YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRAJECTORIES THROUGH ANTI-ISLAM(IST) AND EXTREME RIGHT MILIEUS: COUNTRY LEVEL REPORT THE NETHERLANDS

The New Right in the Netherlands

DARE Dialogue About Radicalisation & Equality

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Executive Summary:

This report considers the voices of the New Right in the Netherlands. The Dutch New Right is characterised by nativism and nationalism, reflected in its espoused 'patriotic' protection of traditional national cultural identity, purported to be under threat from multiculturalism, immigration and Islam, and an emphasis on libertarianism, reflected in calls for protection of freedom of speech etc. The New Right posits itself as defender of these values and accomplishments, while challenging a progressive agenda on other issues such as immigration, environmentalism, internationalism and social policy.

Much concern has been raised in media, security, and academic discourse about the dangers of the New Right and the way it evokes chauvinist symbolism to separate those with non-Dutch backgrounds into 'good' and 'bad' immigrants and to demonise and exclude Muslims in particular. The promotion of such attitudes carries the real danger of contributing to discrimination and hate crimes perpetrated against ethnic and religious minority group members, and has been said to contribute to increased polarisation in Dutch society. Furthermore, studies have pointed to the existence of a strong 'alt-right' online sphere in the Netherlands, propagating populist and racist messages.

We interviewed a number of young people who have encountered or been involved in New Right messaging, ideation, or group formation. They shared their stories in one or multiple in-depth interviews during which we asked a range of questions regarding their worldview, their understanding of radicalism and extremism, their ideological and personal grievances, their online and offline engagement, and their views on gender.

Respondents are concerned about the rise of multiculturalism, which is thought to be fuelled by the political Left and to involve the increasing influence of Islam in the Netherlands. A number of respondents see a conflict, sometimes even foresee a civil war, between the Right and the native population on the one hand; and the Left, Islam, and more generally, immigrants, on the other. Among some, conspiracy theories about racial mixing bolster the sense that 'white' Europe is under threat. National politics, the EU, and Jews, are assumed to side with the outgroup and thus to pose a threat. Few of the respondents consider themselves 'radical,' and even fewer as 'extreme.' The concepts are typically attributed to Islam, and also to the Left. On a political or ideological level, respondents express discontent about egalitarianism. Most of the respondents are very much in favour of equality before the law. Yet, they feel that egalitarian drives among politicians and law enforcement create double standards in practice.

The lives of the respondents were often marked by negative youth experiences, including family breakup, domestic violence, and being bullied at or excluded from school. Several had bad personal encounters with immigrants, although were also eager to declare that they respect everybody as long as this respect is mutual. We found a considerable number of respondents to suffer from mental health issues, sometimes associated with alcohol and drug abuse. We believe these observations are significant, but are hesitant to draw a direct connection to the ideological positions that our respondents take.

The trajectories of New Right radicalisation are heavily guided by the Internet. Interviewees describe radicalisation as a process whereby the individual gradually habituates to verbal or visual extremist content through repeated exposure. The respondents further point to the normalisation of violence and the resulting insensitivity to human suffering.

For many respondents, what are perceived to be innate differences between males and females do not necessarily imply one is better than the other. From this angle, feminism and the Left are criticised for overly striving for equality between the sexes. Such a position further contributes to the respondents' position against feminism and the Left, particularly as some view gender equality as imposed by a leftist agenda.

1. Introduction

Over the past 20 years, politics in the Netherlands has seen a 'swing to the right' (Oudenampsen, 2021: 1–3). The country has received global attention for the way in which New Right[1] parties, which previously only captured marginal support, have been able to make an impact on mainstream Dutch politics. The Netherlands has also produced one of the most outspoken anti-Islam political personalities, Geert Wilders, who has enjoyed high levels of attention and popularity both locally and internationally. More recently, intellectually-styled populist personality Thierry Baudet, whose party Forum for Democracy (FvD) rapidly rose to popularity to win 16% of the vote in the 2019 provincial elections, has been accused of knowingly associating with white supremacists and anti-Semites (Faber, 2018; Gerstenfeld, 2020), and using racist slurs (Vrijsen, 2021).

This shift to the right in the mainstream political sphere may reflect a substantial level of support for Islamophobic and xenophobic claims. Much concern has been raised in media and academic discourse about the dangers of the New Right and the way it evokes chauvinist symbolism to separate those with non-Dutch backgrounds into 'good' and 'bad' immigrants, demonising and excluding Muslims in particular (Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2017). The promotion of such attitudes carries the real danger of contributing to discrimination and hate crimes perpetrated against ethnic and religious minority group members (van Dijk, 2008: 102), and has been said to contribute to increased polarisation in Dutch society (Castanho Silva, 2018). Furthermore, studies have pointed to the existence of a strong 'alt-right' online sphere in the Netherlands, propagating populist and racist messages (Oudenampsen, 2021: 153–171).

Some scholars have described the New Right as the old far right in disguise (Miller-Idriss, 2020), or posited that it may engender polarisation and radicalisation (e.g. Schaap, 2019). Security services have also begun to describe the threats that may be posed by this movement, with the Netherlands National Coordinator for Terrorism and Security (NCTV, 2018) and the General Intelligence and Security Services (AIVD, 2018) recently issuing reports expressing concern about a potential upsurge in violent intent that could emerge from the spread of a toxic atmosphere of intolerance and derogation associated with the New Right. Thus, the New Right is increasingly considered as a radical, if not extremist, movement. However, such characterisations have also been found to feed back into the New Right's accusations of a 'Cultural Marxist' agenda by left-wing elites to silence voices critical of multiculturalism.

In the context of the rise of the New Right in the Netherlands, existing research has mostly focused on right-wing 'populist' parties and politicians in the Netherlands, their electoral popularity, and the broad anti-immigrant or anti-establishment attitudes they might be appealing to within the Dutch population. A number of studies have examined the 'populist' policies and rhetoric of Wilders' Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom, PVV) and the Lijst Pim Fortuyn (Pim Fortuyn List, LPF) (de Koster et al., 2013; Holsteyn, 2018; Muis et al., 2019) as the development of both parties during the 1990s marked the introduction of such policies into mainstream politics. Further studies have examined these parties' relationship with disinformation (Hameleers, 2020) as well as discussing how their nativist and Islamophobic claims have been integrated into the Dutch political mainstream through the Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, VVD) and Prime Minister Mark Rutte's campaign rhetoric (Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2017; Witteveen, 2017).

Oudenampsen (2021) provides a recent exploration of the ideological origins of the New Right in the Netherlands by historically examining public discourse, and argues that the 'shift to the right' began long before recent right-wing populist politicians entered the scene. However, Oudenampsen does not incorporate close-up research with those who may have been affected by this public discourse or

[1] Our use of the term New Right should not be equated with the one-person political party 'New Right' that was active in Dutch politics between 2003 and 2007, gaining little support. However, it is worth noting that the ideological position of this party fits with our general description of the New Right as a strand in politics.

interacted with the New Right in other arenas. This reflects a dearth of research on those who support the New Right in the Netherlands, and in particular how individuals come to be engaged with related ideas and groups in potentially radical ways. One study by Kemmers et al. (2015) conducted in-depth interviews with individuals characterised as 'politically discontented', that is, non-voters and PVV voters, and argues for the existence of an 'anti-establishment career' which consists of a three-stage trajectory. While the subject of this study was not 'radicalisation' per se, the inclusion of PVV voters means a proportion of its respondents may have held radical right-wing views. Yet the assertion of a one-size-fits-all trajectory is unlikely to reflect the complex realities and contexts in which individuals engage with radicalisation.

Our research sought to begin to fill this gap in relevant close-up, contextualised research into engagement with the New Right in the Netherlands. We consider the New Right in the Netherlands as it resonated among a significant share of young people, particularly young men. Through ethnographic research and in-depth interviews with those directly involved, we examine the context in which radical right-wing ideas come to be supported and engaged with by individuals. We also consider relational and situational factors that have contributed to their engagement and how they interpret these factors. This report presents our main findings. We begin by discussing the worldview that motivated these young people's engagement with the New Right. We then address respondents' own understanding of the New Right, and whether and how they consider this loosely connected movement (or collection of movements), and their own participation in it, to relate to extremism and radicalism. We further consider participants' radicalisation and non-radicalisation trajectories in relation to personal and emotional factors, such as their experiences at school and at home, and the way that online and offline sites formed part of their socialisation into the New Right milieu. Finally, we consider the role of gender in the milieu, both in terms of the gendered experiences of respondents and their attitudes towards issues like feminism and transgender rights.

2. The Dutch New Right

The New Right in the Netherlands refers not to one specific party or movement, but comprises a mix of parties, groups and ideological strands. However, they are united in the way they distinguish themselves from the 'old' extreme right through a more international orientation, a greater emphasis on intellectual discourse, and online methods of recruitment, organisation and communication. The Dutch New Right is characterised by nativism and nationalism, reflected in its espoused 'patriotic' protection of traditional national cultural identity, purported to be under threat from multiculturalism, immigration and Islam; and an emphasis on libertarianism, reflected in calls for protection of freedom of speech. Rather than seeking to challenge a progressive consensus on sexuality, secularity, women's and gay rights, the New Right posits itself as the defender of these values and accomplishments, while challenging the progressive agenda on other issues such as immigration, environmentalism, internationalism and social policy (Oudenampsen, 2021: 13–14). Relevant movements include the Dutch 'alt-right' and Identitarian groups. In parliamentary politics, the Party for Freedom (PVV) and the Forum for Democracy (FvD) are considered the primary representatives of this ideology. The images and popularity of both parties are to a considerable extent determined by their leadership. This section outlines the historical context behind the rise of the Dutch New Right, before detailing the contemporary situation and the milieu as defined in this study.

2.1 Historical context: the 'Fortuyn revolt' and the rise of Geert Wilders

The emergence of the Dutch New Right is often understood within the context of a left-wing or socially liberal consensus in Dutch politics since the 1960s. In contrast with countries like the US and UK, the Netherlands did not see significant conservative and right-wing parties emerge in opposition to progressive movements at that time (Oudenampsen, 2021: 3). The country is noted for a significant shift

in the 1960s-70s from a conservative Christian nation to an international leader in progressive politics, when both the general population and political elites embraced secularism, modernisation and progressive morals through a consensus approach (Kennedy, 1995).

However, from the 1990s a form of conservatism began to emerge in the Netherlands that challenged this consensus. Populist Pim Fortuyn rose to popularity in the early 2000s on a platform of anti-immigration with a focus on Islam. His party went on to win 26 seats in the 2002 General Election, the first time a radical right party had had significant electoral impact (Koopmans & Muis, 2009). While the events of 9/11 undoubtedly contributed to a climate critical of Islam, some discontent with multiculturalism had already been developing in Dutch society. Oudenampsen (2021) points to interventions by conservatives that laid the ideological ground for Fortuyn's rise in the years prior to this. The sudden success of his campaign can also be attributed to discursive opportunities provided by media attention (Koopmans & Muis, 2009). However, Fortuyn's dramatic assassination by an animal rights activist in May 2002, just weeks before the General Election, fuelled accusations of the demonisation of New Right views especially by the political Left. Moreover, the assassination of Theo van Gogh, who had directed films critical of Islam, by a Dutch-Moroccan Islamist extremist exacerbated this feeling of demonisation, now in the context of a rivalry between the New Right and Islam (Oudenampsen, 2021).

With a shift to the right in Dutch politics that followed, the major parties – the Labour Party (PvDA, centre-left), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA, centre to centre-right) and the VVD (centre-right) – each began to incorporate aspects of Fortuyn's proposals around immigration and cultural integration, further legitimising the New Right position (Pellikaan et al., 2007). In 2004, the Party for Freedom (PVV) was created by Geert Wilders. Wilders had been a VVD Member of Parliament since 1998, but was expelled following a disagreement over the party's support for the admission of Turkey to the European Union. As party leader of the PVV, Wilders introduced a policy that makes him the only official party member. The PVV remains, in terms of votes, the most significant New Right force in Dutch parliamentary politics.

By the elections of 2006, Wilders had formulated a programme that upheld economically liberal aspirations whilst strongly emphasising the importance of bolstering Dutch pride and upholding 'Judeo-Christian' values. For example, Wilders suggested changing the non-discrimination clause forming the first article of the Dutch constitution to an article that would recognise the 'dominance of the Judeo-Christian and humanistic tradition and culture,' thus ostracizing Muslims from the most basic legal principle in the Netherlands. Other pillars of the PVV's ideology include nativism, nationalism, and a call for law and order (Holsteyn, 2018: 484). His electoral success of 2006, when he won 9 out of 150 seats, provided a further stimulus for Wilders' and PVV's hallmark anti-Islamist rhetoric.

In 2008, very much against the advice of the government at that time, Wilders released a film called *Fitna*, which portrayed Islam as a source of terrorism, domestic violence, and violent intolerance against non-believers and homosexuals. It led to national and international indignation, yet bolstered Wilders' and PVV's position as the leading voice against Islamic influences in the Netherlands. The publication of the film intensified the threats to Wilders' life, which reinforced his image among supporters as a heroic truth teller, but also resulted in court cases for incitement of hatred and discrimination (Van Noorloos, 2014). The 2010 national elections saw the PVV become the third largest party with 24 out of 150 seats, and controversially, positioned the PVV as the support party for a minority government between the VVD and CDA. This first cabinet of the current Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the VVD[2] would eventually dissolve as a result of disagreement between Wilders and the two other parties.

As a parliamentarian, Wilders has since managed to maintain a vocal opposition to Rutte's coalition governments. In 2013, he won 15 seats out 150 in the national elections, winning 20 seats in 2017, making

[2] Currently, the Netherlands has completed its third 'Rutte cabinet', and after an election win by Rutte in March 2021, is likely on its way to a fourth.

the PVV the second largest party in Dutch parliament after the VVD. This indicates that there is still significant support for his anti-Islam, anti-EU and anti-establishment platform. Indeed, some polls had predicted that the PVV would win an even larger proportion of the vote in 2017. The VVD's success has not been described as a victory for anti-racism or for multiculturalism – the adoption of campaign slogans such as 'Act Normal or Go Away' seems to demonstrate the strong impact that Fortuyn and Wilders have had on broader political sentiment and attitudes towards immigrants and Muslims in the Netherlands (Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2017).

In 2016, after a long and complicated court case, Wilders was found guilty of criminally inciting discrimination and hatred, a verdict upheld in the 2020 appeal case. This verdict was based on events that occurred on municipal election night in 2014, when he promised action in response to calls for less Moroccans in the Netherlands.

While Wilders has sometimes been considered the de facto leader of the Dutch New Right, recently, he has found a competitor in Thierry Baudet and his party Forum for Democracy (FvD), the impact of which we explore next.

2.2 Contemporary political context: Baudet and the Forum for Democracy (FvD)

The contemporary New Right in the Netherlands cannot be understood without reference to the emergence and rapidly rising popularity of Thierry Baudet and the FvD. The FvD seeks to provide an alternative to the current governance structure in the Netherlands, which is assumed to be ill equipped to address the challenges of our time; in particular uncontrolled immigration, the Euro, and issues with education and health care. In line with its focus on 'democracy', the party's official website explicitly mentions 1848. This is the year the Dutch constitution was drafted by Johan Rudolph Thorbecke. Considered as the founding father of the VVD's political ideology, Thorbecke was politically liberal, thus the constitution enabled the people to have a more direct influence on governance (Forum voor Democratie, 2020). Reference to 1848 is indicative of a general intellectual approach that characterises Baudet and many of his followers.

Baudet holds a PhD in Law. His thesis '*De aanval op de natiestaat*' (The attack on the nation state – authors' translation)'[3] (Baudet, 2012a) argues that the nation state, since the end of the Second World War, has been undermined in its sovereignty by supra-nationalisation through political European unification, and by the ideology of multiculturalism that came with mass immigration (Baudet, 2012). According to Baudet, both tendencies 'attack' the nation state because they corrode the social, political and legal foundation of the nation, and thereby corrode the nation state as the lead authority in governance and jurisdiction, providing few common ground principles in return. In order to address the social chaos and fragmentation he posits would ensue from this, Baudet argues for the defence of the nation state as the carrier of the democratic legal order through bolstering loyalty to a clearly defined national identity.

Consistent with this message, he has been involved in various political initiatives to engage citizens to restrict the transfer of power to the EU. These initiatives include a 2013 petition for a referendum on the desirability of the transfer of power to Europe, which was dismissed by parliament despite sizable popular support. In 2016, Baudet organised an advisory referendum regarding the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement. In this instance, again, the Dutch parliament went against public opinion by ratifying the agreement despite the negative outcome of the referendum. In part as a result of the lack of

[3] The English language version was given a different title: 'The significance of borders: Why representative government and the rule of law require nation states' (Baudet, 2012b).

parliamentary responsiveness to these initiatives, Baudet and other FvD members decided to participate as a political party in the 2017 national elections, winning 2 out of 150 seats.

Since then, Baudet's core message, together with his flamboyant persona which combines elements of an archetypal frat boy with bohemianism, has had considerable resonance, particularly among young and middle-aged men (Rooduijn, 2021). Whereas Wilders remains the only member of the PVV, the FvD is a member-based organisation with considerable growth. In January 2018 the party claimed to have more than 20,000 members, having grown from only 1,863 members in January 2017[4]. By January 2020, the party claimed 43,000 members, making it the largest party in the Netherlands by member numbers. Furthermore, the party's congress was attended by 17,000 people in autumn 2017, demonstrating that these are active members. In 2019's provincial elections, a minor election relative to the national and municipal elections, FvD won the largest segment of votes of all political parties with 80 actual seats out of 570, cementing it as a major political influence.

Although the rise of FvD has been remarkable, it has increasingly been marred by internal division within the party's organisation. A common theme across incidents associated with the party has been the alleged racist and otherwise extremist ideas espoused by Baudet. Many critics expressed dismay when during his victory speech after the 2018 provincial election, in his signature metaphorical style, Baudet uttered the phrase 'our boreal world'. Baudet was criticised for the term's racist connotations, as it has been used by, for instance, Front National's Jean-Marie LePen. Within the extreme right, it is understood to denote a historic entitlement to European identity on the basis of white skin. Baudet has also suggested that the ideology of multiculturism has led to the 'homeopathic dilution' of the Dutch people, sparking rage among anti-racist groups. This notion has been linked to Renaud Camus's 'Great Replacement Theory', which suggests that a global elite is aiming to replace white Europeans with non-white people.

Baudet has recently faced what is perhaps his most significant challenge after key members of his election board expressed outrage about alleged antisemitic proclamations made during an evening strategy meeting held in November 2020, for the upcoming 2021 national elections. Baudet was accused of repeating one of the many conspiracy theories targeting George Soros,[5] that Soros was responsible for the spread of Covid-19. Baudet was further said to have claimed that many people in his vicinity were antisemitic. While one of the meeting attendees wrote a detailed report that was leaked to the press, and this account was supported by a number of other attendees, Baudet and another attendee have denied that he made antisemitic statements (Den Hartog, 2020). Following a week of news headlines filled with the alleged antisemitism and conspiracy thinking of Baudet, there was much chaos within the party and many members attempted to distance themselves from him. These events follow several months of allegations in the media that Baudet and segments of his youth wing are increasingly expressing blatant Nazi sympathies on closed WhatsApp groups and other social media outlets. The question has arisen, as it did earlier for Wilders and his PVV, whether FvD represents far right ideology, and whether the FvD, PVV and its affiliates are connected to far right extremist factions in the Netherlands. Baudet's support among youth and the involvement of the youth wing in the aforementioned scandal are particularly relevant to the current study. As will become clear in our findings below, Baudet was a key figure for some of our respondents.

[4] However, it should be noted that the two largest of the five other major parties that are represented in Parliament have between 25,000 and 30,000 members.

[5] Philanthropist and founder of the Open Society Foundations, known for providing financial support to anti-racist movements and other progressive causes.

2.3 The Dutch New Right today: Groups and movements

In line with the positions of the aforementioned political parties and personalities, we describe the Dutch New Right as advocating the cultural conformity of 'outsider' groups deemed a polluting cultural influence. Its more extreme manifestations, call for a white, racially pure, and culturally homogenous Europe that preserves its own identity and culture. It idealises a Europe without ethnic minorities, specifically Muslims, but in some circles, Jews. The New Right opposes immigration, Islam, feminism, expressions of minority gender and sexual identities, and 'cultural Marxism', which is perceived as an agenda of the Left to socially engineer society against the interests of the majority.

The emphasis on anti-feminism is a relatively new characteristic as far as right extremist perspectives are concerned, at least in the Netherlands. However, it follows from a focus on masculinity, physical culture, fight training, and the use of violence that have long been hallmarks of Nazism and various right-extremist groups. In New Right extremist discourse, violence is a recurrent topic, conveying a sense of a war being waged against white people.

We can distinguish three general strands through which individuals engage with New Right ideology in the Netherlands: 'traditional' racist groups, often neo-Nazis; groups associated with the alt-right, taking considerable influence from their North American counterparts; and campaign-oriented street groups. These three strands do not operate in isolation but rather increasingly interact, communicate online and offline, and even actively cooperate with each other, blurring the boundaries between them. According to the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Services, the organised right extremist scene in the Netherlands (excluding online groups) is thought to comprise 255 *active* members. However, these data do not capture the strength of the extreme right or New Right in the Netherlands (AIVD 2018:19).

2.3.1 Traditional racist groups

After a period of relative tranquillity following the Second World War, the 1970s and early 1980s saw the rise of extremist parties and racist violence. From the late 1970s onwards, racism became increasingly viewed as a persistent social problem: in 1983, Kerwin Duinmeyer, a young Surinamese teenager, became the victim of the first post-war racist murder.

The Dutch Popular Union ('Nederlandse Volksunie', NVU), a party with national socialist affinity, had become more active, while a xenophobic party, the Center Party ('Centrum Partij,' CP) was founded and gained seats in national Parliament. After several years out of parliament, leader of the Center Party Johannes Janmaat returned to regain a parliamentary seat in 1989.

The early 1990s also witnessed an increase in racial violence. Due to the first Iraq War in 1990-1991, this violence increasingly targeted Muslims and mosques. From the early 2000s, the Netherlands witnessed a revival of violence, right extremist mobilisation and hate crime. Nationally and internationally major developments such as the 11th September 2001 terror attacks impacted the focus of these groups, who have since increasingly made Islam and Muslims their targets.

2.3.2 The Dutch alt-right

In parallel with the alt-right movement in the US, the Netherlands is one of several European countries which has seen the emergence of its own alt-right movement. The US movement began in 2011 when its founder Richard Spencer created the website alternativeright.com (later altright.com). Its primary aim was to reclaim the dominant status of 'whiteness' in US society (Hartzell, 2018:11) and to 'protect and promote the values of an idealized white European culture' (Mirrlees, 2018:51). The movement subsequently developed into a loosely related, trans-national group of libertarians, neo-conservatives, white nationalists, anti-Islam campaigners and neo-Nazis, couching its rhetoric in appeals to intellectualism in an attempt to lend the movement an air of legitimacy (Salazar, 2018). Identitarianism and anti-Leftism are particularly significant aspects of the movement. While there have been active attempts to distance the movement from white supremacy and reject racism and violence, some strands

and sympathisers promote these (Berger, 2018; Hartzell, 2018). Globally, the alt-right movement, or movements, are generally in favour of a white, culturally homogenous and racially pure Europe that preserves 'traditional' white European identity and culture. They oppose immigration, Islam, 'cultural Marxism', homosexuality and feminism, the latter three being associated with left-wing agendas. 'Cultural Marxism', originally a post-Cold War conspiracy theory about the spread of socialism from the ground up, is widely used by the alt-right to refer to a sinister social engineering agenda by the Left aimed at brainwashing the masses into socialism through education and the media (Mirrlees, 2018). The emphasis on anti-feminism, is a relatively new characteristic as far as right extremist perspectives in the Netherlands are concerned. A focus on masculinity, physical culture, training to fight and the use of violence have long been hallmarks of Nazism and various right-extremist groups. The new dimension is that the alt right movement opposes what it considers the feminisation of the western man. Together with homosexuality and immigration, feminism is considered a key threat to the central idea of a superior white race.

For the Dutch alt-right, violence is a recurrent topic, and the movement often frames itself and Europe more broadly as engaged in a cultural or ideological battle or war. Fighting is considered a natural, biologically determined tendency and presented as an important instrument to reach the objective of a racially pure ethno-state. Violence is not advocated in words alone, however. In the Netherlands, members organise training in fighting sports as a way to prepare themselves for a coming civil war. This is particularly advocated by the group Erkenbrand, who claim to be one of the main organisations of the Dutch alt-right (Sterkenburg, 2017). The Dutch alt-right largely imitates the US alt-right discourse in its style and vocabulary, using terms such as those outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Popular terms, and their meanings, as used in US and Dutch alt-right discourse.

'red pill'	• Referring to the moment one chooses to realise the truth; taken from *The Matrix* film franchise.
'pol'	• Politically correct
'normies'	• Average people
'snowflakes'	• Emotionally or mentally weak people who supposedly melt when insulted or feel pressured; i.e. young liberals.
'social justice warriors'	• Left-wing people who are overly focused on criticising others and protecting minority groups.

The movement is characterised by extensive use of online culture symbols and memes, such as the now iconic character 'Pepe the frog' (Woods and Hahner, 2019). Irony, trolling, straightforward provocative ideas and insulting language go together, making it hard to know what is meant as an argument, and what as a joke. Dutch alt-right groups and sympathisers are also well embedded in international networks of like-minded movements, with the various European new and alternative right-wing strands sharing similar viewpoints (McMahon, 2021).

2.3.3 Campaign oriented street movements

Campaign-oriented New Right groups in the Netherlands are involved in multiple activities. They engage in the dissemination of ideas and ideology, as well as recruitment both offline at conferences, meetings, parties; and online through websites, social media platforms and podcasts. They participate in rallies and protest actions, including the 'yellow vest' anti-establishment protest movement, anti-Muslim actions,

anti-'Antifa'[6] campaigns, and international solidarity campaigns.[7] Of the groups involved, Identitarian Resistance ('Identitair Verzet'), Resisting Right ('Rechts in Verzet'), and the Dutch branch of Pegida (an anti-Islamisation movement originating in Germany), are among the better known.

One specifically Dutch issue that mobilises considerable activism from a number of groups focuses on 'Black Pete,' the name used to refer to the depiction of Saint Nicholas' helper. During an annual 5 December ritual, actors dress up as Saint Nicholas and 'Black Pete' and give presents to children. Saint Nicholas is depicted as white and rides a white horse, whereas those dressed as 'Black Pete' paint their faces black and their lips bright red. They wear afro wigs, gold earrings, and colourful tights, and dance or perform tricks for the crowds. Critics see in 'Black Pete' another manifestation of the controversial and aggrieving practice of 'blackfacing,' whereby white skinned individuals paint their faces and provide a caricatural, degrading and subservient portrayal of black people (Pijl & Goulordava, 2014). The issue of 'Black Pete' has become particularly salient since the early 2010s, when public uproar began to surround the tradition (ibid). This intensified in 2015 when an activist group named 'Kick Out Black Pete' began to protest Saint Nicholas events (Donker, 2020). In response, various groups have organised counterrallies to block 'Kick Out Black Pete' access to the Saint Nicholas events, depicting the movement as yet another attack on Dutch culture (Hilhorst & Hermes, 2016). Some of these counterrally groups are of a New Right signature. For instance, Black Front ('Zwart Front') manifested in this context. Their name is the same as that of a fascist party that was founded in the Netherlands prior to the Second World War (Crienen, 2016).

Anti-Muslim activities are also high on the agenda of campaign-oriented New Right groups. These activities mainly target mosques: the Dutch section of Pegida's planned to organise a barbecue with pork meat in front of a mosque, while the Resisting Right left a decapitated puppet outside of a mosque. Whereas previously such discriminatory activities against mosques were carried out covertly and anonymously, in more recent years, groups are starting to proudly take ownership of such activities. Nonetheless, covert actions also continue, including a very serious arson attack against an Enschede mosque and its 30 attendees in 2016. The perpetrators were sentenced to up to four years each in prison for terrorism (NL Times, 2016) and were detained in the same units as Islamist prisoners. Although such violent acts of right-wing terrorism are exceptional in the Netherlands rather than a significant phenomenon, the glorification of anti-Islamist violence on the internet appears to be widespread.

2.4 Locating the milieu

We conducted the present research to obtain a better understanding of extremists and non-extremist attraction to the New Right in the Netherlands. To that effect, we approached young people who, in one way or another, were engaging with New Right political ideas and had chosen to affiliate with these ideas. This included those engaging with a range of strands associated with the Dutch New Right, from Neo-Nazi sympathisers to FvD party members. These individuals were not all part of one group or social circle. Rather they constituted a 'milieu' in the sense that they each participated in the New Right as a disparate movement in the Netherlands, in which the associated parties and groups increasingly interact, with significant crossover in ideas and members. Few respondents admitted to having radical ideas, although some did. In the researchers' eyes, quite a few were moderately radical, and some were quite radical in the sense of being against homosexuality, feminism, Muslims, immigration, the EU and the 'elites,' but support for violence across all respondents was limited.

[6] A prominent left-wing, anti-fascist/anti-racist protest movement.
[7] For example, in support of 'Tommy Robinson', a prominent right-wing figure who was briefly imprisoned in the UK.

3. Field Research

We conducted field research between November 2017 and January 2020. This section provides details of which data was used in the study and how this was collected and analysed. It also discusses issues of access to respondents and researcher-respondent relationships, gives details of ethical practice, and provides a socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set.

3.1 Data collection

For this study, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 young people, aged between 18 and 34 years old. We also conducted interviews about the respondents, two of which were with parents (in both cases, both father and mother were present), and one with an uncle. One interview was conducted with a woman who was older than the DARE project's definition of 'young people' and the participants in the main research group, but who participated in the milieu and had an interesting story to tell about her long-term engagement with right-wing extremism. There were 21 men and five women among the extended respondent set including parents, family, and the older respondent. In terms of the respondents comprising only the original target group, there were 18 men and two women. All interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis after obtaining informed written consent. Most interviews were conducted by two researchers, with a small proportion conducted by one. The first author of this report, Ineke van der Valk participated in all but two interview sessions. The third author, Mark Dechesne, conducted one interview and two student assistants (male and female) participated in thirteen interviews in total (five and eight respectively). The interviews took place at Leiden University, the homes of the respondents, or in public places such as hotels or cafes. The average length of the conversations was almost two and a half hours, and several interviews were conducted in more than one session. All interviews were voice-recorded, anonymised and transcribed. Table 1 provides an overview of the data sources used in the analysis.

Table 1: Overview of data sources

	Number	Total length or brief description (as appropriate)	Average length
Respondent memos	20	n/a	n/a
Audio interviews	20 (24[8])	2,752 min. (45h 52)	138 mins
Field diary entries (total)	3	Containing detailed description of three protest meetings: 1) a confrontation between Antifa and a group called 'stop Antifa terror', 3/11/2018; 2) a protest meeting of the 'Yellow vests', 1/12/2018; 3) the arrival of St Nicholas in The Hague, 17/11/2019.	n/a
Other data	Text Documents	2 newspaper articles on the identitarian movement and essays written by people close to the milieu, or respondents.	n/a

[8] Twenty interviews were conducted with young people within the target group, an additional four were conducted with parents etc. (see explanation above).

3.2 Access and researcher-respondent relations

Respondents for this study were recruited using several methods, including through existing researcher contacts; by approaching individuals at events; and through direct contact online. One of the researchers had contacts with alt-right sympathisers in the Netherlands and several respondents were recruited through her approaching these individuals. One respondent was approached during fieldwork at a rally, and access to two further respondents was facilitated by a journalist and a fellow researcher. As we experienced difficulty finding respondents, in a later phase, recruitment took place via social media. We investigated the online New Right sphere on platforms like Reddit, 4chan, Gab, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. In particular, public Facebook pages that were popular among the New Right were examined, including comments and likes on posts. We further followed discussions on social media after relevant events which drew attention and created heated online debate including the Christchurch mosque attack, a terrorist attack in Utrecht, and the evolving debate concerning a Salafist Islamic high school in Amsterdam. By following these debates, we could identify individuals engaged in the New Right milieu and could send direct messages to these users inviting them to participate. We obtained a number of positive responses to these online invitations.

Generally speaking, however, it was not easy to access the target group and to persuade potential respondents to cooperate with a project that does not immediately or obviously benefit them. The more extreme groups are, the harder it was to gain access to them. Some organisations more or less instructed their members not to work with DARE. This was sometimes related to the fact that the principal researcher is known for her research on the extreme right and Islamophobia. Other organisations did not allow outsiders to participate in their activities, usually after the publication of critical articles in the media where their extremist views were exposed. Sometimes distrust concerning DARE procedures played a role in their refusal to participate, primarily in relation to anonymisation procedures.

There were also occasions where participants were not concerned at all with these issues and even wanted to be mentioned by name. In general, the less extreme groups and individuals were often more accessible, which is reflected in our final participant group. Most, if not all, of the people we spoke with, were glad to have participated because they were able to express views that they often did not dare to express in their daily lives and which would likely create debate or controversy. They often appeared to enjoy talking about their ideas and frustrations and seemed pleased to receive attention, perhaps experiencing this as a legitimation of their viewpoints. Some told us they were happy to have the opportunity to express themselves on matters of concern to them. Interviews generally took place in a friendly atmosphere, and perhaps because most respondents did not openly express more extreme or violent views, researcher-respondent relations did not pose any particular barrier. As meetings and rallies do not take place very often, there were few occasions on which to join the respondents at such events. The centre of gravity was online. In addition to reports of rallies and meetings, some pictures, videos, memes and articles/or other pieces of text written by the respondents were collected as fieldwork and additional material.

3.3 Ethical practice

In order to ensure that respondents' consent was fully informed, a Dutch version of the DARE project respondent information sheet, which included the project objectives, background and research process, was provided to each respondent before the interview. A verbal explanation was also given at the start of the interview, followed by a discussion to ensure the implications of participation were understood. Respondents were provided a Dutch translation of the DARE consent form, and all respondents provided consent. Rather than assign pseudonyms to respondents, we decided to number them. Thus, throughout Section 4, respondents are referred to as, for example, R1, R2 etc.

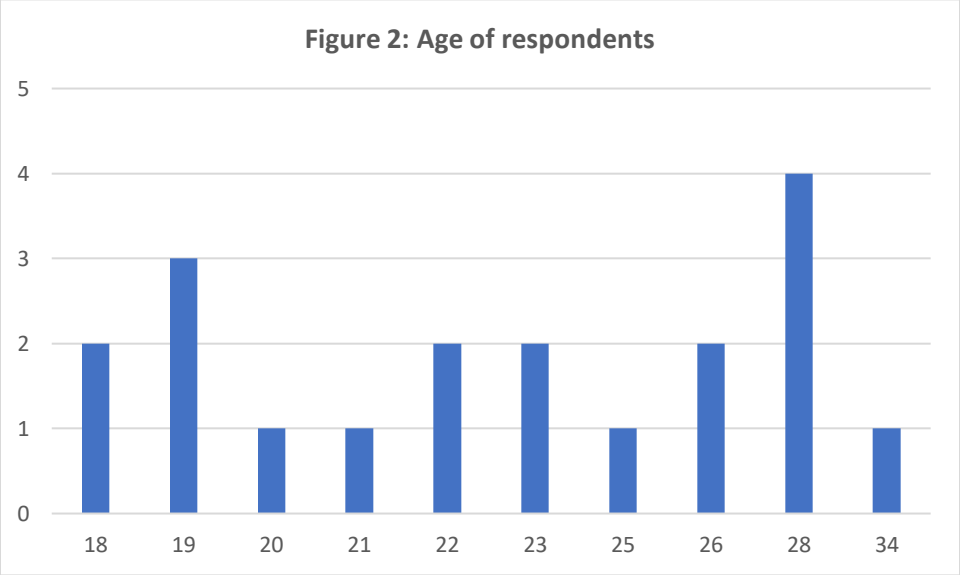
3.4 Data analysis

The Dutch team followed the agreed data analysis procedures as outlined in the General Introduction to this series of reports (Pilkington & Vestel, 2021). All materials were transcribed in Dutch and entered into NVivo. The materials were coded in line with the predetermined coding scheme (see General Introduction). Taken together, 29 level two nodes and 203 level one nodes were used for data analysis. Three level two nodes were added to the 26 nodes of the skeleton coding tree: 'organisations/movements and strands', 'deradicalisation' and 'personal experiences with violence'. These were added because they represent topics that frequently came up in our conversations with respondents. Since several respondents had experienced phases of radicalisation and deradicalisation, they often reflected upon both processes.

3.5 Socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set

As noted in 3.1, the ages of the 20 young people we interviewed ranged from 18 to 34, with the majority in their twenties; two were younger than 20 and three were older than 30. Of the larger respondent group of 26 individuals, five were female and the rest male.

Figure 2 shows the age distribution of respondents. The ages of two respondents are missing as they are unknown.



Given the occupations of their parents, most respondents could be judged to be from middle class backgrounds. One appeared to be from an upper-class background and a handful were from working class families. The majority were still in education at the time of the research, with most studying applied science topics at university. Two respondents had not completed secondary school, having dropped out. Four respondents were working full-time, two as self-employed professionals (one in health care and the other in ICT), one in education and one in unskilled labour. Two respondents were unemployed; one stayed in a supported living facility and engaged in voluntary work every now and then. Most of the respondents who were studying also worked in part time unskilled jobs to make ends meet, as the funding they received from parents and state was insufficient. Figures 3 and 4 provide an overview of the educational background and employment status of respondents. Figure 4 depicts employment status. This Figure shows the category of 'Student', which includes those respondents who only spend time on their study and are not part-time employed. The category of 'In part-time employment' includes students who are working in part-time employment.

Figure 3: Educational Background

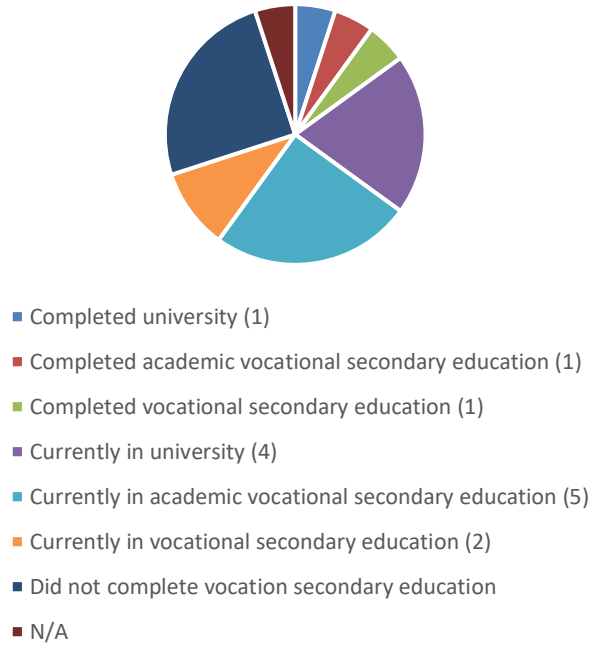
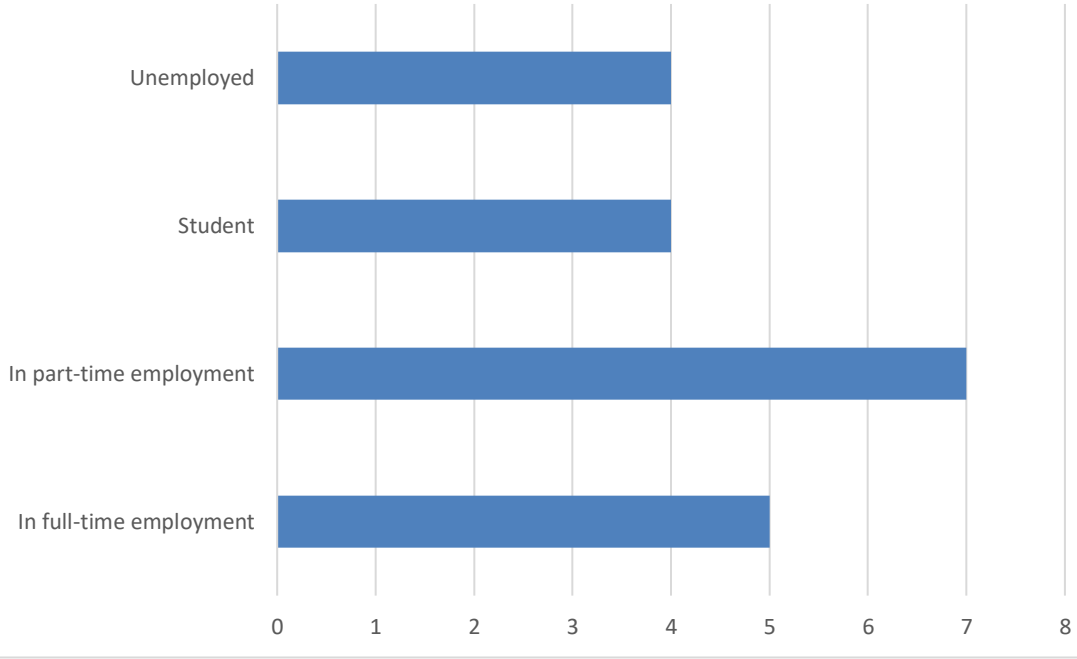
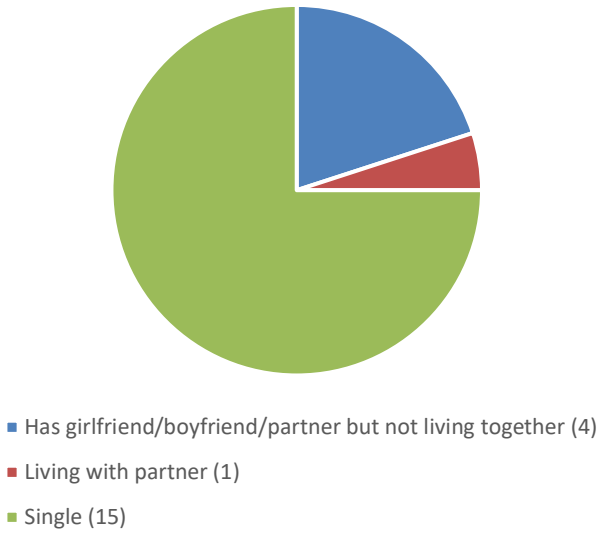


Figure 4: Employment Status



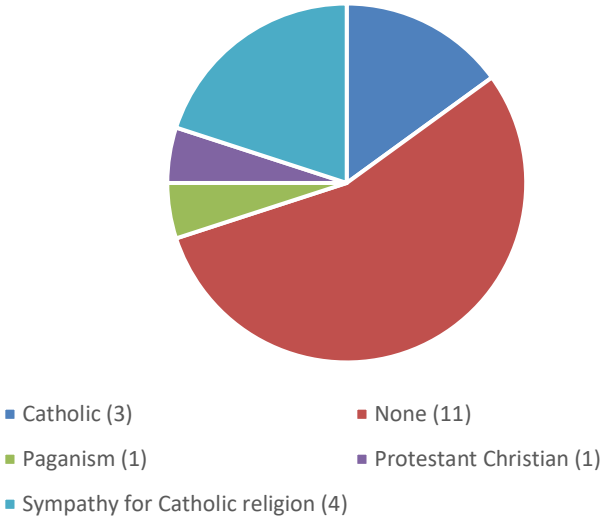
Most respondents were single, as outlined in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Relationship status

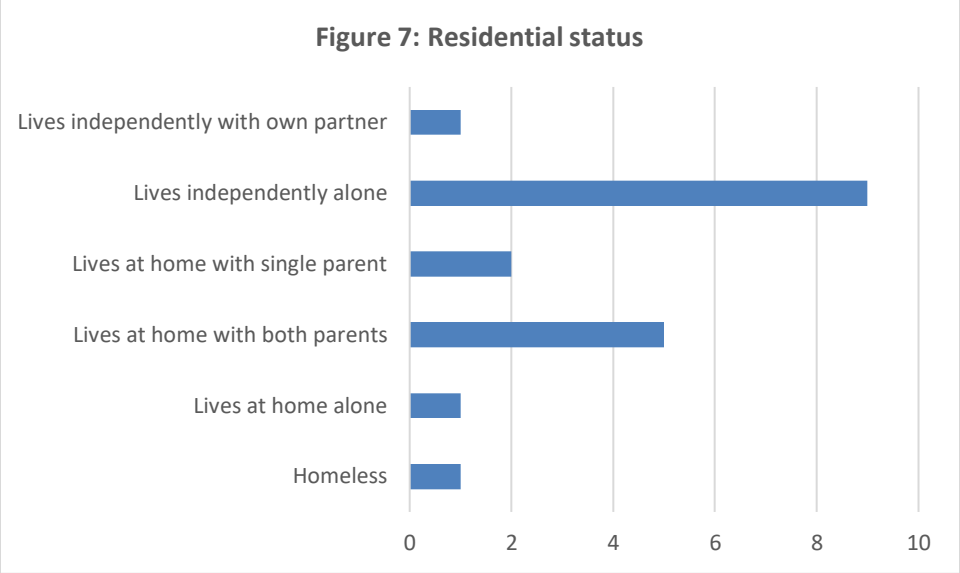


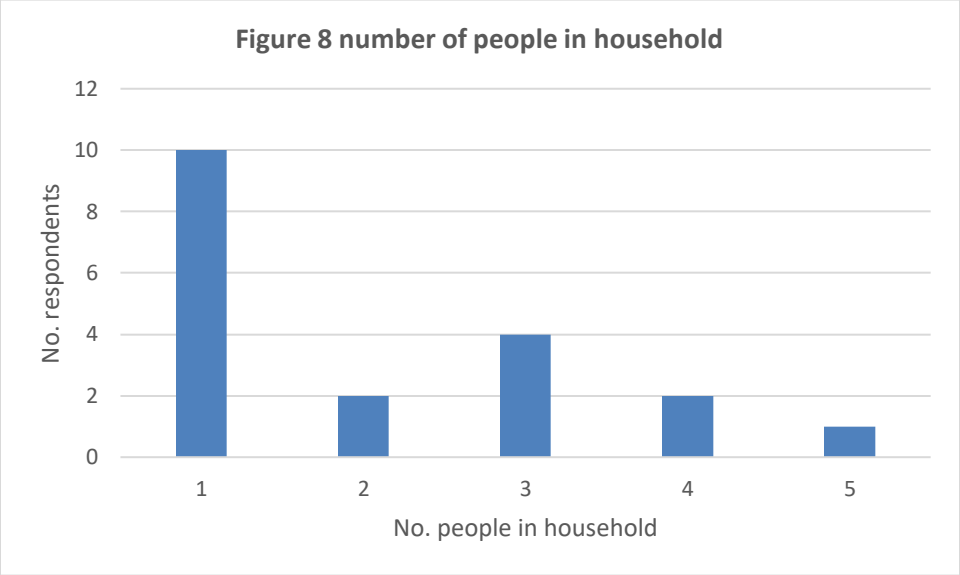
Interestingly, many respondents said that they had no religion, although a significant number said they were Christian (either Catholic or Protestant). Figure 6 shows the religious affiliation of those respondents who disclosed this during interviews.

Figure 6: Religion



Finally, Figures 7 and 8 give the residential status of the respondents and who they lived with.





The respondents were generally very active on the internet and much less so offline, although some participated in rallies or in public fora. Two respondents had been in prison in relation to their extremist views and activities. An overview of the demographic characteristics of each respondent is also provided in Appendix 7.1.

4. Key Findings

This section outlines our key research findings. We first discuss our respondents' own descriptions of their ideology, as this is important for understanding their engagement with the milieu. We then consider their interpretations of the labels 'radical' and 'extremist' and how they understood these to relate to their own ideology and the ideologies of others. Next, we turn to the personal and emotional factors that were salient in respondents' trajectories, including around difficult relationships with friends and family, and issues of mental health, before looking at respondents' accounts of relevant online and offline interactions

within and outside the milieu. In the final section, we consider the role of gender in respondents' engagement in the milieu, both in terms of gendered experiences and attitudes towards gender.

4.1 The ideology motivating respondents' engagement with the New Right

Here, we outline the key elements of the worldview described by respondents in order to understand what political grievances or ideas motivated their engagement with the New Right. As we will see below, respondents' concerns broadly centred on identity, immigration, multiculturalism and protecting Dutch or European values. While participants did not emphasise their own Dutch national identity, they perceived a threat to Dutch society (and its superior European cultural values) emanating from Islam as well as from the 'cultural Marxist' agenda of the Left. The latter was perceived as deliberately, or inadvertently, aiding Islamisation or the erosion of Dutch culture through multiculturalism. At times a threat was perceived also from the EU which was seen as robbing countries of their freedom to be sovereign nations. Thus, the ideology or worldview subscribed to by respondents reflected a nativist, racialised and ethnocentric understanding of national belonging, Islamophobic attitudes, and the articulation of these through ideas sometimes borrowed from the alt-right.

4.1.1 A civilisational identity under threat

As noted above, respondents' engagement with the New Right was motivated by a perceived threat from Islam and the Left. What respondents seemed to articulate as the most salient object under threat were European cultural values, understood as civilisational achievements that the West had earned: democracy, freedom and equality. This mirrors Brubaker's (2017) argument that Northern and Western European 'populisms' have shifted their focus from a national to a civilisational threat due to the perceived civilisational threat posed by Islam. For our respondents, however, this was complexly interlinked with perceived threats to Dutch national culture and national sovereignty, traditional values around issues such as gender, and their own status and rights as the Dutch 'indigenous' majority. Many respondents were pessimistic and the majority foresaw a major crisis. They spoke in terms of civil war or war in general, referring to tensions, escalation, polarisation, demise, expected tipping points, and a fear that things were getting out of control. The respondents particularly feared the demise of the Western world, of Europe in particular (as it is currently 'too soft' as R14 put it) and of white people. The responsibility for this scenario of doom is implicitly or explicitly attributed to Muslims, refugees and the Left. In this sub-section, we examine the values and ideals that participants sought to protect.

Most respondents' senses of identity were found to be weakly tied to nationality or ethnicity, if at all. In our conversations, ethnic identity was more likely to be brought up by respondents from mixed or immigrant backgrounds than by those from a native Dutch background, while interviewees from non-Western regions of the Netherlands emphasised their regional identities more than those from the West. In contrast, respondents from the Netherlands' Western areas (particularly the provinces of North and South Holland where the three largest cities – Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague – are located) emphasise their political identity, or their identity as individuals. Only R19 referred to his identity as European.

Some respondents, despite their views about multiculturalism and Islam, emphasised a colour-blind ideology similar to that commonly found in cultural racism and neoliberal individualism (Lentin, 2014). R13 was born and raised in a multicultural neighbourhood. He said he felt that his background had made him a better person than if he had grown up in an all-white area. He told us he considered people on an individual basis and did not judge them based on their group membership as he felt other people were inclined to do:

> You know, I am white, I am a Dutchman. But I am also dangerous, you know. I can also murder someone if necessary. I have always been aggressive and now I have learned so much. I think

> that it helps. There is a distinction [...] I can get along with everyone you know as long as you respect each other, Polish, Turkish, Moroccans, I don't care, you know. (R13)

However, a lack of nationalism was sometimes problematised and national pride valued. R14, who was from a mixed background (third generation) told us that although he did not feel like he really belonged to either the nationality of his father or his mother, he feels he is from 'the Dutch race.' In the interview, however, he sometimes contradicted himself by saying he identified himself according to his father's ethnic background:

> R14: […] perhaps the difference is that the Dutch are not nationalistic and the people from [my father's country] are, […] it is something to be proud of and I regret that the Dutch don't have it a bit more. I do not mean the football hooligans but people who are proud of their country [...] although I sympathise with certain ideas of fascism just as some ideas of National Socialism appeal to me.
>
> INT: Can you tell which ideas?
>
> R14: National pride. The idea that you put your own country first.

Similarly, R7 primarily attributed group identity to Muslims rather than to his own ethnic group,. For him, a feeling of belonging to a group culture or group identity was stronger in Islam:

> That makes them stronger and resilient. The question is: do you want to join that group feeling? I do not feel, well I am not happy with that. Their group feeling and community awareness as such is positive. But because they have a very strong feeling of identity and we haven't [...] Islam becomes more dominant. That leads to polarisation between left and right, also between Antifa and Erkenbrand. That leads to the situation with Islam as a rejoicing third in the conflict between left and right. I perceive it as a threatening presence. We have seen it with the latest knife attack. […] A strong Identitarian movement is also what we want as a counterbalance. A movement that defines what it means to be Dutch, and thus provides an identity. For example, some things you are not. They find for example that women may go on the street in burqa. We do not want that. One may also define identity on the basis of what one is not. (R7)

R12 felt irritated when people in his neighbourhood spoke in a denigrating way about the Dutch. He had been raised in accordance with his Surinamese background but 'with acceptance of the Netherlands, one of the best countries to grow up in.' Being black, he admitted that identifying as right-wing was 'an often unexpected combination.' He pointed to the confusion that this intersection generated, 'for example leftist people who are of the opinion that I cannot be right wing [...] or right wing people who are happier that I am right wing than if I had been white.' (R12)

Overall, we see that many of our respondents perceived group-based identity to be lacking in the Netherlands. This collective identity, which was attributed to other groups and nations, was often considered a strength, and its lack in the Netherlands lamented. To the extent that others were basing their identity on a collective while, the Dutch were not, the Netherlands was considered at risk of being overrun. Some, like R15, feared that white skinned people would become a minority in the Netherlands. What was at stake if the Netherlands was lost to other ethnic and cultural groups was the Enlightenment-type European values that respondents felt had been hard won in Western Europe – freedom, democracy and equality – as well as 'decent' values like respect. This was reflected in R3's concern that the cherished values and norms of the sixties were at stake:

> In the sixties those people built our norms and values, it is now time to defend them and then the people who built our norms or values don't do that. And those who do [defend them]

> they call them extremists, like me. But really, I only defend the norms and values that became commonly accepted in the sixties. In fact, typical liberal, social ideals. (R3)

On a personal level, some of the respondents' reflections indicated a desire for order, discipline, and social decency, which for some was combined with a desire for national pride. R9 identified herself as Western, with a focus on individualism, and personal growth and development. R3 stressed that it was important to treat others as you want to be treated yourself, with R20 also insisting that the most important thing is to treat people with respect, to be polite and not to shout at others. In accordance with Baudet's own coinage of the term *oikophobia* (fear of the home, meant to denote a self-loathing supposedly promoted by the Left) (Faber, 2018), R4 pleads for more love of the self, but also living according to the Ten Commandments. In line with the intellectualism characteristic of the New Right, for R5, critical thinking was seen as crucial, while R8 claimed to live by the advice of Jordan Peterson: Clean your own room first before changing the world.

Many respondents espoused freedom as their greatest ideal and expressed libertarian views. They unanimously attached great importance to freedom of opinion and freedom of speech, warning against the suppression of this freedom or the application of double standards between left (or pro-Islam) and right-wing views. They criticised recent increased efforts by government and social media companies to censor certain content online, viewing this as curbing freedom of expression and as an example of double standards. As R14 commented, 'certain rightist opinions are targeted while nothing is done against illegal scan links, bots and terrorist pages'. Respondents generally called for more space for freedom of opinion, with the only limits to this freedom being where this violated the law. They maintained that they did not condone the incitement of hatred and did not see expressing criticisms of Islam or immigration as constituting such incitement.

Some respondents also expressed more broad libertarian views consistent with a 'small government' right-wing political attitude (Betz, 1993). They called for a reduction of state power to just the core task of security and that there should be no state interference in education and health care. R12 wanted to be freed from the Dutch state and for taxation to be reduced. He was convinced that if capitalism was really given free reign, we would be surprised what this would bring compared to the current situation in which 'people are subjugated by states.' R7 said he wanted power to be decentralised, with a greater mandate for local authorities. He identified a disconnect between the aspirations of politicians and more localised concerns generally held by the 'common man', reflecting the populist stance taken by New Right parties and politicians (Akkerman et al., 2017). Some respondents also called for the introduction of the right to own and carry firearms.

While espousing freedom as a concept, the freedoms respondents supported had their limits, and mainly concerned their political freedom as supporters of the New Right. When it came to Islam and Muslims (attitudes towards which we will address in a coming sub-section), more restrictions were sometimes advocated. These included restrictions on freedom of religion, in particular for Islamic practice, the closure of mosques and the withdrawal of subsidies for schools based on religious denominations.

Democracy was considered by some participants as the best (available) option to achieving the freedoms they advocated. A focus on democracy is unsurprising given the centrality of 'the people' and their sovereign mandate to populist discourse. Indeed, appeals to democracy are of great utility to populism; as De Genova (2018: 359) borrowing from the work of Laclau (2005) asserts, 'That elementary grammar that unites the entire discursive field of bourgeois democracy as such [...] is populism [...]'. Several respondents felt that the current democratic system was old-fashioned and needed to be improved or reformed. They referred to the introduction of referendums, as advocated by Baudet (see above), saying this would represent an important step towards establishing a more direct democracy, which was preferable. A significant share of participants expressed indignation because they felt their voices and opinions are not heard by politicians. They felt that politicians do not listen to ordinary citizens. This lack

of attendance to 'the people' was particularly salient where the topics of immigration and refugees were concerned.

At the same time, there was a minority among our interviewees who explicitly rejected democracy, with some citing National Socialism as their most ideal political system. One respondent, who had deradicalized by the time the fieldwork was conducted, told us he had adhered to National Socialism during his radical period. For R6, there was 'one absolute truth. Democracy is a falsehood. If the only goals in life are power and money, we will end up with oceans full of plastic and slavery. While every human being can find perfect love.' Another respondent, who previously identified as fascist and recently converted to Catholicism, said he was in favour of abolishing democracy. In his view, democracy steers people away from the truth. Instead, he called for the introduction of an absolute Christian monarchy. However, he was the only respondent to plead for a political role of religion. Other respondents who stated a religious affiliation believed religion was important to give meaning to society, but did not advocate that it play a political role.

According to Fukuyama (2020), the past decades have witnessed a shift from a focus on economic concerns to social ones, giving rise to identity politics, and with it, a new left-right divide:

> […] the Left focuses less on creating broad economic equality and more on promoting the interests of a wide variety of marginalised groups, such as ethnic minorities, immigrants and refugees, women, and LGBT people. The Right, meanwhile, has redefined its core mission as the patriotic protection of traditional national identity, which is often explicitly connected to race, ethnicity, or religion.

In this assessment, Fukuyama attributes values such as freedom to the Left and characterises the Right as authoritarian. Yet such an assessment does not appear to apply to the New Right. Rather than a radical shift away from the notion of freedom, the New Right has integrated the universal appeal of the ideals of democracy and freedom into its calls for the preservation of national identity and conservative values. In many ways, this is what differentiates New Right groups, such as the alt-right, from the traditional extreme right with their focus on authoritarianism and violence. It also gives the New Right the opportunity to appeal to a broader audience, particularly young people. The freedom of opinion and of speech espoused by respondents here and by the New Right more broadly does not extend to the Left or to Muslims: it is incompatible with demands for a culturally homogenous nation and the preservation of traditional gender values, as we will see in the coming sub-sections. However, it provides a legitimate-sounding discourse with which to make their demands and to position themselves as the victims of an injustice.

The attacks on 11 September 2001 were a particular turning point for the New Right and its agenda around freedom. When the then US President George W. Bush[9] voiced the widely publicised assertion that 'our very freedom is under attack', 'freedom' became the defining element of traditional national identity. He emphasised that 'America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world'. While 'freedom' had long been an integral element of American national discourse, the soon-to-be international 'War on Terror' transformed this from a nationalist to a civilisational issue. The attack's perpetrators, and for a significant share of the population, the political Islam (Islamism) that the perpetrators claimed to represent, came to be considered the polar opposites of the 'free world'. Anti-Islamism, which was already emerging in the 1990s in response to the fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie, gained momentum after '9/11' as the idea that it is a patriotic duty to defend one's country and its tradition of freedom against terrorist oppressors, which at the time was Islamic fundamentalism. Seen from this angle, the New Right, combining what they understand as patriotic protection of traditional national identity with the defence of 'freedom' and connecting this notion of freedom to ethnicity and religion, is intrinsically tied to anti-Islamism. In turn, the anti-Islamist

[9] https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html

sentiment that was sparked by the 9/11 attacks fuelled interest and support for the New Right globally, as reflected in our respondents' worldview.

Another important, but threatened, value espoused by respondents was equality. Injustice related to equality was a persistent theme throughout our interviews. In line with a libertarian stance, equality of opportunity was important to respondents, yet equality of outcomes was not; differences, for instance between men and women or natives and immigrants, were seen as natural thus positioning affirmative action as a form of social engineering. Equality before the law was emphasised and the same double standards respondents saw as applied in relation to freedom of speech were perceived to be at play here. Politicians, the government, judges, police and the media were accused of applying double standards at the expense of their 'own population' and in favour of immigrants, refugees and the Left (versus the Right). The media and journalists were criticised for being more political activists than objective journalists. In respondents' accounts, this was often about perceived injustice than personal experiences of unfair treatment and included the notion of unequal or inadequate political representation for their views. This notion of 'reverse racism' has long been present in anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalism arguments (Beider, 2015; Hewitt, 2005) being a common device of the alt-right (Greene, 2019).

This sense of unfairness or double standards was articulated by respondents in their comments about the treatment of refugees. R17 commented on an activist group called 'We are here', which is made up of refugees who have been declined residential status and are openly protesting their living conditions: 'when you see those groups like "We are here", if for example I occupy a building tomorrow, I will be beaten by the police. But they are allowed to stay.' R10 echoed this: 'bogus refugees get all sorts of things while my mother-in-law gets much less. It means something is not right.'

The reflections of R3 regarding the commemoration of the victims of 11th September 2001 at school when he was a teenager also sheds light on this. He told us that pupils with an immigrant background were laughing and pointing at him, and whistling from outside the school. This was upsetting, and the fact that teachers did nothing to stop it added insult to injury. The interviewer asked R3 whether he felt attacked too, and he responded:

> Yes, absolutely. Our way of life, our western society. It became worse when people said that it was our fault. It was turned upside down. The people themselves were blamed, or at least the government or the people who live there. That made me think further about it […]. For me it was clear that it were a bunch of fools who had done it. But it was condoned from a political point of view. (R3)

This comment demonstrates the intimate link between the discourse of double standards and that of civilisational threat. R3 also felt he was called to action after Geert Wilders publicly called for there to be less Moroccans in the Netherlands. The mayor together with numerous citizens reported Wilders to the police, which R3 found to be a hypocritical act. On his own, he confronted 400 people with a flag on which he had written 'Geert, thanks.' He recalls: 'I was threatened and I was surrounded by policemen who had to protect me. That was the beginning.' When the interviewer asked about his feelings at that time, he answered that he felt 'absolute despair,' revealing the visceral emotional reaction that such a sense of injustice can provoke.

R3 further perceived unequal reactions by authorities towards the Left and the Right, where double standards are applied as common practice. He mentioned that former Leftist activists, even those who had been convicted for serious offenses, are still able to go on to hold public office. Similarly, R19 said she felt that the Left was much more violent and aggressive than the Right, painting them as instigators: 'if Antifa had not attacked us, my friend wouldn't have been in jail'. Although she disapproved of the Right's throwing stones through windows, she felt that the authorities were much more lenient when the Left engaged in comparable activities.

In sum, our respondents were motivated to engage with the New Right by a sense that their rights, identity or values as Dutch or European were under threat. Values they deemed to be at stake included freedom, democracy, equality and common decency. They frequently painted themselves as members of a group who were experiencing injustice at the hands of left-leaning authorities, including the consequences of immigration. The following sections discuss their attitudes towards some of the actors and ideas perceived as perpetrating this threat.

4.1.2 Migration and Islam as threat

Multicultural society was the primary source of concern for our respondents. Almost all respondents conceived of culture as a homogenous, static entity that was separated from other cultures along ethnic, national and religious lines. Respondents generally told us that they did not reject other cultures per se – they simply did not want people from these cultures to come to the Netherlands. As noted above, they felt that European or Western 'white' culture was under threat from immigration, specifically Muslim domination. For instance, R8 condoned limiting ethnic heterogeneity:

> […] there are people who say: I prefer that the Netherlands does not get browner than it is already is. I think that is not a strange position. A Tunisian may have that opinion, a Chinese about China, and a Zimbabwean about Zimbabwe. That, demographically, a country remains as it is. I think that people are entitled to that opinion. It is weird to say: those other barbarians may be racist, but we are too good for it. This line of thinking is a paradoxical form of racism, western paternalism. I say: no, we are humans, we have feelings of group identity. (R8)

Such a representation of inter-group antagonism as human nature has recently been given new legitimacy by public intellectuals like David Goodhart and Eric Kaufmann. This racialist logic draws a disingenuous distinction between racism and 'racial self-interest', claiming that favouring one group at the expense of others should not be condemned as racist, based on the narrowest definition of racism (Gillborn, 2019). This naturalises the existence of widespread structural inequalities and racial stratification (Louis, 2020). As R17 commented, 'it is difficult for others to adapt [to the Netherlands], clashes occur.'

Stricter immigration policies or policies that put a stop to immigration altogether were high on the agenda. Most respondents rejected mass immigration, while a few said they were not against all immigration but wanted to end 'open border' immigration policies. Moreover, they wanted policies on immigration to be more transparent and unambiguous; for border walls to be built; and for the introduction of a points-based immigration system following Australia's example. They called for refugees to be received by countries within their region rather than in the Netherlands. Many respondents directly associated immigration with Muslims, which fuelled their opposition to immigration.

R14 identified a change in immigration patterns, saying that immigrants of his grandparents' generation came for work, while nowadays immigrants did not want to work but rather tried to claim their host country as their own. He also related this shift to changes in the role of women. Nowadays, he argued, women wanted to have a career, got divorced more often, and were, in his view, extreme feminists. For him, , all of this resulted in people no longer having identity and society having become overrun with homosexuals, drugs, and prostitution. He felt that the way in which men were no longer able to fulfil their protective role was enabling Islam to take over. R14 also felt that countering immigration was equivalent to preventing terrorism.

This was indicative of the way in which within their opposition to cultural heterogeneity the respondents rejected Islam in particular. For instance, R18 told us that during his radical involvement he had aspired for a white continent, but primarily that Muslims should have to leave, and Islam should be forbidden. Respondents perceived Islam as antithetical to Dutch culture, which they saw as characterised by freedom and, ironically, tolerance. Very few respondents expressed positive evaluations of Muslim culture. Islam

was deemed expansionist, strongly masculine, hierarchical, oppressive to women, intolerant, promoting segregation, and backward or unable to innovate. Respondents attributed to Muslim immigrants a lack of adaptation or integration into Dutch society. This is consistent with Leonie Jackson's (2018: 14) observation that in increasingly pervasive Islamophobic ideology, 'Muslims are the living bearers of an immutable "Islamic culture", which conditions their psychology, behaviour and actions in a fundamentally different way to members of other cultures', rendering tension the inevitable result of mixing.

There was a general interest among interviewees in Islam. Quite a few had actively sought information about Islam, mostly online, and Wikipedia was described as a widely used source of information. Several anti-Islam activists such as Geert Wilders were mentioned as sources of knowledge, as were Robert Spencer from Jihad Watch, Maajid Nawaz, an activist and former extremist now working for the counter-extremism think tank the Quilliam Foundation, and Sam Harris, an outspoken and influential American intellectual with a critical view of Islam. Several respondents said they had read the Koran, fully or partially, but showed comparatively less interest in thoroughly studying Christianity, which some of them said they learned about through the Bible, YouTube or by attending church.

Islam was characterised as violent, and several respondents compared Islam to Christianity saying that Islam was more dangerous. R16 argued that Islam legitimatised the use of violence in order to protect the religion. In his view, violence was inherently tied to Islam. A similar attitude was also reflected in R7's above observations that a sense of group culture or group identity was stronger in Islam, following which he commented:

> […] because they have a very strong feeling of identity and we haven't […] Islam becomes dominant. That leads to polarisation between left and right […]. That leads to the situation with Islam as a rejoicing third. I perceive it as a threatening presence. We have seen it with the latest knife attack. (R7)

R3 observes: 'I do not see any other culture that celebrates the death of people'. In this view not only is Islam deemed violent and threatening, but divisions or polarisation in society between Left and Right were seen to contribute to Islamisation or the dominance of Islam over Dutch culture. R7 also felt that terrorist acts committed by Muslims were downplayed by the authorities. Referring to the notion of double standards described above, he said he wondered what the reaction would be if such an act was committed by a Christian.

Comments on Islam and Muslims often focused on the position of women. R4 said that Islam was 90% barbarian and backward and only 10% good. The good aspects he listed were ideas about peace, opposing interest on loans, and supporting the death penalty. He summarised the bad characteristics of Islam as follows:

> The bad side of Islam is the oppression of women. As a woman, you are not a full human being. You cannot get a divorce. Your husband is allowed to beat you. To get a divorce as a woman, you need a certain number of people to support you. Forced marriages may occur from 12 years old onwards, female circumcision, in Saudi-Arabia women were not allowed to drive cars. The oppression also holds for men, apostasy may be punished with the death penalty, and there is hate towards Jewish people. (R4)

This reflects a recent trend in which anti-Islam movements frame their opposition to Islam as the defence of secular and liberal values including feminism and women's rights (Rhodes & Hall, 2020: 288) and support for Jewish minorities (Burke, 2018). These frames draw on a more mainstream attitude towards Islam; as Goldberg (2006: 345) notes, Islam is understood in Europe as lacking freedom, civility and 'equal respect for women and gay people'. However, such claims have been criticised as imperialist and paternalistic (Mondon & Winter, 2017). Brubaker describes the purported progressiveness of the radical right as 'strikingly contradictory' given that its form of 'liberalism' is also 'deeply illiberal' (2017a: 1210).

Additionally, several held the view that Islam was cruel to children. R12 attributed this to religion more broadly saying he was against circumcision and taking children to church or mosque. In his view, adults should not impose religion on their children, and people should be able to decide for themselves, once adults, whether or not to be circumcised. Once again, there is a link to liberalist values and the defence of freedom.

4.1.3 Left-wing agenda as threat

As alluded to above, our respondents not only saw immigrants or Muslims as a threat, but linked this to the promotion of multiculturalism and minority rights agendas by the Left and those in power. This was often articulated through conspiracy theories such as the deliberate organised mixing of races by 'cultural Marxism' and the 'Kalergi Plan', in addition to Camus' idea of white genocide. These theories bring together the Left and Muslims/Islam as ideological opponents or outright political enemies.

'Cultural Marxism' (see above) was the term used to describe the Left's ideology as well as a perceived agenda to socially engineer a society where people would cooperate with multiculturalism without questioning it. R19 outlines her understanding of 'cultural Marxism' at length:

> R19: Why is it the fault of politics? Then I come back to Marxism and communism. Central to Marxism is that the ruling citizens, in the Netherlands white people, are in fact controlled by another group. In order to get a fully grey mass of people who are all the same. Do you understand? [Respondent shows a video segment she says can explain better what she means] […] I am convinced that cultural Marxism is the new communism, a descendent of communism. It dominates politics much more than we realise. It has to do with the process of normalisation. Normalisation of questioning everything. Not leaving things as they are.
>
> INT: Also that people should stay in their own places?
>
> R19: Yes, exactly to prevent a culture clash and work together in order to have positive cooperation. Because to be honest most quarrels and clinches, nine out of ten, between countries are about culture or religion. I do not mean to say that no Muslims should live here, when they identify with Dutch culture [...] they are welcome.

Thus, interpretations of 'cultural Marxism' shifts the blame for the civilisational threat described above from immigrants or Muslims themselves to those in power involved in a conspiracy to promote cultural mixing and even Islamisation. The Left were accused of having 'sold our country', as R18 recalled being told by friends, or wanting to have refugees in the country with the intent to mix them with the white skinned population.

R8 attributed blame for the actions of the New Right in the Netherlands to the actions of the Left and Islam combined:

> […] so I think the radical right in the Netherlands is not very strong. That it is a reaction to the Left. There is Islam as a factor, there is the Left and they influence each other. The right reacts to that and subsequently it gets its own dynamic. Just like fascism and communism. (R8)

He concluded that the fascism of the Left, that is communism, had universal potential to encourage the Left to kill many more people, including their own. This idea of harming one's own is reminiscent of Baudet's coined *oikophobia* (see above), which was attributed to the Left's promotion of outside cultures at the expense of 'native' culture. R4 considered self-hatred a prominent issue in Dutch culture and associated this with pop culture and fast food restaurants.

The anti-fascist action group Antifa was depicted by numerous respondents as the militant manifestation of 'cultural Marxism', compared by some with terrorists and referred to as an analogous 'vegan IS.' Many respondents accused them of violence and intimidating actions or behaviour. In line with the depiction of the Left in general, they were also represented as hypocrites and simultaneously aggressive and weak.

R8 was particularly emphatic about Antifa and called them 'cowards, they do not have real weapons […] the extreme right does not use face coverings [during demonstrations or street activities], the extreme left does. I know who the cowards are and who is the bigger threat. If you anonymise yourself that is not ok.' He continued:

> Ku Klux Klan is a hate organisation but not a terrorist organisation for example. They do not act, only sometimes a march, that is all. There are only 1,000 members while Antifa is able to mobilise 10,000 people [...] and they bring weapons along and cover themselves [...] there are not many rightist riots, Chemnitz and the rally for Tommy Robinson were not violent. If Antifa appears, they provoke and then it ends in violence, that is true. (R8)

R11 was confrontational in his depiction of Antifa as the enemy: 'When Antifa goes, I go there. To see what happens. When I pass by, I try to say something.' R9 was also very much against Antifa, but appeared to understand them as taken in by ideology:

> […] that is a dangerous group because they use violence, just like Volkert van der G, [Pim Fortuyn's murderer] who thought he had shot a new dictator [...] if he [Fortuyn] is depicted as such they really begin to think that they do the right thing. (R9)

Alongside the Left, the European Union (EU) was believed unable or unwilling to address the challenges associated with immigration. We registered strong negative sentiment against the EU; a large majority was outright against the EU while only one interviewee said he was pro-EU. The EU was considered undemocratic, too big, and as depriving nations of their sovereignty. Several interviewees said they were in favour of some form of cooperation between European countries, but not in its current form. Most of our respondents thought decisions should be taken on a national level, and not on EU level.

A small number of respondents extended the range of ideological enemies to include LGBT individuals, and R 6 related this to left-wing or progressive ideas like feminism:

> R6: I have a huge aversion to extreme LGBT or whatever they are called, and their excesses. It is disgusting, how they behave [...] that holds also for radical feminists and Antifa [...]
>
> INT: What do you think about transgenderism?
>
> R6: I disapprove of that too. Honestly, I feel compassion for, I pity [...] those people; I do not only see them as losers, they are sick in my view [...] that they […] their own bodies [...] I find it depressing.
>
> INT: Is homosexuality also a disease?
>
> R6: No. it is both biologically and socially determined, both.
>
> INT: what about other forms of relationships?
>
> R6: I disapprove also of polyamory.

In interviews with respondents we found a variety of conspiracy theories that not only represented the more extreme forms that these worldviews could take, but also reflected participants' sense that political events were being orchestrated behind closed doors and their democratic rights subverted. These included the idea that the US state was behind the 9/11 attacks; that Jews or Muslims were conspiring to dominate the world and rid it of Christian norms and values; and the idea that online pornography was being deliberately used to prevent men from having successful relationships with women in the real world. Some conspiracy theories were more widespread than others, exemplified by claims made in the 'Kalergi Plan' that the mixing of races in Europe is being deliberately orchestrated, and Camus' idea of white genocide. Others were focused on specific events; for instance, R17 thought that Notre Dame in Paris had been deliberately set alight in 2019, pointing to hateful reactions to the event by Muslim people.

This respondent was also one of several who felt that the Illuminati were striving for a concentration of power on the European level.

4.1.4 Antisemitism and Jews as threat

As noted above, one of the criticisms of Islam involved its perceived treatment of Judaism and Jewish people. Yet not all respondents were concerned with the treatment of Jewish people by Muslims: several held explicitly negative views of Jewish people.

Several interviewees elaborated on the supposedly powerful position of Jewish people in society. R11 thought that the global elite – mostly Jews among them – wanted to normalise paedophilia: 'I even believe that the world leaders do something with children, murder rituals.' R15 pointed to the power held by the Rothschild family and to the position of Jews in the media in the US. Although he did not particularly care, he stated that statistically it was strange, and expected that this would be increasingly problematised by Dutch youth. He researched the situation in the Netherlands, and pointed to nepotism as the probable cause. He commented:

> […] then you see that the boss of the NPO [the Dutch Netherlands Public Broadcasting company] accidentally happens to be a Jewish woman. I don't mind, but statistically it is improbable. A very small group in the Netherlands, and nevertheless in those positions. You see it in politics, for example Lodewijk Asscher, Job Cohen, Sybrand Buma [leaders of the Labour Party and the Christian Democratic Appeal – two of the most dominant political parties in post-war Netherlands]. (R15)

R11 had also researched Judaism and reflected that this had led him to some disquieting findings:

> R11: I have learned that Judaism does not follow the Old Testament [...] they follow the Talmud; In the Talmud non-Jews are described as cattle. I see that they only promote things that are bad for us. I cannot explain it very well.
>
> INT: Does that make you disapprove of Jewishness?
>
> R11: Right. I am of the opinion that the wrong people have won the Second World War, to be honest.
>
> INT: Who should have won the war?
>
> R11: The German blood, so we. […] I am not completely Dutch but […]
>
> INT: Who is of German blood, the Dutch, the Germans?
>
> R11: I only mean to say that Hitler should have won the war in fact.

R11 further legitimised violent attacks against synagogues:

> […] it is not about being allowed but I cannot let myself become extinct [... they only promote immigration […] they only want the white people dead. I do not understand what is wrong with it. If you want it for somebody else, you should not be surprised if it happens to you.' Such comments represent a neo-Nazi orientation that was found amongst a proportion on the respondents and betray a sense of racial identity threat that complicates the characterisation of the New Right as defending values such as freedom from the oppression of Islam. (R11)

R2 was also more Nazi-oriented but while he admitted to having urinated against the walls of the local synagogue, he claimed his anti-Jewish attitudes were not too strong. He had never come across Jewish people himself, and he condemned more serious acts:

> […] others who trespassed boundaries by destroying Jewish graves, people that I knew vaguely did it, I could not approve it, not now and not at the time. It was a topic that was fiercely reacted to by the more nationalistic side, this is not done, graffiti with swastikas, people speculating who had done it. They were apprehended, that changed the story. It happened more often, those kinds of incidents, I did not feel like going along with it. I disapproved of it but did not betray them. (R2)

R14 referred to the 'Great Replacement' theory in relation to Jews and Muslims alike. He described Israel as having, 'well, a bit what Islam has, to undermine Europe and white people to be better off themselves'. He saw Zionism as connected to Communism, and further elaborated on the reasons why Hitler was able to gain power in the interbellum and the general climate of decadence at that time. He argued that Jewish people had held prominent positions and propagated derogatory ideas in order to undermine Germany and keep it in a total state of anarchy. In this, he identified a parallel with the social climate of today, in which he observed 'overt homosexuality, drug abuse, and a lot of prostitution.' George Soros was used as an example of why Jews could not be trusted: Soros allegedly used his foundation to promote immigration and replace white Europeans. When the interviewer asked why Soros would want that, R14 responded that this was because 'they' would be better off with people who are 'not as critical as we are'. Alluding to the notion that Europeans were more intelligent or more critical thinkers than those from other parts of the world, he said: 'because we are critical he wants to eliminate us, to replace us with people who are not, so that they work for them without ever asking questions.' In this way, Soros was sometimes used by respondents to link anti-Semitic conspiracy theory with theories of 'cultural Marxism' or the 'Great Replacement' (despite Soros himself being secular and anti-Zionist [Porter, 2015]). This link is perhaps not so surprising, however, given that the same kinds of racialised logic are said to be at play in both anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim conspiracy theories (Zia-Ebrahimi, 2018).

Interestingly, for R14, the history of Zionism was a warning against permitting Islamisation: 'It showed me that may be Zionist Jews are not friends and we cannot trust them, just like Islam'. He was very much against Israel and felt that some Dutch politicians were pro-Israel because they were anti-Muslim. 'Israel is hypocritical' he said. 'They were in power, in prominent positions, for years in Europe and outside.'

R6 also shared his anti-Semitic attitudes with us, centred on the idea that there was an agenda. He linked this to the idea of 'cultural Marxism':

> I enjoyed for a while anti-Semitic jokes, I find them funny, there was an ideological core in it. I had antisemitic views, a standard conspiracy view with Jews dominating the world [...] it is not completely gone, but it has become less relevant. In my eyes there still is a group, we may say "them", who try to influence the world to get rid of Christian norms and values and cultural certainties, who try to maximise their influence on materialistic, consumer oriented, stupid folks. Many of them are Jewish. But it is less relevant for me now [...] Many social changes originate in the media, are normalised in the media. More than half of the content producers are Jewish people, I hope it is accidental, that it is not about all Jews, it is not genetic, there is an agenda, cultural Marxism, my feeling is that the majority are Jews. (R6)

R10 told us he spent a lot of time on 4Chan, particularly in its subforum 'POL' (short for 'political'), where posts are anonymous. While the role of online forums like 4Chan will be discussed in greater detail in Section 4.4, R10 stated that the Jewishness of individuals was explicitly discussed on this forum, and antisemitism was promoted:

> […] so someone posts a statement of Trump or a tweet from Trump or something like, this filmmaker who is Jewish has done this or that or Europe has done this […] and then people start to discuss it, some really go into it, some are extreme and then they say: "it is their fault" [...] of those people, but I do not really know where these people come from because it is anonymous. (R10)

4.1.5 The future: Fears, hopes and proposals for change

When speaking of the future, few respondents were optimistic; a positive outlook was the exception rather than the rule. They spoke of the escalation of social tensions and the possibility of a coming civil war between Muslims and the Left on one side, and the Right (backed by the general population), on the other. R13 was fearful of war, bombs, attacks, and increasing violence. In his view, the current situation was grim: 'it is perhaps related to the fact that more and more people are murdered [...] Many people do not have enough means for food and drink'. R11, who felt a conscious effort was being made to replace the white population of the Netherlands, said that he was not against a race war – in his eyes, such a war was already taking place. R10 also had a dire outlook, arguing that the world was already a big mess, with three quarters of it being at war. R3 told us how his movement tried to maintain a good relationship with the police 'because we are convinced that at one point they have to choose if they will shoot at their own people or not, that they take our side. These are often patriots, people who love their country'.

Despite such pessimism, however, the young people we spoke to often articulated the changes that they wanted to see in Dutch society. During virtually all interviews, responded were asked about the one thing they would prioritise if they were in a position of power. The issues that they brought up reflected their worldview and in many ways bore semblance to those promoted by the alt-right. Some indicated a wish to leave the EU, with R6 wanting to disconnect the Netherlands from 'globalist' powers. Others wished that all Muslims would go to the Middle East or that Islam would be banned. Yet others focussed their answers on overhauling immigration and integration policies. One respondent wished that each ethnic or racial group would have their own country, while another wished for the abolition of legal antidiscrimination provisions.

Other issues mentioned focused more on authoritarianism, conservative values, democracy or freedom. These included the reintroduction of mandatory military or social service; the prohibition of abortion; more debating and communication lessons at school; the replacement of member of parliament with people who truly cared about citizens; the guarantee of freedom of expressions; the abolition of freedom of religion; more 'objective' reporting by the media; the introduction of the right to carry firearms; the reduction of the number of motorways; and a stop to the construction of unsightly new housing. Although few conflictual relations with the state and authorities were reported by respondents, several called for a reduction of state power at the political level, reflecting libertarian right-wing views.

Respondents proposed specific policy interventions such as tougher measures around structural misconduct, and a change of policies concerning vaccination, climate change, the provision of medicines, and the subsidising of schools. R12 was one who advocated the introduction of the right to carry firearms. His comments were striking as he described multiple positive effects. He argued that the country would be better able to fight off invasion by a foreign nation, as well as benefitting women, who would be able to defend themselves if assaulted or attacked by men. He points to yet another positive effect being that 'politicians will fear the people. That is why I am also in favour of referenda. It makes politicians afraid as well. They should be in a permanent state of fear…maybe not panic but trepidation.'. This respondent's proposal alludes also to a dissatisfaction with, and a distrust of, a possibly corrupt government.

The FvD's Baudet was the most trusted Dutch politician by far, and FvD was the party the majority of the interviewees said they would vote for. Several respondents criticised Wilders, with only one fully supporting him. This perhaps reflects the figure of change Baudet represented among young people, compared with Wilders' less intellectually styled populism. In contrast, the late Fortuyn continued to be commended for his outspoken approach and critical stance towards immigration and Islam. Of the respondents, only one said he abstained from voting because, in his words, he had no knowledge of politics and it did not interest him.

Other proposals for change were more compassionate and social in nature: more patience, more empathy, more love and care in social contact; connection and discussion; less polarisation; more respect

for each other and each other's personal space. For example, R4's ultimate goals were to 'stop self-hate, wars, violence' and promote 'more democracy, more social engagement.'

Respondents generally felt it was the responsibility of politicians to implement change, although some criticised their fellow citizens, particularly young people, for not doing more. For R19, 'Young people have to change their mentality. They have become lazy, have no passion, they have to become more active. A lot of them abuse their parents and use their homes as a hotel.' R6 was in favour of setting a good example himself: 'It is better than violent insurrection on the part of fascism or the extreme right. I see a risk that it comes to a tipping point' he warned, echoing concerns discussed above.

4.1.6 Conclusion

Our respondents were motivated to engage with the New Right by a worldview that saw Islam, multiculturalism and the Left as threatening Dutch and European civilisation. They felt that superior Western values such as freedom, democracy, tolerance and equality, along with ideals including respect and traditional gender roles, were under attack from the perceived increasing influence of Islam in Dutch society and the Left's collusion in Islamisation. For some, this was also a serious existential threat: conspiracy theories such as the 'Kalergi Plan' and the 'Great Replacement' fed fears that plots for the extinction of the white race existed.

Democracy was considered by most respondents as the ideal political system and should be more directly applied as in the form of referenda. Freedom of expression was considered particularly important, with respondents perceiving that a double standard was applied to expressions of right-wing views or critical attitudes towards immigration or Islam, in comparison to left-wing and multiculturalist views.

The political Left's emphasis on imposing egalitarianism while idealising diversity was considered by many to undermine the essential right to freedom of expression. Although our respondents did not explicitly attach much value to their Dutch national identity, identity was mobilised when discussing worries, fears, and opponents, where national or racial pride was valued or normalised. The primary concern of respondents surrounded the rise of multiculturalism, thought to be fuelled by the Left and to involve the increasing influence of Islam in the Netherlands. Islam was considered a threat owing to the respondents' perception of it as an uncivilised, undemocratic and totalitarian system. Reflecting typical Islamophobic tropes, most viewed Islam as oppressing women and promoting segregation. The Left was another common opponent. Several respondents perceived the Left's promotion of multiculturalism as facilitating the entrance of Islam into the Netherlands and enacting a 'cultural Marxist' agenda which aimed to socially engineer a complicit society.

Multiple respondents foresaw a conflict, even a civil war, between the Right and 'the people' on the one hand; and the Left, Islam, and immigrants more generally, on the other. In this vision, we see the materialization of the perceived threat in a particularly sinister and, importantly, violent form. It highlights the strength of the social divide perceived by respondents, in which the ingroup is defined by values of individualism and freedom of expression, as well as national history, Christianity, and whiteness. In contrast, the outgroup is defined by collectivism, imposed egalitarianism, Communism, Islam, and racial mixing. National politicians, the EU, and in several cases Jews, were assumed to side with the outgroup, and thus also pose a threat. The extremity of respondents' views varied greatly between individuals. While many aspects of this description are alarming, other elements allude to high levels of care about social and political affairs and potential constructive engagement. In the next sections, we discuss how respondents' views and engagements related to the concepts of 'radicalism' and 'extremism', and their understanding of these terms.

4.2 Understanding radicalisation and extremism

In analysing the articulated views and behaviours of the research participants in relation to their 'radical' or 'extremist' nature, we need first to recognise the debated and contest nature of these descriptors. There is disagreement between definitions about the relationship between radicalism and violence, and more generally between radical thought and violent action (Sedgwick, 2010). DARE considers radicalisation as a dynamic process, starting from the position that ideological radicalisation (the process of coming to hold radical or extremist views) must be distinguished from behavioural radicalisation (engagement in violent extremist actions or terrorism). Considerably more people hold radical or extremist views than act on them, whereas some violent extremists have only a superficial commitment to the cause in whose name they act. DARE does not assume radicalisation implies either current engagement in, or an inevitable trajectory towards, violence. We further recognise the use within radical milieus of forms of symbolic violence and violent talk that fall short of physically harming individuals or threatening state security but that do have negative social consequences.

In the recent past, Dutch connotations associated with 'radicalisation' were not particularly negative. Etymologically, it comes from the Latin word 'radix,' which means 'root.' The concept radicalisation implies going back to the roots or foundations of a phenomenon. In the seventies, a political party called Politieke Partij Radicalen (Political Party Radicals) made inroads into parliamentary politics without much controversy. In the Left-leaning political climate of the time, the name had positive connotations. What is, and is not, radical and whether we should be concerned about radicalisation is socially and historically determined, thus must not be seen in absolute terms (see also Sedgewick, 2010). The meaning of radicalisation varies across time, place and date. This is consistent with Fadil, Ragazzi, and De Koning (2019)'s characterisation of radicalisation as a 'floating concept'; an empty and controversial term that likely has different meanings for different stakeholders across politics, policymaking, academia, and social practices.

As field researchers involved in the DARE project we seek to avoid making moral judgements about our interviewees. We primarily want to know and understand their experiences, ideas and vision including what the concepts of radicalisation and extremism means for them. The following paragraph gives insight into the range of views of our respondents on these 'floating concepts.'

4.2.1 Respondents' views on radicalisation and extremism

Respondents showed a critical understanding of the term 'radical,' and the way they felt it was used and abused in practices and policies, often for political ends. Some associated a positive connotation with the term, and others a negative one. Several interviewees emphasised that the concept 'radical' varies in meaning depending upon one's political perspective and national context, although 'extremism' was mostly tied to violence.

While many interviewees identified themselves or their former selves as 'radical', identifying oneself as an 'extremist' was rare. Only R14 accepted the label of extremist, but this self-ascription only developed after a period of deradicalisation. In recent years, radicalisation has been strongly connected to Islamism, a view shared by many interviewees. However, our respondents additionally connected radicalisation with the Left, specifically with the leftist movement Antifa.

R1 and R2 saw themselves as a 'rightist' and a 'nationalist' rather than as 'radical' or 'extremist.' Sometimes, 'right-wing extremist' was used as a badge of honour. R3 defines his social engagement to help society in various forms of action, from cleaning the street to occupying a Salafist school, as 'passionate patriotism'. In his eyes, he is not an extremist nor a radical: only his actions are radical.

R7 does not consider himself to be a radical. If he uses radical statements, it is often meant ironically, as a joke. He labels groups like the Dutch alt-right group Erkenbrand as extremist. On the political Left, he considers Antifa and some of the activists among the anti-Black Pete protesters as extremist. R7 observes

that the mainstream is getting more and more radical. For him, radicalism is about the idea and extremism about the (violent) behaviour. He propagates the first but renounces the latter. He links extremism to neo-Nazism, but also thinks some mainstream thinkers are actually quite radical, most notably Keynesian economists.

R8 thinks that it requires a certain personality structure to radicalise. The radical Right is not a big problem in the Netherlands. He states: 'it is more of a reaction to the Left. There is Islam as a factor and the Left, they influence each other, the Right reacts to it and subsequently it gets a certain dynamic [...] like Communism and Fascism.' He views Antifa as extremists: 'if there are riots Antifa is involved in, they create provocation and use violence, the Right does not.'

For R9, wearing a burqa is an expression of extremism. She feels wrongly accused of being extremist herself. Radicalism for her is about isolation as well as a lack of openness towards and renouncing other opinions. She finds hardcore Communists radical, and Muslims who reject non-believers. She identifies some on the political Right as extremists, specifically those Forum for Democracy (FvD) voters who believe in the intentional racial mixing 'Kalergi' theory.

For R11, an extremist is someone who is prepared to kill for their ideals. He intentionally seeks to provoke radicalisation among the mainstream, for example by displaying swastikas to bystanders. He positions himself as 'extreme' and 'radical' whilst simultaneously claiming that these terms are empty. Ideologically, he adheres to National Socialism, which he argues is not radical but natural. It is 'not against other groups, it is for your own group. It is not to destroy other groups or races.'

R5 sees the positive side of radicalisation, which can be facilitated by the Internet, but only under certain conditions: 'if it is equally divided, radicals on one side and radicals on the other, this would create a truly lively debate, and in doing so, this is how we can approach the objective truth.' R6 admits to being radical but states he would not violate Dutch law. He acknowledges that it is quite something to say 'I was a fascist and for some parts, I still am'. He is used to speaking in terms of radicalism and extremism, and does not consider the concepts in a particularly negative way. He argues that people in right extremist milieus consider it as positive.

Many respondents claim extremism is about crossing a line into preparedness to use violence for one's own convictions. Extremism is regularly attributed to ideological enemies of the respondents. R14 identifies homosexuals and their overt practices on gay parades, along with Muslims and Jews, as extremists. He points to the existence of ecological extremism, people who take action against environmental pollution, which he supports wholeheartedly. In his view, extremist groups thrive because they do not get a platform to express their views. R15 speaks of the 'overtone window', the gradual change of what is accepted as mainstream. For him, Communists are extremists, not individual such as Trump or Wilders. He does not use the terms often, however. R16 sees extremism in the movements against climate change and energy transition. In his view, 90% of the people in Forum for Democracy (FvD) are not radical but some are, such as radicals against Islam or regarding gender relations.

Only R18 admits that the term extremist also applied to himself: he was proud to be radical and defined himself as such. In hindsight, he sees his former self as rather extremist ('but not a terrorist'). He recalls '[...] my opinion was the right one and all others were wrong. It was with me or against me. Yes, that may be seen as extremist' (R18).

R3 points to the public understanding of extremism. In his view, those like himself, who defend the norms and values of the sixties, such as liberal and social ideals are under threat. He finds that defendants of these values are seen as extremists.

4.2.2. Attitudes towards discrimination, racism and antisemitism

In DARE, extremism is described as the:

> overzealous conviction that the survival or success of one's own group can only be achieved through active hostility towards 'other' group(s). This may be driven by a belief in the superiority of one's own group and/or distrust or hatred towards 'other' groups. It may also be rooted in a sense of injustice towards, of vulnerability of, own's own group. (http://www.dare-h2020.org/concepts.html).

In the current discussion on extremism, we should therefore also take discriminatory attitudes, race and racism, and antisemitism, into consideration.

In almost all cases, respondents denied that they supported discrimination. However, some downplayed discrimination, expressed their understanding for people who discriminate, or suggested that people who were overly sensitive to discriminatory remarks were free to leave the country. R7 finds discrimination 'understandable.' Reflecting the racialist attitudes discussed in Section 4.1, he commented that as a degree of preference for one's own group or culture, it eases daily life, and he felt it was natural to prefer likeminded in the workplace rather than other-minded, saying 'I have no issue with that.'

Respondents in our sample who had deradicalised admitted their former discriminatory attitudes. R18 avoided encounters with Muslims and foreigners in his radical period: 'Getting a Döner sandwich, no way. That is betrayal of your country, it helps the enemy. It supports the enemy economically! We also actively encouraged others: don't do that, don't go there.' He finds that the label of discrimination is too easily applied nowadays, comparing it to being in fashion. R13 hopes that negative talk about ethnic groups will stop, but argues that these groups should also adapt themselves. For him discrimination is normal and natural. R4 downplays discrimination, arguing that everyone has experienced discrimination every now and then: 'As a member of the majority you are discriminated a bit less in the Netherlands. Once or twice I was called a sick Dutchman, it was arbitrary and had nothing to do with ideology or nationalism'.

With one exception, respondents believe in the existence of the phenomenon of race. R8 considers race a social construction that has nonetheless become a social reality. Racism is as old as mankind: 'Is it racist to say that some races are more racist than others?' (R8). Respondents vary in the degree of their acceptance of race hierarchy and racial differences in aptitude and performance. Some respondents liken the human race to animal breeds. The respondents who have deradicalised admit that their vision can be characterised as racist. The various visions of respondents described and quoted below sheds light on the variety of their opinions and concerns regarding race.

R6 talks about his earlier fascist period:

> By then, I was more into cultural things, almost racist standpoint regarding white culture. Now, I have softened those views. I continue to be a proponent of our own autochthonous culture that should be maintained but not along colour lines, not as extreme. Now the church comes first, I prefer a multicultural society attending church than a white society that doesn't care about God. […] I used to see race theory as the truth, I have abandoned that, not completely but I do not make the distinction anymore, it has no relevance anymore. I am now more open for humaneness and the value of every human life. (R6)

R11 is the most outspoken against the mixing of races. He points to an agenda behind it:

> I am against nobody, I am not a racist. I want the best for everyone, but the white race has almost died out and I only see women getting along with black men and mixing with them. I am against that [...] if someone falls in love with another, who am I to say something against it? But I find it weird that it is constantly promoted in the media [...] I think that there is an agenda behind it. (R11)

R12 made a media statement which claimed that IQ is the best predictor of success on the labour market. He had said that black people have a lower IQ, which drew a lot of attention:

> […] white racism and institutional oppression is total bullshit [...] I want that [Country X – non Western] has the highest IQ of the world. And people interpreted that as: "he says that black people are stupid". Well guys, I don't know any more. I exactly use this example of my own to avoid problems. I thought if I speak about Turks I will get a problem. (R12)

He argues that racism as well as sexism are exaggerated and do not occur as often as people presume.

R14 finds that all reproaches of being a racist, sexist, homophobe or Nazi have lost their potency because these notions are misused by the Left to refer to everything that the Left disagrees with. Instead of 'racism', he would rather use the more general term of 'discrimination':

> […] on the race phenomenon, I find that that white people have a higher IQ than most of Black people. You can see it in Africa. There are exceptions, of course. You can clearly see that minorities have a lower IQ […] I mean racial minorities. Arabs are a bit smarter than negroes. But maybe Asian people are a bit smarter than white people. Chinese also have a higher IQ than Europeans [...] black and white is too generic. (R14)

He bases his argument on statistics he found on the Internet, but also on his own experiences at school.

R15 similarly argues that IQ differs according to ethnic group but emphasises the consideration of 'nurture' versus 'nature'. He is in favour of equal treatment but acknowledges some differences between races, believing that it is too naïve to state that 'the human race is the only race'. He regards himself as anti-Semitic. This plays no role in his social environment, in the east of the Netherlands, but he often encounters anti-Semitic slurs on the internet. These slurs have varying effects on him, but he is not bothered by them. He identifies immigrants, especially from Morocco as responsible for anti-Semitic expressions. When asked why anti-Semitism occurs so much on the Internet but is not as present in offline spaces, R15 stated that 'they [Jewish people] probably deserve it'.

R19 has extensively studied National Socialism, and found that anti-Jewish sentiment was used as a political counterargument by National Socialists against Bolshevik Communism: 'I am not hateful against that group because I find that everybody has the Right to be in this world [...] I do not hate religions or whatever. I abhor Communism and Marxism and how it influences people nowadays.' She emphasises the connection between race and culture, and religion and culture. 'But I find that one should stay where one is born'.

R13 is the only respondent with explicitly positive views on non-white people: 'I have grown up amongst blacks, you know, I always found those people fantastic. You are always welcome, it doesn't matter [...] there are bad people in all races.'

4.2.3 Attitudes towards violence

Violence is certainly something many respondents think about. Several respondents explicitly reject violence - some have themselves been a victim of violence, while others participated in group fights with other youth groups. Several are in favour of using violence to deter political extremism. The introduction of the death penalty is advocated, as is the legalisation of firearms possession. One respondent justifies the violence committed by Anders Breivik. Others point to the Left as the main instigator of violence. Quite a few of our respondents expect a civil war between ethnic and political groups. Some explicitly say they would participate in such a conflict. The stories below illustrate these different experiences with, and opinions about, violence.

Some respondents have gone through a traumatising experience as a victim of violence. R13, for example, was convicted for murder, after somebody who had been aggressive towards him was later killed by a friend of R 13. This friend accused R13 of having done it. R13 was imprisoned but later acquitted.

R2 and his right-wing extremist comrades targeted leftist groups and their symbols. He explains it was 'not out of ideological motives' but rather 'it was for a kick, the adrenaline, fighting for the fighting.' He

participated in street fights against soccer hooligan groups that had young people with an immigrant background in their midst. He fought against both the Left at rallies, and against immigrants. Both sides took the initiative – the fights involved 8 to 20 young people and took place around every two weeks in towns and cities all over the country, and sometimes abroad. The participants would drink alcohol to lower the threshold for the use of violence. They fought with belts, chains, brass knuckles, and glass. The fights were short, because the police would swiftly stop them. R2 participated after a couple of drinks. Eventually he quit: 'you know from the beginning where it will end. After three times in a police cell, I was fed up with it.'

R6 did not consider violent rebellion a first choice. He aspires to be a role model. He is nonetheless in favour of the death penalty, for example for blasphemy, child abuse, or sexual misconduct, particularly when committed by priests. He argues such priests should be banned from their priestly office and burnt on a pyre. R6 advocates a similar response to Pussy Riot's actions, believing their act of storming an alter with naked chests to be an act of desecration that should be punished with 'whipping'. He feels attracted to militancy but prioritises a religious context, in order to demonstrate his commitment to Catholicism. He will not commit random attacks or kill innocent people, but if the Pope calls for a crusade, he would certainly consider participating. He mentions that the crusades in the past are justified and necessary. In the case of renewed Islamic expansion, they may be undertaken again. He further shared his approval of a case that occurred abroad, where an individual who demolished a statue of Mary was beaten, but avoids the question whether he would have participated if the event had occurred in the Netherlands.

R8 defines himself as a 'pathological pacifist' although he acknowledges that violence may be necessary 'to defend yourself'. He does not like violence because he is not good at fighting, but he is convinced that things will get tougher. He argues that the Left are the real violent actors, as demonstrated by Fortuyn's murder and a rally in Berlin. R10 approves of a corrective use of force by the police, but speaks against the use violence to impose one's will, especially the government's will. In contrast, R11 does not have a problem with violence. He argues that he cannot just let himself be exterminated and do nothing. He approves of Breivik's attack in Norway and an attack against a synagogue the USA, justifying both as an eye-for-an-eye: 'They want the white people to be dead. I do not understand what is wrong with violence as a response. If you wish it for another you should not regret it when it happens to you.' (R11).He shares information (pdfs etc.) on forums about arms, strategies, tactics, and how to use them but uses the disclaimer: 'I am not a terrorist. It is more in case that […] Imagine that things go wrong.' (R11)

R12 is not in favour of using violence to impose his political will. However, he considers using violence for political aims to be legitimate and notes he may use violence to defend his principles in the coming civil war. In his view, this civil war would not be between Right and Left, but rather between Islam on one side and groups such as the Yellow Jackets on the other. He is intellectually fascinated by the morality of violence and war, calling it one of the most interesting fields of study: 'What is proportional violence and what may I do in my own home? What about international issues such as the invasion of Iraq, nuclear bombs on Japan.' He thinks participation in a foreign country's conflict would be morally justified if there were a clear distinction between the two sides, with one clearly bad and the other good.

R13 does not like to be involved in violence but - he adds a disclaimer - if one of his friends were attacked, he would defend them. Once a friend took a weapon to a party and was seeking to fight and provoke black people by saying 'I shoot them those niggers.' It was posted on the internet and caused them trouble afterwards. At school, R13 had a fake pistol which he and a friend used to play at shooting the knees of other pupils under the table. However, when his friend started to use it to commit real crimes, R13 stopped using the pistol.

R14 has a fascination with weapons. Like several of the respondents, he feels that possessing weapons should be legal in the Netherlands as it is in the US, and is in favour of using arms for reasons of self-defence or to prevent the violation of women or animals. Child abuse must be punished with the death

penalty. Women should be able to defend themselves with pepper spray or a weapon if they are violated. R14 has never used a weapon himself, only an airsoft gun, although he once when abroad he held a weapon for fun. He sometimes comes across calls for violence but generally, he argues, it is just meant as a provocation, not to really to actually use them. He is in favour of using violence for political change but considers it unrealistic in the Netherlands.

R15 is similarly in favour of weapon possession but restricts this to individuals keeping their weapons at home or in the car rather than carrying weapons around all day. Women in particular should be allowed to possess pepper spray and other weapons to defend themselves against rape. He believes in absolute freedom of opinion, as in the US, but feels that a call to violence is beyond the limit. Self-defensive violence is an exception. 'When a burglar enters your house you may kill him without being punished.'

R21 has met people within right-wing extremist groups who approve of violence such as that committed by Anders Breivik. She does not approve of it herself, but understands the motives:

> […] these people [the victims associated with the Norwegian Worker's Youth League] will turn into those Wouter Bos or Alexander Pechtold [Leftist Dutch politicians] like people […] you'd better pre-emptively shoot them, I understand that. But in practice, one does not do that. (R21)

R19 adheres to National-Socialist ideology. She emphasises that she does not approve of the Holocaust but argues that 'the winner writes history.' She continues:

> It is a fact that in all wars things go wrong and crimes are committed by all parties involved. Nowadays, the focus is exclusively on the Holocaust, while other genocides such as the Holodomor[10] are forgotten. History books do not explain why Hitler detested Jews. (R19)

4.2.4 Conclusion on understandings of radicalisation and extremism

Our respondents are aware of the terms 'radical' and 'extreme' in political context. Few of the respondents consider themselves 'radical,' and even fewer 'extreme'. These terms are typically attributed to Islam and to the Left. For example, Antifa, the leftist street movement, is considered by some as 'radical' while others view it as 'extreme'. According to some of the respondents, the attribution of 'radical' to a political viewpoint depends on one's own political perspective. For many, extremism is associated with the use of violence, with the Left often considered the main actor in political violence. Many of the respondents have first-hand experience with violence, as a victim or a perpetrator, and some advocate expanding the use of violence for self-defence.

Although a significant share of respondents believe in racial differences in terms of abilities and performance, few consider themselves racist or anti-Semitic. Most feel that the term 'discrimination' is overly used (especially by the Left) and thereby has lost its meaning. The presence of discrimination is thought to be exaggerated.

The respondents feel that the current, predominantly publicly conveyed, negative connotation of radicalisation places the individuals and movements who are considered 'radical' outside of mainstream society. Such movements and communities designated as 'radical' are at risk of having their civil liberties restricted which could fuel further resentment and radicalisation. Indeed, the sense of being excluded and stigmatised was observed in several of our interviews. Respondents themselves argued that radicalisation occurs when people feel that they are not listened to. This effect may deepen their radical views as they lament what they consider to be the application of double standards: they feel they are unfairly treated.

[10] The Holodomor was a period of man-made famine in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic between 1932-1934. Several million people lost their lives due to the policies of the Stalin regime. While many now describe the Holodomor as a genocide, it is not internationally recognised as such.

4.3 Personal and emotional factors

Personal experiences and frustrations, as well as psychological states, may impact our respondents' engagement with the world, along with grievances regarding societal inequalities. We extensively asked our respondents about their family backgrounds, life events, and experiences growing up. We encountered quite a significant share of grief and frustration, and the presence of psychological instability. We should note, however, that while these factors may contextualise our respondents' views, we cannot necessarily infer a causal relationship.

4.3.1 Family background

Our respondents have quite diverse family backgrounds. Most are from middle class backgrounds, although some come from lower, and others from upper, class backgrounds. In most cases, both parents have a job. A significant number of parents work in the health care sector. Some have their own (small) enterprises, while others work as employees in the technical sector. Most respondents have a native Dutch family background. Five are third generation from immigrant backgrounds, having grandparents who immigrated from former Dutch colonies, neighbouring countries or from wider Europe.

Several respondents report problems in their parents' families such as addiction to alcohol or drugs, domestic violence, divorce, suicide, or war trauma. Some further reported problems in their own family, including divorce, illness, domestic violence and maltreatment by fathers, and psychological problems of parents which predominately affected mothers. Respondents report various effects of these problems on their own personal situation and wellbeing. For instance, R11 was sent away from home at a young age after a fight with his stepfather: 'they had a quarrel and I defended my mother, so I had a fight with my stepfather and then my mother said that I had to leave home.' His biological father had also been violent.

R21 said that she became physically ill because both parents came to her with their marriage problems. R8 explains that owing to his parents' divorce, he has been restless and unable to settle. Alcohol addiction problems in his family background contributed to him also developing a drinking problem. Additionally, the medication he receives for panic attacks does not mix well with his drinking habit.

Many said that their parents were politically oriented towards leftist parties. The religious orientation of parents varies too. Some are religious and practicing, sometimes in progressive churches. Others have had a Christian upbringing but are no longer practicing Christians.

Respondents grew up in various physical environments: cities, mid-sized towns or smaller villages. Most come from small families of up to four siblings, while some also have stepsiblings. Numerous respondents are from broken families, yet there is a significant number, predominately those who grew up with both parents, who report to have had a happy childhood.

4.3.2 Events

Some went through crucial moments of change. Examples of this include: religious conversions; parental divorce; engagement with literature which introduced them to various ideologies, such as the Manifesto of the Unabomber; and hospitalisation for a variety of reasons, including for assault. These events sometimes influenced their vision of life or strengthened their ideas and informed their dreams and ideals.

Several respondents have personally been confronted with death, terminal diseases, and suicide in their families or close environment. Some respondents have themselves thought about suicide. This was often related to a depressive stage. Several were confronted with life threatening violence. This sometimes, but not always, had an important or even life changing impact.

For R6, his religious conversion had a life changing effect: 'if I hadn't become religious, I would have hanged myself.' R8 has a generalised anxiety disorder and during anxiety attacks he feels suffocated and confronted with suicidal ideation. These experiences make him less fearful of death because, as he says, he has more or less had the experience already. R10 has witnessed three cases of death in his immediate

environment in the past year, which has affected him deeply. R13 had a female friend who killed herself at the age of 15 by jumping in front of train, just a month before the interview. He said the incident made him think a lot about issues of life and death but did not reflect on it during the interview because he found it too painful. R18's former friend had drug addiction problems and had killed himself. R19 is confronted with suicide on a regular basis in the context of her work in the care sector. Two respondents have had the experience of being strangled.

4.3.3 Experiences at school

Several respondents were bullied because their appearance or behaviour was different. Sometimes this experience of bullying changed their lives. For one respondent, the bullying stopped when he cut off his long hair. Another respondent experienced his classmates telling him that they wanted him dead; they had put a letter expressing this in the idea box of his class. Several respondents have or have had drugs problems at school.

The professionals at school often do not know how to handle radicalisation or the social problems that put pupils at risk. A father told us, 'They [the teachers] had analysed the situation: our child was outside of the group, excluded, and they didn't do anything with that information'. Despite the parents' requests to act, the school director did not do so because he did not want politics in the school: '[...] except when there were complaints from other parents, then he had to act'.

R3 was expelled from school:

> […] because I was considered a racist. That was in the period of 9/11, a turbulent time, also in school [.] That time has formed me […] I was in a school for vocational training. We came together for two minutes of silence. Good immigrants, Muslims, were outside and did not take part. The others were laughing at us in front of our eyes. They were pointing at us and whistling and laughing and the teachers pretended not to see it. I was very shocked and thought, 'how do they dare'. I was the bogeyman. Because I had pointed to them as being the ones who made fun of us […] It clearly showed the polarisation. That is why one looks further and I noticed that they do not appreciate our way of life at all. And even more and that this was expressed in those attacks. (R3)

R11 and R13 were also expelled from school. R11 was rebellious and got involved in criminal activities. At the age of 14, he ended up in a youth detention centre and was forced to change school from pre-university education to a special school for training in manual work. After R13 moved from a larger city to a small village, he was bullied. His aggressive response led to his eventual expulsion.

The schools that R19 attended were too easy. She was always eager to learn but the curriculum was not challenging enough for her:

> [...] I asked what can I do, you know, yes well, "transcribe the dictionary". I said I beg your pardon? Do you think that this makes sense? I said I will not do that. "If you don't do that I will give you a red card." I said I will go and get a red card myself, I refuse to transcribe the dictionary, I do not find it useful. (R19)

After disappointing experiences in formal education, she decided to educate herself from home: 'I know I have the discipline to study at home and to educate myself and it goes well'.

R21 stopped her studies. She ended up in financial dire straits, losing her house and developing drug and alcohol problems

R1 recalled how his school leader wanted to block access to the Internet:

> I was searching for the truth. The Internet has helped me. For me it worked as follows. I revised my opinion when there were reasons to do so, in case of valid arguments. The

> Internet was very important. The threat of the school leader had a huge impact. I went to him crying. Then he allowed me to have access except for some sites, he recognised I had to find my own truth. (R1)

R2 told us how no one was bothered about his political views until he publicly expressed his sympathy for the extreme right, in dress and habits on TV. R2 recollected that a teacher with whom he got along well, could not accept it, and had said 'I spit on those Nazis'. R16 got along well with his teachers, but after gaining high grades in his exams, his history teacher warned him and gave him and a book about Fascism: '[...] I had to be aware of fascism because I was in favour of Forum for Democracy.' The story went viral and made news' headlines. R18 also came into conflict with a Leftist teacher:

> I had one radical teacher. Left radical, as I considered it at the time when I was turning to the Right. He insisted on anti-fascism, the danger of politicians with rightist ideas. If you liked the colours of the Dutch flag, the red, white and blue, you were already considered a fascist. (R18)

R14 complains that during his school years, he had never known people from a Dutch background. He was in a Catholic school, but he was the only Catholic there; the others were all from immigrant backgrounds and Muslim. He had no friends and did not like the other children; he felt they were 'too macho' and showed off, and so didn't even try to make friends.

R18 was fired from the school where he had completed his internship on the day that he started his official job there. The school made that decision based upon his involvement in the extreme right. The school board was unaware of his involvement at the time of his internship.

4.3.4 Friendships and social relationships

Although a small number of respondents were or had previously been socially isolated, most have one or more friends. Some respondents lost friends due to their engagement in the New Right milieu, but this engagement also led to new friendships within the milieu. Some respondents only had friends from within the New Right milieu. Others successfully maintain friendships outside the milieu, including friendships with young people who hold opposing political views, such as with members of the Green Left party. R3 told us 'I had a BBQ yesterday. Friends whom I have known for 15 years joined as well as people of the right-wing extremist group with whom I get along well.'

Although he went through a radical period, R18 managed to maintain friendships outside of the radical right milieu: 'I am a fanatic supporter of football. That is the most important part of my life. I used to be and still am with all fanatic groups of supporters. That was, so to say, my peer group.' His sense of belonging to this group and their reaction against his right extremist involvement played a crucial role in his subsequent deradicalisation.

Still, a significant share of respondents report problems regarding social relationships. R11, for example, recounts: 'In fact, I do not have many friends. I do not get along with other people because they have totally different viewpoints from the ones I have.' This respondent wants to have meaningful discussions about things that really matter in life such as history and politics not about the latest music videos. He is lonely, but says it is his own choice: 'I exclude myself'. He is also unemployed. R1 has always had difficulties in finding friends and when the right-wing extremist scene offered opportunities, he decided, 'better the wrong friends than no friends.' However, in the second class of high school he lost all his friends:

> I was without friends, I had nobody anymore. I knew I could not be alone and I did not want to be bullied […] When I started a new class I knew one girl that I had dated before. I wanted to join her and her girlfriends, fall in love with one of them. It went wrong. I did not know how to handle this, started stalking her and then I was excluded. I had nobody to hang around with during the breaks. (R1)

R8 recalled: 'in the second grade of high school I joined a band, a terrible noise, but for the first time in my life I had the feeling that people found me cool, that we could do something nice together. I was thirteen or fourteen.'

Sometimes friendships are hampered by political views or ethnic bias. R12 was:

> […] good friends with a Moroccan guy for ten years. I know too many Mocro's [colloquial term for Moroccans] to say I feel negative towards Moroccans, I don't have that feeling. I mean when I say Islam, I feel a distance. So I do not know. I am no longer friends with that guy but I also do not know if I could be very good friends with a religious Muslim. I do not say that he will be my enemy, but I can imagine that given how strong I am now regarding my convictions that it will just not match. (R12)

R212 is very disappointed with the groups she used to be involved in:

> I get sick of people. They started to harass me on Facebook. Again such a period. First, you enter a group, everything nice and cosy, you get to know people. Then you get to know them better and then the moment comes when they get rid of you because you do not match with the group and for me that repeats itself every time, again and again. (R21)

R 17 reflected: 'Yes at this moment Google is indeed my best friend'.

Most respondents discuss important issues in life with partners, friends, and parents. We found that the more radical the respondents are, the more they feel reluctant to openly discuss issues that are personally important to them.

R6 reflected: 'I did not belong to the popular guys […] belonging to them, who does not want that?' Nowadays, R6 avoids controversial topics in order to not lose friends: 'Within my group of friends we avoid it […] before, when it was about abortion I shouted 'murder' if I heard people speaking about it, now I do not interrupt when I hear others speaking about it'.

Given that he does not dare to share his opinions, he feels rather alone:

> I do not share my opinions on Facebook, I will be shot, that is obvious self-evident, for example the Catholic vision on homosexuality, for me it is self-evident but I will not express it, one will be shot. I cannot be public about it […] not with friends either […] I understand it, I see that some viewpoints are radical, if I find someone to share my thoughts I find it a relief to discuss my ideas [...] but someone willing to listen is not easy to find in real life. (R6)

R13 was born and raised in a city and has problems with social relationships in the countryside where he now lives. He says that in the city, people accept you as you are, but in the countryside, it is different:

> R13: With those farmers, they only provoke you and mock you [...] they are very tough.
>
> [INT]: And the elderly people at your work are they different?
>
> R13: Yes, they are quiet and if you ask them for help they do not say "ah, do it yourself!" No, they come and help you. I sometimes have problems with measuring and counting. Then I ask if I can use my mobile phone, but when I did that with those 'farmers' they started to hit me and I had to restrain myself.

4.3.5 Conflictual social relationships

Aside from the above report by R13, most conflictual relationships for respondents generally occur within the context of interethnic contact. Many talk about their experiences with Moroccan youth, but sometimes refer to youth groups from other ethnic backgrounds.

R2's parents mentioned that a group of Moroccan youth brandishing chains once came to ask for their son's friend. R2 had had a disagreement with a 'dark-skinned guy' at school:

> […]I made a discriminating remark for the first time; I said Nigger. It gave me a feeling of power […] I thought if they want to harass me, I can do this […] then against foreigners, Jews the scapegoats of National Socialism; I had many problems with Moroccans who couldn't behave themselves, still today they irritate me a lot, but I understand it better now, how they do things as a group. (R2)

R7 worked in a city neighbourhood where:

> There were many groups of Moroccans. […] To be honest I did not feel safe then. If I am at the station in [city] late in the evening and I see youngsters hanging around; that does not give me a good feeling. Crime statistics confirm it. Hanging out together, it does not give me a good feeling, it is very intimidating. [...] Dutch youngsters hanging around are less intimidating. What the difference is? Difficult...it is a gut feeling. It is a certain intimidating gaze that they have, it looks aggressive. (R7)

R14 told us about the people on his street. A mixed population of coloured people, Moroccans, and anti-social Dutch, there are sometimes quarrels and fights. 'Yes, I have had a plethora of rather negative experiences in my life, both at school and in the neighbourhood and somewhere else.' He recalls problems at work with Moroccan colleagues who played loud music, which he did not like: 'These are all rather negative experiences I have had in the past which have only confirmed my stereotypes and not countered them.' He also elaborates on his experiences in the neighbourhood, specifically how Moroccan families were looked down on by the other neighbours, including his own parents.

Respondents told us about negative experiences of interacting with Moroccans, focusing on the perceived attitudes of Moroccans towards women. R21 was harassed by a Moroccan man in a park near her home, and now she does not dare go there anymore. She repeatedly sees him and she does not go out anymore without asking someone to accompany her. She feels dependent and restricted in her liberties to move around. R9 also tells about sexual harassment while implicitly referring to people of immigrant backgrounds (see also Section 4.5 on gender). R8 tells about how Moroccans react to his girlfriend: 'I can accept it from Surinamese people. They show a kind of respect 'hey lady.' But from Moroccans, it is often threatening, they look differently at you, you are a whore, you are not a Muslim. It is as simple as that.'

R1 did not specially refer to Moroccans. At school, he had quarrels with peers of an immigrant background. While he did not know these students, he wanted to engage with them to show who is boss.

There are also voices which are less negative. For example, R10 states: 'people of another colour or another religion are equal. If you treat me with respect, you get respect back. But that does not apply to a lot of people.' He discusses how the misbehaviour of Chinese entrepreneurs who came to his firm has led to prejudice against Chinese people among himself and his colleagues. R13 has positive opinions of, and experiences with, people from other ethnic backgrounds. He explains that he gets along well with everybody, particularly mentioning Polish, Turkish, and Moroccan people, as long as there is mutual respect.

4.3.6 Mental health

Approximately half of the respondents indicated they had or have had psychological problems, including depression which was sometimes related to drug or alcohol abuse or addiction. Some are still receiving therapy as a result of their mental health issues, such as R8 and R17. As noted earlier, R8 suffers from anxiety and panic attacks in addition to a mild form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He is an alcoholic yet takes medicine. This combination, has given rise to a respiratory disorder. He struggles with his alcohol abuse and says: 'In truth, drinking is nicer than not drinking.' R17 suffers from drug abuse and

Seasonal Affective Disorder He is still involved in a programme for addiction to alcohol, speed, and cocaine. At the time of the interview, he had been in a clinic for 8 months.

4.3.7 Conclusion on emotional and personal factors

On a political or ideological level, respondents express discontent about egalitarianism. Most of the respondents are very much in favour of equality before the law. Yet, they feel that egalitarian drives among politicians and law enforcement create double standards when it comes to equality before the law. Immigrants, refugees, and advocates of Leftist positions are favoured in political considerations, by the police and the court. This creates a sense of double standards that favour what the respondents refer to as the 'outgroup' (the Left, immigrants, Muslims), over the 'ingroup' (Dutch nationals). In this way, egalitarianism is thought to undermine equality.

The lives of the respondents were often marked by negative experiences in their youth, including family breakup and domestic violence, in addition to being bullied or excluded from school. Several had bad personal encounters with immigrants, although respondents in general were eager to declare that they respect everybody as long as this respect is mutual. We found a considerable number suffered from mental health issues, sometimes associated with alcohol and drug abuse. We believe these observations are significant, but are hesitant to draw a direct connection to the ideological positions that our respondents take.

4.4 Online and offline social interactions in radicalisation trajectories

In recent years particular attention has been paid to the role of online spaces in radicalisation (Behr et al., 2013), with a number of cases of far-right radicalisation attributed to 'self-radicalisation' online (Alfano et al., 2018). 'Lone wolf' terrorists such as Anders Breivik (Norway) and Brenton Tarrant (New Zealand) supposedly formed their extremist ideas through engagement with online content and communities. Both published online manifestos documenting this (Berntzen & Sandberg, 2014; Veilleux-Lepage et al., 2020). The online propagation of the 'Q-Anon' conspiracy theory likely contributed to the US Capitol Hill riot in January 2021 (Argentino, 2021). While the use of the Internet by radical groups is by no means a new phenomenon, the popularisation of social media platforms combined with the proliferation of alternative online news and information sources have raised questions about how use of these online spaces may be contributing to the spread of radical ideologies. This includes the availability of a plethora of radical content, its targeted dissemination through algorithms, and the emergence of extremist culture and communities on forums and social media platforms. Simultaneously, Conway (2017) notes that there remains insufficient empirical social scientific evidence to determine whether online spaces are as influential as is anecdotally suggested. Online radicalisation cannot be understood in isolation from the offline lives in which it is embedded (McDonald, 2018). Online and offline spheres are mutually dependent and interconnected when it comes to radicalisation trajectories. This section examines the relationships, interactions and encounters, both on- and offline, which contributed to participants' radicalisation trajectories.

4.4.1 The role and use of the internet and social media

Respondents' narratives reveal that the Internet, including websites, social media and other online fora, played an important role in their political development and, for some, in their radicalisation. Self-radicalisation through online activity was for many the main vehicle to (radical) political socialisation. Here we discuss respondents' use of the Internet and social media, and the role they saw this play.

Many respondents spent a considerable amount of time online. For them, as with most young people, social media provided spaces of socialisation (de Cook 2018). Respondents told us they often used Facebook and Instagram. Other platforms that were mentioned included YouTube, and the forums 4Chan (particularly its subgroup 'POL'), 8Chan and Hiddenlol. Some respondents further spoke of more extreme

platforms like Mind, Voat or Gab, as arenas where freedom of speech or opinion was guaranteed, in comparison with more mainstream platforms where respondents were aware of censorship.

One of the key functions of online spaces for respondents were as sites of information seeking. R18, for whom the Internet had played an important role in his radicalisation, had been looking for information on Muslims when he came across radical sites of Dutch right extremist groups who argued that Dutch identity was being threatened by the rise of Islam. Some respondents told us that they lacked trust in 'mainstream' (traditional) media and often turned to social media and other online fora for their news. R9 for instance lamented the lack of authoritative media in the Netherlands. Previously, she had liked the Correspondent (a news outlet focussed on specific topics, rather than the 24 hour news cycle), but she felt it was increasingly about Wilders, PVV bashing, the environment, and gender equality, and had lost its philosophical approach.

Recently, a large number of alternative news media outlets have emerged online which 'position themselves as correctives of the mainstream news media' (Holt et al., 2019: 860). They speak to the disenchantment of the New Right with a perceived left-wing hegemony in traditional news. However, more personal experiences prompted some respondents to turn away from traditional news. R8 told us about a negative experience with a journalist who had reported a distorted picture of the things R8 had said in an interview. This caused him to lose confidence in mainstream newspapers: 'They pretend to be interested in your story, they listen quietly and then they transform it into a bullshit story' (R8). Nowadays, his girlfriend keeps him informed: 'In fact, I rely on my girlfriend. She follows the news and informs me. I consider myself above the media. But if Thierry [Baudet] has done something weird, then I have a look.' (R8).

R8 also spoke about the 'Intellectual Dark Web', a term used to refer to a group of commentators – including Jordan Peterson, Ben Shapiro and Eric Weinstein – who construct themselves in opposition to the alleged dominance of political correctness in higher education and the mainstream media (Parks, 2020). Interestingly, R8 felt that these personalities were involved in preventing radicalisation because 'they say: "be an individual and do not allow yourself to be manipulated"'. However, figures such as Peterson are known for blaming Western society's ills on 'Marxism' (Nicholls, 2019), in a discursive strategy reminiscent of the 'cultural Marxism' conspiracy theory described above. They epitomise contemporary right-wing populism's use of 'counterknowledge' (Ylä-Anttila, 2018); that is, they 'advocate a particular kind of objectivist counter-expertise' (ibid.: 358), through the use of scientific language and the espousal of positivist views, in order to contest epistemic authority. However, as Hong and Hermann (2020, np) reveal in their analysis of divisive libertarian commentator Ben Shapiro, such commentators provide 'not so much substantive engagement with factual claims using any kind of rigorous methodology, but a habitual circuit of attachment through the sharing of anxiety and outrage', drawing boundaries that construct the audience as a victimised Other. This kind of negative affective loop is arguably more likely to contribute to radicalisation than to prevent it (McDonald, 2018). Furthermore, respondents also mentioned that the conspiracy theories they engaged with had been encountered online. This indicates that the kind of knowledge engaged with online was related to their worldviews as described in Section 4.1.

Given the international nature of the Dutch New Right online, it is perhaps no surprise that a number of these international figures and sources of information emerged as more important to respondents than Dutch personalities. In addition to individuals such as Jordan Peterson (mentioned by a number of respondents) and Ben Shapiro, some respondents mentioned North American commentators with YouTube or podcast channels who were known for their spread of conspiracy ideas and white supremacy rhetoric, including Alex Jones and Stefan Molyneux. One respondent mentioned the less extreme (but still mired in accusations of racism and homophobia) conservative commentator Steven Crowder. American libertarian politician Ron Paul was also mentioned. Few respondents referred to Dutch influences. R4

mentioned, 'There are good ones. Geerten Waling and Weird Duk are quite good. Baudet cannot speak his mind…previously yes, but not anymore'.

In R19's case, finding information online helped her and her boyfriend understand their identity and the identity imposed on them by others. She stressed two factors that determined her involvement in the extreme right: Firstly, the metal band in which her boyfriend played chose extreme right music because the outside world had already defined them as such. Consequently, they saw no other direction or audience other than the extreme right scene. Secondly, R19, with her boyfriend following her example, wanted to understand for themselves what their viewpoints were, so they went online. After researching on the Internet, they concluded that they agreed with many right extremist views.

As an active member of the extremist website Iron March[11], R6 was inspired by Fascism. He downloaded PDF documents containing fascist literature that increasingly fascinated him. One of the gateways to extremism were threads that had become available around the US elections. He felt that New Right radicalisation was not a rapid process, as he perceived Islamist radicalisation to be. It builds up slowly, he said:

> first a page that ridicules foreigners, then Muslims, and then a page that does that too, but at the same time also targets Jews […] You think […] oh that is nice too, and then someone says 'I am fascist'[…] oh you get used to that [...] it happens gradually. (R6)

Radicalisation is a gradual process particularly in extremist Catholic circles. In his view, 10% of people were socialised via their parents, while others were converts who slowly entered the milieu and took years to become radicalised. He thought a large influx had taken place during the 2016 US Presidential election campaign.

For some respondents, online spaces provided a sense of belonging that contributed to their socialisation into the New Right. For example, R1 told us he had radicalised at a young age at school, due to social isolation:

> The choice was: either sitting alone in the canteen or go online in the computer class. That is what I did: looking for information, email with friends. In October or November it became clear that I was with that group [...] we defended ourselves by saying we are not Nazis, we are nationalists. We did not know what it meant. We were especially against everything that was not Dutch. (R1)

R14 placed particular importance on the Internet because he did not have many friends in the offline world. At the time of the interviews, he was spending several hours a day online, although this was less than it used to be. He considered himself a veteran of social media, having started using the internet when he was 8 years old to play video games (including violent ones). Around 2010 when he was 10 years old, he discovered YouTube. It was around 2014 that he was confronted with videos about extreme feminism, resulting in him becoming politically active online. Initially, he went through what he called his 'red pill period' (see Section 2.3.2), discovering alternative narratives to those provided by mainstream media:

> Around 2015 -2016 I came into contact with alternative media, at the time of Brexit and President Trump. Info Horse is a very nice one that reported on Brexit and what was happening in the US, but also the UK, the number of violent incidents that is higher than in New York, the referendum and Black Lives Matter that is based on a lie because the people who were shot by the police were not unarmed and had committed a crime. That was propaganda by the media. So I became more and more political. (R14)

[11] A site that, until it was taken down in November 2017, celebrated murder and genocide against non-whites, Jews and LGBT people.

Here distrust in mainstream media and the discovery of alternative information also emerge as salient. R14's interest in the 2016 US Presidential election campaign influenced his emotions, friendships, and life course. In this case, becoming an extremist was a process that took several years. It was further informed by several triggering events, such as his experiences with women at school, as well as the Charlie Hebdo attack and Muslim students' (positive) reactions to this at school. The process involved not only engagement with online content but also offline factors, particularly social relationships. Online content reaffirmed his interpretation of negative offline experiences.

The issue of feminism was also salient in R11's trajectory. His alignment with National Socialism started on the Internet when he was about 19 years old. He felt video games and films were implicitly advocating feminism, prompting a backlash from users:

> We then saw that many people who promoted that were Jewish. You then quickly arrive at National Socialism. Before I used to think that Hitler was an evil man and this and that [...] this is how I got there. (R11)

Now he sees himself as a lone wolf, albeit one who believed in the law. He was active on 4Chan's POL forum, as well as 8Chan, Discord and Voat, a video sharing site. He said that on POL, 'they speak about Bible texts but also about news articles by Jewish authors who promote diversity and acceptance of migrants […]' demonstrating its importance as a source of information. He did not only consume but also produced content online: 'I am an online activist making Twitter accounts and other social media accounts to disseminate my message'.

Some respondents referred to films, books or texts as influential materials in their ideological journeys. While some of these may have been encountered offline, much seemed to have been discovered through participants' online investigations. R2 cited the Nazi propaganda film *Triumph des Willens* (Triumph of the Will) by Lenie Riefenstahl as an impactful influence, describing it as about 'the superior Aryan race, the we-feeling, being strong together and carrying the nation.' Similarly, R11 described *Mein Kampf* as a good book that he had read which reminded him of things that are happening today. R5 mentioned the documentary film *Accidental Courtesy* which centres on a black man in the 1980s who attended Ku Klux Klan (KKK) rallies and befriended a Klan member. The friendship didn't last and had negative consequences for the KKK member. R8 discussed *Industrial Society and its Future* by Ted Kaczynski[12] as having opened his eyes: 'It is not a terrorist manifesto. It is a criticism of technology […] about the sources of modern discomfort.' Meanwhile, R12 had been impressed by Ayn Rand's philosophy concerning the importance of deregulation, describing it as '[...] super influential and Atlas Shrugged [Rand's dystopian anti-regulation novel of 1957] is the second most read book in the US, after the Bible, they say. That is quite an achievement'.

Some respondents were critical of social media and the Internet in general, recognising the important role they played in radicalisation processes, and/or finding them restrictive. For example, R4 used Facebook and WhatsApp groups and played with friends on his PlayStation, but was not very politically active or engaged online. He found that the online world 'lacks atmosphere and humanness'. At the same time, he considered the Internet and social media to play a role in radicalisation processes as they stimulate individuals to remain in their own bubbles.

R9 further discussed the limitations of social interaction on social media. She was active on Facebook and previously on Twitter, sharing posts several times a day, such as jokes, opinions, or questions. However, she found Facebook too shallow to communicate with friends and fellow students, and mostly communicated face-to-face or via WhatsApp: 'you forget too easily that you are discussing with a person and not with a profile photo [...] for me, it is a source of information, I follow people who share interesting

[12] The so-called 'Unabomber', who was the subject of a TV series released in 2017. This series subsequently helped him to regain the spotlight in recent years.

texts […] I am often on fora too.' For R9, social media were also sites of conflict, where challenging things she disagreed with could result in her views being dismissed or labelled as extreme. This ultimately contributed to a feeling of marginalisation and negativity towards immigrants who refused to integrate in Dutch society:

> Moroccans meet on Facebook. I asked: "there are many Dutch people here. Why do you speak Moroccan/Arabic? Are there any issues that you cannot express in Dutch?" The reaction was: "what do you do here, go away". I had instantly become a Nazi. I understand that you are a community but there is so much hostility, I do not like that, I want to see everyone going together and that everything goes smoothly, but it often goes wrong. Why – I look at the Left – why am I done with it and you are not? (R9)

Moreover, respondents criticised the direct censorship of their views by social media platforms, attributing this to the victimisation of those on the Right. R14 mainly used Facebook and alternative social media 'who really are in favour of freedom of opinion', such as Mind and Gab, while also using YouTube. He criticised Facebook for their use of algorithms to delete certain messages, such as 'mean posts that use stereotypes of black people. I posted one and within two minutes it had been deleted and I was suspended for 30 days.' He often experienced banning when posting pro-fascist content. To circumvent these suspensions he had 10 to 15 alternative accounts:

> For the controversial stuff, I have alternative accounts under other names, because I know if I do it under my own name, they will get me, because on the Left, people go after people like me, they would attack me or look for my house or whatever. (R14)

He contrasted this with Mind and Gab, unmoderated fora which allowed users to post anything. He also spoke emphatically about the danger of pornography: it was unrealistic and presented a risk of addiction for young people, and could even lead to violence. In his view, there should be legislation against it. He subscribed to a conspiracy theory which posited that in some countries pornography is used to better connect people to the Internet in order to prevent them from going out and looking for a real offline girlfriend. His strong attitude towards pornography was also a reflection of his values around sexuality and the threat of societal denigration or normalisation of deviance. He was concerned about the online portrayal of child abuse, sex with animals and communities of 'Furries' (where anthropomorphised animal characters are fetishised) which have 'dirty habits'. He actively engaged in vigilante efforts against these issues. On one occasion was successful: someone he reported was banned from Twitter due to paedophilia.

R5 pointed to the limitations of social media for free expression. He was simultaneously a member of the youth branch of Forum for Democracy (FvD) and its ideological opposite, DWARS GroenLinkse Jongeren, the youth organisation affiliated with the GroenLinks ('GreenLeft') party, which he joined for their environmental policies. While much of his contacts were established via Facebook and Telegram, he also interacted and made friends in person, both with people he knew from social media and those he had met at offline events. He spent a lot of time on 4Chan and Hiddenlol, describing the latter as a radical site with dark humour that automatically pulls you in. However, he thought fear of publicity and repercussions later in life may keep people from posting more radical viewpoints on social media. This was based on his own experience; he had once been discovered and exposed in relation to racially sensitive expressions, and this had subsequently affected his behaviour on social media. He was now more reluctant to post, particularly with regard to expressing radical views. This reflected the way in which respondents also acknowledged the limitations of online spaces as sites of 'freedom of speech'. R5 liked the memes available online, even constructing around 10 or 20 memes himself. In the next section, we discuss this form of online content specifically, as it was a popular medium within the milieu.

4.4.1.1. Humour and Memes

In online spaces, 'meme' refers to content, particularly images overlaid with text but can mean videos and animations, generated by and shared among users (Hakokõngäs et al., 2020: 2). These are 'aggregate texts, collectively created, circulated, and transformed by countless cultural participants' (Milner, 2016:2) and are often humorous. Memes are important building blocks of ideological meaning, and particularly popular among young adults in alt-right milieus, including in Europe (Bogerts & Fielitz, 2019; DeCook, 2018; Miller-Idriss, 2019).

One respondent sent us a collection of memes circulating in his milieu. The collection contained 74 folders, each holding between two and several dozen files, all together comprising hundreds of memes. The memes included historical posters, screenshots of Twitter messages, humorous and hateful texts, cartoons, photos, drawings, and caricatures. Their topics were mostly different ideologies and religions, specific events that had a relationship with the political views of the respondent, historical and contemporary political personalities, gender or race (see Figure 9). Almost all of the meme text was in English; occasionally this was in another (Eastern) European language, but seldom in Dutch. This clearly points to the internationalisation of the New Right, enhanced by the use of new technologies thus reinforcing their functions of identity formation, visibility and mobilisation (Caiani & Kröll, 2015a). Although the source of many of the memes is not given, the respondent mentioned finding some of the content on Twitter or Tinder. One list of items was categorised as Tumblr, a microblogging site which was most popular in the mid-2010s and is said to have incubated a liberal leftist culture that mirrors that of the New Right on forums like 4Chan and 8Chan (Nagle, 2017: 51–62). A remarkable number of the memes were Anti-Semitic or had Fascist, racist or sexist symbols, texts or images, reflecting the often shockingly hateful cynicism of New Right memes.

Figure 9: The subject matter of the memes received

Ideologies	• National Socialism, anti-Bolshevism, Communism (much historical material such as pre-Second World War posters about these items), Antifa, Alt-Lite (Pepe the frog), Feminism
Gender	• LGBT, women, dual gender, Feminism
Religion	• christcuckery (slang for globalism, open borders and pro-immigration stance), paganism (see below the meme 'nature hates equality'), Atheism, Islam, Jews and Zionism
Race	• the race-IQ discussion, racism related memes, low IQ memes, skull comparison memes, Islam, Muslims and Turks
Events and political processes	• the Christchurch attacks, Brexit, climate change
Countries	• Swedistan (used to refer to Sweden, implying Islamisation and accompanied by images of exaggerated feminism and tolerance leading to violence against (white) women), Poland
Historical and political figures (revered or denigrated)	• Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini • Ben Shapiro, Richard Dawkins, Jordan Peterson, Tommy Robinson, Donald Trump, Geert Wilders, Rodrigo Duterte , Matteo Salvini • Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Greta Thunberg, George Soros, Justin Trudeau

Given the focus of the broader DARE project on anti-Islamist milieus and the perceived threat of Islam articulated by the respondents in this study, it is worth examining the representation of Islam and Muslims in the memes. Thirty-nine of the memes were on this topic. Islam and Muslims were represented as

violent, and responsible for terrorist attacks and violent practices against women. Muslim men were depicted as angry, shouting men with beards, for example, as caricatured in a cartoon related to the trial of Geert Wilders. Muslim women were represented primarily in traditional ways, in particular as mothers. The allegedly oppressive nature of the Quran was also highlighted. However, much of the criticism implied in the memes was directed at the reactions of the Left and mainstream politics to Islamist terrorism and oppression, particularly of women. A remarkable number of memes were about feminists, the Left, or European societies supporting Islam or Muslims and being naïve to do so. This again reflects the worldview of respondents which perceives the threat from Islam to be closely tied to the complicity of the Left.

R6 provided an insight into the role of memes in radicalisation processes, specifically their ability, in his opinion, to normalise extreme content or attitudes, and their relationship to New Right belonging:

> It depends on the content. If the meme is funny, it is funny. It depends on whether the content is supposed to inform or whether it is meant as propaganda, also possible, sometimes it is frightening [...] there is danger. There are for example ten funny pictures and with one you think, oh dear […] again ten pictures [...] you finally get used to it, if you are vulnerable. It is a matter of predisposition. Many people in the extreme right scene are in that scene because they do not have connections elsewhere, they are isolated, they have no social relationships. Suddenly they may join and belong to where there is a 'we,' if it is about Achmed and the mosque or Pete and the neo-Nazis [...] there is a 'we' to join, then it does not take long. As long as you have no other place, you automatically start to agree with the views. Hardly anybody inherently has these opinions, you grow into them. (R6)

Humour was also significant to R5's trajectory, which he described as a gradual process of easing into extremist viewpoints. For this respondent, the ambiguities between cynicism and hate played an important role: 'Is it a joke or serious? It is like a game.' In his view, young people were particularly vulnerable because they tend to rebel.

R10 started to be interested in memes for the fun of it, as someone who liked 'trolling'[13] and who went from one platform to another. He was able to find all kinds of things posted online, including illegal content, such as IS-videos or child pornography. According to R10, some platforms only moderate highly illegal content, particularly child pornography and violence against animals. He was strongly pro-animal rights: 'it is the suffering of animals that touches me personally [...] when a human dies [...] I don't know. Maybe that is normalised within the networks I am in'. Nowadays, he still follows POL on 4Chan, Hiddenlol and Facebook, chatting with around 12 people a day. He rarely posts himself:

> If I think this is a nice controversial subject I may post something on 4Chan but then about big issues. Not those small things like "I have a Turkish colleague that I cannot get along with. What to do with him?" Because you then get the reaction on 4Chan "we blow him up", let's not do that [laughs)]. (R10)

The Internet was an important resource for R10 because he mainly paid attention to international news media rather than Dutch media. He came across radical or extremist messages on the Internet, but preferred not to react because 'if you react, things get worse. Thirty people will react against you, it is better just to wait until it passes.'

4.4.2 Offline interactions

Notwithstanding the significant role of the Internet, some respondents became engaged in radicalism via offline contact with peers or with older members of right-wing extremist groups. We found offline impact

[13] 'Trolling', sometimes described as 'an Internet manifestation of everyday sadism' (Buckels et al., 2014:97), involves triggering or exacerbating conflict 'for the purposes of [one's] own amusement' (Hardaker, 2010:237) and can be directed at individuals or groups (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2016: 6).

particularly among those respondents who radicalised at an earlier stage, when the Internet was less prominent than it is now. For instance, R18 encountered radical right ideas through a friend at school. The friend was of Ethiopian origin but had been adopted by Dutch parents, and the friend wore typical right extremist attire with a bomber jacket and white shoelaces. He told R18 about politics and the Netherlands being threatened by all sorts of enemies, in particular Muslims. He described the Leftist government as selling out 'our country'. R18 began to avoid Muslims: 'buying a Döner sandwich, we will not do that! [...] that is betrayal of our country. Helping the enemy. Supporting the enemy economically [...] we also actively encouraged others not to go there'. R18 then became a role model to his peers, seen by others as a Nazi and therefore 'cool', after he had made a presentation at school about Islam as the enemy of the state and someone had posted it online. He considered himself an influencer at the time of the interviews and said that most pupils agreed with his views.

In the experience of R1 and R2, younger advocates (14 to 15 years old) were connected to older members of the extreme right group who encouraged and mentored them to start groups among their peers.

R7 actively took part in political mobilisation in the alt-right scene and collaborated with others. He ran a podcast aimed at giving a platform to people and viewpoints who did not have access to the mainstream media as a means of expression, owing to their right-wing views. The podcast collaborated with various conservative publishers and asked authors and other alt-right members to speak about their books or views. Each episode reached an audience of between 1,500 and 2,000 people.

Some respondents, specifically those who were associated with traditional extremist groups and Nazism, participated offline through displays of affiliation. These displays included attire, hairstyle, and the use of pin badges, flags and other symbols. These expressions promoted a sense of belonging to a group, reaffirming this aspect of their identity. Many of the expressions signalled authority or were meant to intimidate others. Several interviewees had been through a period of wearing gothic style clothes, heavy black boots with white laces, bomber jackets displaying a Dutch flag and having a buzz cut or shaved head. R 21, our oldest respondent, began wearing gothic clothing when she was younger, continuing to wear it at the time of the interview. Several respondents wore a chain with a cross as a sign of their Christianity and several had tattoos. R13 had tattoos on his arms that said 'mum and dad,' 'grandma and grandad' and 'too hard to live and too hard to die.' Others had more ideological tattoos, such as a Swastika or a crucifix. R2 spoke about the symbolic use of flags, buttons, and other merchandise: 'things such as bomber jackets and boots were used in my Nazi-period to impress people […] when they met me later on it was always: you were that Nazi weren't you?' Those respondents who were more associated with the alt-right made less use of symbols than respondents with Nazi sympathies.

Respondents not only decorated themselves but sometimes bought other paraphernalia as part of identifying with New Right movements. Respondent R14 told us he liked the architecture of the Nazi period and brought a plaque with a Swastika, an eagle and the text *Moschetto Fascista* (accompanied by a fasces[14]) to the interview which he had bought at a second-hand market abroad. He said he was aware it was possibly illegal but wanted to show it to us to elaborate more on the origin of the Swastika and eagle symbols which go centuries back in history. He lamented its current negative connotations because for him it was a beautiful, spiritual thing. 'It is also [about] resilience and pride. That is why it is used in right extremist scenes [...] it mirrors strength which is something that gets weaker today in a society that becomes less and less masculine and less and less strong, that we long for.'

This latter quote perhaps captures the essence of what belonging to an extremist group can offer individuals. At the same time, this belonging also comes at considerable cost. Despite some of the above

[14] A bundle of sticks bound around an axe, this originated as a symbol of power in Ancient Rome, but has evolved into an extreme right symbol since its use by Benito Mussolini in the Italian fascist movement.

accounts of positive reception by peers, respondents' parents and broader social surroundings were often not very accepting of their New Right affiliations, which we turn to in the next sub-section.

4.4.2.1. Parents' reactions

We spoke with respondents about their parents' reactions, speaking directly with a small number of parents and other family members (see Section 3.1). These parents told us they felt ashamed or like they had failed. They felt that they had done everything - right or wrong, effective or ineffective - to try to get their child out of right-wing extremist engagement. They had joined anti-fascist organisations, taken their child to Second World War historical sites and anti-fascist films, and had tried accompanying them to extreme right rallies. They had disposed of T-shirts with fascist symbols on them and CDs containing extremist films or lectures, forbidden their child from becoming a member of a right extremist group until they were 18, and spoken with the school principal to ask them to restrict access to the internet. On one occasion, a parent had even followed a group who were graffitiing walls with the words 'Own people first' and covered up the graffiti with white paint.

Parents generally appeared to favour a 'soft' approach. R2 told us that his parents were permissive. Things were never forbidden. Instead, they asked to remain informed about his ideas, plans and activities. Rebelling against parents was not a motivation for his radicalisation; in his view: 'I longed for restrictions but I don't know what would have happened if they had been imposed.' Nevertheless, there were disputes and quarrels, such as when his mother, while cleaning his room, threw away some of his propaganda material. His father and mother fulfilled different roles. According to R2's parents, his mother had a better relationship with her son during this difficult phase of his life because the emotional ties between the two were strong.

R1's father also refrained from challenging his son. R1 told us he appreciated the way his father said:

> […] 'you have access to information, seek the truth, you will find it' [...] he had confidence in me [...] my father was right. My mother tried to forbid things, it hit me, gave me the feeling that something I was entitled to was taken away from me [...] it became a forbidden fruit. (R1)

R19's mother, who was a member of a socialist party, also took an approach of trust in the end. She had contacted people from R19's right extremist group to discuss the safety of her daughter and to better understand the opinions of the group members:

> […] Finally she said to me: 'I do not agree with you but I accept it. I know that you are safe and I know that you are intelligent enough to know which path to take and which not to take in order not to harm yourself'. (R19)

However, R18's parents consulted a youth psychiatrist and were told that if they did not confront him at home, they would lose him. The psychiatrist stated that their son's room must not be a forbidden area for them, because as parents it is their house. The parents were further advised not to forbid any particular friendships, as R18 could experience this as deeply hurtful. The psychiatrist suggested that they refrain from speaking with others about the issue, to prevent repercussions for their son in the outside world, but were encouraged to keep communicating and discussing things with their son. R18 approved of the shift in attitude of his parents, who followed the psychiatrist's advice. Yet, due to R18's verbal and cognitive capacities, he was often the winner in discussions.

Unfortunately, in many cases, this kind of professional support was lacking. Respondents' engagements with the New Right were often considered a problem of puberty, one that would automatically fade away with age. Parents took their own initiative to help their children to deradicalise, by frequently engaging in discussions, defining and setting boundaries, and continuing to support and care. Today, however, parents were sometimes still worried because they saw that new forms of radicalism seemed to have replaced older ones.

4.4.2.2. Other family members and close relationships

Respondents experienced a variety of reactions from the other significant people in their lives. Brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews were often upset by the right-wing extremist activism of their relatives. Sometimes ties were cut, especially where these relatives had friends or romantic relationships with people from immigrant backgrounds. In contrast, R2 experienced acceptance in his neighbourhood and at school, as if people thought that it was just a phase that would pass; in his own words it was as if they thought: 'we know he is not [really] like that.' This tolerant attitude might be related to the fact that R2 was born and had grown up in this neighbourhood, hence people had known him from an early age.

Many other respondents were aware of the social repercussions of their New Right engagements. The more extreme a respondents' views, the more reluctant they were to share them in their immediate social environment outside the New Right sphere. This was also the case with strangers, especially journalists and researchers, which contributed to the difficulties our project faced in recruiting participants. R14 stated that this reluctance was because the Left was in the majority, combined with taboos associated with the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland (National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands, NSB) which originated in the 1930s. He felt that rightist viewpoints had not been approved of for years. Thus, adverse reactions to respondents' New Right engagements could serve to exacerbate their sense of marginalisation and victimhood.

R18 encountered a particularly negative reaction from the professional football club he supported. The club was very important to him and they made it known that they would not accept a member with a Nazi background. This forced him to make a choice between his club and his extreme right activism. Ultimately, he chose his football team. This was compounded by his close relationship with his uncle, who worked in counter-extremism. Compared to R18's parents, it was not easy to win arguments with his uncle. That his parents sought the help from this uncle made R18 very angry, contributing to his conviction about a Leftist conspiracy to convert him. Nevertheless, these offline relationships played a major role in R18's deradicalisation, discussed in Section 4.4.2.4 below.

4.4.2.3. Repercussions at work

R22 was R18's uncle and an expert in counterterrorism and counter-radicalisation. He argued that most people involved in extremist movements are convinced that they are defending important values for their communities, their people and homeland, and act out of idealism. However, he observed that the stigma of right-wing extremism has longer-term impacts in the Netherlands than that of Leftist extremism, which is often understood to have its origins in a romantic vision of humanity. This was reflected in the repercussions for the professional lives of several respondents. For instance, owing to his past, R2 was not accepted into the military or police. This prevented him from achieving his career ambitions. When interviewed, he still hoped that this might one day change. Due to convictions for arms possession, vandalism and assault, R3 was prohibited from joining the military. R18's professional career was similarly affected by his right-extremist activities: he was dismissed from a school where he had just started to work. Since then, he has struggled to find work as a high school history teacher, despite having abandoned his former political views.

4.4.2.4. Deradicalisation

Several respondents had been through deradicalisation processes after a period of involvement in right-extremist movements. Coming of age and the related cognitive development of young people often played a role in deradicalisation, sometimes facilitated by interventions from family members or peers, as discussed above. Sometimes, disappointment about 'friends' in the movement also played a part.

R1 explained the cognitive process that brought him to deradicalise. He began to differentiate between different kinds of immigrants: good ones and bad ones; true refugees and people who had come to the Netherlands solely for their own benefit. He became more moderate in his views, adhering instead to

voluntarist nationalism, which, he emphasised, was different from ethnic nationalism. As a student, he had come across theories about imagined communities and invented traditions:

> I did not call myself a racist but was convinced that whites were superior. It is normal to be white over here, at least to be in charge. I was afraid we would grow extinct. It was racist, maybe it was not meant as such, but it was. In the course of time, I became less nationalistic and more anti-religious. (R1)

His viewpoints gradually became more nuanced, although he remained convinced that Islam was a more dangerous religion than Christianity. He continued to be highly suspicious of Muslims, believing all had the potential to become a jihadist or terrorist. He began to vote for the liberal party Democraten 66 (Democrats 66, D66), constituting a significant move to the Left. R1 was now also active in promoting atheism, participating in the humanistic movement. His parents stated that: 'He has found his pencil', indicating he has found a way to formulate his political viewpoints in writing.

R2 gradually became disillusioned with his comrades in the Right extremist scene: 'drinking a lot of beer and having opinions about society [...] it was a fake friendship [...] I did not want to live in fear anymore'. These comrades were not enhancing his ideological education: their only contribution was to provide space in their homes where he and his group could meet and have discussions. It took him one to two years to physically distance himself from the scene. Mentally, this distancing took even longer. He felt afraid about what would happen if he were to meet those people again, yet was conflicted by his inherent tendency to want to befriend and get along with everyone. In the end, he decided to study social work as a way to resolve this within himself.

As already noted, R18's favourite professional football club played an important role in his deradicalisation. He was told it would damage the image of the club if they had a neo-Nazi in their midst. His presence at a rally where a violent incident occurred further made him reluctant to participate again. Starting a teacher-training course helped his intellectual development towards more balanced points of view, and he also became interested in getting to know more about the lives of people with immigrant backgrounds. At the time of the interview, R18 was an active participant in deradicalisation projects, sharing his stories with others.

We interviewed two respondents who had disengaged themselves from extremist groups but had not deradicalised in their views. R19 and her partner believed in a right-wing extremist ideology, but R19 wished to help people. She discussed her concerns with her partner: 'I want to change something in this society, we may participate in rallies and protest events but that changes nothing'. This motivated them to leave their right-extremist companions. They moved to another part of the country, where R19 started her professional career. However, she had not abandoned her worldview.

4.4.3 Conclusion on online and offline social relationships

Our respondents' trajectories of radicalisation were heavily guided by the Internet. Many were heavy users of social media platforms and online forums. They described radicalisation as a gradual process whereby the individual habituates to verbal or visual extremist content through repeated exposure. The normalisation of violence and the resulting insensitivity to human suffering is consistent with research about perpetrators of violence in situations of wars (Bandura, 1977).

Online spaces acted as sources of information and discovery, as well as of belonging and identity confirmation. These spaces were characterised by their international nature, reflecting the internationalisation of the alt-right and other strands of right-wing extremism globally (Caiani & Kröll, 2015b). Humour and cynicism, specifically in the form of memes, were significant to a number of respondents' trajectories. However, respondents were not uncritical of social media, recognising its role in radicalisation and its limitations, in relation to censorship. New Right engagement was not always confined to the online realm; some offline interactions, expressions and resources were also significant.

While dealing with a radicalising son or daughter, family members experienced a lack of professional support, yet appeared to have favoured a gentle approach. This contrasted with the wider social environment, in which right-wing extremism was considered completely unacceptable. Respondents' engagements could have harsh social and professional consequences. Coming of age and the related cognitive development of young people often played a role in deradicalisation, sometimes facilitated by interventions from family members or peers.

4.5 Gender

While most of our interviewees were young men, we did speak with three young women and two mothers of respondents. As far as gender was concerned, there was a tendency among male respondents to be in favour of traditional gender roles, although this view was not shared by all. Concerning gender equality, many emphasised differences rather than commonalities, arguing that being different was not the same as being inferior, considering differences as innate. Some of the respondents felt that gender equality already existed. They argued that women, in particular feminists, exaggerated gender inequalities, and that women act as though they are superior. Some respondents perceived negative consequences of feminism for (the demise of) society. The following stories and quotations from the respondents highlight their various views on gender related topics, also in relation to radical right movements.

R2 had never seen women as inferior, and said that neither did the radical group in which he was involved, although there were few female members (only three out of 15). He recalled: 'It was typical. These were women who had all the men, sexually. From there shit happened, always'. R3 reported that his movement was comprised of 80 to 90% male members, but that they were working on improving access for women. He self-critically told us about his own biased attitude. However, he said that the person who had really brought life into the Dutch branch of the movement was a woman and that she was highly respected.

R14 criticised women who no longer wanted to take care of men the way they used to. Women want independence and a career, he argues. Careers are imposed, no longer a choice. He thinks female independence results in an increase in divorce rates, and results in problems with children who lack identity. 'This all leads to an immoral society with drugs and prostitution [...] Men should be in charge and women should be caring, which is by the way reflected in the professional field.' Men have become softer and women tougher, in his view, which 'clashes with the primary instinct of women.'

R10 argues that it is a woman's privilege to play a caring role in the family, a form of love for her husband which enables him to take care of housing and income. For R10, the caring role of woman is given to her by God and is natural, just as the man is head of the family who takes the lead, particularly in relation to religious questions. He emphasises that in this respect, his view is similar to the one he held during his fascist period - but from another perspective. R10 explicitly identifies himself as a man and is in favour of men's rights.

R2 points out how social pressure from his peers forced him into a traditional gender role from a young age:

> In the swimming pool, Moroccan boys called me 'girl, girl' (mimicking a Moroccan accent), I felt unsafe, in sports they whistled at me and I was called a girl. At a certain moment, it was so bad that I took a kitchen knife to school. If this continues, I shall attack with the knife [...] then I changed my mind and I put my cigarette out on his coat. (R2)

According to respondents, if there is a lack of gender equality, it exists predominantly in Islamic and non-western cultures more broadly. R15 reflects that:

> […] everybody can see that objectively, that over there women are inferior, in that religion. My thoughts are, don't do that in the Netherlands. I find it a big mistake that mosques have been established here. It sounds cruel, but that is what I think. You ask my opinion. There are

> many aspects that I do not like. But there are also good aspects. In Christianity, it is a sign of weakness that you turn your cheek to your enemy. I find that really weird. [...] in Islam they think that enemies should be defeated and the like. I find that logical and nice. (R15)

R15 further refers to certain groups of migrants that he believes originate from East Africa:

> They think that they should remove a woman's sexuality. That kind of thing. And female circumcision (FGM), circumcision in general, I find it reprehensible for young people. Although for quite some time, it has been the culture here, but all right. We should object to female circumcision. You cannot counter it by letting people into your country [...] in other cultures the position of women is viewed in a different way. (R15)

4.5.1 The experiences of female respondents

The female respondents in our study spoke about their experiences with gender discrimination in the movement, in the workplace and in public places.

R21 was asked to write text for the magazine of the National-Socialist group in which she participated and did some editorial work. She was invited to give speeches at a meeting, because she was a woman, but nevertheless felt that she was appreciated because of what she said. She likes the punk style, styling her outward appearance as a witch. She heard children saying that she killed children: 'I like to wear gothic clothes. My mother used to read scary books, I read detective novels [...] it gives me a kick.' She explains 'I am a woman and I like a sexy outfit, even nowadays but when I was 20 years younger, I had no cellulite, it looked nicer. I went to town, it looked very sexy, it looked nice.' At the same time, it is difficult for her to be considered a deviant within the movement because of her appearance - she was told that she was too fat and not representative. The men wanted young slim women and not a woman like her. She got disappointed and lost her faith in the movement: 'What I wrote and did for the movement has thus been completely destroyed' she says.

R19 told us about her experiences of discrimination on the combined grounds of gender and her (young) age. As an owner and manager of a small enterprise in the social field, she encountered different forms of discrimination by clients and (co)workers alike. She said she understood it and tried to deal with it in a non-confrontational manner, as far as possible, but finally, as she says: 'I tell them: "hey guys, at the end of the month it is me who pays your salary!"'

R9 recounted her experiences of sexual harassment in taxis and on the street in public places:

> Sometimes it is an innocent question: "do you want to have a coffee", but also: locking the doors and touching me […] it happens less to Dutch youngsters. Moroccans hiss at you, thus emphasizing that you are not equal. I knew what the Quran thinks about unveiled women, that is how I experienced it in practice. (R9)

4.5.2 Views on feminism

For many respondents, feminism is amongst the phenomena that they criticise most, alongside anti-racist movements, the Left, and the EU. Sometimes their narratives were not only ideological but also personal.

R8 explained that his mother is a hard-core feminist, as is his stepmother. He tells about the feminism of his mother:

> [...] that irritated me a lot. I always got the idea that I was not good enough because I was a boy and about to be a man. There was no positive association with that at all. That is quite tough, especially when it is your mother. My father was a good role model. But one's mother should not bash the male thing all the time and put it in a bad light. So the need I felt to unravel feminism probably originates here. (R8)

He is against feminist ideology and, during the interview, he elaborately explained why. His principal argument is that the idea of a power struggle between men and women is wrong. History shows that men and women have always had intimate relationships with each other. He has written an article on the relationship of feminism with Islam: 'a strange relationship initially but if you unravel it, it is absolutely logical. I have written it because nobody has done it before, at least not in the Dutch language.'

R9 points to the #MeToo claims as an interesting topic in relation to radicalism, demonstrating that female respondents were also against feminism:

> […] do we have to believe every woman? That is against the constitutional state. Structurally pointing to men as perpetrators is a radical idea. Rape of men in prison is not taken into consideration […] that is the Marxist hypocrisy in the discussion. (R9)

R4 adds that:

> Modern feminism is totally gone out of control on issues that are not important. For example, they care about Islam, about the veil or the banning of the burqa; they think that wearing a burqa is important whereas Islam as a whole is woman unfriendly. They had better pay attention to that. (R4)

The politics of diversity is also out of control in the eyes of R10. For R16, third wave feminism is redundant in Western society. Feminism only has relevance in other cultures, particularly in Islamic cultures.

Some respondents are more positive about feminism, however. R1 identifies himself as feminist now. Owing to his progressive education, he could never support the anti-homosexual and anti-feminist views of the extreme right, not even during his radical right period when he was predominantly nationalistic. He did not understand why the right-wing organisation he sympathised with was against abortion. R3 also approves of feminism, but does not like the way in which nowadays everything is questioned, from being a boy to boys' clothes.

R12 finds that differences between men and women should be fully accepted. He has joined a men's movement and identifies Warren Farrell as a role model. With regards to circumcision, he criticises the double standard. Everybody is against female circumcision, but nothing is mentioned about male circumcision. He believes that less value is attributed to men's lives in comparison with women's lives.

4.5.3 Homosexuality and transgender rights

We found few examples of outright homophobia among the respondents, but several disapproved of homosexuality. Transgender rights were also discussed as particularly unacceptable.

R6's argument is based on his religion:

> […] we are called to hate the sin not the sinner […] I can be friends but if someone asks me "do you allow me to marry a friend", I say "no". To have a coffee or doing something together is all right, but not sex, just as I am called to abstain before marriage. (R6)

R11 also rejects homosexuality on the basis of religion. He avoids eating soya products because he has learnt from the Internet that eating soya leads to homosexuality. If he were to have a son who was homosexual, he would reject him.

Others are not so much against homosexuality, but criticise public displays of homosexual affection. R10 commented 'If it is normal, fine, but then act normally. No gay parades just as there are no straight parades. We just don't want to see these half naked men in public'.

R7 is not against homosexuality, but against same-sex marriage, and civil marriage more generally. Marriage should remain in the domain of the church. For R12, homosexuality is natural but abnormal and deviant, by which he does not mean to say that it is immoral.

Transgender rights are 'out of control' argues R12, particularly the practice of giving young teenagers hormone blockers, as he feels this is an indication of a radical agenda. This view was echoed by R19. R10 does not recognise transgender as a sexual identity. He is concerned about the costs associated with transgender operations, as these are often financed by public health care funding. He fears that these operations may result in high suicide rates. R8 refers to the fact that 'in between phenomena' such as gender non-binary people are hard for others to accept. He said it makes people feel uncomfortable, as do transgender rights. R6 strongly disapproves of transgender rights, stating 'I honestly feel compassion with those people. I do not see them as losers only, they are sick in my eyes […] that they [...] their own bodies [...] I find it sad.'

For R4, being transgender is a disorder, a deviance we should not pay too much attention to. He finds gender-neutral toilets and passports nonsensical. For him there are two sexes: male and female. R4 finds that we should pay attention to increasing violence against homosexuals. 'For 99%', he argues, 'perpetrators have an Islamic background. That is not discussed'. R14 says he has nothing against gay people, but their movement has become perverted: 'Now we see 10 year olds in drag outfits dancing in front of 50 year old men. In my view, that it is child abuse, paedophilia'. He does not like transgender people because they do not have 'a nice personality,' which he attributes to their taking hormonal treatments. Being transgender is an unnatural mental illness in his view. R21 agreed, stating that 'homosexuality is too much in the limelight nowadays'. R20 feels indifferent towards transgender people: 'but being obliged to say "her" to someone with a penis, that goes too far'.

On the other hand, some respondents explicitly expressed positive attitudes towards other sexual identities. For example, R3 is proud of the tolerance of the Dutch and proud of gay marriage.

4.5.4 Conclusion on gender

For many of the respondents, what are perceived to be innate differences between males and females do not necessarily imply that one is better than the other. From this angle, feminism and the Left are criticised for overly striving for equality between the sexes. Some respondents perceive that gender equality is imposed by a Leftist agenda. Homosexuality is tolerated as is being transgender, although the latter, more than the former, is questioned for the financial burden it places on the state, and for its perceived psychopathology.

5. Conclusions

We conducted the present research to obtain a better understanding of extremist and non-extremist attraction to the New Right in the Netherlands. We focused on how individuals come to be engaged with related ideas and groups in potentially radical ways. To that effect, we approached young people who, in one way or another, were engaging with New Right political ideas, and who, in one way or another, had chosen to affiliate with these ideas. This included those engaging with a range of strands associated with the Dutch New Right, from Neo-Nazi sympathisers to Forum for Democracy party members. These individuals were not all part of one group or social circle, but constituted a 'milieu' in the sense that they each participated in the New Right as a disparate movement in the Netherlands. In this 'milieu', the associated parties and groups increasingly interact and there is significant crossover in ideas and members. Few respondents admitted to having radical ideas, although some did. In the researchers' eyes, quite a few were moderately radical, some were quite radical in the sense of being against homosexuality, feminism, Muslims, immigration, the EU and the 'elites'. Support for violence was limited. We considered key components of the respondent's ideology, their grievances, emotions and personal experiences, online and social interactions, and their perspective on gender.

Regarding their ideology, we observed that our respondents shared a sense that their rights, identity or values as Dutch or European were under threat. Values they deemed to be at stake included freedom,

democracy, equality and common decency. They frequently painted themselves as members of a group who were experiencing an injustice at the hands of Left-leaning authorities or immigration. Multicultural society was the primary source of concern for our respondents. Almost all conceived of culture as a homogenous, static entity that was separated from other cultures along ethnic, national and religious lines. Respondents generally told us that they did not reject other cultures per se – they simply did not want people from these cultures to come to the Netherlands. They felt that European or Western 'white' culture was under threat from immigration, specifically Muslim domination. Our respondents did not see only immigrants or Muslims as a threat but linked this to the promotion of multiculturalism and minority rights agendas by those in power and the Left. This was often articulated through conspiracy theories related to the deliberate and organised mixing of races, as espoused by 'cultural Marxism' and 'the Kalergi Plan', and Camus' idea of white genocide. These theories bring together the Left and Muslims/Islam as ideological opponents or outright political enemies.

Democracy was considered by most respondents as the ideal political system, and if anything, it should be more directly applied, i.e. in the form of referenda. Freedom of expression was considered of particular importance. Respondents articulated a sense that a double standard was applied to the expression of right-wing views or critical attitudes towards immigration or Islam, vis a vis left-wing and multiculturalist views. The political Left's emphasis on imposing egalitarianism while idealising diversity was considered by several respondents to undermine the essential freedom of expression. Although our respondents did not explicitly attach much value to their Dutch national identity, identity came into play when worries, fears, and opponents were discussed, and national or racial pride was valued or normalised. Respondents' primary concern surrounded the rise of multiculturalism, thought to be fuelled by the Left and to involve the increasing influence of Islam in the Netherlands. Islam was considered a threat in terms of typical Islamophobic tropes: as an uncivilised, undemocratic, totalitarian system, which oppresses women and promotes segregation.

Numerous respondents foresaw a conflict, even a civil war, between the Right and 'the people' on the one hand; and the Left, Islam, and immigrants more generally, on the other. In this vision, we see the materialization of the perceived threat in a particularly sinister and, importantly, violent form. It highlights the strength of the social divide perceived by respondents, in which the ingroup is defined by values of individualism and freedom of expression, as well as national history, Christianity, and whiteness. In contrast, the outgroup is defined by collectivism, imposed egalitarianism, Communism, Islam, and racial mixing. National politicians, the EU, and in several cases Jews, were assumed to side with the outgroup, and thus also pose a threat. The extremity of respondents' views varied greatly between individuals. While many aspects of this description are alarming, other elements allude to high levels of care about social and political affairs and potential constructive engagement. In the next sections, we discuss how respondents' views and engagements related to the concepts of 'radicalism' and 'extremism', and their understanding of these terms.

Respondents showed a critical understanding of the term 'radical,' and the way they felt it was used and abused in practices and policies, often for political ends. Some associated a positive connotation with the term, and others a negative one. Several interviewees emphasised that the concept 'radical' varies in meaning depending upon one's political perspective and national context, although 'extremism' was mostly tied to violence.

The terms 'radical' and 'extremist' are typically attributed by respondents to Islam and to the Left. For example, Antifa, the Leftist street movement, is considered by some as 'radical' while others view it as 'extreme'. According to some of the respondents, the attribution of 'radical' to a political viewpoint depends on one's own political perspective. For many respondents, extremism is associated with the use of violence, with the Left often considered the main actor in political violence. Although a significant share of respondents believe in racial differences in abilities and performance, few consider themselves as racist, or anti-Semitic. They feel that the term 'discrimination' is overly used (especially by the Left) and

thereby has lost its meaning. The presence of discrimination is thought to be exaggerated. Many of the respondents have first-hand experience with violence, as a victim or a perpetrator, and some advocate expanding the use of violence for self-defence. The respondents feel that the current, predominantly publicly conveyed, negative connotation of radicalisation places the individuals and movements who are considered 'radical' outside of mainstream society. Such movements and communities designated as 'radical' are at risk of having their civil liberties restricted which could fuel further resentment and radicalisation. Indeed, the sense of being excluded and stigmatised was observed in many of our interviews. Respondents themselves argued that radicalisation occurs when people feel that they are not listened to. This effect may deepen their radical views as they lament what they consider to be the application of double standards: they feel they are unfairly treated.

In almost all cases, respondents denied that they supported discrimination. However, some downplayed it; expressed their understanding for people who discriminate; or suggested that people who were overly sensitive to discriminatory remarks were free to leave the country.

On a political or ideological level, respondents express discontent about egalitarianism. Most of the respondents are in favour of equality before the law. Yet, they feel that egalitarian drives among politicians and law enforcement create double standards when it comes to equality before the law. Immigrants, refugees, and advocates of Leftist positions are favoured in political considerations, by the police and by the court. This creates a sense of double standards that favour the 'outgroup' of the Left, immigrants, and Muslims over the 'ingroup'. In this way, egalitarianism is thought to undermine equality.

The lives of the respondents were often marked by negative experiences in their youth, including family breakup and domestic violence, in addition to being bullied or excluded from school. Several had bad personal encounters with immigrants, although respondents in general were eager to declare that they respect everybody as long as this respect is mutual. We found a considerable number of respondents suffered from mental health issues, sometimes associated with alcohol and drug abuse. We believe these observations are significant but are hesitant to draw a direct connection to the ideological positions that are respondents take.

Respondents' narratives about their political development and, for some, their radicalisation, reveal that the Internet, including websites, social media and other online fora, played an important role. Self-radicalisation through online activity was for many the main vehicle to (radical) political socialisation. Humour and cynicism, particularly in the form of memes, were significant to several respondents' trajectories. Some were also critical of social media and the Internet in general, recognising the important role these factors played in radicalisation processes, and/or finding them restrictive. Respondents criticised direct censorship of their views by social media platforms and attributed this to victimisation of those on the Right.

Notwithstanding the significant role of the Internet, some respondents had become engaged in radicalism via offline contact with peers or with older members of right-wing extremist groups. We particularly found offline impact among those respondents who radicalised at an earlier stage, when the Internet was less prominent than it is now.

According to respondents, innate differences between males and females do not necessarily imply that one is better than the other. From this angle, feminism and the Left are criticised for overly striving for equality between the sexes. Some respondents perceive that gender equality is imposed by a Leftist agenda. Homosexuality is tolerated as is being transgender, although the latter, more than the former, is questioned for the financial burden it places on the state, and for its perceived psychopathology.

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7. Appendices

Appendix 7.1: Socio-demographic data of respondents

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Country of Birth	Education	Employment	Ethnicity	Family status	Gender	Religion	Religiosity	Residential status	No. in household
R1	28	NL	Completed university (History)	Unemployed	Dutch	Single	Male	None	Atheist	Lives independently alone (student room)	1
R2	28	NL	Completed academic vocational secondary education (HBO Social Work)	In full-time employment (care)	Dutch	Single	Male	None	Agnostic	Lives independently alone (central housing project where he also grew up)	1
R3		NL	-	-	Dutch	Single	Male	Sympathy for Catholicism	Believer but not practising in church/ educates himself through bible reading	-	-
R4	19	NL	Did not complete secondary education and left (HBO)	Student/ Food-promotor in supermarkets	Dutch	Single	Male	Catholic tradition	Not practicing	Lives with his mother	3
R5	23	NL	Currently in academic vocational secondary education (HBO – Chemistry)	Student/Works in greenhouse	Dutch	Single	Male	None	Not religious	Lives with his mom and mom's partner	3
R6	23	NL	Currently in academic vocational secondary education (HBO)	Student/ Unemployed	Dutch	Single	Male	Catholic - converted 2 months ago	Practicing	Lives alone at his father's house (on weekends with father)	1
R7	25	NL	Currently in academic vocational secondary education (HBO Business Informatics)	Employee at large IT company	Dutch	Single	Male	Catholic	Practicing	Lives alone in a small municipality	1

R8	28	NL	Currently in university	In part-time employment	Dutch	Has girlfriend/ boyfriend/ partner but not living together	Male	Sympathy for Catholic religion	Agnostic	Lives independently alone	1
R9	28	NL	Currently in university	In part-time employment	Dutch	Has girlfriend/ boyfriend/ partner but not living together, separate rooms in the same student house	Female	Sympathy for Catholic religion	Agnostic	Lives independently alone	1
R10	22	NL	Currently in academic vocational secondary education (HBO Mechanical Engineering)	In part-time employment/ unskilled labour	Dutch	Has girlfriend/ boyfriend/ partner but not living together	Male	None	Atheist	Lives independently alone in student house with common kitchen and bathroom	1
R11	26	NL	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed and sometimes active on the black labour market in home repairing	Dutch	Single	Male	Sympathy for Catholic religion	Believer but not practising in church/ educates himself through bible reading	Homeless, lives sometimes with family members	1
R12	34	NL	Currently in university (Political Sciences, International Relations)	In part-time employment	Suriname/ Dutch	Single	Male	None	Atheist	Lives at home with single parent	2
R13	18	NL	Did not complete secondary education and left	In full-time employment	Dutch	Single	Male	None	Agnostic	Lives at home with both parents	3
R14	20	NL	Currently in academic vocational secondary education (HBO Public Administration)	Student/ unemployed	Italian/Dutch	Single	Male	Paganism	Believer but not practising in church/seeking	Lives at home with both parents	3
R15	22	NL	Currently in academic vocational secondary education (HBO Public Administration)	In part-time employment	Dutch	Single	Male	None	Atheist	Lives at home with both parents	4

R16	19	NL	Currently in university (Law)	Not applicable	Dutch	Has girlfriend but not living together	Male	None	Agnostic	Lives independently alone (student room)	5
R17	21	NL	Did not complete vocational secondary education and left	Other - did not complete vocational secondary education (MBO) and left	Dutch	Single	Male	None	Atheist	Lives independently alone (student room) (Assisted living)	1
R18	26	NL	Completed academic vocational secondary education (HBO Teacher)	In part-time employment 4 days and 1 freelance	Dutch	Single	Male	Protestant Christian	Believer and practicing	Lives independently alone	1
R19	19	NL	Did not complete vocational secondary education and left	Did not complete (vocational) secondary education and left	Dutch	Living with partner	Female	None	Agnostic	Lives independently with own partner	2
R20	18	NL	Currently in academic vocational secondary education (HBO Film Producing)	Unskilled labour two afternoons	Dutch/ Indonesian	Single	Male	None	Atheist	Lives with both parents and sister	4