The same pieces to a different puzzle? Comparing radicalisation towards right-wing and Islamist extremism

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University of Glasgow - 2597028

Dublin City University - 20109784

Charles University - 72267375

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Supervisor: Dr. Andrew Judge

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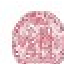

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increase in the presence of far right sentiments and exposure in the Netherlands, numbers show that especially youth seem to be vulnerable to such radicalisation. Youth in general are more vulnerable to extreme ideologies due to vulnerabilities in developmental years from childhood to adolescence. Nevertheless, only a small portion of youth undergo a radicalisation process. The reasons as to why some youths are more perceptible to radicalisation towards the far right are not well understood. This research aims to answer the following research question: Are the factors that impact radicalisation processes of youth towards the far right similar to those in Islamist extremist radicalisation? Since 9/11, a large body of literature has been established that focuses on radicalisation processes within Islamist extremism. Hafez and Mullins (2015) synthesised the existing literature and developed the Radicalization Puzzle model. This model consists of four factors that interact and together form the basis for radicalisation: grievances, networks, ideology and enabling environments. Although the literature provides many valuable insights, not much research exists on radicalisation pathways within the far right, and even less focuses on youth. Furthermore, radicalisation research in general often lacks empirical data and field-insights. Professionals can provide valuable insights to the complex factors that influence radicalisation processes of youth, yet these insights are often overlooked in the academic world. This dissertation aims to fill that gap and contribute to knowledge on far right radicalisation of youth in the Netherlands. Data was collected by semi-structured interviews with professionals (N=4) working in the field of youth radicalisation in the Netherlands. The transcripts were coded, and major themes identified. The findings indicate that radicalisation processes of far right youth and Islamist extremist youth are highly similar. The major theme that the results indicate is the core role that perceptions of injustice play in grievances felt in both far right and Islamist extremist youth.

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1. Introduction

In November 2021, two men, both 19 years of age, got arrested on grounds of spreading extreme right propaganda and committing crimes with a terrorist-intent. In online chatgroups, they shared a scene of American X in which a black man gets murdered, the text along called for re-enacting the scene in real life. One of the men called for "killing all non-white people" and "extinguishing their race" (Heck, 2021). They had also shared a map of the route prime minister Mark Rutte bikes to work. The two men have been sentenced to 30 and 24 months in prison respectively. The men were part of the far right accelerationism movement and exchanged ideas, plans and contacts through Telegram. Accelerationism refers to the extreme right ideology that aims to create or enlarge chaos to accelerate the start of a race war and the replacement of democracy with a white ethnostate (NCTV, 2021). According to the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) a few hundred individuals have radicalised towards accelerationism.

The existence of far right extremism has been consistent throughout history. This consistency could be one of the reasons why it has lacked attention of policymakers and researchers in the security domain. The recurring, but small scaled attacks carried out by far right violent extremists, were often overshadowed by the larger, mediatised attacks executed by Islamist extremists (Bjørgo & Ravndal, 2019). However, data indicates that right-wing extremist inspired violence has increased by 250% over the past six years (Global Terrorism Index, 2020). The data further suggests that although Islamist attacks kill more people, more attacks are carried out by far right extremists in the US and Europe, and they have become deadlier. The 2011 attacks in Norway and the Christchurch attacks in 2019 showcase the threat and capabilities that far right extremists pose and hold. Although often referred to as lone-wolf terrorists, the interconnectedness and globalised nature of this new far right increase is evident. These trends warrant a new investigation of the drivers behind far right violent extremism.

Until recently, right-wing extremism has remained a 'big blind spot' for Dutch policy makers, whose focus has almost exclusively been with Islamist extremism (Ministry of Justice and Security, 2020). Contemporarily though, the potential of violent extremism stemming from the far right has received more attention and preventing and countering this threat moved up the security agenda. According to the latest report, jihadism, accelerationism, and the anti-government movement pose the most significant extremist threat to Dutch national security (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2022). Furthermore, the risk that (fast-radicalising) lone-wolf or small groups resort to violence is larger than in

the past (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2021). While this acknowledgement is important, double standards persist in approaching far right violence versus Islamist extremist violence. Studies show that attacks carried out due to far right ideologies are often mislabelled as hate crime and not encapsulated in the sphere of terrorism (van Puffelen, 2021). Furthermore, not much is known on why individuals increasingly seem to be open to far right ideologies and groups. Sterkenburg (2021) researched the radical and extreme right in the Netherlands for three years and followed over forty individuals. From her findings, she drafted five different pathways of accession to the far right. Such empirical research is crucial as radicalisation studies suffer from a lack of primary data.

The connotation with right-wing extremism has long been one of middle-aged, working-class white men. Research suggests that this connotation distorts reality. As Van Iperen (2022) argues, radical right-wing ideas have become mainstreamed in Dutch society and are supported by individuals from a variety of backgrounds. The role of women in the far right, for example, demonstrates to be pervasive (Jeansonne, 1996; Kenny, 2019; Leidig, 2022). Youth are another, non-homogeneous, group that make up a significant portion of new recruits. In the Netherlands this development is also demonstrated with the increasingly lower age of those who are attracted to the far right (NCTV, 2021). One investigation into far right Telegram chats revealed that the youngest participant was only 14 years old (NOS, 2021). The traditional association of the extreme right with middle-aged male skinheads, with swastika tattoos, seems to be an inaccurate description of the current extreme right scene (Sterkenburg, 2021).

Although a variety of groups in society adhere to extreme ideologies and groups, in general, youth are especially vulnerable. The first reason for this is a natural quest for identity during the transition from childhood to adulthood (Sieckelinck et al., 2019). Relating to this, many young people undergo a rebellion phase during which they are more prone to accept extreme ideologies as a way of resisting their parents and the mainstream or societal structures. Despite the normality of such rebellion, acceptance of extreme ideologies becomes problematic when other groups in society are excluded or when violent action occurs. In the end, only a small portion of youth are actually drawn into extreme groups, and even less become involved in violent extremism (Sieckelinck et al., 2019). Far right ideologies are based on exclusion of other groups and promote the use of violence to achieve their ideals. Besides the damage violent extremism can bring to human lives, it also furthers destabilisation of society and democratic rule of law systems. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the reasons and factors that play a role in why youth turn to far right extreme

ideologies. The answers are undoubtedly incredibly complex, multi-layered, and highly case specific.

The main interest of this paper is the concept of radicalisation among youth towards right-wing extremism. Radicalisation refers to the process individuals undergo to turn from an ordinary citizen into an extremist. Radicalisation research as a field of studies emerged after the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers. The study of radicalisation seeks to understand why individuals turn to extremism, and which factors in their personal lives, but also in society, play a role in this. Radicalisation models aim to display these processes and factors and a variety of these have been created by academics and policymakers. Some models assume a linear process in which an individual moves through several steps with the final destination as carrying out a terrorist attack. More recently, scholars have suggested that linearity should not be assumed and have highlighted the complexity of radicalisation. One model that acknowledges this complexity is the Radicalization Puzzle by Hafez and Mullins (2015). Their proposed radicalization model consists of four factors: grievances, existing networks, ideology and enabling support structures. The model is based on a synthesis of existing models and theories and proposes a non-linear explanation of the radicalisation of Muslim citizens living in the West, mostly Europe. Being a relatively new field and emerging in the aftermath of 9/11, radicalisation studies has mainly focused on Islamist or jihadist extremism.

Given the increased threat stemming from right-wing extremism, it is imperative to understand these underlying radicalisation processes. Early research suggests that the radicalisation processes of right-wing extremists might be more similar than expected to those of Islamist extremists. Some scholars focused on the ideologies of both extremisms and found significant overlap (Abbas, 2020; Ronen, 2020). Others proposed so-called reciprocal radicalisation in which a rise on the one side, Islamist extremism in this instance, has led to a rise in right-wing extremism as a countermovement. This is thought to further reinforce each movement's mobilisation by the other (Knott, Lee & Copeland, 2018; Abbas, 2020). Considering the similarities and possible connectedness of the two most pressing extremist groups in the Netherlands, instead of recreating new models and losing the progress made so far, it is useful to investigate whether what exists can be applied to this increasing threat stemming from the far right.

To that purpose, this dissertation aims to illuminate whether the four puzzle pieces proposed by Hafez and Mullins (2015) encapsulate those factors that contribute towards the radicalisation of far right youth. The objective underlying this aim is to increase

understanding of the radicalisation processes and to provide an initial observation as to whether they are similar to the ones that have been studied extensively. Additionally, these findings could provide a basis for further research to establish whether the projects that attempt to prevent and counter radicalisation are capable of dealing with a changing extremism context.

This paper aims to answer the following research question: Are the factors that impact radicalisation processes of youth towards the far right similar to those in Islamist extremist radicalisation? To answer this question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals in the field of youth radicalisation in the Netherlands. As a discrepancy exists between theory and practice, and radicalisation studies suffer from a lack of empirical data, involving the experience and expertise of professionals will contribute to the academic knowledge which in turn can inform policymakers and organisations.

To answer the research question, the paper is composed of five chapters with a number of subchapters. First, a literature review is presented in Chapter 1 to elaborate on the existing body of literature on radicalisation studies. Second, the methodology and methods taken in this research are discussed in Chapter 2. Third, the results of the interviews and the analysis of the data is presented in Chapter 3. This is followed by a discussion linking the analysis to the existing body of literature in Chapter 4. Finally, concluding remarks and suggestions for future research are provided in the last chapter.

2. Literature Review

To establish a framework for research, it is imperative to first understand the available material on the subject and its historical, contextual, and controversial aspects. First, this chapter covers the definitions of terrorism, extremism, and radicalisation, briefly touches on the historical development of the definitions, and emphasises the complexity of the concepts in 2.1. Second, a situational overview is provided of the current trends in terrorism in subchapter 2.2 to provide a holistic picture of the global, regional, and national context. Third, the history of terrorism, together with the evolution of the study of it is discussed in 2.3. Chapter 2.4 delves into the concept of radicalisation and the various existing theories on radicalisation processes. Fourth, the most current research on comparing radicalisation of a range of extremisms is discussed in subchapter 2.5. This literature review contributes to identifying the gaps and debates in the academic field on the topic of right-wing extremist radicalisation and positions this research within it.

2.1 Defining the problem

Defining the terms relevant to this paper is not an easy task. Terms such as terrorism, radicalisation and extremism are highly complex as well as subjective. They also carry a heavy political burden and varying applications throughout history and geographic location. The aim here is not to provide the 'right' or 'correct' definitions of the terms, but rather to showcase the variety of existing definitions and adopt a working definition needed for discussion of the issues in this paper.

2.1.1 Terrorism

No consensus exists, or has ever existed, on what terrorism exactly is. According to Bakker (2015), "terrorism is a highly complex, highly subjective and politically sensitive topic" (p. 19). In the past, violent political acts by non-state actors were typically exclusively referred to as either anarchist actions or later freedom fighters who were mostly linked with anti-colonialism (Bakker, 2015). Liberation fighters began to be classified as terrorists by their opposing regimes. As this portrays, the first use of the term varies greatly with its contemporary usage. Thus, it is crucial to bear in mind the importance of perspective and context when analysing terrorist group presence and activity. De Graaf (2021) emphasises this: "terrorism is interpreted as a contested concept: as a discursive frame and a political attribution - oftentimes not even properly judicially delineated - with the power to transform conflicting political, ideological or religious positions into repertoires of action and

governmental practices" (p.333). In other words, labelling someone as a terrorist, is highly subjective, and enables the use of a set of hard measures to counter it. Often, these measures are disproportionate to the risk and serve another goal, such as opposition, repression or garnering public support.

'One man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist' is an often employed phrase to showcase the importance of perspective. The meaning of the phrase is exemplified by considering the fact that Nelson Mandela was on the US terrorist list until 2008, although Mandela is now generally considered to be a freedom fighter (Bakker, 2015). In addition to perspective, terrorist labelling is also highly politicised. The former European Union (EU) Counter-Terrorism coordinator Gilles De Kerchove stated in a speech on the terrorist listing of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) on the European Union terrorist list: "The reasons are political. You say that it is a criminal organisation, not a political organisation. That is the message" (De Kerchove, 2009, cited in Casier, 2010). These, not exhaustive, examples display the complex and politicised nature of the term terrorism. Simply put, the designation of someone as a terrorist or a freedom fighter could become a matter of personal political preference (Bakker, 2015).

Nevertheless, according to Bakker (2015) it is important to adopt a common definition on terrorism, for the following three reasons: 1) international cooperation, 2) legal framework, 3) academic world. First, sharing intelligence across states on terrorism requires some consensus on what terrorism is. Second, the lack of a legal definition creates space for abuse by authorities who aim to silence their opposition. Last, for research purposes, a common definition is needed to make data and results comparable (Bakker, 2015).

One of the first attempts to define terrorism was done by Crenshaw (1981, p. 380) who claimed that "terrorism was coined to describe the systematic inducement of fear and anxiety to control and direct a civilian population." Many scholars, and policymakers alike, have since added to this definition or constructed new ones. Annually, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) is published, showcasing data collected on terrorism presence, activities, and trends of the year before. In the 2022 GTI, terrorism is defined as: "the systematic threat or use of violence whether for or in opposition to established authority, with the intention of communicating a political, religious, or ideological message to a group larger than the victim group, by generating fear and so altering (or attempting to alter) the behaviour of the larger group" (p. 6).

As this research is conducted in the Netherlands, and context-specificity is important, definitions given by Dutch institutions are important to highlight. The Dutch

National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) defines terrorism as "threatening with, preparing of or carrying out severe violence towards people, or actions with the aim of achieving social undermining and destabilization, instilling fear among the population or influencing policy making." Compared to the previous definitions given, it is noticeable that the Dutch variant does not include the word 'systematic'. Additionally, the GTI definition incorporates the desired actions of terrorism within the definition, such as 'so altering (or attempting to alter) the behaviour of the larger group', the NCTV definition does not do this, but rather stops at the instillment of fear, and achievement of undermining and destabilisation, as the goal of terrorism. For this paper, the concept of terrorism is not used as much for several reasons. First, as explained throughout this paragraph, terrorism labelling is highly subjective and politicised. Second, the concept of extremism, be it violent or nonviolent, is at this moment more applicable to the dynamics of the far right in the Netherlands, as will be elaborated on later.

2.1.2 Extremism

Extremism can adopt different meanings based on what the norm entails. Extreme ideas refer to those that deviate from that norm extensively. When referring to extremism, Platform Jeugd Preventie Extremisme en Polarisatie [Platform Youth Prevention Extremism and Polarisation] (JEP, 2020) provides a useful definition: "Extremism is the phenomena in which individuals or groups knowingly cross the boundaries of the law to further their ideals."

Extremism can be both violent and non-violent; although extremism in itself does require breaking the law, it does not always employ violent means to do so. The term violent extremism was first coined in an attempt to reshape the effort of counter terrorism away from the Global War on Terror, and the military-focused measures associated with it, towards a softer approach (Bak, Tarp & Lian, 2019). Acknowledging the increasingly widespread use of the term violent extremism, Bak, Tarp and Lian noted the lack of definition. Their research is concluded by proposing the following definition:

> Violent extremism is a violent type of mobilisation that aims to elevate the status of one group, while excluding or dominating its 'others' based on markers, such as gender, religion, culture and ethnicity. In doing so, violent extremist organisations destroy existing political and cultural institutions, and supplant them with alternative governance

structures that work according to the principles of a totalitarian and intolerant ideology. (p. 24)

2.1.3 Radicalisation

The term radicalisation emerged post 9/11 to refer to “everything that happens before the bomb goes off” (Neumann, 2008, p.4). The concept of radicalisation and its emergence will be discussed to greater extent in chapters 2.4 and 2.5. For now, it is important to explain the way in which radicalisation in this paper is interpreted. The definition for radicalisation adopted by the NCTV, and this paper, is:

> A process of increasing willingness to accept the extreme consequences of a way of thinking and to put it into action. This increasing willingness can lead to behaviour that deeply hurts or affects other people's freedom, can lead individuals or groups to turn away from society and can lead to the use of violence.

It is important to note the usage of the word ‘can’ in the possible consequences of radicalisation. This implicitly indicates that a behavioural change, or the use of violence, is not necessary when talking about radicalisation. Although this definition acknowledges that radicalisation does not equate with violent extremism, no distinction is made between the two. For the purpose of this empirical study, it is more useful to adopt the given definition, as the professionals are likely to share a range of experiences, not only with youth who have in reality already turned to the use of violence in the name of an ideology.

2.1.4 Types of terrorism

Terrorist attacks are carried out in the name of all types of ideologies, whether they are politically, idealistic, or religiously motivated. According to Jones, Doxsee and Harrington (2020), four categories of terrorism exist: Right-wing, Left-wing, Religious and Ethno-nationalist terrorism. It is important to note the heterogeneity that exists and that there is a wide variety of groups that operate within the categories. Additionally, the groups are not mutually exclusive as scholars have argued that Islamist extremist ideology also fits within the extreme right narrative (Ronen, 2020). It is beyond the scope of this paper to expand on all types of terrorism, and violent extremism, and many scholars have done so to great extent in the past. What is crucial for this research is to briefly provide a definition on right-wing extremism, in this section, before elaborating on it in subchapter 2.6.

The ambiguity that exists on the concept of terrorism is also clearly present when referring to right-wing extremism. Although discussed to a greater extent later in this chapter, it is necessary to outline what is considered to be right-wing extremism. According to the NCTV (2021), the extreme right encompasses:

> Ideologies such as xenophobia (including: anti-semitism and anti-Islam), hate against foreign (cultural) elements and ultranationalism. Extreme right activists operate within the boundaries of the law, right-wing extremists break the law and extreme right terrorists use violence against human lives based on extreme right ideas.

Sterkenburg (2021) researched the far right in the Netherlands and adopted the following definition: "The pursuit of a homogeneous cultural or ethnic state, through the curtailment of the fundamental rights and civil liberties of religious and ethnic minorities, with or without the use of violence" (p. 39). This paper adopts this definition, as it is context relevant to the Netherlands and based on the most recent, extensive, empirical research conducted on the far right. Although this definition entails both violent and nonviolent extremism, both the radical and extreme right, according to this definition, aim to infringe on individual freedoms and civil rights of minority groups and are therefore in their ideology in conflict with the democratic rule of law system.

2.2 Terrorism Trends

2.2.1 Global overview; focus on Global North

It's necessary to present an overview of the most recent terrorism trends to provide context and perspective. The Global Terrorism Index of 2022 showcases terrorism trends of the year 2021. It shows that the total deaths due to terrorism have fallen by 1.2% compared to 2020, On the other hand, the occurrence of attacks has increased by 17% (GTI, 2022). The increase in number of attacks combined with the decrease in fatalities indicates that attacks have become less lethal (GTI, 2022). Most terrorist attacks (97%) are carried out in countries of conflict, these attacks are also six times more deadly than attacks executed in non-conflict countries (GTI, 2022). According to the data, the region most affected by terrorism is Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular the Sahel, where fatalities due to terrorism have increased by more than one thousand percent between 2007 and 2021. Islamist extremist groups are the main perpetrator of such attacks in the region. Contrarily, the West has seen a substantial decrease of terrorist attacks. This decrease can partially be attributed

to the COVID-19 pandemic, as measures to prevent further spread of the disease limited the gathering and movement of people (GTI, 2022). Since the peak in 2018, the number of attacks has declined by 68%. Despite the decrease and relative low physical and strategic threat of terrorism, it remains constructed by authorities as one of the largest threats to national security (Bakker, 2015). In the Dutch National Security Strategy of 2019, terrorism and violent extremism is mentioned to require undiminished attention and it is deemed to be extremely important to intensify increased capacities where needed, based on current threat levels (NCTV, 2019).

Accounting for the largest portion of terrorism in the West is politically motivated terrorism. Politically motivated terrorism in this index refers to those groups and individuals within far left and far right extremist ideologies. One thing to note is that most of these attacks (95%) are carried out by individuals or groups that are not formally connected to recognised organisations. Since 2007, 30% of fatalities due to terrorism attacks are attributed to far right groups. In Europe, three attacks were carried out by Islamist extremists in 2021, which is the lowest number of attacks since 2014 and constitutes a decrease of 75% compared to 2020 (GTI, 2022).

While the lockdowns implemented by governments to help stop the spread of COVID-19 brought/ensured a decline of terrorism in the West, its secondary effects have been capitalised on by extremists (GTI, 2022). Feelings of alienation, loneliness, loss of income, increased online presence and distrust towards the government are effects of the lockdowns that extremists have utilised to recruit more individuals to their goal (GTI, 2022). The following message was sent in a far right telegram group: “Our message should be that it is not the coronavirus, but the system that is responsible for everything that goes wrong. The more destabilisation occurs, the more people will be ready to accept our ideas. Now that everything is faltering, the time has come to press on.” (Buuren, 2020). As most COVID-19 restrictions have been removed and societies are opening up again, a surge in terrorist activity is expected (GTI, 2022).

2.2.2 Terrorism in the Netherlands

Historical context

As is the case globally, terrorism, in all its forms, has been present in the Netherlands since the start of history. It is not within the scope of this paper to elaborate on a full historical account of terrorism, but rather to provide an overview of the recent developments which triggered, or enabled, the emergence of far right discourse. The paper starts with explaining

the context in which Islamist extremism first took footings in Dutch society and to then expand on its interaction with the rise of the populist right.

The foundation for the first Dutch Salafist network was laid in 1986 by a Saudi charity and was called the El Tawheed Foundation Amsterdam (de Graaf, 2021). However, only a very small minority of those who attended the mosques related to the foundation can be considered jihadi/takfiri. The first public statement of alert to Salafist inspired recruitment was made in 1998 by the Homeland Security (BVD) (former Dutch intelligence agency). Three years later, in 2001, the BVD published a report in which it considered radical Islam, more specifically al-Qa'eda, to be responsible for the biggest terrorist threat (de Graaf, 2021). The 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers happened later in that same year, resulting in a major shift in perceptions surrounding terrorism globally. In the Netherlands, anti-immigration sentiments did not play a major role in Dutch politics until 2002. This changed in the aftermath of 9/11 when the right-wing populist party led by Pim Fortuyn became highly popular (Koopmans & Muis, 2009). Exploiting tensions surrounding immigration and national security, Fortuyn's party was expected to receive a high proportion of votes in the upcoming elections (Ghorashi, 2003). Ultimately, before he could run for elections, he was assassinated by Volkert van der Graaf in 2002. Van der Graaf, considered to be an animal and environmental rights activist, carried out the assassination because of Fortuyn's anti-immigration views. Fortuyn's political party, Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) continued to exist and won 17.5 per cent of the total votes in the May 2022 elections (Koopmans & Muis, 2009). The popularity of the LPF and the assassination of Fortuyn benchmarked the start of a polarised Dutch society, in which Islam and Muslims became securitised (Ghorashi, 2003).

The first jihadist plots to carry out a terrorist attack in the Netherlands were discovered in 2001 and 2002 (de Graaf, 2021). In these plots, the suspects planned attacks in France and Afghanistan. A number of individuals were discovered to have been recruited in a Dutch mosque. In 1995, a former member of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, Redouan al-Issar, had migrated to the Netherlands. He had recruited and mentored a group of Muslim youth of whom multiple were arrested later for terrorist activities (de Graaf, 2021). This group was called the Hofstad Group by the AIVD and became publicly known as such. This group represented a new development in which Europe became seen as "battlefield of jihad" (Vidino, 2007, p. 579). These groups differ from the traditional Islamist extremists, as structured terrorist groups, such as al-Qa'eda, came to be seen as a source of inspiration and ties to these roups only existed in the margins (Vidino, 2007). In November 2004, a member

of the Hofstad Group, Mohammed Bouyeri, assassinated controversial filmmaker and publicist Theo van Gogh (de Graaf, 2021). Van Gogh had created a movie on the relation between abuse of women and Islam, in cooperation with Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Ali is a controversial politician who was born in Somalia and identifies as an ex-Muslim. She is most known for her radical anti-Islam ideology and has received extensive death-threats, one of which was delivered in the note left behind by Bouyeri at van Gogh's body (Vidino, 2007).

Van Gogh's assassination further put Islam on rocky terms with the Dutch public and resulted in public anxiety of Islamist terrorist attacks (de Graaf, 2021). By 2005, the public considered terrorist attacks carried out by the Salafist movement to be the number one problem in the Netherlands (NCTb, 2008). In reality, no further attacks took place and the Salafist community had explicitly distanced themselves from the attacks (de Graaf, 2021). By 2008, the threat from home-grown, autonomous networks was considered to be minimal by the AIVD. Subsequently, the likeliness of a terrorist attack became restricted (de Graaf, 2021).

According to de Graaf (2021), the combination of 9/11 and the 2004 assassination of Van Gogh, caused a major shift in security culture in the Netherlands and marked the start of a "Terrorist-Risk Society" (p. 357). The first Dutch legislation on terrorism was adopted in 2004 from the EU Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism. Bouyeri was tried under these new laws and received a life sentence for murder with terrorist intent. The intelligence services expanded and created new directorates such as Foreign Intelligence and the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism. Immigration and integration became securitised issues and started to be engulfed in the counterterrorism realm. The next major cornerstone in Dutch terrorism trends occurred during the rise of Da'esh. Although major attacks failed to materialise in the Netherlands, an estimated three hundred individuals travelled abroad to join Da'esh (Weggemans et al. 2016). Concerns about foreign fighters returning has been in the public debate and is one of the topics focused on in national security policies.

The previous sections provided a contextual basis in which the far right emerged within Dutch society. It is important to grasp the nuanced environment and the role of politics in how the far right gained popularity, especially because the dynamics now occurring present to be similar. Furthermore, this section was a descriptive account of terrorism trends in the Netherlands, enabling the interpretations that can be made from the results that are discussed in subsequent chapters.

Recent trends

Now that an understanding of the historical context is created, it is useful to address the current art of the affairs. During 2021, the Netherlands witnessed the biggest increment of the impact of terrorism in Europe during 2021, taking the 10th spot of countries most impacted by terrorism in Europe (GTI, 2022). Two attacks were carried out in 2021, one by anti-vaccination extremists and the other by an anarchist group. None of the attacks resulted in fatalities. This absence of fatalities in combination with a marked increase in the impact of terrorism suggests that the occurrence of terrorist attacks is generally low in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, according to the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV), the threat level is set at 3 (NCTV, 2022). This level translates to the existence of a significant threat and further indicates that an attack is conceivable, but concrete signs of an attack are missing. The threat level in the Netherlands is published once or twice a year in the Threat Assessment Netherlands (DTN). The DTN is "a general assessment of radicalization, extremism and of the national and international terrorist threat to the Netherlands and Dutch interests abroad" (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2020, para. 2). The threat level scale runs from 1 to 5 and Table 1 below indicates what each level signifies.

Table 1

Threat level scale

Level 1	Minimal	The chance of a terrorist attack is **unlikely**
Level 2	Limited	The chance of a terrorist attack is **slight**
Level 3	Significant	The chance of a terrorist attack is **conceivable**
Level 4	Substantial	The chance of a terrorist attack is **real**
Level 5	Critical	The chance of a terrorist attack is **imminent**

Note. Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid (2020) Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands - National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism. Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid

At the moment, jihadism, accelerationism, and the anti-government movement pose the most significant extremist threat to national security (NCTV, 2022). Dutch security services posit that jihadist extremism remains an important terrorist threat, but that those affiliated

with it do not. They are barely visible in the public, both online and offline, and it is claimed that the movement has turned inwards. A portion of Dutch society was dissatisfied with the COVID-19 measures and as a response took up protesting. This group consisted of activists and a smaller segment of radicals. This group of extremists is also referred to as anti-government extremists and is fuelled by conspiracy theories that mostly turn against politicians (NCTV, 2022). The far right was also present in the anti-government led protests during the COVID-19 lockdowns and has tried to recruit more members. In doing so, it relied on dissatisfaction with regards to the lockdown and other imposed COVID-19 measures (Seger, 2021). According to the NCTV, three main categories can be discerned within the right-wing extremist landscape: classic right-wing extremism, intellectual right-wing extremism, and accelerationism. Between these categories, accelerationism is the movement that poses the largest threat to the Netherlands (NCTV, 2022).

Accelerationism is defined by the NCTV as the extreme-right ideology that aims to create or enlarge chaos to accelerate the start of a race war and the replacement of democracy with a white ethnostate (NCTV, 2021). To achieve this, accelerationists glorify and justify the use of violence and terrorism. This movement started in the U.S. and quickly spread globally. An estimated few hundred individuals have radicalised towards accelerationism, of which a few pose a violent threat (NCTV, 2022). A high proportion of these youth seem to be dealing with psychosocial problems. Combining that with their young age and low degree of organisation, it is uncertain whether they are capable of planning and executing complex attacks. Nevertheless, the fascination for weapons and the desire to join shooting clubs to gain experience with using weapons is cause for concern. Additionally, the use of 3D printed weapons has become a concern. This concern materialised when in the beginning of 2022 a Dutch man was arrested on grounds of possession of a 3D printed semi-automatic firearm (NCTV, 2022).

Another interesting observation is the eagerness among the far right to join the armed forces. Concerns with regards to extremism in the ranks were researched in the United States. Data shows that recently, there has been a significant increase of individuals with a military background among those who committed extremist offences (Jensen, Kane & Akers, 2022). With regards to the Capital breach of January 6, 2021, at least 151 participants have a U.S. military background, making up for 17.1% of the 882 individuals that are facing charges (Jensen, Kane & Akers, 2022). In the Netherlands, the two 19 year old men that were arrested on grounds of stirring extreme right upheaval and crimes with a terrorist intent in November 2021 were similarly affiliated with the Dutch Defence Force

(Heck, 2021). One of the men convicted had just been accepted to the Dutch Defence Force before he was arrested. The second convict also had ambitions to join the Dutch army (Heck, 2021).

So far, this paper has discussed the terms terrorism, extremism, and radicalisation as, subjective, concepts. Additionally, a foundation of the current state of affairs, as well as its historical roots, is created against which the analysis of the data is assessed in chapter 4. Before continuing, the next section provides an overview of the evolution of radicalisation research, the different types of radicalisation models existing, and the debates in the field. It also elaborates on the Radicalization Puzzle as the theoretical framework adopted in this research. Lastly, it presents comparative research on different types of extremist radicalisation, provides several critical notes and finishes by situating this thesis in the existing literature body.

2.3 Radicalisation Research

As long as terrorism has existed, policymakers and scholars have attempted to understand reasons for its occurrence. Prior to the 1970s, terrorism studies were closely related to other types of political violence and did not develop as a distinct topic (Schmid, 2011). But by the 1970s, as a response to pro-Palestinian attacks and increased terrorist activity in Europe, the study of terrorism started to gain momentum. This research is reactive to different waves of terrorism (Schmid, 2011). Rapoport (2004) coined the concept of the waves of modern terrorism. According to this significant piece of writing, there have been four waves of terrorism thus far, with each wave lasting roughly 40–45 years. The four waves indicated by Rapoport (2004) are: (1) the Anarchist wave, (2) the Anti-colonial wave, (3) the New left wave, and (4) the Religious wave. No consensus exists on whether we are currently still in the fourth wave. Several scholars have theorised on the emergence of a fifth wave. Kaplan (2016) refers to the fifth wave of terrorism as the New Tribalism, in which genocidal or ethnic cleansing is carried out to create a tribal utopia. Neumann (2016) argues that the fifth wave is characterised by lone-wolf, foreign fighters and coins the fifth wave New Jihadists. Others argue that the fifth wave shows a break from religious inspired extremism, but is rather taken by right-wing extremism (Hart, 2021; Auger, 2020).

As the nature of terrorism changed, so did the study of the phenomenon. Early attempts at explaining causes of becoming involved in terrorism believed that the answer was pathological explanations. However, this theory did not hold up against empirical evidence, as no increase in prevalence of pathologies existed in terrorists compared to the

general population (Horgan, 2008). Then, attempts were carried out to create 'terrorist profiles', however, individual personality factors proved to be neither useful nor predictive (Monahan, 2011). After the 9/11 attacks, an investigation into the causes of terrorism was highly sensitive. The public understood this as attempting to draft excuses for the terrorists that had killed so many civilians (Neumann, 2008). Additionally, the terrorists were assumed to be motivated by a violence and hatred that was thought to be inherent to Islam, and further analysis would not make sense (Kundnani, 2012). Distinction between these 'religiously inspired' terrorists and those motivated by political ideologies, such as communism, was made. The former considered to be the new type of terrorism, and referred to as fanaticism, and the latter the old terrorism (Laqueur, 1999). The new type of terrorism warranted hard measures such as military force, as this was considered to be the only thing that could influence such fanaticists. This resulted in the Global War on Terror that saw the invasion of Iraq and the incarcerations at Guantanamo Bay consequently. Soon it became clear that these measures were not effective (Kundnani, 2012). The Madrid train bombings of 2004 and the 7/7 bombings in London in 2005 showcased that terrorist attacks were still carried out and had increased in frequency. Moreover, these attacks also displayed a new phenomenon; that of home-grown terrorism. This development saw the emergence of "unremarkable local residents/citizens who sought to attack their country of residence" (Silber & Bhatt, 2007, p.5). The perpetrators were mainly nationals of the countries in which they had planned their attacks, as opposed to the previous traditional terrorists, who were foreign entities covertly entering a Western country (King & Taylor, 2011). The latter could be well-addressed by tighter border controls; the former needed a new approach.

As a response, the quest to understanding terrorism and root causes at home, had been reopened. To limit public dissatisfaction, the term radicalisation was coined to prevent from being perceived as creating excuses for terrorists. Since the birth of the concept, the study of radicalisation has evolved and now contains a well-established body of literature with varying models attempting to explain the present dynamics. Some of these models take a linear approach, assuming that certain steps are generally succeeded by a determined other. One of the earliest attempts at creating a radicalisation model can be attributed to Borum (2003). The model proposes a psychological pathway in which an individual moves along four stages. The four stages are: 1) Social and economic deprivation, 2) Inequality and resentment, 3) Blame and attribution, and 4) Stereotyping and demonising the enemy (Borum, 2003). At the last stage, violence is legitimised towards the enemy-group being blamed for all injustices. Another well-known linear model is Moghaddam's (2005)

Staircase to Radicalisation, in which a psychological perspective is used to understand the process leading to terrorism. In this model he conceptualises radicalisation as a "narrowing staircase leading to the terrorist act at the top of a building" (Moghaddam, 2005, p. 161). At the ground floor, individuals lead their normal lives. At the fifth, and thereby the top floor, the radicalisation process has been fulfilled and individuals who find themselves on this level are prepared and motivated to carry out terrorist acts (Moghaddam, 2005). In the staircase model, the perceived injustices faced by individuals at the ground floor are the most important factor in grievances that might lead them up the staircase. A similar model was created by Silber and Bhatt (2007) for the New York Police Department (NYPD). They argue that, whereas the focus used to lie on the planning stages of an attack, this was lifted to a much earlier point at the beginning and progression of potential terrorists or groups through a process of radicalisation. They conceptualise this process of radicalisation in four stages: 1) Pre-Radicalization; 2) Self-Identification; 3) Indoctrination; and 4) Jihadization. As the last stage, indicates, this model was created to explain Islamist extremism. The model acknowledges that not all individuals who initiate this process make it through all the phases; many stop or abandon this process at different stages (Silber & Bhatt, 2007).

The first stage, the pre-radicalization phase, refers to the regular life situation of individuals, before any form of radicalisation has occurred, and they are 'ordinary citizens' (Silber & Bhatt, 2007). During the second phase, self-identification, individuals encounter the radical ideology, Salafi Islam in this case. In this stage, the radicalising person meets "like-minded individuals and adopt this ideology [Salafi Islam] as their own" (Silber & Bhatt, 2007, p.6). Generally, a personal crisis occurs which results in the individual's held beliefs to be questioned and makes them vulnerable to new, radical, worldviews. In the third, indoctrination phase, the individual's beliefs are progressively intensified, as part of a radical group, to the point in which he/she comes to fully accept that action in the form of militant jihad, is required. Lastly, in the jihadization phase, an individual is entirely radicalised and accepts themselves as mujahedeen, or holy warriors. This is the end phase in which terrorist acts or jihad are planned. This model was tested against case-studies and proved to be consistent with each of the four phases being prominently present in all (Silber & Bhatt, 2007). This research also suggests that no useful profile exists of those vulnerable to radicalisation as the case studies display radicalised individuals from many diverging backgrounds. Rather, a quest for identity and presentation of the Jihadi-Salafi ideology to fulfil that quest are the main reasons why Muslims in Western countries would radicalise according to the NYPD (Silber & Bhatt, 2007).

Horgan (2008) proposes a three-stage model in which the following phases are identified: getting involved, remaining involved and ending involvement. Furthermore, he calls for tracing “not roots (either in terms of personality factors or root causes) but routes" (p. 82). In this, the quest for discovering root causes is futile, as a big part of the population is exposed to these factors, but only a significantly small portion engages in terrorism (Horgan, 2005). The question Horgan (2008) therefore addresses is “given that so many people are exposed to the presumed generating conditions for terrorism (root causes), the triggering factors and catalysts both for religious and political mobilization, why is it that so relatively few people actually do this?” (p. 83). In answering this, emphasis is placed on the effect of the group and organisational context. One common denominator found in research on radicalisation, more specifically on the progression of radicalisation processes, was the sense of reward, according to Horgan (2008). This reward could be support from social surroundings, role models, material rewards, and status.

Responding to the linear models created and described above, a set of scholars provided criticism to the applicability of such models to real life cases. In his book Leaderless Jihad, Sageman (2008) develops a non-linear model of radicalisation: the Four Prong model. In this framework, an interplay of four dimensions results in radicalisation. These four prongs are: sense of moral outrage; frame used to interpret the world; resonance with personal experience and mobilisation through networks. This model contrasts the notion of sequentiality and emphasises the complexity of radicalisation processes. Rather, he argues that the four prongs interact and reinforce each other, usually occurring simultaneously (Sageman, 2008).

2.4 Theoretical Framework: Radicalization Puzzle

The nonlinear model that is most influential in this research is the Radicalization Puzzle proposed by Hafez and Mullins (2015). This model adopts the following definition of radicalisation: “adopting an extremist worldview, one that is rejected by mainstream society and one that deems legitimate the use of violence as a method to effect societal or political change” (p. 960). The model is based on Islamist homegrown extremism in the West, specifically in Europe, and offers “a puzzle metaphor that represents a multifactor and contextualized approach to understanding how ordinary individuals transform into violent extremists” (p. 958). As radicalisation is often conflated with terrorism or violent extremist action, it is important to note that radicalisation does not necessarily result in violence. Many who hold radical beliefs would never turn to action. This understanding of radicalism

is also referred to as cognitive radicalisation (Hafez & Mullins, 2015). On the other hand, behavioural radicalisation refers to the process in which an individual eventually turns to the use of violence, having the potential to culminate in terrorism (Neumann, 2013; Hafez & Mullins). Borum (2011) refers to this latter process as action pathways. The Radicalization Puzzle model asserts that mediation of cognitive radicalisation is generally present if one has behaviourally radicalised. Here, it is important to note that the assertion made by the authors has been challenged by others. Borum (2011), for example, claims that it is faulty to assume violent extremism is always preceded by radical beliefs. Despite the possibility that it is one route to involvement in terrorism, it might not be the sole one. Nevertheless, this author is mainly concerned with behavioural radicalisation in which some form of cognitive radicalisation is also present. This dissertation follows the idea that the ideological component needs to be present to adhere to the conceptualisation of what terrorism entails and what it does not.

2.4.1 Radicalization Puzzle: Applied to Islamist Radicalization

Four puzzle pieces comprise the radicalisation process and are identified as grievances, networks, ideology, and enabling environments and support structures. These factors were identified after a synthesis of empirical literature on radicalisation research.

Grievances

Grievances related to a dissonance between the European 'host' society and Muslims is often indicated as a root cause of radicalisation. Grievances form the "landscape that frames the proximate causes of radicalicalization" (p. 962) but are not on their own a causation of radicalisation. One reason for disenchantment is poor socioeconomic status as a result of high unemployment rates. Second, discrimination in the housing market and affiliated segregation policies is a related aspect that causes grievances. These together are seen as possible reasons for claimed higher crime levels. Discrimination in general was shown to have a strong connection to terrorism. Moving further than socioeconomic conditions, Hafez and Mullins found identity differences to be another significant factor. Increasing far right sentiments, and xenophobia in particular, are important in the role of identity. Anti-immigration views are often conflated with Islamophobia and are weaponised by the populist agendas of far right parties and further exploited by the media. These views and the associated exclusionary dynamics further increased grievances, especially among second- or third-generation immigrants. As a response to the exclusion and marginalisation, some

Muslims choose to reinforce their religious identity to oppose the dominant culture. This process activates a "self-reinforcing dynamic of exclusion" (Hafez & Mullins, p. 963). The securitisation of Islamic identity during the Global War on Terror has intensified feelings of alienation and increased marginalisation, discrimination, and exclusion. Foreign policies of Western countries in conflicts in the Middle East further confirm the idea that the West is inherently against Muslims and is waging a war on Islam, in which it applies its respect for human rights selectively in accordance with their own interests (Hafez & Mullins, 2015).

Networks

One key aspect that is supported broadly by research is the importance of pre-existing networks in recruitment. Recruitment and radicalisation require levels of trust. Examples of recruitment environments are sports teams, workplaces, faith-based institutions, prisons (Hafez & Mullins, 2015). The model lists five ways in which pre-existing networks facilitate recruitment. First, a collective identity is created by bringing together like-minded peers. Second, existing networks are important when considering the sensitive nature of activities and discussions that extremists engage in. Third, the phenomenon of bloc recruitment might occur in which groups of people who already know each other radicalise at the same time. If several individuals within a friend group become radicalised, the chances are higher that the rest of the group follows suit. Fourth, dependencies that exist in a network facilitate group cohesion which increases shared conceptions of what is right and wrong and increases feelings of fellowship. Fifth, the costs associated with nonconforming, and leaving the group are heightened inside existing groups. A sense of loyalty and anxiety of being shunned decreases chances of leaving such groups. In some of the cases of radicalised Muslims in European societies, existing ties were present through criminal history that resulted in imprisonment, in which they became radicalised. Some were part of a rebellious youth subculture. Additionally, some ties existed through networks of Islamist dissidents, opposing the regimes they had fled in the 80s and 90s. Combining the existence of pre-existing networks and grievances due to marginalisation, a breeding ground for radical ideology has emerged, resulting in a cognitive opening (Hafez & Mullins, 2015).

Ideology

Although ideology does not take a core place in radicalisation processes, some form of it is almost always present. Hafez and Mullins (2015) define ideology as "a set of political beliefs about the world, usually anchored in worldly or transcendental philosophies that are

presumably universal, comprehensive, and idealistic (even utopian)" (p. 966). Ideologies identify societal issues and provide an overarching explanation for them with a course of action attached to combat the issues in the pursuit of the ideal world. Ideology on its own does not result in radicalisation. Rather, it becomes adopted through socialisation mechanisms that often include social ties. The use of symbols and rituals that come with ideologies present a new identity to the individual in quest for a sense of purpose and struggling with observed societal issues, or personal experiences. Ideologies invoke narratives on right and wrong, just and unjust and provide empowerment to right the injustice in the world and open up the possibility that an idealised world can be achieved. It also explains the injustices observed by putting blame on the demonised enemy. In the case of Islamist extremism, a violent Salafist ideology is generally adopted. From this perspective, the Western world is at war with Muslims, and it is the plight of fellow-Muslims to support their brothers and sisters by defending their group. The idea that Islam is inherently a violent religion is widely rejected. However, it is the abuse and strategic framing of Islamist ideas and the selective exploitation of shared traditions, symbols, holy texts, and identities, together with convenient innovations that mobilise action. Ideology is often employed by extremists to draw in recruits and mobilise collective action and can be seen as a strategic tool (Hafez & Mullins, 2015).

Enabling Environments and Support Structures

Enabling support structures enable further radicalisation "by providing ideological and material support for susceptible individuals" (Hafez & Mullins, 2015, p. 968). In the case of al-Qa'eda and Da'esh, training camps were established to which individuals would physically travel. In these training camps, ideological indoctrination becomes strengthened and practical skills, needed to carry out terrorist attacks, are taught. More recently, the internet seems to have taken over as the main place where propaganda is spread. With regards to socialisation, social media has to some extent replaced in-person gatherings and physical places of recruitment as a response to increased measures by the police and intelligence agencies to counter terrorism. The online sphere operates as an echo-chamber in which propagation and support of views takes places and opposing opinions are marginalised (Sageman, 2004). Furthermore, the internet lends itself well to quick and global dissemination of practical videos or online guides on how to create a bomb and plan an attack. Some scholars argue that the online sphere has replaced the physical arena which has resulted in loose networks of self-radicalised individuals (Sageman, 2008; Vidino,

20011; Crone & Harrow, 2011). Others disagree and claim that in-person meetings cannot be substituted by online environments (Behr, Reding, Edwards & Gribbon, 2013).

The Radicalization Puzzle provides a useful initial framework for the analysis of the data stemming from the interviews conducted in this research. It also forms the basis for the drafting of the topic list and associated questions. The appreciation of the highly complex nature, by moving away from a linear procedural approach, is valuable as it leaves space for a case-by-case manner of giving substance to the specifics within each of the four puzzle pieces. It also acknowledges that an interplay exists between the factors, but that the exact nature of that interplay is not a static one. This section provided an overview of the Radicalisation Puzzle by expanding on the four main pieces: grievances, pre-existing networks, ideology and enabling structures and support networks.

2.5 Research on the far right

The research question that guides this paper, as established in the introduction, is: Are the factors that impact radicalisation processes of youth towards the far right similar to those in Islamist extremist radicalisation? The previous subsections of this chapter explained the evolution of the radicalisation concept and presented the Radicalization Puzzle guiding the interviews that were conducted. This section explores the concept of the far right and reviews the research on it.

2.5.1 Conceptualising the far right

The meaning scholars ascribe to right-wing extremism is highly inconsistent. Mudde (1996) analysed research on right-wing extremism and discovered that fifty-eight criteria together with twenty-six different ways of characterising the phenomenon were used. These inconsistencies are also present within the extremist groups themselves. Rush (1963), in his quest to define the Extreme Right, noted that various diverse groups that fall within the phenomena can be identified, and these groups might pursue opposing ends. It is therefore inaccurate to refer to the Extreme Right as one homogenous group. Rush (1963) concludes his quest by providing the following definition of the Extreme Right:

> The Extreme Right is a militant and millenarian political ideology, espoused by numerous Right-Wing groups and individuals, which maintains as an ideal the principle of "limited individualism"; this principle being articulated as opposition to "collectivism"

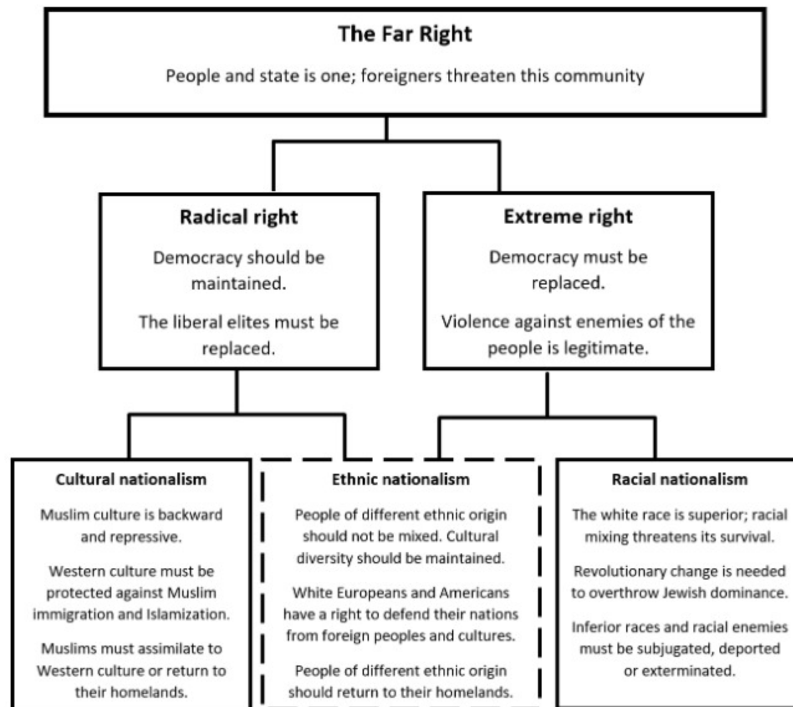
> in government, international relations, modern social principles, and modern social structure and operation. (p. 73)

More recently, Auger (2020), who posits that the fifth, far right wave of terrorism is emerging, conceptualises right-wing terrorism by adopting Koehler's (2014) definition:

> The term right-wing extremism covers a broad range of ideologies that essentially see violence as a legitimate tool to combat a political and ethnic 'enemy' (including individuals with different culture, religion, nationality, or sexual orientation) seen as a threat to the (*sic*) own race or nation. (p. 51).

The inconsistent and sometimes interchangeable use of the terms right-wing extremism, extreme right, far right and radical right are also sources of confusion. The extreme right is one component of the overarching term far right which is increasingly used to refer to the radical and extreme right. The radical right operates within the democratic system, whereas the extreme right calls for abandoning it. An overview of this construct is displayed in Figure 1 (Bjørgo & Ravndal, 2019). Although this conceptualisation of radical and extreme is slightly different to the one offered in Chapter 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 respectively, it is useful for understanding the complexity and main categories that exist within the far right concept.

Figure 1 The Far Right



Note. This figure was originally developed by Berntzen (2018), revised in collaboration with Björgo and Ravndal, and conceptually based on Mudde (2022) and Teielbaum (2017). From "Extreme-Right Violence and Terrorism: Concepts, Patterns, and Responses," by T. Bjørgo and J.A. Ravndal, (p.3) 2019.

The most recent empirical study of the radical and extreme right in the Netherlands was carried out by Sterkenburg (2021) who followed over forty individuals for a period of three years. She adopted the above model and expanded on the three nationalism categories presented. Cultural nationalists in the Netherlands believe that one culture should be adopted by everyone who lives in the country. According to them, Islam is the main threat to Dutch culture and people with an Islamic background have a hidden agenda to 'Islamise' Dutch culture and people (Sterkenburg, 2021). Ethno-nationalists on the other hand believe that ethnicity is the most important factor binding a nation. They are against mixed marriages and believe every ethnic group of people should have their own country in which they live, separated from other ethnic groups. They fear a disappearance of the pure white race and believe women's main role is to have (white) children. Racial nationalists support white supremacy and believe that the 'white race' should rule over all other groups. The main enemy for racial nationalists is Jewish people, who would promote mixed marriages, equality and immigration (Sterkenburg, 2021). It is important to note that although these three categories are drafted, individuals can fall into multiple categories, or shift between

different types. During her research she observed that ideological consistency is low in the individuals interviewed, further supporting the non-uniformity within the far right (Sterkenburg, 2021). Results from her study are further discussed in the following section.

The Alt-right is the 'new right' and forms, according to the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), together with anti-Islam ideals, the main ideological basis for right-wing extremists in the Netherlands. This form of right-wing extremism is non-violent in the Netherlands but constitutes a threat to the democratic rule of law by the systemic spread of hate, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidating and demonising minorities (AIVD, 2022). Alt-right is characterised, or aims to be characterised, by an intellectual middle-class who adheres to ethno-nationalism (Sterkenburg, 2021). They differentiate themselves from the more traditional far right groups by presenting to be ordinary, reasonable, and intelligent individuals. Although the Alt-right is the newest form of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands, this research, as it focuses on professionals who in general talk about their experiences, does not take into account differences between varying groups within the far right when analysing the results. Nevertheless, it is important to draw a holistic image of the context in which this current research takes place.

2.5.2 Far right radicalisation

Koehler (2014) interviewed former German right-wing extremists to understand individual motivations for entry, belonging and exit, to draft a model of radicalisation. He names the radicalisation processes that were revealed as "doing politics". At the entry phase, individuals are occupied with expressing ideals and a search for identity. Influence from the social environment is not found to be decisive, while chance, especially in meeting new people, does play a big role. The second stage is characterised by "political struggle" and professionalisation in which previous drivers become politicised. The last phase is the exit phase in which individuals become frustrated because the ideological propaganda of the group does not match the actions taken (Koehler, 2014). Koehler's (2014) research emphasises the agency of the participants, through which structural factors such as unemployment and family background are not considered to be valuable in explaining involvement.

More recently, Sterkenburg (2021) drafted five diverse pathways of entry into different groups within the far right milieu resulting from her field work. The five pathways are: Thrill seeker, Political seeker, Justice seeker, Social seeker, and Ideological seeker. Additionally, a number of micro-, meso-, and macro-level explanations for entry through

each pathway are identified. The explanations that were present in (almost) all pathways are briefly noted here. For all of these pathways, outrage about terrorist attacks in Europe and outrage about government policy were macro-level explanations for almost all of the participants (Sterkenburg, 2021). When considering meso-level factors, the far right group provided a sense of purpose for all pathways; for all pathways besides social seekers, the formation endorsed the perceived threat to the group. Feelings of dissatisfaction and feelings of racism stood out as micro-level explanations for entry and were present in each pathway. Additionally, feeling that the in-group is threatened was an explanation in each pathway, apart from the social seekers. The same is true for feelings of superiority and feelings of political disappointment (Sterkenburg, 2021). It would be interesting to see whether, and to what extent, these 9 factors are supported by the empirical data in this research.

2.5.3 Comparing Islamist to far right extremism

One venture of research when combining both Islamist and far right extremism has been the concept of reciprocal radicalisation. Reciprocal radicalisation refers to the "idea that extremist groups fuel on another's rhetoric and/or actions including violence" (Knott, Lee & Copeland, 2018, p.4). This concept was first coined during the riots in Northern England in 2001 and referred to the link between extremists but has more widely been applied to the connection of Islamist and far right extremism. In this instance, both extremist groups draw from a common pool of resources such as tactics, narratives and the otherisation of groups for propaganda purposes (Abbas, 2020). In short, the presence and activities of one group fuel that of the other (Knott, Lee & Copeland, 2018).

Other research investigates how the radicalisation process, and the factors that play a role in it, compare between Islamist and far right extremists. Sikkens et al. (2017) interviewed youth with extreme right wing, left wing and Islamist ideals and their family members. Results show that perceived injustices in the world are the main drivers behind the radicalisation processes for all extremist ideologies. Overall, personal issues seem to play a role too. Youth with both Islamist and extreme right wing ideals indicated that belonging to a group was an important pull factor. One difference shown is that among far right youth, ideological adaptation only seemed to have occurred after joining extreme groups (Sikkens et al., 2017). Sieckelinck et al. (2019) conducted empirical research on homegrown radicalisation and deradicalisation of young people in Denmark and the Netherlands by interviewing former extremists and their families. The main focus was on far right and Islamist extremism as pathways in and out of extremism were aimed to be

revealed through insider insights. These insights are particularly valuable to this paper as they portray specifics of youth radicalisation in the Netherlands. The results identify a set of push factors that include a problematic home situation, a search for identity, and injustice in the world (Sieckelinck et al., 2019). Additionally, the results indicate that these factors interact and produce a highly complex, nonlinear radicalisation process. Questions on personal experiences, such as a divorce of parents, sickness in the family, or political situation of the world were prevalent in each former extremist; if not properly dealt with, they turned into existential questions. This quest for a place in the world and significance resulted in disappointment with the systems in place. As Sieckelinck et al. (2019) summarise: "a great deal of radicalization can be understood as being a result of the young people's disappointment in society's institutions" (p. 673). Additionally, they add that "the radicalization process can be characterised as a journey in which the transitional social-emotional tasks of adolescence are ineffectively taken care of" (p. 673). This research shows that youth radicalisation patterns and factors are distinct from those of adults. Furthermore, it emphasises the vulnerability of youth to violent extremist ideologies as one way of coping with a transition to adolescence. Results from this study might provide a slightly different perspective as former extremists and families themselves are not involved, but rather offer a professional's point of view.

2.5.4 A critical look

A major concern with the study of radicalisation is that a disproportionate focus has been on Muslim communities in Western countries. This has led to widespread associations between Islam and violent extremism. The production of suspect communities occurred, in which being Muslim translated to being a potential terrorist (Pantazis & Pemberton, 2009). Despite the overall ineffectiveness, human rights, and ethical issues of this approach, it also exacerbates issues that could potentially increase chances of radicalisation, thereby rendering it counterproductive. In the Netherlands, it was recently revealed that multiple municipalities had, illegally, ordered investigations into mosques, in which researchers infiltrated mosques in at least ten municipalities to retrieve 'information' in the name of preventing violent extremism (Van Kouwenhoven, Rosenberg & van der Poel, 2021).

Although the narrative in Europe has shifted to focus increasingly on the extreme right as a potential source of increased radicalisation, in practice, several issues exist in addressing it. One reason is that double standards continue to be employed when comparing the approach to right-wing versus Islamist extremism. Research shows that often when

violent acts are committed by right-wing extremists, this is mislabelled as hate crime as opposed to violence with terrorist intent, or not adopted in statistics because of a lack of centralised monitoring (Ronen, 2020). This misclassification is one of the reasons that right-wing extremism has, partly, gone unnoticed, according to Ronen (2020). The other three reasons are identified as: lack of definition, difficulties for law enforcement agencies, and legal reasons. This results in a different approach to punishing the perpetrators and ensures a lack of consideration for deradicalisation trajectories. Additionally, it skews data on violent extremism which begets underreporting and a potentially associated lack of response.

The likelihood that a suspect community is constructed around right-wing extremism is low as it becomes very complicated if individuals in it cannot be distinguished from ordinary citizens from the outside, as is the case with right-wing extremists. This is also the case with Islamist extremism, although that was not the way it was seen by the public and authorities alike. Research suggests that the far right intentionally promotes looking ordinary, instead of adhering to the traditional skinhead/Lonsdale jacket and army boots look, to avoid negative attention and stay out of public sight. Considering the effects that the War on Terror had for the Muslim populations in Western countries, the singling out of who could be an 'extremist' was more easily done for that population. This further promotes the presence of double standards in identifying (potential) violent extremist threats to national security.

Additionally, far right ideologies might yield a wider political effect than that of Islamist extremism. As Ronen (2020) asserts; grievances addressed in the far right express an existing sentiment in the wider population, although in a more moderate fashion. On the other hand, when it comes down to Islamist extremist ideology, a strongly opposing widespread sentiment is present in European societies. These considerations could indicate that the impact of far right extremism might be more influential in achieving societal changes. Concerns about the mainstreaming of far right sentiments in the Netherlands have already been raised on many occasions (Segers, 2021; van Iperen, 2022). Mudde (2019) argues that the far right has become mainstream and that one of the results has been a renewed presence of strong anti-establishment sentiments in the population.

This chapter provided an extensive overview of the body of literature that exists on radicalisation and far right extremism. It started by discussing the conceptualisation of the important, but contested terms of terrorism, extremism, radicalisation and the far right. Trends on terrorism and the specific case of the Netherlands were elaborated on to present

the context in which this research takes place. The chapter then moved to outline the emergence and evolution of the field of radicalisation and presented a variety of radicalisation models, of which some assume linearity, whereas others are characterised by a more context-specific, factorial approach. The Radicalization Puzzle by Hafez and Mullins (2015) was then presented in its application to Islamist radicalisation in the West, presenting the basis for the held interviews and subsequent analysis. The following section aimed to provide an overview of existing, current, research on the far right. Lastly, a critical stance was presented to highlight how double standards are employed comparing approaches to counter Islamist versus far right extremism. Radicalisation processes are often examined per ideology. Although very insightful, this overlooks the possibility that such processes and the factors fuelling them might be similar to each other. In addition to increasing knowledge on the concept of radicalisation, making a comparison also informs Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) projects. Research exists that includes professionals', such as youth workers, perspectives, but not to a great extent. The gap between policy, research and practice remains large in the radicalisation field. This paper aims to fill the gap of lack of knowledge, lack of practitioner insight and lack of comparison. Before presenting and analysing the results of the empirical research, the following chapter describes the methodology and methods chosen for this research and explains ethical considerations and limitations.

3. Methodology, methods, and limitations

This chapter provides an explanation of and justification for the chosen methodology and method to answer the research question: Are the factors that impact radicalisation processes of youth towards the far right similar to those in Islamist extremist radicalisation? This thesis takes a qualitative approach and is built on data that was collected following semi-structured interviews with experts in the field. To start, subchapter 3.1 will give a general overview as to the ontological and epistemological frameworks driving the study. Next, subchapter 3.2 elaborates on the motivations of choosing semi-structured interviews and the objectives of the study. Following, the coding process and its underpinnings will be expanded on in subchapter 3.3. Ethical considerations are important to thoroughly discuss. As this research involves primary data collection involving human subjects, and the topics discussed are of sensitive nature, ethical challenges might arise. These are discussed in section 3.4. Lastly, final subchapter 3.5 considers challenges and limitations associated with the research.

3.1 Methodology

Methodology is the underlying, comprehensive approach that lays the foundation for any research design. When choosing a methodology, it is important to acknowledge the ontological and epistemological assumptions that influence the design of the research. Ontology is understood as the claims that are made on what constitutes social reality (Blaikie, 2009). It seeks to limit the complexities of a subject area through the organisation and categorisation of relations between different domains of discourse. The ontological framework that will be used in this paper is constructivism, as constructivism holds that the social world is made/remade by actors through their actions and interactions (Onuf 1989). Constructivism was chosen because the concept of radicalisation (and terrorism) is a social phenomenon of which meaning is derived from social actors. Due to this, the meaning of radicalisation is in a constant state of revision, as is shown in the literature review in Chapter 2 (Bryman, 2012). While ontology looks at categorising domains of discourse, epistemology is concerned with how we can reveal, or research, knowledge of social reality (Blaikie, 2009). The epistemological approach taken in this paper is an interpretivist one. Interpretivism "holds that humans construct knowledge as they interpret their experiences of and in the world" (Hiller, 2016, p. 103; Given, 2008).

Given the ontological and epistemological approaches taken, it must be understood that any results stemming from this research will be shaped by the construction of reality

established by the participants' realities. The individuals interviewed work and experience reality within institutions that are part of the state. States, and the institutions under them, are the ones with the power to define who is considered to be radicalised, and therefore, who is considered a threat to society and who is not. The responsibility of power is then transferred down and granted to the professionals who work for state institutions. This power has often been mis- or abused by authorities, resulting in the weaponisation of terrorism, and more recently, of radicalisation. The dynamics of power that influence radicalisation are discussed further in the literature review, however, it is important to mention here as it emphasises the influence of different interpretations. The extrapolations made in this paper are not to be supposes to be as the declaration of an absolute truth, or reality; nor to be used by authorities to create a new suspect community. It is not the aim of this paper to pinpoint the one reality that exists when considering factors that play a role in radicalisation. But rather, the objective is to illuminate the many realities and complexities of radicalisation processes and what these are, according to professionals. Resulting from the ontological and epistemological assumptions outlined above, this research takes a methodological approach in which a small number of semi-structured interviews are analysed thoroughly to derive meaning and perspectives. The research question of this paper is: Are the factors that impact radicalisation processes of youth towards the far right similar to those in Islamist extremist radicalisation? To investigate this research question, a qualitative approach is taken using both deductive and inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning is used as the researcher aims to verify the existing theories and literature against empirical data, or individual instances. Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, can be formed based on the empirical data, thus inductively conceptualising a new suggested theoretical framework within the research.

Qualitative research engages very closely and in-depth with the data to clarify understandings and perspectives on various research topics (Antaki, Billig, Edwards & Potter, 2003). This thesis explores a comparison between theoretical explanations and practical insights. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative data lends itself well to this aim as it helps "to get beyond initial conceptions and to generate or revise conceptual frameworks" (p.1). Furthermore, qualitative approaches "provide a level of intimacy rarely available through counts and measures, and is potentially generative of fresh insights and deep understanding," according to Bazeley (2020, p.6). This is particularly relevant for this research as it aims to provide new insights by considering the experiences of professionals with youth radicalisation, a perspective that is often overlooked.

One methodology that is oriented around learning from the experiences of others is phenomenology (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpi, 2019). Phenomenology aims to grasp the essence of a phenomenon by investigating perspectives of individuals who have experience with that phenomenon (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). It relies on the assumption that human beings give meaning to their surroundings through personal experience, in line with the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this research as discussed above. Phenomenology refers to examining the lived experiences of a phenomenon, in this case, of youth radicalisation. Within this research, the lived experiences of experts have been collected through semi-structured interviews, the chosen data collection tool, or method. The aim is to understand the phenomenon of *radicalisation towards right-wing extremism* through learning from the experience of professionals.

3.2 Method: Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured expert interviews are the chosen method of data collection within the phenomenology research methodology. Interviews allow in depth discussions with research participants. As opposed to other methods such as closed-answer surveys, interviews allow elaborate explanations of the researched phenomenon. The elaborated explanations, in turn, can give more insight into a particular topic, rather than imposing generalised responses. For this research, the questions were semi-structured to allow for open-ended answers and conversation. Open-ended questions enable a lengthy response and are "concerned with why and how, beliefs, opinions, forecasts and narratives" (Pierce, 2008, p. 118). Semi-structured interviews are the most broadly used type of interviews in politics, and thus, security research (Pierce, 2008). According to how semi-structured interviews are carried out, the researcher first drafted a topic list and predetermined questions. That list and associated questions can be found in Appendix A.

The topics and questions that were established for this research were based on the subjects outlined in the literature review. When creating the questions, there was a critical emphasis on keeping the questions neutral as not to steer participants towards answers found in the existing literature, but rather to discover their practical insights. Once established, the questions were grouped under the four main aspects that play a role in radicalisation according to the Puzzle Model by Hafez and Mullins (2015) that is discussed in Chapter 2. This model was chosen as it represents a non-linear model that does not assume consecutiveness of different 'phases' of radicalisation and is a model based on the synthesis of a number of theories. However, the participants were not asked about the model nor was

the terminology discussed in the academic way in which it is represented in the literature. It became clear during the first few interviews that there was a correlation between answers to different questions. When elaborated on, participant answers to one question also gave insight into the other pre-established questions. Moreover, it was observed that some relevant topics were not covered by the pre-established topic list. This proved to show the benefits of semi-structured interviews as they allow for flexibility in the data-collection while also ensuring all relevant topics are covered; thus, a perfect fit to deal with professionals from diverse backgrounds, or niche working fields, and diverse levels of experiences (Smith, Harre & Van Langenhove, 1995).

3.2.1 Participant selection

The chosen research subjects were professionals in the field of youth radicalisation. Their work enables them to experience up close the everyday life of youths who are at risk of radicalisation, or already radicalised. Additionally, they are generally present in the youths' lives over a longer period of time and therefore get a privileged position to access information on their background and important life events. In the Netherlands, professionals are part of a broader network that assembles different key players on the prevention of violent extremism. Expertise of one individual is therefore aggregated knowledge from colleagues from many institutions and organisations. The nature of professionals' experience therefore provides special and valuable insights that cannot be provided by other means of inquiry. Thus, "it is essential for scholars to learn from the experiences of others" (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019, p. 91). By interviewing professionals that directly work with radicalised or potentially radicalised youths, it is the aim of this research to depict a greater understanding of radicalisation through the personal experiences of individuals working on the ground level. The main reasons that professionals were chosen as participants rather than the youths themselves is due to ethical considerations, accessibility, and reliability. For one, interviewing youths might include those that are under the age of 18, as consent to participate in an academic study is ethically impossible for them to give themselves, parental consent is often required. This also leaves the question whether the researcher wants to burden youths who might already be overburdened, especially regarding the topic of inquiry. Furthermore, it would be impossible, nor wanted, for the researcher to identify those youth who are or have been radicalised as the researcher is not trained to do so and has no authority on the matter. This is linked to issues of accessibility, which is always an issue when conducting empirical research on radicalisation, or terrorism more

traditionally. How then does one find individuals with lived experiences of radicalisation and why would they talk to the researcher? One solution to this is talking to formers, or people who went through a radicalisation process in the past but have now deradicalised. Nevertheless, although this provides valuable and crucial insights, it is not immune to biases. When inquiring about motivations for joining the extremist group/ideology in the past, explanations given might not reflect their true reasons, but are prone to reflect an ideological learning process coming from being a member of the group. Past research suggests that answers given during interviews might reflect propaganda and ideology that the radicalisation process has installed into their truth, instead of illuminating initial reasons for their radicalisation. The combination of the named obstacles that come with interviewing those with lived experiences of radicalisation, the researcher opted to speak to professionals instead.

15 professionals were contacted via email. Most contact points were derived through personal and professional networks of the researcher. Most notably, Human Security Collective (HSC), a Dutch foundation where the researcher undertook a collaborative placement, shared their network with the researcher as the researcher was undertaking a placement with the foundation at the time of inquiry. Additionally, a number of professionals were contacted using contact details shared on websites of Dutch institutions that work in the field of radicalisation. In the end, interviews were held with four professionals. The remainder of the individuals contacted either did not respond or were unable to be interviewed due to a number of various reasons, including holiday (as the research mostly took place during summer break), or high work pressure.

All participants are between the age of 25-64 and are therefore labelled as adults. One participant, from now on referred to as professional1, is a teacher at a high school who serves as the focal point when concerns on radicalisation are raised about pupils within the school. The second participant, from now on referred to as professional2, works for the municipality in the field of security with a focus on radicalisation. The third participant, from now on referred to as professional3, is a youth worker with experience and focus on radicalisation. And the last participant, from now on referred to as professional4, works for child protection services and is the focal point for radicalisation concerns within the organisation. Of the four interviews, one was held in-person at the office of the participant; two were conducted over Microsoft Teams; and the last one occurred over the phone. The length of the interviews ranged between 45 minutes to one hour and 20 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. It should be noted that the

interviews were held in Dutch, as the research took place in the Netherlands, and have been translated by the researcher. In doing so, the aim was to remain as close as possible to the wordings and meaning of the participants. Nevertheless, the translation process might result in slight adjustments in comparison to what was originally said as to ensure the translation made logical sense in English.

3.3 Analysis of data

In order to reflect on the data from the interviews and to analyse it, the transcriptions were coded. Coding was done in NVivo 12 software in which the transcripts were uploaded, and themes (nodes in the software) were created. The coding process was guided by Smith's (1995) approach in which a number of steps are taken to analyse qualitative data. First, each transcript was individually read multiple times and emerging themes and other interesting findings were taken note of by the researcher. Next, with each emerging theme, a new node was created in NVivo, and the relevant quote was coded within that node. Some themes fell within the factors indicated in the existing literature or in previously coded transcripts, while others required the creation of new nodes. While coding, the researcher took note of interesting or outstanding matters that could be relevant to writing the analysis, per transcript, but also between transcripts or between transcript and literature. After all transcripts were coded, the themes that were created were compared to one another and if they were deemed to be highly similar, they were merged in one theme. If multiple themes were associated, but not similar enough for merging them, a parental node was created to create a category. Throughout this process, the primary source was often consulted to see whether the context of the quote also worked for the newly made connections (Smith, 1995). Eventually several major themes, with subthemes, arose which are discussed in the results and analysis section in Chapter 4.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Ethics should be considered in all types of research but is especially important when the research includes human subjects. This dissertation adheres to the University of Glasgow's high ethical standards as is now discussed. Preliminary to contacting potential participants and holding interviews, an application was made to the College Research Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research involving Human Participants/Data. Only after acceptance could participants be contacted and invited for the interviews. Before the interviews were held, participants were provided with a privacy notice, a plain language statement and a consent

form. They were asked to carefully read the information shared and if agreed to the terms as outlined in the documents, to sign the consent form and return it. Participants were promised confidentiality and ensured that no information could lead back to them. During the interviews, the participants were once again asked to consent to recording the conversation. This is safeguarded through the de-identification of data during the transcribing process. Any information, such as names, organisations and locations are left out of the transcriptions, and therefore also out of the direct quotes used in this paper. The data is stored in a cloud-service Officebox which is protected by two-factor authentication and has a TLS encryption on it, the researcher is the sole person with access to the folder.

Another important consideration is that research focusing on PVE practices and singling out particular groups vulnerable to radicalisation has been and is being (mis)used by governments to curtail civil liberties in the name of security, thereby creating a suspect community. This is also present in the Dutch context, as independent research has shown that instances have occurred in which Muslim populations were subject to disproportionate measures and surveillance in the face of countering terrorism. This issue is acknowledged by the researcher and remains a vulnerability, although the aim is not to create a 'profile' of individuals that are prone to radicalisation and the results should not be lent to that purpose. More particular to this research is aiming to indicate those factors in broader society, and in personal circumstances, that may lead to frustration in groups in society currently and explain to some extent the rise in right-wing extremism, and how these factors then compare to Islamist radicalisation.

3.5 Limitations

One major limitation to the research is the limited sample size due to accessibility issues. As only four individuals were interviewed, the results are in no manner generalizable to a broader population. On the other hand, the aim of the research is not to create generalizability. Another limitation is that the primary data that is obtained on radicalisation is through a third-party: the professionals. As explained above, it was unfeasible and unethical to include youth in the sample, which may also result in biases. Because the interviews inquire about the opinions of the professionals' perspectives on factors of another individual's radicalisation process, this may lead to incorrect interpretations and presents a one-sided narrative of events.

Another limitation arises when considering the relation between researcher and participant. At times in the interviews, the researcher noticed that participants made remarks

that addressed that they did not have an academic background on the matter. Although the researcher attempted to make clear that the focus was on their practical insights, it might have impacted the answers given. It may have created an atmosphere in which the interviewee might not share everything that comes into mind, in fear of sharing a perspective that is not in line with the theoretical background of the researcher, or those who are traditionally considered to be experts. This only further emphasises the need for putting more value on insights of professionals in the field.

Lastly, the biggest limitation to this research is a lack of cases by the professionals interviewed. All professionals indicated during the interviews that their case-based experience with right-wing extremists is severely limited. The geographical location might play a role in this, as all professionals work in urban areas. Therefore, their experiences do not reflect trends in more rural parts of the country. Another explanation could be the small sample size. Lastly, the presence of double standards with regards to right-wing versus Islamist extremism might explain some of this. Nevertheless, this is an outcome in itself and is also discussed in the results and discussion section.

3.5.1 Reflexivity as a researcher

It is important to adopt a reflexive inquiry, which incorporates the ability of the researcher “to reflect on their own subjectivities and to embed this in the research process (Fitzgerald, 2020, p. 2).” According to Bryman (2012) constructivism “has also come to include the notion that researchers’ own accounts of the social world are constructions. In other words, the researcher always presents a specific version of social reality, rather than one that can be regarded as definitive (p. 33).” In light of this, it is important to acknowledge that despite extensive efforts to maintain objectivity as a researcher, it is impossible to ever fully achieve it. A researcher's previous personal, cultural as well as educational experiences influence the interpretation of the data. Considering this researcher's personal background, being from a mixed ethnic background leads to personal vulnerabilities and emotions regarding right-wing extremist ideologies. Due to this, potential biases might play a role in assessing the literature and data retrieved. Therefore, as a professional it remains imperative to employ reflexivity and use systematic and critical approaches to also evaluate my own analyses.

4. Results and analysis

Based on the Radicalization Puzzle, and a preliminary analysis of the interview data, a set of themes were identified. These themes are the four pieces of the radicalisation model: grievances, networks, ideology and enabling environments. However, there were also two themes identified that did not seem to fit in the model: childhood to adolescence and double standards. Furthermore, this section leaves room for general trends observed and discussed by the professionals interviewed and how they view the comparison of radicalisation processes between Islamist extremists and the far right. This chapter first displays the results according to the themes identified and by using quotes from the professionals to serve as explanations, examples, and elaborations. As the focus is on the perspectives and insights of the participants, it was found important to stay close to their wording and this results in the extensive use of quotes. After the results are displayed, analyses that can be drawn from the results are shared.

4.1 Results

Grievances

The role of grievances as theorised by Hafez and Mullins (2015) is not a causation on its own to why people radicalise, yet it is often placed at the root of producing a cognitive opening. In the case of far right extremism, this central role is highlighted by professional2: "With the [far] right, you often see that grievances certainly have the upper hand. They [youth] are angry about something, they are very disappointed in something."

Feelings of injustice are considered to play a central role in radicalisation processes. "Emotions are the core," professional1 noted when referring to the multiple aspects of feelings of injustice. Injustices are perceived with regards to several societal issues, at the moment, a *housing crisis* exists in the Netherlands. This crisis has resulted in frustrations within the population at large. But it plays a big role in the far right narrative in which migrants and refugees are often accused of stealing the available houses. Professional3 noted, "feeling left behind, unrightfully treated, having that feeling that people with non-Dutch roots have easier access to a house than people who are already living here." Professional2 sees every crisis as a breeding ground, "what is a really pressing issue for youth currently is the housing market." When asked to clarify how the housing market influences radicalisation, professional2 gave the following explanation:

> They assume that the opportunities for their own people, as they say so themselves, are becoming minimal because people from outside are given priority. In any case, the grievance is present for them at that moment, whether it is justified is another question, but at least they experience it that way.

Perspectives on the impact of *socioeconomic* conditions varied among the participants. According to professional3, “financial aspects do play a role because they [youth] might feel that they are falling short and are therefore not able to do all the things that they would want to do.” Another issue young people experience is the high costs associated with studying and therefore not being able to afford it. Both professional1 and 2 did not believe that socioeconomic background plays a significant role. “Especially not on the right-side of things,” according to professional2. However, she added:

> What I really do see is emotional neglect, so indeed the dual earners, good incomes. But the parents just say: ‘here's a moped, have fun, we both have to work; do your thing’. They have absolutely no idea what the young person is dealing with. […] They are very well off, only they forget certain conversations and to give attention to [their child] […] What you see in some highly educated people who completely release their children and allow them to make their own choices, is that things don’t always end up well.

The researcher then asked how this impacts vulnerability to radicalisation. Professional2 answered that it is due to a convergence of both not being monitored by parents and seeking attention and validation elsewhere, because of the neglect. Professional4 did not observe a link between socioeconomic class and vulnerability to radicalisation. He specified that there is always attention to financial aspects when considering radicalisation cases, but that this is never a cause for youth radicalising. When referring to cases of far right radicalised youth, he said: “in general, they have a job somewhere.” Professional1 was ambiguous about the role of socioeconomic background:

> In all my classes, I have pupils who are poorer and pupils who have more, they are mixed. I cannot say on a one-to-one basis whether the ones who are poorer complain more or are more radical in their ideas. The victim role is present of course. But on the other hand, the people who are richer complain about paying taxes. In reality, you can always find a label that makes you a victim.

Professional4 said that they “notice in practice, it is very much *not feeling understood*, feeling short changed. Not feeling seen, not being taken seriously. The ‘nots’, that contributes a lot to portion of radicalisation.” He continues:

> Emotions, and the part of not feeling understood, that’s really important of course. The moment you start shouting a lot of things and nobody really hears you and nobody puts in the effort to listen to you, that can very much cause you to turn against society or against something that you would really like a lot of attention from, we do notice that in conversations [with youth].

According to professional1, the role of feeling *discriminated* against is crucial. When asked whether perceptions and emotions are important in this, regardless of whether discrimination actually takes place, he answers: “Yes, I definitely think that's 110 percent the case, that's definitely very important to know.”

Professional1 talked about his pupils and how they seem to be worried about what is happening in *society*, such as “the war in Ukraine, [about which they say:] ‘teacher, is a third world war going to happen?’, [about the lockdowns:] ‘hey, we’re not allowed to go to a concert, the government sucks, dumb government’.” He notes that he would not label these pupils as anti-government, but that he does observe that these sorts of factors do contribute to a vulnerability to radicalisation.

According to professional2, a so-called ‘*life-trigger event*’ is always present when radicalisation occurs. She explains:

> Something very serious has happened, something intense for that person in their development. That could be a grievance, but it could also be that someone has died in his immediate environment that he has not processed properly, it could be possible trauma, it could be a psychological disorder, it can take all kinds of forms. […] Often, they have experience with child services in the past or other unpleasant situations that results in them completely losing trust in the government and in society.

Professional1 stated: “I do believe that if you are really sad, or insecure about certain things, or are not happy with life, or being bullied, it does not matter what, you’ll try to find something that provides support.”

One common theme that was raised in the interviews relates to the, perceived, *deterioration of Dutch culture*. According to professional3, they "are scared that something is being taken from them. Black Pete is being taken from us. [...] They are scared that what is supposed to be theirs, is being taken." Professional1 provided an example of pupils in his class that demonstrates this further:

> One pupil said, no, teacher, I am from Syria, it is very intense, I can't really talk about it. The conversation then continued among those girls and one girl said to the other girls 'no, but I'm just ordinary Dutch.' So, it is actually a fat minus if you're not a half-blood, multi-blood, many-blood. I encounter this more and more.

According to the same professional, this sometimes results in "a group of pupils who then persist in being Dutch and that is very quickly accompanied with an aversion against everything that is foreign." According to professional4, when talking about a countermovement against the 'woke' movement, he noted:

> At a certain point in time, they've developed the feeling that they are not allowed to say anything anymore, this might sustain the feeling 'we are being oppressed too much', so there is an increased feeling of oppression. I don't know where this is coming from, but that is how they experience it.

Networks

The following quotes of professional1 illustrate the perceived importance of networks, and the sense of belonging to a certain group: "are you listened to? Do you find connections? Do you belong?" The interviewee drew a parallel with being a die-hard football fan:

> I believe that in theory it is the same thing, of course it is not [...]But, jeez, it is so nice, you just want to feel some kind of security somewhere, right?

One aspect that was raised by multiple professionals as being important in radicalisation processes is that of parental influence. Professional2 identified: "intergenerational transmission, parenting in other words. You do see, especially within the far right, that

entire families have certain ideals." Professional3 also defined the family where you're from and upbringing as important factors:

> It usually starts with parents who have certain ideas, and I'm referring to right-wing extremists here. They share those a lot quicker with their children. The kids naturally adopt it because they hear it and think that it's accepted and how it should be.

Furthermore, participants emphasised the role that social media and politics plays. According to professional2, political engagement of youth has increased because of social media, she said:

> [normally at young ages, people] weren't politically conscious as much, currently, people [politicians] are using youthful language that speaks to youngsters. This makes them think 'hey this seems interesting.' They click somewhere and they keep reading. The chances to subsequently end up in a social bubble are increased and politics definitely play a role in this.

Professional1 also worries about the influence unmonitored social media use could have on youth, as is illustrated by the following quote:

> I have no idea what they encounter on the internet. [...] Whether it is vloggers, or Instagram account holders, talking about the influence the moon has on you, or whether there are die-hard neo-Nazis who address my pupils, anything could be going down.

Ideology

The participants shared their insights to the role ideology plays in the radicalisation process and what kind of ideologies are present in the Netherlands. Professional4 provided a take on the function ideology has in extremist groups: "I often feel like they use, abuse, and weaponise [ideology] instead of actually feeling it. [...] Commonly, it is [first] not feeling heard and understood and then finding a connection with a certain ideology." According to professional2, ideology is initially not present for far right radicalisation: "the ideology just isn't present in advance, it really needs to be found and you need to belong to something to get there." Professional3 shared a number of the ideologies he encounters during his job,

such as “the great reset and [ideologies on] leftist political parties that are fooling everyone.’” Professional1 observed similar ideologies:

> We especially see QAnon, the great reset, well basically everything. The old school Nazis are not around that much anymore. They present everything a bit cleaner, but the underlying foundation, the ideology of racial hatred, has remained the same. They just approach it a bit differently, it is kind of the 2.0 version. But we do believe that when talking about violent extremism, some form of ideology needs to be present, because the term radicalisation is not really applicable otherwise.

Professional1 experienced a few instances in which antisemitic sentiments came to the surface. He also once found a note “that had been crumbled up and thrown in the corner. The note said that all black people had to die, had swastikas written on it, and that those foreigners needed to die.” He further noticed that many issues exist in the margin, but that recently, they all seem to be linked to one another

> If you are against homosexuals, or if you think it is obscene or dumb, you might end up with pupils who mainly want foreigners to leave but also consider the family unit the cornerstone of society, in which a family exists of a man and a woman and the man is the breadwinner because that is the way it used to be in the Netherlands. It is all being attached to one another.

Enabling Environments and Support Structures

The professionals were asked whether they had information on the structures that enable youth to socialise within their radicalisation processes with the ideology and the group. Additionally, structures and developments in society that seem to catalyse radicalisation processes were also discussed and are displayed in the following subsections.

Professional2 was asked whether far right groups meet offline as well as online, she responded: “They hold meetings, they go on fun team outings, they barbecue together. They also go for survival activities to the Ardennes, or Hungary. They go to festivals together, meet at football clubs. They meet both on- and offline.” Professional1 shared his thoughts on the role social media plays:

> I can imagine that on certain fora online, for example during the MeToo discussion when pupils thought women should stop complaining, that’s also a bit conservative, right-

> leaning. If you spent a day on such fora [...] where a lot of judgement is given towards women and you think yeah that's funny, I don't know how being on such a for three weeks will affect you.

Professional2 also noted that "if you spend day and night in some kind of rabbit hole on the internet," radicalisation can be self-induced. According to him, this becomes more problematic when factoring in that many people at a young age have not developed critical thinking skills to the extent of being able to distinguish between reliable and unreliable online sources. "The enormous influx of opinions ... you surely don't think that my pupils thoroughly research sources?"

Another enabling environment that furthers the creation of the out-group is the segregation of Dutch population groups. According to professional3, "people are not used to hanging out with non-white Dutch people. They always have an opinion on the matter." He adds that "population groups are put in neighbourhoods together, but they are not being mixed. Homeowners are usually white people with money, whereas social housing residences are mainly occupied by people of colour or white people with issues. Segregation does not help." Professional1 provided a slightly different perspective as she believes the issue of segregation is decreasing, when referring to about 20 years ago:

> In that period, completely separate groups of friends existed at secondary schools. You really had the Islamic groups, and you had the 'native' groups and they did not mix at all. Currently this has changed, especially in secondary schools and in pre-vocational secondary education, mixing is taking place. Not very much yet, but they play sports together, they do things together and so you do really see a change taking place there.

A widespread presence of discrimination and racism can also be interpreted as an enabling environment in which the radicalisation chances are higher. According to professional1 and 3, discrimination and racist tendencies are widespread phenomena in Dutch society. Nevertheless, people do not necessarily identify as racist, professional3 explains: "People do not see themselves as being racist, they don't know what that entails. They use certain words, such as the n-word. It has always been like that; the Netherlands is subtly racist." According to professional1:

> The aversion [against foreigners] exists, often they say “no teacher I’m not racist, because I also eat at the Chinese takeaway, stupid example that I just made up, but you get what I mean. They always give an argument to show that they’re not extreme, but in practice, they do adhere to us/them thinking. [...] I believe that racism and discrimination are widely spread. I don’t want to say that it’s part of our DNA, but I am afraid that quite a large group of people do not see themselves as racist, but in reality, express ideas that fall under discriminatory.

The following quotes by professional1, uttered at different points during the interview, display a feeling that society has become more radicalised, and that this contributes to an enabling society in which radicalisation happens more easily: “Hasn’t society on its whole become more radical?” He also said: “I think the word polarisation is the best word [...] I believe that it is increasing.” When referring to recent farmers’ protests, professional1 shares concern: “If that is the norm, scolding and yelling and driving up to a minister's house with a tractor, if that is becoming the norm, then we will have a bunch of unpleasant years ahead of us.” Professional2 spoke about the role that politics play in mainstreaming of radical ideas:

> As soon as politicians, who should be providing the right example, use certain language that is on the fringe of crossing the boundaries of the law, it becomes easier for youth. It slowly becomes common good and accepted and normalised that such remarks are made.

Professional2: “Back in the days it was already quite intense, a few baseball bats, mostly fists and brass knuckles. Now, slaughter and stabbing weapons have come to dominate [...] you notice that people are more rapidly willing to use violence.” This development might serve as an enabling environment for the use of violence by radicals. Social media also provides an enabling environment for the use of violence, according to professional2, it “continuously discusses the large number of weapons that are circulating. This gives regular youth [...] the idea that ‘well if there are so many stabbings and guns, I should preventively also have a weapon so I can at least defend myself.” Professional4 also shared his concerns on the increased use of weapons: “you have a lot of stabbers here in [city blanked out].”

Comparing far right and Islamist extremism

The professionals were also explicitly asked how they would compare radicalisation processes between the far right and Islamist extremism. Professional4 said on the matter that:

> I think the emotion that is present is the same. I believe that they [far right] feel just as discriminated, just as left out [compared to Islamist radicals] [...] [they also experience] feeling marginalised because they think that because of their colour and gender they are being excluded.

When asked about the differences between Islamist and far right radicalisation, professional2 said: “What we see is that it actually emerges similarly.”

Professional1 noticed a dynamic in which a contemporary societal issue can cause polarisation and blaming of the ‘other’, this dynamic happens on both sides, according to him: When referring to the recent accommodation of Ukrainian refugees who fled the war, Professional4 noticed how situations like that provide a breeding ground, for Islamist radicalism, he also explained how this works the other way:

> It’s very interesting to see how different the [Ukrainian] refugees are dealt with. [...] Syrian refugees who live here but saw that their families weren’t accommodated like that, and who witness discrimination all around and suddenly, the church bells are playing the Ukrainian anthem, they’ve never had that with the Syrian anthem. They felt fooled and discriminated against again. These kinds of things create such a breeding ground. [...] This works both ways of course. If an attack happens, or the news covers an item in which a Moroccan Dutch person is [negatively] involved, and in which it is emphasised that it is a Moroccan or Turkish person, or whatever, then they [the pupils] are like ‘see, teacher, it is a [foreigner] again’

Professional4 noticed a few aspects that seem to be different between Islamist and far right extremist youth, “you often see that youth [who are in an Islamist radicalisation process] are from a family who is clearly from a lower socioeconomic status [...] not as much with right-wing extremism.” He also adds that a high occurrence of domestic violence is present with Islamist extremist radicals, whereas this is not the case with right-wing extremism. On the

other hand, when asked about the similarities and differences between the radicalisation processes, professional4 answered:

> I would consider the process in this to be the same, roles could perhaps be different, but I would see the process of how it all works as the same. I don't believe that they [youth] all start with an ideology. […] With Muslim extremists it is often offered to them more from home, and not so much extremism but simply Islam is offered to them more. And right-wing extremism, which is also passed on from home, but in a different way. And that's very difficult, but to be honest I say that I just don't have enough experience to say anything about it.

Professional1 created a metaphor:

> I think that, and correct me if I'm wrong, every addiction is the same thing, meaning that whether you're addicted to Lego, or to sex, or to drugs, in the end all that matters is that you're not able to separate yourself anymore from something and that you're not able to participate in society anymore. [...] I think that in fact the tunnel vision that has become your perspective could lead to extremism.

The experts were also asked whether they believed the current prevention projects to be adequate to address far right extremism and all answers indicate that they do. Professional2 said:

> I don't think we need much more, I just think we need to include other players [...] Someone who has radicalised towards the left would be less willing to talk to a police officer, whereas someone on the right side is often alright with that.

When asked whether another approach was needed to deal with different types of extremism, professional4 said: "No, our approach in that remains the same." Professional1 also believed that removing someone from a tunnel vision, regardless of ideology, remains the same. He did wonder what the effects of the 'eternal', within Islamist extremism, would have on someone. He compares the difference between leaving neo-Nazi ideology behind versus that of leaving Islamist extremism behind, the former "might be easier to leave aside

than burning in hell for eternity for abandoning your faith, at least if you're in the rabbit hole."

The overall radicalisation process

Professional2 explains a similar pattern of radicalisation to the one proposed in the Radicalisation Puzzle:

> You need a life-event, so you need the trigger. You must already be unstable in a sense, or at least, you're not comfortable in your own skin, to be open [to radical ideology]. Then you also have to meet someone at that moment by chance, or online or in real life, or be in a situation where it is just present in your environment from childhood. [...] especially if grievances play a role and you are in a lower point of your life on all aspects. It becomes just too easy to embrace, and you create a world that is a bit more pleasant for yourself.

Signs of radicalisation among youth are, according to professional2:

> They show different behaviour; have become isolated; are rejecting their own friends, believe in the familiar and the foreign; and hold certain opinions on the democratic rule of law system. It doesn't really matter on which side of the radicalisation process they are left, right, they all have an opinion on that.

Childhood to adolescence

On the phenomenon of youth radicalisation, specifically, professional1 said the following:

> There has always been phases around groups of young people who try to react in a healthy way against the, at that moment, normative society. They want to break free from adults. At that moment they have a radical edge, and they also behave radically for a bit.

Professional4 said that distinguishing between a normal youth going through puberty or a youth radicalising is important for his work: "you have to think very carefully: is this a youngster who is radicalising, or has he already been radicalised, or is this a youngster who is resisting his parents, the system, whatever. Are they actually going through a natural process?" Professional1 is also involved with this distinction at his work:

> I am not shocked by seeing a swastika drawn on the schoolboard at all. But I do want to know what is going on. Most of the time it is just a way to provoke and cause some uproar, but there are pupils who do actually stand by it.

Professional1 also expressed:

> I think it's a very normal process for teenagers to bite into something, whether that's smoking weed on the street or chasing girls. [...] I don't think it's an unusual thing that adolescents are more vulnerable in general, it is *the* group that is still very much searching. [...]It's always us/them thinking [with adolescents]. Oh, how they would like to belong to something and how do you achieve that the easiest way? By rebelling against something, whatever that is.

Double Standards

One theme that was raised by multiple professionals is the double standards that exist when comparing the, tough, approach against Islamist extremism to that taken to combat far right radicalisation. Professional3: "In the first instance, the far right group [blacked out because of anonymisation] wasn't labelled as such. The municipality reacted very softly because violence was not propagated."

Professional1 also notices double standards at his work:

> I thought it was really interesting that the murderer of Pim Fortuyn in the schoolbooks that we have [...] was not referred to as a terrorist, but as an activist. Mohammed B. [who murdered Van Gogh] was labelled as a terrorist, I don't know if you can explain that to me, but I find that fascinating, as both were politically motivated.

He also shares: "I know for a fact, I have experienced this, that if pupils draw a swastika, teachers get upset, but if someone draws an IS flag, all hell breaks loose. And that difference also illustrates something, I believe that difference shouldn't exist."

4.2. Analysis

Based on the results, an analysis can be made on themes that were common across the interviews and those that are contrasting. This section shares the analysis and relates it to the research question. The question that guides this research is: Are the factors that impact radicalisation processes of youth towards the far right similar to those in Islamist extremist radicalisation?

Although no simple answer to this question exists, and the answers that can be inferred from the findings are not generalizable to the extent that it presents a solid theory, a number of interpretations can be made. First, the factors involved in far right radicalisation of youth seem to be highly similar to that of their age peers who have radicalised towards Islamist extremism. As the experts indicated, it is the *perception of injustice* which lies at the core of vulnerability to radicalisation. As the literature indicated, this seems to be the case for Islamist radicalisation as well. In this sense, it does not matter whether or not such injustices are a fair depiction of the societal conditions, although what is fair and not is also highly subjective; what matters is the strong feeling that a group within society, whether it be white Dutch people, or minority groups, is marginalised. The feeling of injustice is fuelled by a number of sub-issues that fuel grievances. These issues were identified as: housing crisis, perceived discrimination, deterioration of Dutch culture, feelings of not being understood or listened to, sense of belonging, traumatic experiences in life, segregation of population groups. Interesting to note is the correspondence of this list of grievances to those identified by Hafez and Mullins (2015) with regards to Islamist radicalisation. Especially the discrimination in the housing market and segregation policies seem to be overlapping grievances. More importantly, a feeling of discrimination is very present in both groups, regardless of whether the group consists of a majority or minority population. Another grievance that overlaps is the presence of extremist sentiments on ‘the other side’. For Islamists this refers to far right, xenophobic, tendencies; for the far right, the occurrence of Islamist attacks is a source of outrage.

Second, the presence of pre-existing networks seemed to play an important role in far right radicalisation, as it does in Islamist radicalisation. What the pre-existing network exactly is, is not well understood by the professionals, or rather, it is expected to originate from a variety of sources. As Professional2 experienced:

> It could be anywhere really. Maybe it's part of the street culture, it depends on where you grow up, in which neighbourhood your cradle happens to be, which football club you go to, which sports association you attend, which school. Basically, the entire living environment of the youth could influence this.

One thing that is noticeable is the importance of *parental influence* in the far right as multiple participants claim that parents with far right ideologies pass these on to their children. This was, according to the professionals, a bigger factor in far right extremism compared to Islamist extremism. Yet, Hafez & Mullins (2015) emphasise the importance of interpersonal ties as they claim that: "Individuals that join violent groups often do so because they have one or more family members or friends in the movement" (p. 964). Within the 'network' puzzle piece, the *influence of social media* seems to be extensive, according to the professionals. Social media engages youth with societal issues and presents a one-sided perspective which is easily accepted as the tools to critically assess the information are not fully developed among youth at that age yet. Furthermore, recruiters can easily access vulnerable youth online and provide a feeling of belonging to youth who are, naturally, in a quest for being part of a group. Contrarily, the role of the online space in the pre-existing networks aspect within the original Radicalization Puzzle is not explicitly mentioned.

Third, the role ideology plays as a driver of radicalisation is minimal according to the professionals. Instead of understanding ideology to be a causal factor, it is perceived to be a useful tool and only gets adopted later on in the process. One of the participants apprehends *ideology to be weaponised* in order to have a foothold in something and belong to a group, instead of deeply believing in it. This is in line with Hafez and Mullin (2015) as they assert that ideology does not take a core place in radicalisation processes. Further, the conception that ideologies become adopted throughout a radicalisation process matches the results to the puzzle model, although the phase in which is thought to be later for far right compared to Islamist radicalisation. Within both far right and Islamist ideologies, a demonised enemy who is to blame for all the injustices experienced is created. This enemy is for the far right either foreigners or leftist politics, for Islamist extremists it is the West. Another point that can be made from the results is the emergence of the so-called 2.0 far right, in which far right individuals present themselves and their ideology cleaner yet are still rooted in racial hatred.

Fourth, the results show two things: 1) far right groups hold regular social meetings in which group identity is strengthened, and 2) wider, both existing and developing, societal systems serve as enabling structures to radicalisation. With regards to number one, professionals agreed that far right groups meet both off- and online, although the latter has become more prominent in the radicalisation process and functions as a rabbit hole in which increasingly radical and extremist ideas become adopted. This observation is in line with those made by Hafez and Mullins (2015), although they place a higher importance on offline spaces. I view the wider, both existing and developing, societal systems as an enabling structure as well, as these structures promote what is considered to be the norm, or at least, what kind of ideas are tolerated. The idea that discrimination and racism against minority, or non-white Dutch, groups is widespread in Dutch society was revealed by the professionals. This form of *discrimination* might be implicit, and the existence might be rejected by individuals, but it has profound effects on dynamics on communities and on creating the norm. Accentuating the already existing tensions, the, what I call, *mainstreaming of far right ideologies* in society became clear from the interviews held. The political arena is dominated by right, including far right, parties that produce an increasingly radical narrative on minority groups. This results in a shift of norms in Dutch society that slowly becomes more nationalistic and intolerant to other groups. Another development is the increased (willingness to the) use of violence, especially among youth who are engaged in the Drill Rap scene. Although the increased (willingness to) use of violence is a broader societal issue and not necessarily linked to extremism on its own, it does influence the perceptions of youth on the use of violence. This makes it more likely that individuals that adhere to the far right will cross the line, as the threshold to do so has been lowered in the Netherlands. The developments in Dutch society identified in this section as enabling environments are present for the population at large, yet they contribute to a wider availability of far right propaganda and increased tolerance of both far right narratives and the use of violence.

Fifth, the results indicate that professionals view radicalisation towards the far right and Islamist extremism as a similar process. In this, the emotions and perceptions of individuals are highlighted and marked as the core aspect present in grievances on both sides. Within radicalisation processes though, different components of individuals' lives might slightly differ. The results suggest that parents holding far right ideologies might play a bigger role in far right youth radicalisation as compared to Islamist extremism. Furthermore, although the current measures in place to address radicalisation are thought to

be adequate to deal with both Islamist and far right radicalisation, the players needed are thought to differ. Moreover, the concept of ‘eternity’ that one professional noted with regards to Islamist extremism, might require different deradicalisation efforts when comparing this to the ideology of the far right in which such fatalistic narratives are, supposedly, less present.

Last, the radicalisation patterns illuminated by the interviews largely overlap with those proposed in the Radicalization Puzzle. However, one aspect that is not explicitly included in the model is a life-trigger event, yet it is an aspect that is emphasised by the professionals. Besides this, the presence of grievances and meeting someone at the right moment, or having those people around you already, combined with the presentation of an ideology that explains the world and gives a course of action, increased isolation and tunnel vision are all aspects included by both professionals and the Radicalization Model. There is a specificity with regards to youth radicalisation that is not present when adults radicalise. This is the struggle that youngsters already experience in the transition from childhood to adolescence which includes a natural process of rebellion and a strong quest for belonging and identity formation.

5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Discussion

The analysis showed that in both far right and Islamist extremism a grievance exist that is related to the other group. In a sense, the increased presence of Islamist extremists results in grievances among the far right that could stimulate radicalisation, and the other way around. This corresponds to literature that explores the concept of reciprocal radicalisation (Abbas, 2012; Ebner, 2017; Knott, Lee & Copeland, 2018). As explained in the literature review in Chapter 2, reciprocal radicalisation refers to the increased radicalisation of, in this case, Islamist extremists fuelled by the presence of far right groups, and vice versa. The results of this research corroborate with the existence of this dynamic on an individual level as well. On a macro level, widespread discrimination in the Netherlands, and the unwillingness to acknowledge it, inhibits any attempts to create positive change. It also corroborates with Ronen's (2020) assertion that far right ideologies address grievances present in the wider population. Recent attempts to raise the issue on the agenda received resistance from conservative groups in society. Faith in progression has shifted to a strong sense of cultural and ethnic preservation by the Dutch middle class. One example is the counter-movement, by those who felt that 'everything is being taken' from them, to the 'Black Pete is Racism' campaign. Black Pete is part of the Dutch Sinterklaas holiday, which is similar to Santa Claus. Sinterklaas is accompanied by helpers with black-face. The tradition has now become controversial and banned in most places in the country. This brought with it violent protests from the far right side who were against losing the tradition. This example further illustrates the process of reciprocal radicalisation.

Another result of widespread racist tendencies is the double standards that are employed when approaching right-wing and Islamist extremism. Interview data suggests that signs of radicalisation to the far right are often misjudged and not recognised. Additionally, responses to symbols associated with far right ideology are less intense to those associated with Islamist extremism. According to recent research by Görder and Chavannes (2020), Islamist terrorism is combatted in a much more extensive way, while combatting far right terrorism lacks adequate legal tools for accountability. Sterkenburg (2021) wrote a book on her research on the far right in the Netherlands and titled it: 'But you cannot say that'. This title refers to the much uttered phrase that expresses a belief that society does not allow people to freely express their opinion anymore. However, as the mainstreaming of radical views portrays, this is not necessarily true. The phrase is used by the far right to exploit grievances related to a perception of a deterioration of Dutch culture.

As Noorloos (2015) has assessed in the Dutch context, the application of the 'freedom of speech argument' has been skewed to protect the majority from the 'radical minorities'. It has become weaponised by those in the far right as a justification to express racism, while not allowing that space for their perceived 'others'. The inconsistent application of bans on hate speech further portrays the double standards present in society.

The sense of reward, importance of the group, and organisation of extreme groups was a common denominator in Horgan's (2008) research. The importance of a sense of belonging and the associated rewards are clearly present in the radicalisation processes as indicated by the participants in this study. One major component to youth radicalisation is understood to be the natural process of puberty in which one aims to find their place in the world and be part of a group. A radical group can provide an answer to that search, although vulnerabilities related to other parts of the youngster's life are needed to create an opening. The findings of this study are therefore in line with those posed by Horgan (2008), even though material rewards were not mentioned by the participants. Other rewards, such as support from social surroundings, role models, and status, however, do seem to be concurrent with the results of this research.

The understanding of ideology to be weaponised, instead of holding deeply held beliefs for the underlying ideas, corresponds to the body of literature that moves away from seeing ideology as taking a core role in radicalisation. It further corresponds to those who argue that cognitive radicalisation does not necessarily precede behavioural radicalisation (Borum, 2011). However, the results of this study do indicate that the presence of an ideology is a requirement for the professionals to use the label someone or something as radicalised. Academic literature has also drawn parallels between the ideology of the far right and Islamism. Both are based on the creation of an out-group, and antisemitism is an important component of both (Wegener, 2020). Additionally, as the results indicate, far right narratives use the sense of victimhood to justify the exclusion of, and sometimes the violence towards, minority groups. Victimhood also plays a big role in Islamist extremist ideology. They both use conspiracy theories in which apocalyptic futures are adopted; for Islamist extremism this refers to the end of the ummah, whereas far right ideology is 'concerned' about the replacement of the white race (Wegener, 2020).

5.2 Concluding remarks

This research sought to answer the following research question: Are the factors that impact radicalisation processes of youth towards the far right similar to those in Islamist extremist

radicalisation? It did so by conducting semi-structured interviews with professionals working on youth radicalisation. The data collected from these interviews was coded and themes that arose were compared to those proposed in the theoretical framework developed by Hafez and Mullins (2015). This model, the Radicalization Puzzle, was developed as a synthesis from existing research on Islamist extremist radicalisation. Results show that radicalisation processes, as understood by professionals, are highly similar between the two types of extremisms, although the precise patterns and specific factors within them might vary slightly. The data also indicates the presence of widespread far right sentiments in Dutch society and the double standards applied when approaching right-wing versus Islamist extremism.

The results of this research are not generalizable and do not provide a holistic picture of what radicalisation processes for far right youth entail, due to its small sample size and limited geographical distribution of participants. They do, however, provide an insight into such processes, from experts who gained experience with the phenomenon through their profession. It also displays the utility of interviewing professionals and appreciating their experience as expertise. More research is needed to fully grasp the complexities at play that might explain a part of the increase of youth radicalisation to the far right. This research must emphasise that every radicalisation process is different, and no extremist profiles can be created, while simultaneously demonstrating common patterns among the varying processes. This research also indicates that due to the similarities in the patterns between right-wing and Islamist extremist radicalisation among youth, it is helpful to apply similar strategies to combatting it. To do so though, first and foremost, the effectiveness and impact of existing projects to prevent radicalisation should be assessed more thoroughly. This enables to capitalise on the lessons learned and good practices resulting from over a decade of (hyper)focus on Islamist extremism. Although the rise of the far right among youth is a highly worrisome phenomenon, as stressed by professionals, youth remain youth, and allowing them to explore, be visible to, and critically engage with the world around them, within the boundaries of the law, should be promoted. Most importantly, youth's worries should be taken seriously, and providing a genuine and safe environment to utter these might be the most important tool in preventing radicalisation. To conclude, far right extremism should be treated as a global phenomenon that requires international cooperation, lessons learned from the past, and the same intensity of tools used to battle Islamist terrorism.

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Annex

Indicative themes/questions

1. Ask for consent to record the interview.
2. Introduction of participant (‘s work) and myself (and my research).
3. Introduction of the research.
    a. Explain the focus of my research and what I mean with the terminology I’m using
    b. E.g. radicalization, right-wing extremism.
4. Example topics/questions (based on Hafez & Mullins’ radicalization puzzle (2015))
    a. General
        i. From your work experience, please explain what the current trends are in the field of radicalization of youth.
        ii. Why do you think these trends are occurring?
    b. Grievances
        i. What personal experiences impact youth to become more vulnerable to extremist groups?
        ii. How do politics play a role in the reasons why youth radicalise?
        iii. How does socioeconomic background impact youth radicalization?
        iv. What are developments in Dutch society that impact radicalization?
    c. Networks
        i. How do youth first get into touch with radical peers/ideologies?
        ii. What is the support network of youth at risk for radicalization like?
    d. Ideology
        i. How does ideology play a role in the reasons why youth radicalise?
        ii. What do the youth you work with believe in in terms of ideology?
    e. Enabling environment and support structures
        i. Through which platforms do the youth socialise with like-minded peers (both on- and offline)
5. Interventions
    a. What type of interventions or procedures are you familiar with that you have used in your work with regards to radicalisation of youth?
    b. From your perspective, how would you describe the adequacy of these interventions to deal with the shift in focus, or the added focus, towards the extreme right?
6. Are there any questions or other issues you would like to discuss with me?
7. Thank you and closure of the interview.