saved you *again* but I showed you again how fast your life can be over". And then I said, ok, well, I got so many signs now, I'm converting.' After conversion, he felt more

self-confident. He stopped smoking weed and drinking alcohol but also started to have affairs with women. He knew this was not accepted by his fellow Muslim friends, but he felt that God rewarded him for his religious commitment by healing him from his obsession of feeling unattractive and being sexually disturbed.

The young woman whose father tried to burn down the flat when his family was asleep, wanted to get married soon was wondering whether or not her father may be her guardian as it is required according to her in a traditional Islamic wedding. She explained:

R: But the thing is, I didn't even mention [in front of my husband] that he did those things. But he did, um, I don't know, maybe I didn't mention it because I thought, ok, he didn't do it to kill me personally, but because he's just stupid in the head.

Q: [...] Do you know if he still has problems with drugs?

R: He has a hundred percent. I'm not sure, but as if he's getting away from it. [...] I see his environment, I see what he looks like. But wait, my fiancé and I also have another suspicion about him. Which is not so provable in the sense that it has more to do with Islam, and, ..., yes. He just lives for himself, I don't really have that much contact with him either.

Q: What would be the suspicion? [...]

R: That he has a *djin*. So that he is possessed. Because, I suspected the same thing when he was living with us before. [...] I just want to learn this exorcism. And my fiancé does it too. And he also said for example: 'I noticed at the first meeting that there was something wrong with your father, no matter whether it was that or a mental problem. Your father isn't normal.' He [my future husband] noticed it directly. When he [the father] lived with us, I saw signs where he talked to himself, I don't know, or when he became so aggressive, he had a different voice... Just one, he was so different, as if he was like, he was like a zombie. And that's what I deduced from it, because he just did a lot of things that attract that kind of people. For example, he was often in the toilet all the time, and on, well, he was smoking and drinking there, well, in the bathroom (!), they say the *djins* [are] in the toilet, simply, simply because it's a dirty place, because that's where the bad *djinn* are. And because he was there all the time and also because, I know what a disgusting man my father is, I thought to myself that this could also apply to him.

This is the most explicit example of someone interpreting personal experiences and someone else's behaviour in religious terms that deviate strongly from common sense or scientific knowledge. Accepting that your father wanted to kill you or, at least, was accepting your death, is hard. Interpreting it as being possessed by a *djinn* removes her father partially from his responsibilities for his actions and allowed the respondent to continue integrating him into plans for the future, such as her wedding.

Another female respondent's biography can be interpreted as an attempt to escape the expectations of a modern life. She did not feel beautiful, something that was not important or defined differently in her neo-salafist environment. She was not sure about her plans for her professional future, but as a neo-salafist woman and an early mother, these problems were far away from her. Traditional Muslim family life gave her a promise to build her own functional family after her family of origin had fallen apart. When asked about what characterised her besides her religiosity, she simply stated: being a mother.

4.4.4 Conclusion: searching for sense, finding islamism?
Among the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as complete distance (see Section 4.1), most did not experience biographical challenges. Most families are relatively stable. Even though there are sometimes major conflicts with parents, respondents do not reject their parents or families as

a whole. Most describe some spiritual normality that they witness in their family. Few describe learning Islam autodidactically. All had contact with radical messages. Reactions, however, differed.

Among the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as factual distance (see Section 4.1), most experienced biographical challenges. Most families are rather unstable. Besides major conflicts with parents, some respondents do reject some of their parents or family members. Some describe a lack of spiritual orientation at home. Some describe that they have learned about Islam autodidactically. All had contact with radical messages but reactions differed.

None of the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as factual closeness (see Section 4.1), all respondents experienced biographical challenges. Most families are rather unstable, but besides major conflicts with parents, none of the respondents reject some of their parents or family members completely. All describe autodidactic ways of learning about Islam. Many describe a lack of spiritual orientation at home. All had contact with radical messages, but reactions differ.

Gender did not make a difference in these overall findings.

Among the set of respondents, there is a link between biographical challenges, lack of spiritual orientation, and (non-)radicalisation. Young adults who have experienced both – biographical challenges and a lack of spiritual orientation are more likely to join neo-salafist groups than those who did not have such experiences.

5. Conclusions

In this study young people' trajectories of (non-)radicalisation are understood as their movement towards or away from neo-salafist narratives and groups. To this end, a typologisation of respondents was presented in Section 4.1 based on respondents' proximity to, or distance from, these groups and narratives. Subsequently, the report explored if and how the experiences of respondents, or the way they dealt with these experiences, influenced these trajectories. Thus, in Section 4.2 it was shown that the lower the degree of (non-)radicalisation of respondents, the more strictly they refused to accept violent and non-violent radicalism as being part of Islam. Radicalism is associated with violence by most respondents and more concretely with the islamist group ISIS, which is the most well-known example of islamist violence. In Section 4.3, three dimensions of inequality, as experienced by respondents, and their connection to proximity to or distance from neo-salafist narratives and groups were analysed. First, in relation to economic inequality, it was shown that neither structural economic inequality nor crisis, that worsened the economic situation of the respondents, correlates with their degree of (non-)radicalisation. Second, in relation to horizontal inequality, it was shown that discrimination and racism does not correlate with the degree of (non-)radicalisation or the respondents. Third, with reference to political inequality, it was shown that, for some respondents, a correlation between their statements on political inequality and their degree of (non-)radicalisation can be found. Among the set of respondents in this study, the importance of life crises and biographical challenges seems to be most closely connected to why some people ignore neo-salafist approaches, while others are fascinated by them and even join those groups or networks. This was demonstrated in Section 4.4.

Building on this analysis, a number of conclusions can be drawn on *why respondents do not join non-violent neo-salafist groups.* First, among the respondents whose proximity to radicalism can be described as complete distance or factual distance (see Section 4.1) most respondents are not interested in politics, society or spiritual questions beyond their daily experiences. Nevertheless, they have a clear normative compass, that corresponds, or does not correspond, with what they learned from their parents and peers, but, importantly, this was not questioned by the young adults over the course of the fieldwork. The lack

of interest in politics, society or spiritual questions is striking, especially because they are – more than the average in society – the object of discrimination, something that may also push people into political activism or spiritual processing as Ivanova described in 2017 – based on her own research and categories other researchers have used before - different strategies of coping with racist downgrading (Ivanova, 2017). She presented the level of consciousness about racist discrimination and the level of actual confrontation with racism as varying factors, but also groups' reactions into the following set of strategies:

- Collective Strategies of Advancement <-> Individual Strategies of Advancement

- Offensive Counterstrategies <-> Defensive Counterstrategies

- Active strategies of endurement <-> Passive strategies of endurement

The analysis above (see Section 0) has shown, that a range of strategies is taken by the respondents. No respondent reacted in only one way. This is not surprising and has also been described by Ivanova. But, respondents in my study – as a whole – do not use the entire spectrum of strategies described by Ivanova. Collective strategies of advancement – such as discreditation of white non-Muslim Germans or super elevation of one's own culture/ethnicity – and offensive counterstrategies – such as development of new representations or establishing new dimensions for social comparisons and revaluation – are rarely used if at all as a direct or long term reaction to discrimination. Although being asked by the researcher specifically about it, no respondent from Group 1 referred to a possible collective strategy against racism or other forms of injustices and inequalities. Assuming that neo-salafist networks offer collective strategies, this lack of interest in *collective strategies* may explain why young Muslims from this group do not interact with neo-salafist groups nor hold beliefs that are easily connectable to neo-salafist narratives. This is, of course, only true as long as respondents feel comfortable with the output of their individualistic strategy and therefore do not develop a wish for collective strategies. Furthermore, there are many democratic ways to opt for collective strategies while fighting against racism and inequality. Ultimately, the accessibility of democratic groups to young Muslims will help determine whether the respondents of this group - should they develop an interest in collective strategies to cope with their experiences - will turn to them, get frustrated over politics and resign or turn to neo-salafist or other non-democratic interpretations instead.

There are different reasons for rejecting neo-salafist violence and/or violent neo-salafist groups. Among those having a factual closeness (see Section 4.1) respondents did are not justify islamist violence or groups like ISIS. On the contrary, they state that violent interpretations of Islam did not persuade them. They were connected to neo-salafist networks and perceive these as being against islamist violence. They explain their aversion towards groups like ISIS, arguing that ISIS does not observe Islamic law and has committed crimes that are not permitted within Islam (0). This could lead to a conclusion that would correspond with the idea that non-violent understandings of Islam, no matter what school or branch, may prevent violent radicalisation, as it is mentioned in some projects to prevent radicalisation (Berrissoun, 2014). However, in the case of these respondents, this is only partly true. Non-violent neo-salafists are not pacifists and, among the respondents, some argued in favour of the legitimacy of *jihad* as such, while claiming the illegitimacy of ISIS and other groups. Others talked about legitimate forms of self-defence. The development of neo-salafist communities in the Rhineland is shaped through the comings and goings of individuals who easily cross the border between violent and non-violent neo-salafist groups (Käsehage and Antes, 2019). It is therefore unlikely, that non-violent neo-salafism, as such, prevents violent islamism. The respondents who contributed to this research chose to not join a violent group for several other reasons. When asked about this, they employed arguments based on both religious understandings and common sense (0). From a more distanced perspective, two other factors may have played a more important role: social bonds with non-Muslims or non-neo-salafist Muslims and the possibility of taking up non-violence related positions and activities within neo-salafist networks. Three respondents did not

join violent groups because they had too much to lose. One respondent had left the neo-salafist network – without distancing attitudinally – as the repression intensified against radicalising parts of the network, because he did not want to undermine his professional future or his relationship to his mother. Another respondent did not give this as a reason, but his remarks about his family indicated that he did not want to disappoint his parents, who had supported him on his religious path so far. Another respondent named her maternal home as the best place in the world and therefore had something to lose, too. Another explanation may be that many respondents from the *factual closeness* group have found other ways to be active in a collective manner within the non-violent salafist networks. One respondent said that she planned to become a translator in order to translate neo-salafist basic literature that has not been translated so far into German. Another respondent was engaged in a prisoners' aid group, claiming that she thought this was for those who regret their actions. And another respondent is engaged in charity activities, something he did before conversion and now does within neo-salafist networks.

In addition to these findings that may explain (non)-radicalisation among this set of respondents, other interesting insights were made during the field research. First, almost none of the young adults have a closed mind-set or lived his or her live without contradictions. This seems to be banal but for those undertaking research about worldviews, this is not banal at all. There is, among the set of the respondents from this research, no easy way to classify persons along an ideological range. It seems unrealistic to do so, as many contradictions came up during the interviews. Furthermore, the relation between words and deeds is not clear, identities are not without contradictions and plans for the future were not well-developed. It seems rather impossible to make any prediction on whether or not these young people, one day, may join violent radical groups or not. Second, most young Muslims in Germany have many problems, but getting radicalised is not one of them. Experiences of discrimination put a heavy burden on young Muslims. Men and women bear a both heavy burden, albeit in different ways. That so many young adults, who are not only experiencing discrimination in many different ways but are often living in disadvantaged circumstances, are not angry, is the most astonishing finding of this research.

6. References

Amir-Moazami, S. (2016) 'Dämonisierung und Einverleibung: Die "muslimische Frage" in Europa', in Castro Varela, do Mar, M. and Mecheril, P. (ed) *Die Dämonisierung der Anderen: Rassismuskritik der Gegenwart*. Bielefeld: Transcript, pp. 21-39.

Amir-Moazami, S. (ed) (2018) *Der inspizierte Muslim: Zur Politisierung der Islamforschung in Europa*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Anderson, E. (2015) 'The White Space', *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity,* 1(1): 10–21.

Anton, A., Schetsche, M. and Walter, M.K. (2014) 'Einleitung: Wirklichkeitskonstruktion zwischen Orthodoxie und Heterodoxie – zur Wissenssoziologie von Verschwörungstheorien', in Anton, A., Schetsche, M. and Walter, M.K. (eds) *Konspiration:* Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, pp. 9–25.

Aslan, E., Erşan Akkılıç, E. and Hämmerle, M. (2018a) *Islamistische Radikalisierung*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Aslan, E., Erşan Akkılıç, E. and Hämmerle, M. (2018b) *Islamistische Radikalisierung: Biografische Verläufe im Kontext der religiösen Sozialisation und des radikalen Milieu*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Bade, K.J. (2011) 'Von der Arbeitswanderung zur Einwanderungsgesellschaft' in Stemmler, S. (ed) *Multikultur 2.0: Willkommen im Einwanderungsland Deutschland*. Göttingen: Wallstein.

Bakker, E. (2006) *Jihadi terrorists in Europe: Their characteristics and the circumstances in which they joined the jihad ; an exploratory study*. Den Haag: Clingendael.

Berrissoun, M. (2014) 'Extremismusprävention im Frühstadium. Initiative 180 Grad Wende als innovativer Lösungsansatz und Modellprojekt', *Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik,* 7(3): 389–401.

Borum, R. (2011a) 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories', *Journal of Strategic Security,* 4(4): 7–36.

Borum, R. (2011b) 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research', *Journal of Strategic Security,* 4(4): 37–62.

'Bundeskriminalamt, Hessisches Informations- und Kompetenzzentrum gegen Extremismus and Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz' (2016) *Analyse der Radikalisierungshintergründe und -verläufe der Personen, die aus islamistischer Motivation aus Deutschland in Richtung Syrien oder Irak ausgereist sind: Fortschreibung 2016*. o.O.

Cavallar, G. (2017) *Islam, Aufklärung und Moderne*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Ceylan, R. and Kiefer, M. (eds) (2013) *Salafismus: Fundamentalistische Strömungen und Radikalisierungsprävention*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Dantschke, C. (2019) 'Attraktivität, Anziehungskraft und Akteure des politischen und militanten Salafismus in Deutschland', in Toprak, A. and Weitzel, G. (eds) *Salafismus in Deutschland: Jugendkulturelle Aspekte, pädagogische Perspektiven*.

El-Mafaalani, A. (2014) 'Salafismus als jugendkulturelle Provokation: Zwischen dem Bedürfnis nach Abgrenzung und der Suche nach habitueller Übereinstimmung', in Schneiders, T.G. (ed) *Salafismus in Deutschland: Ursprünge und Gefahren einer islamisch-fundamentalistischen bewegung*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript.

Fahim, A.A. (2013) 'Migrationshintergrund und biografische Belastungen als Analysekriterien von Radikalisierungsprozessen junger Muslime in Deutschland', in Herding, M. (ed) *Radikaler Islam im Jugendalter Erscheinungsformen, Ursachen und Kontexte:* Halle (Saale): Deutsches Jugendinst., Außenstelle Halle (Saale), Arbeits- und Forschungsstelle Rechtsextremismus und Fremdenfeindlichkeit.

Filipp, S-H. and Aymanns, P. (2018) *Kritische Lebensereignisse und Lebenskrisen: Vom Umgang mit den Schattenseiten des Lebens*. Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer.

Foroutan, N. (ed) (2011) *Sarrazins Thesen auf dem Prüfstand: Ein empirischer Gegenentwurf zu Thilo Sarrazins Thesen zu Muslimen in Deutschland*. Berlin: Humboldt-Univ.

Forschungsnetzwerk Radikalisierung und Prävention (ed) (2020) *Aspekte von Radikalisierungsprozessen: Fallgestützte Studien*. Osnabrück.

Fülling, H. (2019) *Religion und Integration in der deutschen Islampolitik*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Glaser, M., Frank, A. and Herding, M. (eds) (2018a) *Gewaltorientierter Islamismus im Jugendalter: Perspektiven aus Jugendforschung und Jugendhilfe. 2. Sonderband Sozialmagazin*. Weinheim: Beltz, J.

Glaser, M., Herding, M. and Langner, J. (2018b) 'Warum wenden sich junge Menschen dem gewaltorientierten Islamismus zu? Eine Diskussion vorliegender Forschungsbefunde', in Glaser, M., Frank, A. and Herding, M. (eds) *Gewaltorientierter Islamismus im Jugendalter: Perspektiven aus Jugendforschung und Jugendhilfe*. Basel: Beltz Juventa.

Herding, M. (2013a) 'Forschungslandschaft und zentrale Befunde zu radikalem Islam im Jugendalter', in Herding, M. (ed) *Radikaler Islam im Jugendalter Erscheinungsformen, Ursachen und Kontexte:* Halle (Saale): Deutsches Jugendinst., Außenstelle Halle (Saale), Arbeits- und Forschungsstelle Rechtsextremismus und Fremdenfeindlichkeit.

Herding, M. (ed) (2013b) *Radikaler Islam im Jugendalter Erscheinungsformen, Ursachen und Kontexte*. Halle (Saale): Deutsches Jugendinst., Außenstelle Halle (Saale), Arbeits- und Forschungsstelle Rechtsextremismus und Fremdenfeindlichkeit.

Högl, E. and Weßnigk, D. (2016) 'Rechtsextremer Terror des NSU – Staatsversagen und Konsequenzen', in Braun, S., Geisler, A. and Gerster, M. (eds) *Strategien der extremen Rechten.* Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, pp. 581–590.

Hohnstein, S. and Herding, M. (eds) (2017) *Digitale Medien und politisch-weltanschaulicher Extremismus im Jugendalter: Erkenntnisse aus Wissenschaft und Praxis*.

Ivanova, M. (2017) *Umgang der Migrationsanderen mit rassistischen Zugehörigkeitsordnungen. Strategien, Wirkungsweisen und Implikationen für die Bildungsarbeit*. Bad Heilbrunn: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt.

Käsehage, N. and Antes, P. (2019) *Salafismus in Deutschland: Entstehung und Transformation einer radikal-islamischen Bewegung*.

Kiefer, M. (2005) *Islamkunde in deutscher Sprache in Nordrhein-Westfalen: Kontext, Geschichte, Verlauf und Akzeptanz eines Schulversuchs*. Zugl.: Köln, Univ., Diss., 2005. Münster, Westf.: LIT-Verl.

Kundnani, A. (2012) 'Radicalisation: the journey of a concept', *Race & Class,* 54(2): 3–25.

Logvinov, M. (2012) '"This is all about Islam" versus "This is not about Islam": Islamistische Radikalisierung - Zur Erklärungskraft wissenschaftlicher Theorien und sicherheitsbehördlicher Hypothesen', *Interventionen - Zeitschrift für Verantwortungspädagogik,* 1: 39-44.

Logvinov, M. (2019) *Zur Psychopathologie des Extremismus und Terrorismus*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Lohlker, R., El Hadad, A., Holtmann, P., et al. (2016) 'Transnationale Welten' in Biene, J., Daase, C., Junk, J. and Müller, H. (eds) *Salafismus und Dschihadismus in Deutschland: Ursachen Dynamiken Handlungsempfehlungen // Ursachen, Dynamiken, Handlungsempfehlungen*. Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag, pp. 199–232.

MAIS NRW (2010) *Muslimisches Leben in NRW*.

Ministerium des Innern des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (2019) *Verfassungsschutzbericht des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen über das Jahr 2018*.

Ministerium des Innern des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (2020) *Schriftlicher Bericht des Ministers des Innern für die Sitzung des Innenausschusses am 06.02.2020 zu dem Tagesordnungspunkt "Umgang*

mit Rückkehrern des Islamischen Staats nach NRW": Antrag der Fraktion der CDU und der Fraktion der FDP vom 10.01.2020. VORLAGE17/3005.

Muckel, S. (2017) 'Muslimische Religionsgemeinschaften als Körperschaften des öffentlichen Rechts,' in Antes, P. and Ceylan, R. (eds) *Muslime in Deutschland: Historische Bestandsaufnahme, aktuelle Entwicklungen und zukünftige Forschungsfragen*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 77–113.

Müller, T. (2018) 'Sicherheitswissen und Extremismus', in Amir-Moazami, S. (ed) *Der inspizierte Muslim: Zur Politisierung der Islamforschung in Europa*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Neumann, P.R. (2013) 'The trouble with radicalization', *International Affairs,* 89(4): 873–893.

NRW Innenministerium (2015) *Extremistischer Salafismus als Jugendkultur: Sprache, Symbole, Style*.

Oberlandesgericht Düsseldorf *Archiv für das Jahr 2020: Pressemitteilungen aus dem Jahr 2020*.

Oberlandesgericht Düsseldorf (2020) *Urteil gegen Kölner Rizin-Bombenbauer: Pressemitteilung Nr. 15/2020*. Düsseldorf.

Poli, A. and Arun, O. (2019) *Report on the Meta-Ethnographic Synthesis of Qualitative Studies on Inequality and Youth Radicalisation*, DARE, Available http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/d4.2_2.pdf

Rahlf, T. (ed) (2015) *Deutschland in Daten: Zeitreihen zur historischen Statistik*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung.

Roy, O. (2009) 'Al-Qaeda in the West as a Youth Movement: The Power of a Narrative', in Emerson, M. and Roy, O. (eds) *Ethno-religious conflict in Europe: Typologies of radicalisation in Europe's Muslim communities*. Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies.

Salili, F. (2020) 'Political Inequality, Secular Democracy, Religion, Gender, and the "ISMS"', in Papa, R. (ed) *Handbook on Promoting Social Justice in Education:* Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 2417–2437.

Saritoprak, Z. (2003) The Legend of al-Dajjal (Antichrist): The Personification of Evil in the Islamic Tradition. *The Muslim World* 93(2): 291–307.

Schiffauer, W. (2008) 'Suspect Subjects: Muslim Migrants and the Security Agencies in Germany', in Eckert J.M. (ed) *The Social Life of Anti-Terrorism Laws: The War on Terror and the Classifications of the 'Dangerous Other'*. s.l.: transcript Verlag.

Schimany, P. and Baykara-Krumme, H. (2012) 'Zur Geschichte und demografischen Bedeutung älterer Migrantinnen und Migranten in Deutschland' in Baykara-Krumme, H., Schimany, P. and Motel-Klingebiel, A. (eds) *Viele Welten des Altern*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 43–73.

Sold, M. and Abay Gaspar, H. (2019) *Wehrlos gegen Salafismus im Netz? Chancen und Grenzen von Gegennarrativen*.

Speer, S.W. (2017) 'Deutsche Religionspolitik im Kontext des Islam', in Antes, P. and Ceylan, R. (eds) *Muslime in Deutschland: Historische Bestandsaufnahme, aktuelle Entwicklungen und zukünftige Forschungsfragen*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 115–147.

Statistisches Bundesamt (2018) *Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund - Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus - Fachserie 1 Reihe 2.2 - 2018*.

Steinberg, G. (2012) *Wer sind die Salafisten? Zum Umgang mit einer schnell wachsenden und sich politisierenden Bewegung*.

Steinberg, G. (2014) *Al-Qaidas deutsche Kämpfer: Die Globalisierung des islamistischen Terrorismus*. Hamburg: Ed. Körber-Stiftung.

Stewart, F. (2000) Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities. *Oxford Development Studies* 28(3): 245–262.

Stichs, A. (2016) *Wie viele Muslime leben in Deutschland? Eine Hochrechnung über die Anzahl der Muslime in Deutschland zum Stand 31. Dezember 2015*.

Storm, I., Pavlovica, T. and Franc, R. (2020) *Report on the relationship between inequality and youth radicalisation from existing European survey datasets*. DARE. Available: http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/d4.3.pdf

Virchow, F. (2016) PEGIDA: Understanding the Emergence and Essence of Nativist Protest in Dresden. *Journal of Intercultural Studies,* 37(6): 541–555.

Virchow, F. (2020) *Interactive radicalisation Country level report*. Germany. DARE. Available http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/d2.2_germany_report_on_interactive_radicalisation.pdf

Wagemakers, J. (2014) 'Salafistische Strömungen und ihre Sicht auf al-wala' wa-l bara' (Loyalität und Lossagung), in Said, B.T. and Fouad, H. (eds) *Salafismus: Auf der Suche nach dem wahren Islam*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.

Wiedl, N. (2014) 'Geschichte des Salafismus in Deutschland', in Said, B.T. and Fouad, H. (eds) *Salafismus: Auf der Suche nach dem wahren Islam*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.

Wiktorowicz, Q. (2006) 'Anatomy of the Salafi Movement', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 29(3): 207–239.

Winker, G. and Degele, N. (2010) *Intersektionalität: Zur Analyse sozialer Ungleichheiten*. Bielefeld: Transcript-Verl.

Zick, A. (2017) 'Das Vorurteil über Muslime' in Antes, P. and Ceylan, R. (eds) *Muslime in Deutschland: Historische Bestandsaufnahme, aktuelle Entwicklungen und zukünftige Forschungsfragen*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 39–57.