GENDER DIMENSIONS OF RADICAL(ISING) MILIEUS

Summary of Key Findings

+ The 'traditional', heteronormative, patriarchal family unit was found to be central to the world views of research participants in many of the milieus – both Islamist extremist (ISE) and 'right-wing' extremist (RWE) – studied.

+ The centrality of the family unit to a healthy society and traits associated with positive masculinity were identified as foundational gendered ideological influences on the attitudes, roles and behaviours expressed within both ISE and RWE milieus.

+ Male and female roles were understood as naturally different, signifying complementarity rather than inequality. However, some participants across the milieus actively rejected these prescribed roles for themselves, suggesting the need to distinguish between ideology and lived experience.

+ Many cited the moral crisis and chaos, believed to be caused by 'modernity' as a key motivating factor for their participation within a milieu. Several male respondents (in the UK and Norway) also referred to the desire to act as 'protector' of native cultural values and of women as an additional motivation.

+ Most respondents justified their own strategic deployment of gender as a response to an oppositional milieu's understanding and construction of gender.

+ In Western European countries of study, the instrumentalisation of gender within RWE milieus contributed to the politicisation of gender and Islam within wider society.

The DARE Research

This research briefing is based on qualitative data collected and analysed as part of the DARE (Dialogue About Radicalisation and Equality) project. The project focuses on young people (loosely defined as those aged 15 to 30 years) and on two strands of extremism, which we refer to as 'Islamist' extremism (ISE) and 'right-wing' extremism (RWE).

The DARE project uses a mixed-methods approach and has multiple research strands. In this research briefing, data are drawn primarily from 19 milieu-based ethnographic case studies (10 of ISE milieus, 9 of RWE milieus) in 12 countries including just under 400 semi-structured interviews.

We cannot do justice to the complexity and contentious nature of many terms used in this briefing. For brief conceptual

definitions, see: http://www.dare-h2020.org/concepts.html. For critical discussion and contextualisation of these terms, please consult the individual research reports: http://www.dare-h2020.org/research-reports.html

Further information on the project and participating institutions can be found at the end of this briefing.

Introduction

This briefing considers the gendered dimensions of radicalisation based on findings from across 19 ethnographic case studies of radical(ising) milieus. Of the total number of respondents (n=369) interviewed in our case studies, 23% were women and 77% were male (see Figure 1). Respondents in three case studies (Russia and Belgium [ISE] and France [RWE]) were exclusively male. However, we view gender dimensions of radicalisation to be significant even where women are absent or marginal in radical milieus. 'Gender' should not be conflated with the study of the role of women in such milieus or the identification of 'women-specific' explanations for radicalisation; gender inflects every stage of radicalisation (Pearson, Winterbotham & Brown, 2021).
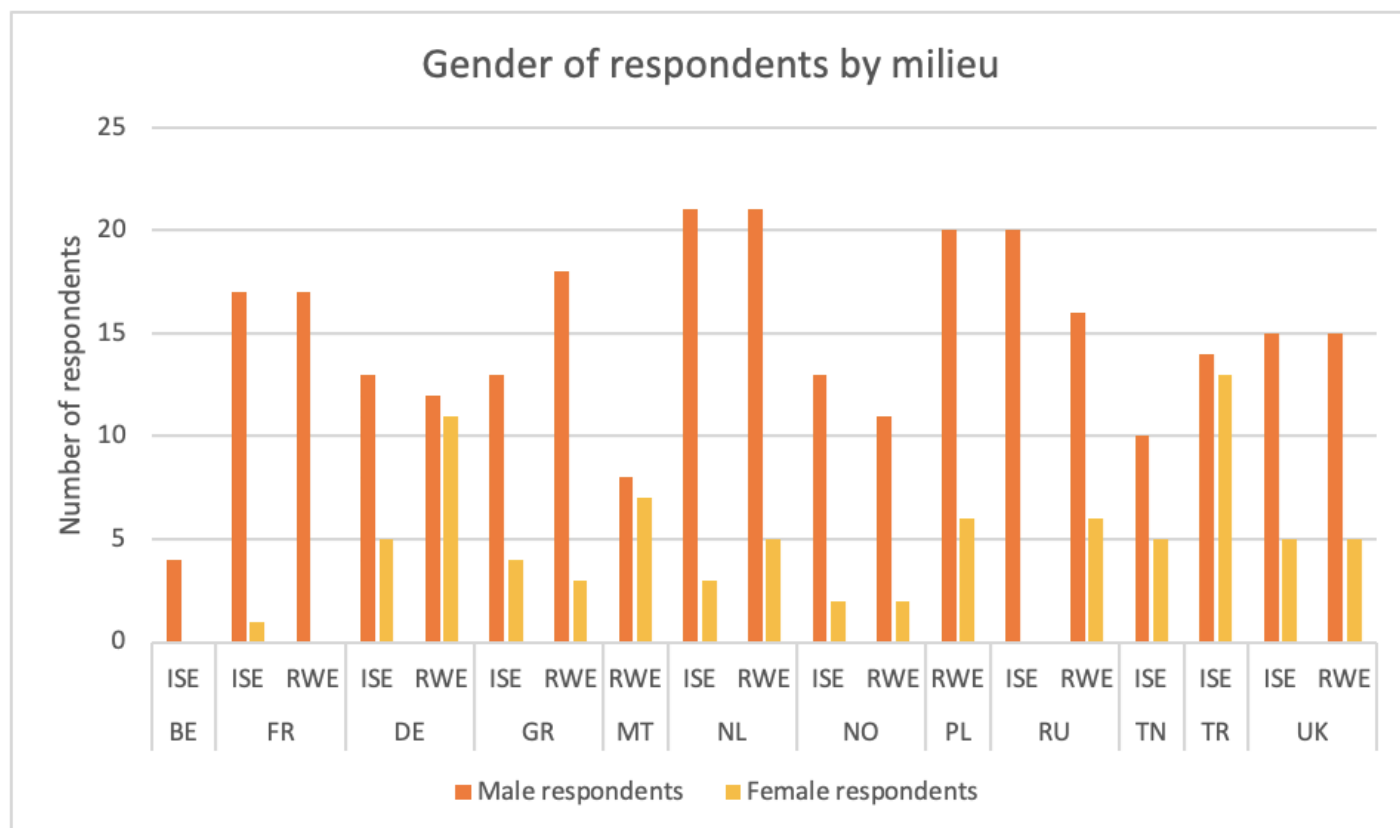

Figure 1: Gender composition of the milieu

In this briefing we highlight four areas where gender was found to manifest in the milieus studied: ideologies; roles; motivations; and the strategic deployment of gender. While the themes explored here are pertinent to all cases, it is important to note that the similarities and differences identified between case studies must be seen in context (both national and milieu specific). By this, we mean that what appear to be quite extreme views (e.g. on intolerance towards LGBT+ rights) in some milieus may be quite mainstream in particular national contexts. Moreover, even within specific case studies there is a wide diversity of opinion. Where possible, we seek to indicate this variation but this is explored more thoroughly in the individual case study reports (http://www.dare-h2020.org/research-reports.html).

Previous research identifies gender as a key factor in radicalisation. In the study of RWE, gender has been seen to act as a protective factor against radicalisation for women and a risk factor for men (Kitschelt, 2007; Mudde, 2014) although the recent 'mainstreaming' of ideas traditionally associated with right-wing extremism would suggest that this 'gender gap' in RWE support and activism is likely to decrease (Miller-Idriss & Pilkington, 2017).

Comparative discussions note the 'relative dominance of men' and a 'reliance' on gender binaries (Pearson, 2020:3) which has resulted in overlooking women's participation in extremist milieus (Blee & Deutsch, 2012; Orlav, Shreeves &

Radjenovic, 2018). While there has been an increase in research into women and extremism, this has tended to focus on roles rather than ideological commitment (as outlined by Sjoberg & Gentry, 2016) and, especially, on the participation of women in violence (True & Eddyono, 2021). While women's role in violence is understood as transgressive of gender-appropriate roles, for men who have suffered political and economic disempowerment, the use of violence has been seen to enable an external performance of masculinity that reasserts their place in the gender order (Aslam, 2014:148; Kimmel, 2014:71; Garland & Treadwell, 2011:621).

Gendered ideologies

Ideological positions articulated by ISE and RWE milieu respondents reveal two key gender dimensions: the centrality of the family unit to a 'healthy' society; and traits associated with positive masculinity. Such ideologies exert a foundational influence on the attitudes, roles and behaviours in all milieus, although manifest differently within each case study.

Centrality of the family unit to a 'healthy' society

The ideal-typical family was constructed as a traditional, heteronormative and patriarchal unit across both milieus, enhanced by the affirmation of different but complementary gender roles and threatened by non-heterosexual identities. The belief that male and female social and familial roles are naturally different was found across ISE milieus in the Netherlands, Germany, Russia and Turkey as well as among RWE milieus in Norway, the UK, Malta, the Netherlands and Russia. These role differences are considered complementary, rather than constituting gender inequality. 'Equality' is considered unachievable because men and women have biologically different abilities.

> **FATMA (TURKEY, ISE)**
>
> *'Are women and men equal? They are not equal, they are each other's counterpart, they are a match. There is a great metaphor on this issue; men and women are similar to a pair of shoes. Each has no meaning without the other in the pair. I really like this metaphor. […] Being a pair is something, being equal is something else. Allah created us within different natures. I cannot be as powerful as a man in physical terms. He is superior to me in physical power as well as in terms of courage. […] But men are not as caring as women. Allah created women as caring creatures in order to mother their children. We are not equal. We are counterparts.'*

'[…] we don't see it as the superiority of man over woman […] it's rather that men and women, nature is such that, their functions are different.'
Nikolai (Russia, RWE)

'[…] the family is the spinal cord of the nation […]'
(Daniel, Malta, RWE)

As Figure 2 demonstrates, when performed alongside each other, these roles are understood as creating a 'whole'. Recognising the natural-ness of these differences is considered necessary for maintaining the traditional family unit, yet the framing of natural roles within the milieus differed. Research participants in ISE milieus, and some Russian RWE respondents, referred to God-given characteristics as justifying binary gendered roles. Tradition constructs gender differentiated roles, whilst adherence to these roles reinforces the continuation of such traditions.

Respondents from the RWE milieus in Malta, the UK, the Netherlands and Norway similarly framed the existence of gendered roles in relation to maintaining tradition. However, in these RWE milieus the importance of establishing a socio-culturally stable and ethnically homogenous nation was emphasised.

The patriarchal family unit is vital to the existence of a nation: '[…] We should stimulate them [women] financially and morally to be at home with the kids. It is good to build up a strong nuclear family as a core cultural feature' (Gunnar, Norway, RWE). It offers structure and support, maintaining a stable society. R14 (Netherlands, RWE) describes the family unit as a symbol of morality. Failure to adhere to gender roles, he says, '…leads to an immoral society with drugs and prostitution […]'.

ALEX (MALTA, RWE)

Alex believes that binary gendered roles are rooted in a natural 'inequality':

'[…] we do believe that a man and a woman have different roles, that they are different physically, biologically, emotionally. They are different, we should embrace that […]'

Exemplify 'masculinity' through:

Physical strength (combat sports) – TR [ISE]; PL [RWE]; RU [ISE & RWE]

Courage – RU [ISE & RWE]; TR [ISE]

Leadership – (domestic) NL [RWE]; (religious) DE [ISE]

Protector – MT [RWE]; UK [RWE]

Provider – MT [RWE]

Jihadi – TN [ISE]

MALE ROLES & ATTRIBUTES

'[…] men and women are similar to a pair of shoes […]'
(Fatma, Turkey, ISE)

Exemplify 'femininity' through:

Motherhood (give birth; raise children, be caring & nurturing) – TR [ISE]; NL [ISE]; MT [RWE]; RU [RWE]

Wife (domestic tasks) – TR [ISE]; RU [RWE]; DE [RWE]; MT [RWE]

Transmit cultural heritage, consolidate economic, cultural & spiritual life – RU [RWE]; TN [ISE]

FEMALE ROLES & ATTRIBUTES

Figure 2: Emic understandings of complementary gender

Several respondents from the UK's and Norway's RWE milieus showed appreciation for certain aspects they perceived as central to Islam such as strong family values (Billy, UK, RWE). This stems from a perception that these values help to entrench and maintain traditional gender roles.

Yet, the fulfilment of biologically gendered roles as central to sustaining the family unit was not universally accepted. Within the RWE milieus of Norway, Malta, and the Netherlands, male and female respondents disagreed, exemplified by Lara (Malta) and Tina (Norway). For Lara, 'women have their own identities', which can only be realised through equal rights and equal access to opportunities in education and employment. Tina, in contrast, dissociates herself from the roles of wife and mother that she sees as 'natural' for the majority of women but 'not for me'. Her own much more liberal gender practice is justified by associating herself with the 'elite' who are above 'the masses' who perform traditional female roles.

MIRRA (POLAND, RWE)

'Homosexual marriages? No, absolutely not, because, after all, how can you have two fathers or two mothers? I can't even imagine that, we're... A traditional family, that's what a family is, exactly, a mother and a father, and then there can be children, and if there are two people of the same sex, well, then it's not possible for them to produce children. So in my opinion that's also why these people shouldn't adopt children or get married, also because according to the Church and the tradition in Poland, which I agree with, well, a family is made up of a man and a woman.'

As same-sex couples are unable to 'naturally' conceive, homosexuality is seen by most respondents to threaten the gendered ideology embodied in the heteronormative family unit and to subvert adherence to appropriate gender roles. The family is the primary space where culture and traditions are passed down. The destruction of the family unit equates to the destruction of culture and wider society. This is explored in more detail in relation to modernity later in the briefing.

Traits associated with positive masculinity

The second strongly gendered position identified across a number of milieus is the association of specific traits with positive masculinity. Both Russian milieus associate positive masculinity with physical strength, learned and displayed in combat sports clubs. The RWE milieus of Poland and the UK associate positive masculinity with solidarity and, in the Polish milieu and part of the UK milieu, ritualised football fighting constructs an otherwise absent social space within which traits associated with positive masculinity are displayed.

Development of physical strength in combat sports clubs

Combat sports, such as Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), clubs are a common social site dedicated to the development of physical strength associated with positive masculinity within ISE and RWE milieus. Women are usually excluded from these spaces, although Tina (Norway, RWE) is an exception.

MMA clubs were popular among ISE respondents in Russia and Turkey and seem to be key sites of encounters with radicalising messages and agents. Participation in such clubs suggests the centrality of wider cultural and socialisation practices shaping radicalisation processes.

Russian RWE military self-training activities and combat sports clubs in the Polish, Dutch and German RWE milieus were central to the respective milieus (although not always sites of radicalisation). Learning hand-to-hand combat is considered a method of preparing to defend tradition and homogenous cultural and ethno-nationalist identities. The justification of the use of combat through 'defence' also normalises the existence of an ideological 'Other'. Through uniting against the 'Other', members form a 'brotherhood'.

Comparison of the Russian ISE and RWE milieus reveals similarities in the assimilation into religious and socio-cultural norms of positively associated masculine traits such as physical strength. This further embeds ideas of 'tradition' (see Figure 3).

Gender segregation and behaviour regulation are traditions practised by both milieus which aim to sustain patriarchal ways of life and maintain existing social orders where masculinity is defined in opposition to femininity. The Russian ISE milieu strictly regulates gender and behavioural expectations, exemplified by segregating young people by gender. In contrast, women's roles within the Cossack community are more ambiguous demonstrating disparity between idealised characteristics and embodied actions.
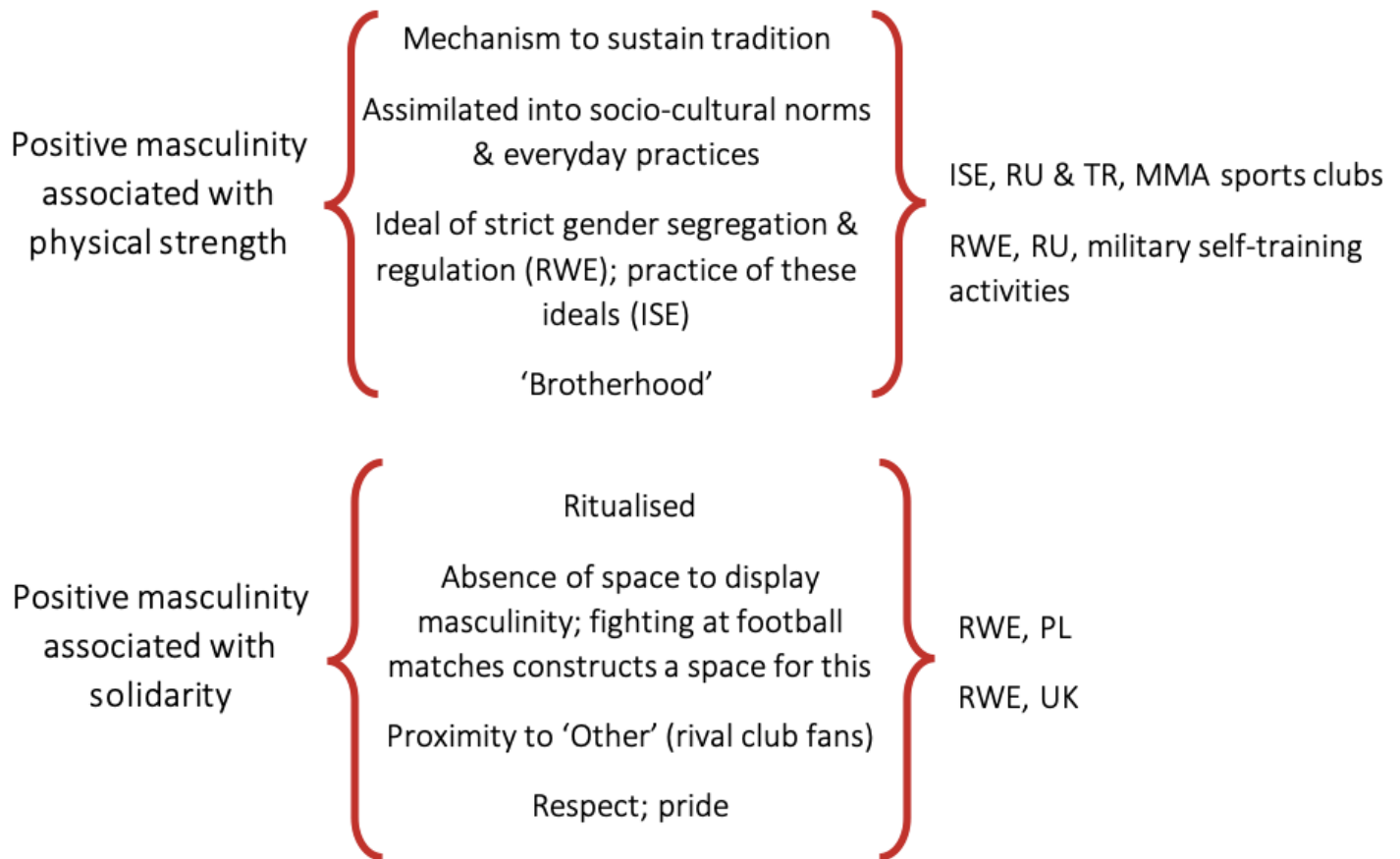
Positive masculinity associated with physical strength {
Mechanism to sustain tradition

Assimilated into socio-cultural norms & everyday practices

Ideal of strict gender segregation & regulation (RWE); practice of these ideals (ISE)

'Brotherhood'
} {
ISE, RU & TR, MMA sports clubs

RWE, RU, military self-training activities
}

Positive masculinity associated with solidarity {
Ritualised

Absence of space to display masculinity; fighting at football matches constructs a space for this

Proximity to 'Other' (rival club fans)

Respect; pride
} {
RWE, PL

RWE, UK
}

Figure 3: Summaries of traits associated with positive masculinity

Constructing solidarity through ritualised football fighting

Ritualised football fighting, performed by RWE milieu members in Poland and the UK, associates positive masculinity with solidarity. In proximity to an identified 'Other', such as fans of a rival club, this ritualised fighting can be understood as demonstrating an individual's pride in defending their club's honour (Jan, PL). It further provides a mechanism by which respect can be gained.

Violence is constructed as a mechanism for individuals to display their masculinity, express solidarity with members of their club, and for some, such as Paolo (UK), to gain respect from others: '[…] it's not that I enjoy fighting, but the respect and the notoriety that comes with it – that is more appealing than the actual giving a kicking bit.'

Poland, RWE

Football fighting is an established tradition in the Polish milieu which entrenches enmities between fans (Piotr; Jan). Fights between clubs are often pre-planned for after a match.

That there are established, although unwritten, rules and an element of organisation implies that fighting has become part of the ritual of football match attendance:

'*There is this unwritten contract between the fans that the fights are unarmed. Cracovia and Wisła Krakow fans break this rule, they swing at each other with machetes, axes, and baseball bats. When we arranged fights in the woods, there was, for example, an agreement that someone would pull the emergency cord on the train and the fans would get off where we were to meet.*' (Panufcy)

Jan and Pawel further describe how football fighting strengthened bonds of solidarity between group members:

'*[…] those who went on trips were, like, more unified. Because they were together on that train and, like it [or] not, when we got attacked, they had to fight.*' (Pawel)

'*In football, they stoke this hatred for other clubs. I only beat people up because they weren't my guys, but strangers.*' (Jan) Jan explains further, '*I didn't do it to hurt anyone, but for others to see that I was doing it.*'

The presence or absence of gendered roles

As outlined above, many case studies analysed hold an ideal of a strict gender regime where the traditional family unit is produced through adherence to appropriate gender roles. ISE cases demonstrated a greater coherence of position compared to RWE milieus, possibly owing to the unified religious ideology that justifies gendered segregation. There is greater fragmentation within and between case studies across the RWE milieu spectrum, where generally women and men participate in a range of roles.

For ISE milieus in Turkey, Tunisia and the Netherlands, the home is constructed as a woman's domain. Several male respondents from the Netherlands asserted the powerful position women hold within the household, while in Turkey, all female respondents positively articulated their identities as wives, daughters and sisters.

By forming 'networks of women' that arrange marriages, mothers and older sisters are ideologically important to maintaining the existing social order in Tunisia. Women perform a social role compatible with the overarching strict gender regime; they influence the public sphere whilst fulfilling accepted gender roles from within the home. Women in the Russian RWE perform a similar, ideologically important role by acting as transmitters of Cossack culture.

R18 (NETHERLANDS, ISE)

Although she does not share this belief, R18 reflects on the theological justification many in the ISE milieu place on motherhood as the ideal role for women.

'*[…] paradise is under your mother's feet. So when the prophet is asked, who do you owe the most honour? Then it is: your mother, your mother, your mother.*'

In contrast, men in ISE milieus are present and active in public-facing spaces, fulfilling more formalised ideological roles, as Imams or other leadership positions within mosques. In Turkey and Tunisia, this differentiation of roles extended to framing 'jihad' as a 'men's affair' (Insaf, Turkey, ISE). Consequently, although women and men in Turkey shared similarly radical views, women were less likely to act on these views in practice, as this would necessitate engaging in the public sphere.

Women and men were observed as participating in 'equal roles' within the RWE milieu in the UK, including giving speeches and organising events. Unlike other milieus, women did not report any barriers to participatory or leadership activities, and violence was not an exclusively male behaviour.

While most participants are male, there are a higher number of women concentrated within specific interest groups, active around causes including the protection of children, and supporting female victims of organised sexual exploitation, rape, and abuse. Within these spaces, women are accorded a certain authenticity and moral authority.

Yet engagement in 'equal roles' occurred within a wider culture of gender discrimination, sexualised banter and objectification. Although the sexual exploitation of women was condemned at the ideological level, many female respondents shared experiences of inappropriate behaviour from the movement's men. Examples range from comments on a woman's appearance, inappropriate physical contact, to expectations of a relationship. Such instances indicate a difference between ideological ideals and practical behaviour.

ADAM (UK, RWE)

Referring to his work in an anti-'grooming gangs' organisation, Adam states: '...there's more women in our team and that speaks volumes really, 'cause obviously it's predominantly women that'll suffer rape or suffer grooming.'

'Just little things like when he went to leave, he put his hand round my waist.'

(Alice, UK, RWE)

In German Marksmen's clubs, attitudes towards female participation varied; differences were regional and localised, even varying across clubs located in the same city. Most clubs allow women to participate as members but others limit their inclusion to participation in domestic, 'background' tasks including making and serving food, attending to uniforms, and setting up events.

ANTON (GERMANY, RWE)

.'...Uhm but I think many women also understand that this is just a kind of man's game ('Männerspiel'). And uhm the women have their "role". This should not be derogatory at all...'

Respondent attitudes echo this split, although most markswomen condemn the exclusion of women from some clubs.. Others refer to 'tradition' (Vanessa) or 'custom' ('*Brauchtum*') (Mona) to justify or at least explain female exclusion. Many, such as Anton, argue that women perform different roles anyway so do not need to hold membership in the same manner as men: women '*already have their groups. Just not in uniform*'.

While our study shows that all milieus have some notion of ideal gender roles and spaces, it is important to compare these not only across different milieus but also to their own national and cultural context. The ethnographic nature of the research also reveals that there is often a gap between stated ideals on gender roles and their everyday performance.

Gendered motivations: modernity's threat to traditional values

Motivations for participation in radical milieus vary. However, many of our respondents described their activism as a response to the perception that 'modernity' has created moral crises and chaos, threatening 'traditional' values.

'The West, which is trying to masculinise women, is today trying to make them slaves of the tesettursüz (unveiled) modernity.' **(Gulsin, Turkey, ISE)**

Characterised by hedonism and individualism, 'modernity ' is used as a blanket term to indicate numerous socio-cultural and behavioural changes that milieu members oppose. Many repeatedly referred to alternative sexualities and feminism as primary threats, considering the impact of these on nationhood and identity ideals. In both RWE and ISE milieus there was a tendency to react to these perceived crises by reasserting traditional values.

Not all participants in all case studies held such views although those who held more 'liberal' positions tended to be in the minority. Moreover, several respondents - from RWE milieus in Norway and the UK – explicitly articulated their participation in the milieu as motivated by the desire to 'protect' tradition. This identity as 'protector' is central also to understanding how gender is strategically deployed (see below).

Nation and Identity

RWE respondents described how the ideals of identity and nationhood were under threat from increased immigration and the subsequent demographic changes to the population.

Russian participants in both milieus and RWE Greek respondents expressed the link they felt between religious and national identities. Of the ISE milieus, only Russian respondents stated a concern for the erosion of regional, rather than national, identity. For Russian Cossack (RWE) and Greek Orthodox (RWE) respondents, national and religious identities are inseparable. Faith is related to ideas of the 'Fatherland', where 'Fatherland' is central to self-understandings of identity. Such interdependence is displayed in Figure 4, which

Figure 4: Fatherland-Religion-Family triptych

illustrates the Fatherland-Religion-Family triptych. Vaggelis and Zinovia (Greece, RWE) both share their concerns that Greece is abandoning this triptych of national values and traditions, resulting in socio-cultural instability.

Malta's RWE milieu also connects nation and identity to religion. Less than half of respondents identified as Catholic, yet dominant notions of nationality are intrinsically linked to Catholicism. Immigration and abortion posed the main threats to the Maltese traditional family model and national values. The extremist political party Alleanza Nazzjonali Repubblikana ('National Republican Alliance', ANR) approached this from a position of Catholic morality, while Azzjoni Nazzjonali ('National Action', AN), and Moviment Patrijotti Maltin ('Maltese Patriots' Movement', MPM) took secular perspectives. Concerned with changes to population demographics, AN and MPM argued that immigrants have a higher birth rate and so will significantly alter Malta's 'native' population. This stance further manifested as opposition to mixed-race marriages.

BILLY (UK, RWE)

'…you have women from here […] having maybe four or five abortions. But Islamists would be coming in maybe having ten kids. So it's going to change the demographics completely.'

Similar secular positions were held by some from the UK's and Netherlands' RWE milieus. For Billy (UK), family forms the basis of the nation, so 'strong family' is equated with 'strong nationhood'. For him, opposition to abortion was ideological rather than religious, stemming from concerns about changing population demographics, and fears that the ethnically 'native' population would become the minority. For several participants in the Netherlands abortions are perceived as preventing the creation of a superior white race.

Alternative sexualities

Across both ISE and RWE milieus, religion was found to be deployed as a mechanism to justify opposition to alternative sexualities.

ISE respondents from Turkey and Russia framed homosexuality as a significant threat to Islamic values, believing it to be against God's will. Many perceived liberal attitudes to homosexuality to create a 'chaotic' world. Several respondents in Turkey argued for the criminalisation of homosexuality, with Russian respondents viewing 'any deviation from "normal" gender relations' as a Western import designed to undermine the Muslim world.

NADIA (NORWAY, ISE)

'I can say that, with my background and culture and religion and everything, it [homosexuality] is not an acceptable thing […]'

For RWE respondents from Poland, Russia and Greece, where more conservative social norms tend to prevail also in wider society, intolerance to alternative sexualities is justified through religious belief. Religious canons are invoked in support of key institutions transmitting traditional values, including the heteronormative family unit. From this perspective, 'modernity', exemplified by homosexuality, is a cultural attack against Christianity, national values and family. Protection of traditional values equates to the protection of religion.

A minority of respondents from ISE milieus in the Netherlands, the UK and Norway diverged from the prevailing negative attitude towards LGBT+ identities. Two of Norway's ISE respondents indicated tolerance of same-sex relationships, if kept to the private sphere. Both declared that while they may not personally agree with same-sex relationships, ultimately sexuality is a personal issue that cannot be regulated.

> **VAGGELIS (GREECE, RWE)**
>
> *[…] And, of course, the institution of the family which is being degraded through new, additional, artificial rights such as gay couples' marriages, or child adoption by gay couples, things that will lead to freak families and people with psychological problems.'*

Feminism and women's sexual self-determination

Diverse views are held about feminism. R1 (male) from the Netherlands' RWE milieu was positively inclined towards feminism, self-identifying as a feminist. Yet the dominant narrative across the cases depicted feminism, and its associated increase in women's sexual self-determination, as presenting one of the greatest threats of modernity to traditional values. In Norway's ISE milieu, feminism signifies the 'coming Doomsday', while R16 (Netherlands, RWE), who is male, asserts that feminism disrupts the 'natural' role of women, causing family breakdowns by encouraging women to have careers and get divorced. Several respondents from RWE milieus in the UK and Netherlands oppose feminism, perceiving it as an ideological enemy rather than a tool for empowerment Many associate feminism with the Left, based upon the emphasis both ideologies place on achieving equality between the sexes, which many RWE milieus reject because men and women have different biological functions.

A further similarity between the UK's and Netherlands' RWE respondents is the belief that feminism is redundant in the West (Tonya, UK), being only relevant for Islamic cultures (R16 [male], Netherlands).

Alice and Imogen (UK, RWE) display more ambiguous attitudes towards feminism. While both say they reject it, they simultaneously express views which could be interpreted as in line with some of the core values of feminism. While both women challenge conservative attitudes towards gender, traditional gender role assumptions and images, these views do not meet the threshold for their definitions of 'feminism'. This demonstrates the importance of understanding how concepts are understood by actors within milieus themselves and how they become framed within wider milieu ideology.

Strategic deployment of gender

Respondents in neither ISE nor RWE milieus saw the groups and movements in which they were involved to be strategically deploying gender. Rather, research participants understood their positions to be responsive; necessitated by either morally reprehensible gender attitudes and practices (RWE) or wilful misrepresentation or misunderstanding of such (ISE) within the opposing milieu. Examples of how this is expressed in ISE and RWE milieus are depicted in Figure 5. However, RWE respondents were more concerned with, and placed greater emphasis on, their interpretation of how ISE milieus understand and construct gender regimes than vice versa. Since this perception was central to their justification of anti-Muslim rhetoric and behaviour, it can be seen as an ideological instrumentalisation of gender.
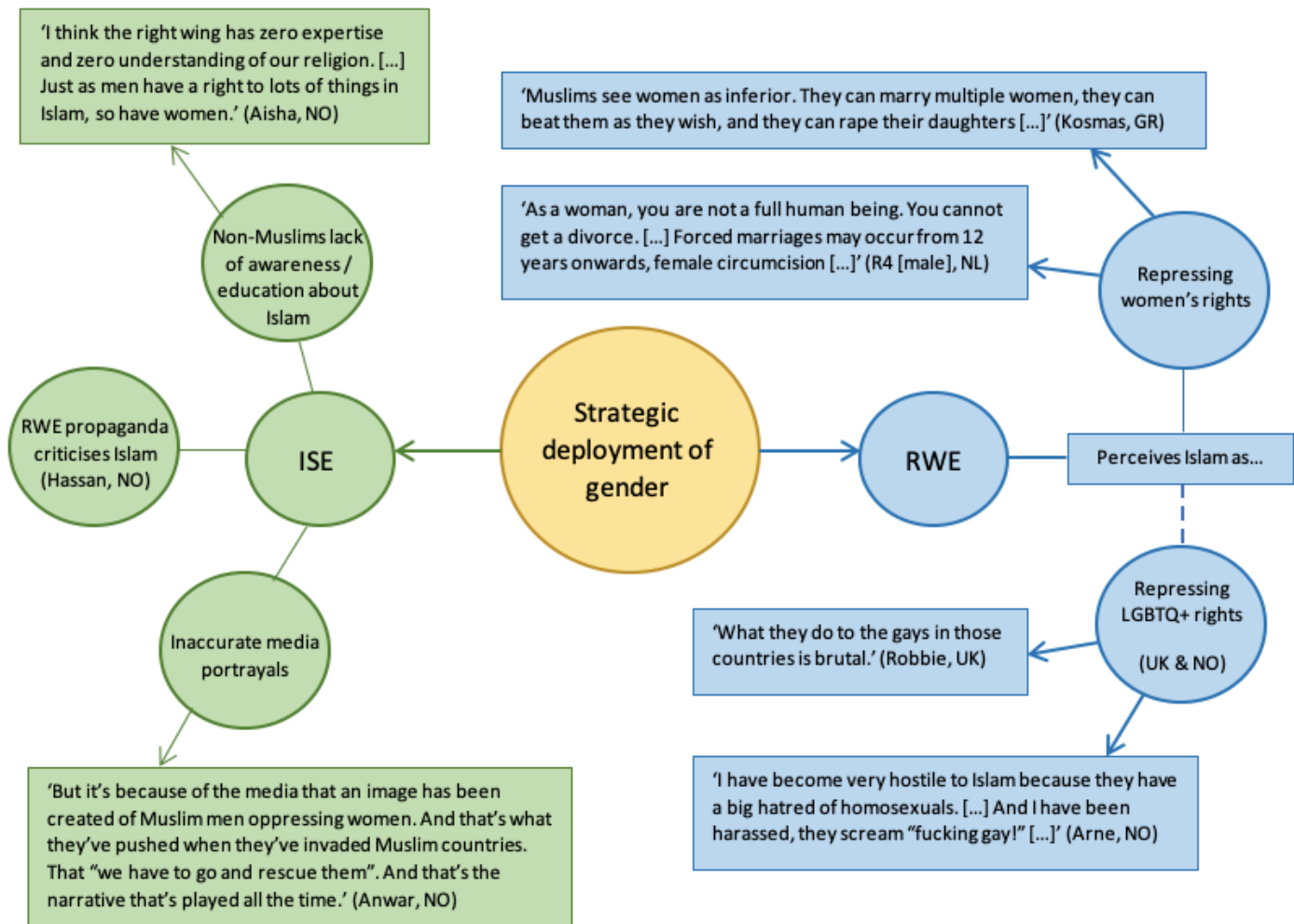
Figure 5: The strategic deployment of gender in ISE and RWE milieus

Protecting women and LGBT+ against 'Islamisation': RWE narratives

Reflection on the Islamist construction of gender, and assertion that it is wrong, manifests in various ways in RWE milieus in Russia, the UK and Norway. Many RWE respondents positioned their milieu as reacting to the threats posed to women by Muslim men and wider discrimination and oppression, exemplified by 'barbaric' practices associated with Islamist ideology and perceived to be counter to 'Western' values (Anita's father, Norway). Limitations on women's freedom were cited as the main incompatibility with Western values, alongside Muslim women being treated as inferior 'objects' (Melpo, Greece). RWE milieus are concerned that immigrants import such practices with them and seek to impose them on the West.

As such, respondents from the RWE milieu, particularly in Greece, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands, refer to themselves as 'protectors' of native cultural values and women. Women are positioned as 'victims' in need of protection against 'an alien ideology' and 'the 'dangerous' Muslim man (Wigger, 2019). The protection of native women from Muslim men in this way becomes integral to preserving the purity of the nation and value-laden performances of hegemonic masculinity in response to this perceived threat.

While not the predominant view, several participants from Norway and the UK extend this 'victim/protector' narrative to include the protection of LGBT+ rights. For some, these rights are reified as liberal values in need of protection from Islam and represented as indicative of the greater tolerance among RWE milieus than enshrined in Islamic doctrine. This has led

to arguments that gender and LGBT+ equality are deployed as 'instruments of anti-Islam rhetoric' (Spierings & Zaslove, 2015:143) where Islam is perceived as threatening these freedoms.

However, in some RWE milieus, respondents report a genuine commitment to creating a more comfortable environment for LGBT+ participants and the presence and acceptance of openly gay couples. Reflecting on the movement as a whole, Will (UK, RWE) concludes that it remains split on gay rights but that the divide is not ideological but one between Christians and seculars. In the UK RWE, indeed, the prime focus of discussion appears to have shifted to issues of gender fluidity: *'[…] someone wants to be gay, what's the problem, you know what I mean? The only thing I am against, and this is not me being homophobic, I'm against all these hundred genders and all this crap. It's gone beyond a joke, and gender neutral and... beyond a joke, to be fair. There's only two genders – a man and a woman. Doesn't matter if you're gay or you want to be transsexual, but you're a man or you're a woman.'* (Dan, UK, RWE)

The politicisation of gender and Islam: ISE narratives

For ISE respondents in the Netherlands and Norway, accounts and interpretations of male-female relationships and the difference in conceptions of gender between those within and those outside of Islam constitutes a source of continual misunderstanding (Abdi, Norway). From the perspective of the ISE respondents, this process illustrates how the RWE instrumentalises gender against Muslim communities (see Figure 5).

For ISE respondents from the Netherlands such misunderstandings were evident in the way in which the 'Muslim woman' had become a politicised identity subject to external monitoring by the state. We find that in our Western European case studies, the RWE's instrumentalisation of gender, as outlined above, contributes to this politicisation of gender and Islam. In the West, where Muslim populations are in the minority, wider society is often exclusionary, basing attitudes towards Muslims upon negative stereotypes which incorrectly conflate Islam with radicalism and construct the 'Muslim Other'.

Contentious, public debates surrounding veiling are central to this politicisation, involving those inside and outside of Islam. Prevailing Western European attitudes interpret veiling as counter to a woman's freedom, using rhetoric surrounding women's choice to frame the debate.

'[…] it is women who face many challenges, they have ten times more difficulties than men, because the woman is the one who needs to be covered [the Islamic way], who covers her body and abandons the habits that she had before [as a non-Muslim or as a non-practising Muslim].' Vassilis, (Greece, ISE)

As documented by others (see, for example: Zempeh and Awan, 2017), 'visible' Muslims are subject to increased harassment and intimidation, making women who wear the veil disproportionately more likely to experience overt discrimination. Although a key difference between women's and men's experiences, this was not found to necessarily equate to, or manifest as, having a direct relationship to, radicalisation processes or trajectories. Figure 6 illustrates the various exclusionary societal practices and attitudes that were experienced by many of the Muslim women interviewed as part of DARE's research.

Restrictions on veiling, exemplified by 'burka bans', are understood by those within the ISE milieu, and some RWE respondents across the case studies, as intrinsically curtailing Muslim women's freedom and right to choose. In Germany, almost all RWE female respondents, and some men, felt that wearing a headscarf should not be prohibited for reasons of religious freedom. Yet, many held reservations about a full veil or burka being worn, suggesting degrees of acceptability and a conflation of the burka with extremism.
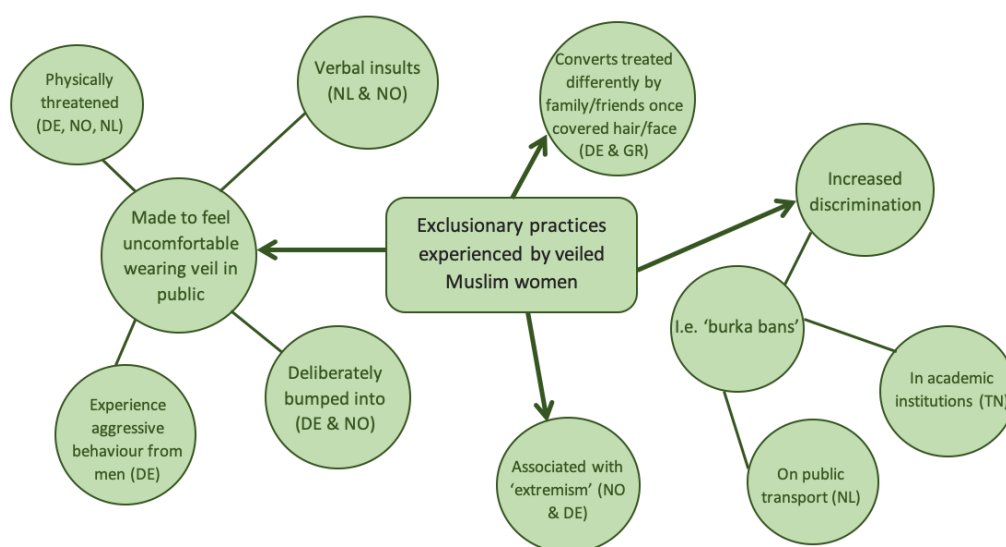
Figure 6: Exclusionary practices experienced by veiled Muslim women

Findings from this study of RWE and ISE radicalising) milieus suggest a number of similarities in relation to their gender dimensions alongside a good deal of diversity within and across milieus.

For both ISE and RWE milieus, the centrality of the heteronormative family unit to creating a 'healthy' society, and the association of traits such as physical strength or solidarity with positive masculinity were evident as ideological aspects that influenced attitudes towards gendered roles and behaviours.

Across both kinds of milieu, 'modernity' was perceived as a root cause of moral crisis and chaos and as posing a threat to 'traditional' values. In response, 'traditional' values are reasserted by respondents. Male and female roles were predominately understood as naturally different, owing to biological functionality. However, rather than signifying inequality, many understood distinct and different male and female roles to be complementary. While support for traditional ways of doing gender appear to be prevalent in the milieus studied, in practice, lives are lived in more complex ways. In reality, few respondents in non-Muslim majority countries of our study were able to adhere to fixed gender roles.

Despite this distinction between ideology and lived experience, ideological ideals remain central to motivating engagement with a milieu and shape the construction of masculinity and femininity in binary opposition to each other.

There are examples of ISE and RWE case studies instrumentalising gender although these activities are rarely recognised as a gendered strategy. Instead, groups emphasised how the opposing milieu strategically instrumentalised gender, reflecting on opposing milieus' understanding and construction of gender to justify their own actions. In some cases, RWE instrumentalisation of gender has contributed to the politicisation of gender and Islam and facilitated the discrimination against veiled Muslim women in wider society.

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