


Cas Mudde (ed.): *Youth and the Extreme Right* 


In this anthology, Cas Mudde has curated a collection of articles providing a multi-disciplinary lens into the relationship between youth and their involvement within extreme-right political parties, social movements, and subcultures. Essays are by scholars from anthropological, political science, psychological, sociological, and social work backgrounds. From the start, the reader is reminded that often the media, mainstream politics, and the general public tend to oversimplify and stereotype extreme-right group members as ‘young men, heavily tattooed, heads freshly shaved, with a fanatic stare and, preferably, their right arm in the air (to make a fascist salute)’ (p. 1). The purpose of this book is, at least in part, to debunk such stereotypes. Recognising the importance of adolescents and young adulthood within the socialisation process, this anthology explores the nuances of extremism and its allure for youth. The book is divided into three thematic sections addressing the initial priming and appeal of extreme-right groups, prejudice and violence associated with extremist movements, and extremist prevention and intervention programmes. Chapters vary in breadth and depth, ranging from close proximity case studies to larger European-wide comparative analyses.

Chapters included in Part I of this anthology explore causal factors driving youth attraction to extreme-right groups and ideas. The authors address socialising agents that influence the radicalisation process, targeting the role of families, employment, extremist organisations and cultural male rites of passage. ‘Youth, Unemployment and Political Marginalisation’, by Ann Helén Bay and Morten Blekesaune, gives a comparative political analysis based on Eurobarometer survey results about the impact of unemployment on political marginalisation, considered a factor in priming interest in extreme-right groups. Generally, trends of unemployment are shown to positively correlate with individuals lacking political confidence. Unemployed youth also have a slightly higher rate of holding revolutionary ideas, which can be linked to a higher willingness to join in more alternative ideologies, such as extremism. Thomas Gabriel’s chapter ‘Parenting and Right-Wing Extremism: An Analysis of the Biographical Genesis of Racism among the Youth’ tracks the influence of the family in the development of racist attitudes using a Swiss case study. Cultural coding, handed down from parent to child, including the impact of immediate social circles, is shown to have a large influence on attitudinal development and can precondition far-right motives and actions. Exposure to domestic violence, parental conflicts, and intra-familial experiences as a young person are also discussed as affecting behavioural predispositions.

Stéphanie Dechezelles provides a chapter on ‘The Cultural Basis of Youth In-
volvement in Italian Extreme Right-Wing Organizations’, comparing two youth organisations attached to extreme-right political parties. Dechezelles highlights that these extreme political youth groups provide cultural frames which present an ideal model of society, historic legend-based narratives, and suggestions of symbolic territory that help build a strong in-group identity for participants. The author argues that these frames, combined with collective cultural references, facilitate the appropriation of these youth movements.

Continuing with another case-study analysis, Michael Kimmel writes on ‘Racism as Adolescent Male Rite of Passage: Ex-Nazis in Scandinavia’. Qualitative interviews with ex-Nazis reveal that extreme-right adherents in Scandinavia come from primarily lower middle-class backgrounds, more often come from divorced families, and tend to join extremist groups during their mid to late teens. Joining such groups is less about political activism and more about the social and cultural in-group benefits. The author argues that for a number of extremists, participation is more a masculine rite of passage than a dedication to extremist ideologies. Stories and case studies run parallel to analysis, giving the reader an insider’s lens into how young individuals are drawn to extreme-right groups, as well as an idea of why they choose to leave.

The second part of this anthology targets the primary issues related to youth and the extreme-right; mainly ethnic prejudices, intolerances, and violence based on these sentiments. The first two chapters analyse trends in ethnic prejudices and tolerance. Pieter Bevelander and Jonas Otterbeck look at ‘Young People’s Attitudes Towards Muslims in Sweden’ using multiple regression data sets. The study addresses the increasing issue of Islamophobia, particularly within extreme-right groups in recent years, as this minority has increased throughout Europe, representing the new ‘other’. Results mainly confirm certain assumptions about Islamophobia, showing that educational environment and levels of ethnic diversity within friend circles and within a community setting all affect attitudes towards Muslims. Higher integration and exposure to ethnic diversity tends to increase acceptance levels towards ethnic minorities. Taking a different angle, Allison Harrell addresses ‘The Limits of Tolerance in Diverse Societies: Hate Speech and Political Tolerance Norms among Youth’. In this case study comparing Canadian and Belgian survey data, the reader is forced to question the fine line between freedom of speech and objectionable speech, such as hate speech, but other types of objectionable speech are also included. Despite some nuanced differences between the two countries, Harrell’s research provides positive findings showing that young Canadians and Belgians possess, for the most part, positive multicultural tolerance levels, supporting speech rights for objectionable groups without extending that privilege to groups promoting hatred.

The second two articles in Part II look directly at youth violence and aggression based on xenophobic ideologies. In Heléne Lööw’s article, ‘Right-Wing Extremist Perpetrators from an International Perspective’, newer waves of violence against immigrants in Sweden are looked at directly, relating findings to broader international research. Lööw dives deeper into profiling the perpetrators of hate crimes finding that while some have direct links or affiliations with racist organisations, others lack this association completely. Violent attacks from racist organisations target not only those defined as a ‘foreigner’ or ‘other’ but also those seen as representing the ‘system’, such as government representatives, anti-racists, or journalists. Many extreme-right groups justify their actions through Zionist and globalisation-related conspiracy theories. Certain juvenile subcultures are also linked with violent aggression
against foreigners directly. Following on from this, Meredith W. Watts writes about ‘Aggressive Youth Cultures and Hate Crime: Skinheads and Xenophobic Youth in Germany’. Showing similar findings to Lööw, Watts concludes that at least one-third of violent hate-crime incidents are carried out by young men that are unaffiliated to racist organisations. This chapter not only reflects the significant country variation in legally defining and reporting ethnically-based crimes, but also shows the complex and culturally sensitive nature of German laws. These laws are focused largely on the prohibition of ‘Nazi’ speech and propaganda, while having less robust legal structures for other discrimination-based offenses. Going against certain preconceived notions, the reader is reminded that ‘[o]nly some skinheads are racists, and most racists are not skinheads’ (p. 152). The article also crucially addresses the rise in more global white power movement, facilitated by social media and online tools connecting those with marginalised ideologies and giving a new market to skinhead subcultures as a form popular culture.

The final part of this anthology discusses the ways in which both state institutions and non-state actors have created programmes aimed at preventing young people from developing extreme-right sympathies and developing membership in extreme-right groups. These essays also touch upon exit programmes, helping individuals leave extreme-right groups. Andreas Beelman’s chapter, ‘Preventing Right-Wing Extremism: European and International Research’, provides an overview of issues prevention programmes face. This article discusses the effectiveness of child-focused prevention measures, with a focus on how programmes can modify both negative attitudes, such as prejudices, as well as negative behaviour, such as violence. Prevention measures can target a cohort-specific group, such as an entire grade level at a school, or specifically target at-risk groups.

In this overview of international programmes it becomes clear that perceptions of what causes extremist ideologies have a large impact on how programs are developed. Some programs target individuals showing certain social symptoms while others may target a school, certain families or social groups. Beelman points out the importance of better longitudinal studies tracking moving forward, addressing the need for a broader understanding of best practices for developmental models. The second chapter in Part III addresses both entry and exit from extreme-right groups. Ineke van der Valk writes on ‘Youth Engagement in Right-Wing Extremism: Comparative Cases from the Netherlands’. The author discusses the changing nature of the Dutch extreme-right landscape with the introduction of escalating Islamophobia. She stresses the importance of social factors and friendship groups, rather than xenophobic political ideologies, in pulling young individuals into extreme-right circles and organisations. Violence was also seen to play a large role in both radicalisation and deradicalisation, showing the fluid nature of extreme-right participation and perceptions on an individual level.

The next two chapters look at case studies concerning prevention strategies at local community and educational levels. Yngve Carlsson’s chapter, ‘Violent Right-Wing Extremism in Norway: Community Based Prevention and Intervention’, presents current prevention strategies existing in Norway and how they might be incorporated into wider contexts. Carlsson gives the reader a lens into the response from local Norwegian communities confronting the proliferation of violent right-wing extremism. The chapter argues that racist and violent youth groups manifest differently at local levels and equally localised responses should determine how best to face issues and whether or not to involve various potential counter-agents, such as police, municipal departments, schools,
voluntary organisations and/or youth representatives. Honing in on the role education plays, Cynthia Miller-Idriss, in 'Raising the Right Wing: Educators’ Struggle to Confront the Radical Right,' focuses on Germany’s distinct history, coming to terms with its Nazi past, and the effect this has on neo-Nazi youth movements. The author presents individual cases of youths engaging with extreme-right ideologies in Germany before arguing that teachers are often unprepared to counter extremism among their students, nonetheless identify students that might be holding contentious ideologies. The chapter also argues that the younger generations are resistant to the national taboos against neo-Nazi ideologies that overlap with national pride. Educators have a potentially strong role in helping students engage in dialogue about national issues in a way that also serves to prevent the allure of extremist ideologies.

Overall, this book presents an excellent range of academic engagement with the subject of youth and extreme-right ideologies. Sections are also introduced with a range of questions for the reader to ponder while reading, making this book a good addition to syllabuses for university-level courses touching upon this subject. One is perhaps surprised that far right groups are often not addressed directly in many chapters, and instead a variety of factors are tracked that contribute to, or facilitate processes of radicalisation.

Despite efforts to clarify the relationship between youth and the extreme right, the reader is rather left in a position to question the complexity and multi-variable factors that lead to extreme-right participation. The book cautions readers from the start to keep an open mind about the heterogeneous nature of what is labelled ‘extreme right’ across Europe and the United States. Cas Mudde reminds us that only by building an understanding of the complex life experiences and choices young people face can we better assess what makes them embrace extreme-right ideologies and join extreme-right groups and political movements. This understanding is necessary in order to effectively prevent and intercept radicalisation processes.

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Dennis McKerlie: Justice Between the Young and the Old

In philosophical discussions of distributive justice two issues have traditionally occupied centre stage. The first is the currency of justice: whether we should concern ourselves with individuals’ resource holdings, their opportunities, or with their well-being. The second is the structure of our just distribution. A concern for relative equality between individuals motivates relative egalitarians; prioritarians suggest that individuals’ claims grow stronger the worse their absolute positions; and sufficientarians insist that there are important thresholds that define a stark difference in the concerns of justice.

Dennis McKerlie’s great contribution to the field has been to highlight an important third issue, which he calls the ‘temporal subject’ of justice. Many accounts of distributive justice assume that the structure of our distribution should concern life-times. If we are welfare egalitarians, for example, we should be fundamentally concerned that people have equally good lives. This would ignore vast inequalities between groups in a society, including different generations, so long as the same patterns of inequality are replicated across people’s lives. In fact, this seems much more likely to occur with intergenerational inequalities than between other kinds of