*Routledge Studies in Fascism and the Far Right*

# THE DYNAMICS OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM WITHIN GERMAN SOCIETY

## ESCAPE INTO AUTHORITARIANISM

Edited by Oliver Decker, Johannes Kiess and Elmar Brähler

Translated by David West

# The Dynamics of Right-Wing Extremism within German Society

*The Dynamics of Right-Wing Extremism within German Society* explores the prevalence of right-wing extremist attitudes in Germany.

The book provides a thorough psychosocial and sociological theory of general authoritarian dynamics to explain broader societal attitudes, particularly focusing on right-wing extremism. It provides a uniquely long-term perspective on the different dimensions of right-wing extremism – the affinity for dictatorial forms of government, chauvinist attitudes, the trivialization or justification of National Socialism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and social Darwinism. The first chapter delineates the theoretical framework of authoritarian dynamics, while subsequent chapters provide an in-depth analysis of empirical findings and distinguish authoritarian and democratic typologies. The authors focus on recognition of authoritarian statehood and anti-Semitism; the relationship between religion and right-wing extremism; and support for the radical-right populist party, *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD). The innovative theoretical approach of this book scrutinizes the theory of authoritarianism in the contemporary world.

This book provides unique empirical data and will be of interest to scholars of German politics, anti-democratic attitudes and prejudices, sociology, political science, and social psychology.

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## Escape into Authoritarianism

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# 1 Flight into Authoritarianism

## The Dynamics of Right-Wing Extremism at the Centre of Society

*Oliver Decker*

We have been using representative surveys since 2002 to investigate political attitudes in Germany, with between 2,500 and 5,000 inhabitants of the country being interviewed every two years. The immediate backdrop to our research were the pogroms and politically motivated murders of the 1990s, a time when hundreds of thousands of people sought refuge and asylum in Germany. The reaction to this influx of people was severe, and names like Rostock-Lichtenhagen and Solingen still stand today for the atrocities that were committed against migrants and refugees there. It was against the background of these atrocities that the Bundestag passed the so-called "asylum compromise" in 1993 – a dreadful term for the *de facto* ending of the fundamental right to asylum, as the Peace Prize winner Navid Kermani told Bundestag members in his speech commemorating the 65th anniversary of the Basic Law. It was the first instance when solidarity with the weakest was withdrawn, long before the reforms to the labour market that followed at the beginning of the new millennium. If this "concession" was intended to quell extreme right-wing outrages, then it has sadly not succeeded. Arson attacks and murders, pogroms, and terror perpetrated by right-wing extremists – these continue to be part of German reality, more than 25 years after the "asylum compromise". The National Socialist Underground is only the best-known example here – and at the same time it exemplifies the difficulties of dealing with the situation, since, following the long court hearings that brought some of the perpetrators to justice, there are still many questions left unanswered.

The police are constantly forced to correct upwards the number of victims of right-wing extremism. For example, the German government announced in 2018 that the latest investigations suggest that there have been an estimated 83 victims of extreme right-wing violence since 1990.[1] But independent observers, such as the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, Pro Asyl, and victim-support associations, say that their own data show that not even half of the cases that can be proven to be extreme right-wing killings are reflected in police statistics. For example, the five victims of the attacks at the Munich Olympic Shopping Centre are not included in police statistics,

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even though the experts commissioned by the Munich Office for Democracy (Matthias Quent, Christian Kopke, and Florian Hartleb) came to the clear conclusion that these murders were motivated by xenophobia. And even the Federal Ministry of the Interior was forced to admit in 2013 that, in an initial review of unsolved murders between 1990 and 2011, there were 746 cases where there was evidence of an extreme right-wing motivation for the crime.[2]

Whenever refugees, those who have a different opinion, or migrants are murdered or attacked, sections of the public have for years reacted in the same way. First, the actions of right-wing extremists are denied or depoliticized (see Schellenberg 2015); and, if this cannot be maintained, then the actions are relativized as was the case most recently with the hounding of foreigners in Chemnitz.[3] This refusal to accept reality is flanked by another phenomenon that has become increasingly common recently: every mention of right-wing extremism is countered by the phrase “left-wing extremism”, an echo that is now as predictable as it is irrational, but that leads to inaction when it comes to the spread of right-wing extremism. Nor is the comparison correct, since the extreme left does not simply mirror the extreme right: they have very different political aims and ideologies (the ideology of the right, unlike that of the left, is an ideology of inequality); and they differ fundamentally in terms of the violence that they perpetrate, especially violence against people.[4]

However, two events in 2000 led to increasing recognition of the danger posed by the right: the bomb attack on migrants and Jews in Düsseldorf-Wehrhahn (which is still unsolved), and the attack on the Düsseldorf synagogue a few weeks later. These provoked a new reaction and marked a rethink. The call made by the then Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder for an “uprising of the decent” brought to an end the widespread denial that there were sections of the population who were violent and neo-Nazi.

This public mobilization was necessary and, although coming relatively late, it had an impact because it began discussions over the support in the population for the extreme right. When questioned, neo-Nazi perpetrators of violence have freely said that they saw themselves as “executing the will of the people”, with the proverbial silent majority nodding their heads in approval when they chased migrants through towns and villages, set fire to refugee shelters, and killed people. This is what led us to examine the political attitude of Germans. Our first survey in 2002 was based on the question: how widespread are extreme right-wing attitudes in the population? We also used a questionnaire on extreme right-wing attitudes in a representative survey for the first time (Decker et al. 2013), assigning three statements to each of the six dimensions in the questionnaire (support for a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, social Darwinism, and trivialization of Nazi crimes). The respondents given this questionnaire were asked for their opinion: they could either agree or disagree with these extreme right-wing statements.

The results from 2002 were shocking (Decker et al. 2003). For example, 42% of East Germans and 37% of West Germans agreed with the statement belonging to the dimension of "xenophobia" that "Germany is dangerously overrun by the many foreigners living here"; and, taken together, the three xenophobic statements met with approval among 24% of respondents in West Germany and 30% in East Germany. The proportion of those with xenophobic attitudes remained almost unchanged in the next survey of 2004 (Decker & Brähler 2005). The proportion of respondents in East Germany who agreed with xenophobic statements then rose steadily to reach almost 39% in 2012, while the proportion in West Germany fell temporarily to 18% in 2008, although about 22% of West Germans again expressed xenophobic attitudes during the economic crisis (2008–2012). In 2014, agreement with xenophobic statements fell to just over 22% in the East and 17% in the West. Although there were still a great number of people with xenophobic attitudes (too many for a democratic society), there were considerably fewer than in the previous survey waves. This number remained virtually unchanged in 2016 (West, 19.8% and East, 22.7%), but rose again in 2018 (overview in Chapter 2 of this book), with the proportion of those in the East agreeing with xenophobic statements again exceeding 30%, and in the West, above 20% again. Devaluation of groups deemed "foreign" or "deviant" also rose, with negative attitudes towards Sinti and Roma, asylum seekers, and Muslims continuing to increase. For example, while in 2010 around 33% of respondents felt that Muslims made them feel "like a foreigner" in their own country (Heitmeyer 2010), that figure climbed to 55% in both East and West in 2018 (see Chapter 2).

## The centre of society

These findings led us to speak of right-wing extremism at the "centre of society", and to give the study then carried out with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in 2006 the title *Vom Rand zur Mitte* (*From the Margins to the Centre*) (Decker & Brähler 2006). Since we noticed for the third time in 2006 that devaluation of other people, the desire for a leader, and chauvinism were present not only among voters of extreme right-wing parties, but also and even especially among supporters of democratic parties, i.e. parties that claim to represent the "centre", we decided to focus in particular on right-wing extremism at the *centre* of society. Our results were not an error in measurement, as some critics of our study might have wished, and they have unfortunately been confirmed in recent years by the growth of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany, AfD) and Pegida.[5] There had long been a great potential for extreme right-wing parties, but such parties as the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland* (National Democratic Party Germany, NPD) could simply not exploit this potential. But the fact that the spread of extreme right-wing attitudes did not manifest itself in action should not be a comfort to anyone. And to prevent people

from coming to the wrong conclusion and thinking that extreme right-wing attitudes only occur among so-called "marginal groups", we attached the term "centre" to the phrase "right-wing extremism". That was a decision that has brought us much criticism since.

Our decision was not completely without precedent, though. For example, a study by the sociologist Theodor Geiger of the "old" and the "new middle class" led him to describe both as the "blessed ground of ideological confusion" (see Geiger 1930: 641). Where this "confusion" came from was a question that Georg Simmel had already answered: "The middle class alone has an upper and a lower border, and such that it continuously receives individuals from both the upper and the lower layer of society, and gives individuals to both" (see Simmel 1908: 451–452). Taking up this idea, Geiger argued that the "confusion" of the middle class is a product of its fear of being demoted from the centre and falling into poverty: "The false shame of being demoted is expressed often enough in hatred and disdain" (see Geiger 1930: 646). With this, Geiger had found an explanation that still has relevance today, namely, the threat or reality of being demoted is accompanied by extreme right-wing or fascist attitudes. For both Geiger and Simmel, the centre was a position in society that lay on a vertical axis. But Geiger was wrong in one respect: NSDAP (National-Socialistic German Workers' Party) voters were often not themselves affected by the economic crisis, and those who *were* affected (such as the unemployed) were more likely to vote for the Social-democratic Party (SPD) or the Communist Party (KPD). People who voted for the NSDAP did so not because they themselves were suffering, but because the Weimar Republic was going through an economic crisis (Falter et al. 1983). But the very fact that the economy was able to strip the first democratic society on German soil of its legitimacy is anything but self-evident.

It was here that a gap in the explanation appeared, but one that did not obstruct the progress of the term "centre". The US sociologist Seymour Lipset, who investigated changes in voting behaviour at the end of the Weimar Republic, was the first to speak of an "extremism of the centre" (Lipset 1959), by which he meant the source from which the NSDAP had recruited its supporters. Unlike Geiger, though, Lipset had in mind not the centre on a *vertical* axis, between a lower and an upper layer in society, but rather the centre on a *horizontal* axis. In doing so, he was, in fact, taking up a distinction that has been in use since the French Revolution: in the French National Assembly of 1789, the restorative, i.e. monarchist, forces took their place on the right of the plenary hall, those who wanted radical change sat on the left, and the "moderate" forces positioned themselves between the two. The political centre has since been regarded as a place of moderation – and as a shelter for democracy. Lipset, however, ascribed to the supporters of the centre parties their own extremism: that of fascism (Lipset 1959). Although Lipset's empirical findings would be modified somewhat later, the Mainz political scientist Jürgen Falter describing the

NSDAP as a "people's party" (*Volkspartei*) whose voters came from various social backgrounds, even though it had a decidedly "middle-class belly" (Falter 1981), what remains undisputed is the involvement of the political "centre" in fascism. As the historian Heinrich Winkler has argued, there "can be no doubt that the reservoir of NS voters mainly comprised farmers, the self-employed middle class, and employees and civil servants (Winkler 1972: 181).

However, we also had something different in mind to Lipset when choosing the term "centre", since he had used it primarily to characterize those in society who had supported National Socialism. We did not want to explore the essence of the centre – through, for example, investigating the income groups, level of education, and professions that constitute it – but rather the dreadful state of affairs in society that produces the potential for anti-democratic sentiments. The term "centre" is ideally suited to this purpose, since it is related to one of the oldest ideas in European thought: namely, the idea of a place in society where can be found the representatives of the normative order. The most important theorists of extremism, therefore, understand the centre as an "institutional structure of the constitutional state whose aim is to restrain, to guarantee freedom, and to control power" (Backes & Jesse 2005: 160). Aristotle had in fact already used the term "mesotes" ("center" or "mean") in this sense in the fourth century BC, when in the *Nicomachean Ethics* he contrasted it with the "most peripheral", i.e. the extreme, thus turning both terms into political-ethical dimensions. For Aristotle, virtue lies in the golden mean between two evils (namely, those of excess and deficiency), so that "in all things the mean is to be commended, while the extremes are neither commendable nor right but reprehensible" (Aristoteles & Dirlmeier 1999: 48). This holds true for the individual, who should moderate her actions according to the golden mean, as well as for the state, which should justify the hegemony of a certain economic position in the polis: "the goodness or badness of a constitution or city" depends to a large extent on the "centre" being "strong". Here, the centre is for Aristotle, not the group who live their lives in moderation, but the group of middle property: "In all cities", he writes, "there are three groups – the very rich, the very poor, and those in the middle". It is only where the latter are "strong and more powerful than the two extremes" that the polis has a "good constitution", for otherwise uprisings and unrest may threaten (Aristoteles & Schwarz 2010). We should not ignore the fact that this statement served to delegitimize democracy as a form of government, since not everyone can have in mind the well-being of the polis, which for Aristotle is something that only men at the centre of society are capable of. Nevertheless, Aristotle managed more than 2000 years ago to give the term "centre" a range of meanings – as a yardstick by which the individual can moderate her actions, and as a position in the polis. Centre and moderation are related to a virtuous life and have a horizontal and a vertical axis. Horizontally, the centre denotes political moderation, the

place between extremes; vertically, it denotes a social position, the transitional stage between above and below.

Given this history of the term, we can understand why the "magic of the centre" (Lenk 1987: 12) was so important for the reality of the Federal Republic of Germany from the very outset, since it served to separate the present from the past: National Socialism was deplored as a "loss of the centre" in the political and normative sense, a phrase coined by Sedlmayr, who in fact owed his academic career to his strong involvement in the structures of the NSDAP (Sedlmayr 1948). The folksinger/songwriter Franz Josef Degenhardt had the figure of the "old notary Bolamus" express the postwar image that Germany had of itself:

> Yes, the old notary Bolamus, he's got the right recipe.
> How to get as old as he is and still live –
> And he tells everyone at the pub who wants to hear:
> "That's it", he says, "all very simple, with moderation and with purpose
> And never, my dear, ever exaggerate anything
> Then every organ and everything will be fine!
> Then every organ and everything will be fine!"
> Yes, the old notary Bolamus, he has
> managed to live a good life
> Because he was always a little for, and he was always a little against, and he was always careful!
> "Only Auschwitz", he says, "that was a little too much!"
> And he quotes his motto: "Everything with moderation and with purpose!"

The centre is, as historian Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht put it when looking back on his childhood in the early Federal Republic, a "latent figure" in postwar West German history (Gumbrecht 2012).[6] The longing for the *centre* expressed the latent desire of the postwar period for the destruction of the war to be healed, for the grievous loss of the ideology of supremacy not to be suffered, for the guilt for millions of murders not to be present. The loss of the centre seemed to have caused the disaster; its return would provide the longed-for restitution.

The presence today of the notion of the centre is inseparably linked to the early history of Europe and to the postwar history of the Federal Republic of Germany. Having taken its place as a latent figure and invocation, the centre was adapted in parallel to the development of the Federal Republic. The centre has long been invoked in the rhetoric of election campaigns, first in the early 1970s, when Willy Brandt's campaign team called on the SPD to represent the "new centre" (which indicated that structural changes to working society and the lines of conflict shaping it had cost the SPD its electorate, not because there was no longer a working class, but because

the working class saw itself less and less as such). The CDU also sought to represent the "centre" following the "spiritual-moral turn", or the change of government to the Kohl era. But it was only with the Blair-Schröder paper on the "new middle ground" (1999) that the rhetoric of the centre really took off, with subsequent election campaigns being conducted with the explicit aim of winning over the centre. Election campaigners did not want, and could not afford, to miss out on "the centre" any less than the majority in parliament. Information on the spiritual state of this centre was also provided, for example, by Guido Westerwelle, the then Vice-Chancellor, who spoke out in a guest article in *Die Welt* for those "who have worked for everything": "Ignoring the centre", he wrote, "is extremely dangerous" (Guido Westerwelle in *Die Welt* of 10 February 2010). The title used by the news magazine *Focus* in 2009 ("The Centre – a German Fetish") was more clairvoyant than perhaps the authors themselves knew. The "centre" is an idea still alive in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. Invoking the centre can be read as a sign of progress: the aim is no longer to be a people's party, but a party of the centre. But taking into account the history of the idea reveals the character of the appeal: to address the centre is to demand political moderation. Invoking the centre offers the hope of salvation, and it is little wonder, therefore, that pointing to how little the centre really is the stronghold of the democratic polis should trigger such fierce resistance. Linking "centre" with "right-wing extremism" is akin to slaughtering a holy cow (Decker & Türcke 2016).

Thus, using the coordinates of the social situation simply cannot identify the centre. To do so would be like taking Max Weber, the doyen of German sociology, at his word. While examining the close functional link between Protestantism and capitalism, Weber identified the comfort given by the promise of salvation through the accumulation of wealth. To establish the psychological drive behind the accumulation of capital, Weber studied not all currents of Protestantism, but only those of Calvinism. Had he been asked to say where this Calvinist could be found, Weber would have shaken his head in confusion, since for him the Calvinist was an "archetypal correlation of functions" and "could rarely be found in historical reality" (Weber 1904/1905: 55). Such an archetype is by no means a particularly positive example, but the condensed manifestation of a social process, a special case that illustrates a general social phenomenon.

It is in this sense that we have also used the notion of the *centre*, which for us is a means to reveal a social and historical reality, one that only a few wanted to acknowledge. Our notion is a montage, a form by which we can generalize our empirical findings, the beginning of a "critical typology" (Adorno 1950). Or, less abstractly, we wanted to make public the fact that the democratic society is under threat not from its margins, but from within its apparently stable centre.

Those who criticized our studies because they wanted us to provide a precise location of the centre (an actual postal address, so to speak) did

not understand this – or understood it only too well. Those drawing on the notion of the centre have usually interpreted it correctly on this point: namely, it was the canon of views of the extreme right on social and political themes deemed acceptable by a broad section of the population (Butterwegge 2002; Lohmann 1994). Similar constellations are referred to in political science as the Overton window, named after the US political advisor Joseph P. Overton, who advised candidates for political office to adopt generally accepted views – to shift the discourse in their favour. Or, to adopt his metaphor, to open the window wider. But the window has long been wide open to extreme right-wing views.

Our findings show that the centre does not guarantee stability. The centre of society has articulated, and is still articulating, views and concerns that fundamentally contradict how democracy understands itself in the Federal Republic of Germany. The centre is not a site of moderation, as desirable as this would be. The history of the notion of the centre reflects all this. Thus, the tension between centre and right-wing extremism can be exposed and analyzed, but what we used to break a taboo in 2006 has now become a social reality visible to everyone. The public speeches of the extreme right, the attacks on shelters for asylum seekers, the new self-confidence with which racists and anti-Semites in the AfD speak out, and representatives of the AfD demonstrate together with right-wing extremists, as in Chemnitz in August 2018 – these are clearly visible and clearly audible, and we do not need empirical social researchers to point to the latent dangers. The fact that these right-wing slogans are also echoed by democratic parties indicates how wide the Overton window has been opened to racist positions. We should also note at the same time, though, that the acceptance of extreme right-wing positions has become weaker rather than stronger in many political milieus over the past ten years. In 2016, there were more people living in democratic milieus, and fewer in authoritarian milieus, than had been the case ten years earlier (Decker & Brähler 2016). We did not intend this finding to suggest that the danger had passed. If we wish to understand the social and psychological processes behind the vicissitudes, then the notion of the "centre" has its drawbacks. To analyze the social dynamics involved, we also require something more.

## Populism – the increasing popularity of a concept

When we began documenting the spread of extreme right-wing attitudes among the population, many were surprised at how prevalent such attitudes were, since there was no extreme right-wing party that came even close to achieving such a high level of electoral support. However, the social sciences make a fundamental distinction between attitudes and behaviour, with attitudes not necessarily translating into behaviour. The last few years have witnessed a change, though, with behaviour now apparently adapting to the attitudes that had long existed. Not only has there been a surge in the

number of violent and criminal acts perpetrated by right-wing extremists; extreme right-wing attitudes have become increasingly manifest in the way that people vote. What the NPD did not succeed in doing is currently benefiting the AfD: those Germans who had long harboured extreme right-wing attitudes, be it chauvinism, support for a dictatorship, anti-Semitism, or xenophobia, but who had previously voted for the SPD or CDU, are now voting in line with their beliefs, and have found a political home in the AfD (Kiess et al. 2015).

This does not turn the entire AfD into an extreme right-wing party, but there has been a clear trend in recent years. The AfD started as a national-liberal party and was thus initially situated on this side of a political *cordon sanitaire* drawn around extreme right-wing parties in Germany. The AfD was thus able both to secure a place on the party spectrum and to win over those people who feared having their civic reputation damaged by association. University lecturers, psychotherapists, and army officers would not have been able to join a party like the NPD without having to fear the consequences. The AfD then underwent a very quick ideological reorientation, though, one linked with the names of its rapidly changing party leaders: from the first leader Bernd Lucke and his national-liberal anti-euro party to the conservative-nationalist AfD of his successor Frauke Petri, and the party of Alexander Gauland, where populist-nationalist factions dominate.

The refugee movement to Europe also gave the AfD the issue that has since carried it from one electoral success to the other. In 2014 and 2015, more people were in flight in the world than ever before, and Europe and Germany were not spared the consequences of the catastrophes that European countries themselves had (partly) caused. This human misery was a godsend to the AfD, since the refugees provided something that had seldom been available before: namely, a political issue that bridged the ideological gap between extreme right-wing and national-conservative milieus, with the AfD thereby becoming the party that it is today, one comprising very different political currents (not least, populist-nationalist, anti-liberal, Christian-fundamentalist, and extreme right-wing).

This development is linked to a shift in public debate that warrants our attention. The distinction introduced in the 1970s between "right-wing extremism" and "right-wing radicalism" was used to classify political objectives until quite recently. While the former is directed against the liberal-democratic basis of society and is therefore a case for the protection of the constitution, the latter (Latin: *radix*, roots) has a place in the canon of the democratic process of negotiation. As difficult as it is to distinguish between them, these terms have always had a primarily practical meaning, as they originate not from academia, but from the field of politics (Kiess & Decker 2010). However, talk today is no longer of "right-wing extremism" or "right-wing radicalism", but always of "right-wing populism" – and at a time when there is a party offering a broad platform to the traditional ideas of the

extreme right, such as populist-nationalist views, anti-Semitism, and the trivialization of Nazism.

Although there are also constants that make the concept of populism appear as a legitimate heir to the concept of extremism (for example, a distinction is made between a left and a right variant), its current boom is nevertheless astonishing. The concept of right-wing populism has moved within a very short time from its academic niche to the political centre. Populism was already present in academic circles in the 1950s in studies on political movements in North and South America (Knöbl 2016), and the editors of a volume on the same subject saw this spectre at work at the end of the 1960s: "A spectre is haunting the world – populism" (Ionescu & Gellner 1969: 1). In the 1980s, the Marxist theorist Stuart Hall identified an "authoritarian populism" (Hall 1982) as a political reaction to the Anglo-American neoliberalism ("Thatcherism" and "Reaganomics") emerging at the beginning of the decade and the devastating social effects that ensued. According to Hall, such a populism should be opposed by a "popular-democratic" position.

Although the left may also attempt to use populism for its own purposes (Mouffe 2015), populism is driven by the right, which can be seen very clearly across the world: Viktor Orbán, Donald Trump and Geert Wilders, and the parties Dansk Folkeparti in Denmark, UKIP in Great Britain, Forza Italia in Italy, the ÖVP in Austria, and Fidesz in Hungary are all regarded as right-wing populist. What lies behind these populist movements, parties or leaders, and what programmes or goals they pursue, can be very different (for an overview, see Priester 2016). It is not without reason that the authors of a recent study on the spread of right-wing populist attitudes in Germany have noted that populism is "a multifaceted term, ambiguous and overlaid with numerous meanings" (Vehrkamp & Wratil 2017: 14).

But this is precisely what could make *populism* an analytically powerful concept, since the object that it describes is itself multifaceted and contradictory, and therefore difficult to pin down. Although academia lacks a uniform definition of right-wing populism, the definitions that exist all juxtapose "people" (*Volk*) and "elite" (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017: 5). But that alone cannot explain populism. As the political scientist Jan-Werner Müller has already argued, populism also mobilizes against pluralism, since the "*core claim* of all populists" is: "We – and only we – represent the true *Volk*" (Müller 2016: 26). Here, right-wing populism emphasizes the "*Volk*", and the "true" *Volk*. It is not concerned with majorities or democracy, but rather with constructing a homogeneous "*Volk*" and a threat to the will of the *Volk* by – mostly foreign – "elites". For, populism is for Müller the "idea of politics in which a morally pure, homogeneous *Volk* is always opposed by immoral, corrupt and parasitic elites – with these elites not actually belonging to the *Volk* at all" (42).

This definition also underlies the Bertelsmann Foundation's "Populism Barometer", a study conducted since 2017 that takes the two elements

*anti-establishment* and *anti-pluralism*, supplemented by a third dimension, *pro-sovereignty of the* Volk (i.e. the demand for more direct democracy), to determine the "populist attitude" of the population (Vehrkamp & Merkel 2018: 25). Its findings are significant: 30.5% of people have an explicitly populist attitude, and 36.8% a somewhat populist attitude (28), with these figures on the increase. The greatest increase in the populism thus recorded is located in a well-known place, since, according to a central finding of the study, there is a "growing populism in the political centre" (31). Thus, the threat to democracy that populism poses also does not emanate from the margins. However, this also cannot close the analytical gap that opens up in the notion of the centre. On the contrary, it is noticeable that the authors of the study do not discuss the ideological anchoring or the reasons for the spread of the "populist attitude".

Yet, the motives themselves are revealing: the idea of a "homogeneous *Volk*" deceived by "foreign elites" clearly expresses more than the desire for more involvement. Seeing populism as a "weak ideology" (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017: 6) cannot account for its "aversion towards the 'patronising' attitude that the functional elites have to the *Volk*" (Priester 2012: 4); rather, populism is absolutely dependent on a more comprehensive ideology. The NSDAP also relied on the juxtaposition of a "homogeneous *Volk*" and an imagined external threat from the global elite of a "Jewish, ravenous financial capitalism", and therefore required anti-Semitism as the ideological core of its propaganda. This becomes very clear when we look at the AfD, whose alliance with representatives of the xenophobic and violent movement Pegida (in Chemnitz, for example; see Chapter 8 in this volume), the racism of many of its exponents, and its anti-egalitarian political goals clearly show that behind its populism there lies a predominantly right-wing extremist worldview. Its rhetoric is shaped by metaphors of a "popular uprising" against a "dictatorship", against "traitors of the people", the "lying press", and "elites". Representatives of the AfD such as Björn Höcke, leader of the party faction in the Thuringian state parliament, believe that a "*Schwellenzeit*" ("threshold") has arrived that marks the transition to a new society.[7] The right-wing populist desire for the overthrow and end of plural democracy is not possible without an extreme right-wing ideology. That is also true when the desire is expressed a little more quietly.

Party and faction leader Gauland asked himself and his readers in a guest article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in October 2018: "Why did [populism] come into being? What is it a reaction to?" He answers this question by talking about "people from business, politics, entertainment and culture – and above all the new species of those working in digital information". Members of this "globalized class", he argues, "set the pace culturally and politically", since they "control information". Their "attachment to their respective homelands" is weak, and they are responsible for the "rift" that runs through "all Western societies", a rift "considerably widened" when "suddenly billions of taxpayers' money was available to save

banks, support bankrupt European states, and help hundreds of thousands of immigrants" (Gauland 2018: 8). Gauland's arguments are aimed not simply at "those up there". Rather, he uses the same stereotypes as the fascist propagandists of the 20th century, employing a conspiracy theory that sees in the background a global, deracinated and exploitative elite at work. With the help of the "culture industry", this "elite" manages to manipulate people and to create a "rift" in the previously harmonious "homeland". This is not only anti-pluralistic; such rhetoric identifies actual enemies, deploying not least the latent image of the "deracinated Jew" (Chapter 5 highlights how closely this conspiracy theory is related to well-worn anti-Semitic attitudes). What Gauland conceals or fails to recognize, of course, is that the "rift" in the "homeland" has long been there, and that it is due not to individual persons or elites, but to political conflicts and social contradictions. And whether the AfD's goal really is to heal the rift is at best extremely doubtful. Although Gauland writes that "globalization looks much nicer from the penthouse than from social housing", the radical market programme pursued by the AfD suggests that it would abolish not the penthouse but the social housing (Kim 2018). It is a classic stylistic device of the agitator to talk about poverty, but not about its economic causes. Instead, personification is used to legitimize aggression against people. Hostility to Muslims, anti-Semitism, historical revisionism, and sometimes openly racist positions – these make clear that right-wing extremism is the ideological core of this populism. The success of right-wing populists makes discovering its causes ever more urgent.

Despite its public popularity, the concept of "populism" can be of no assistance. The fact that almost everyone is currently championing the concept is due to the attempt to introduce into the public debate a kind of "extremism-light", which is intended to delegitimize the agitator, but not those who enthusiastically agree with her. This is not the fault of the discipline that produced the concept of populism. As the political scientist Gideon Botsch writes:

> The terminological confusion around the concept of populism points to helplessness. Obviously, "right-wing populism" is intended to refer to something that is somehow perceived as right-wing and somehow as unpleasant. It is an avoidance strategy: parts of the public domain, including state authorities, are reluctant to speak of right-wing extremism. Right-wing populism becomes a proxy concept. Evaluating the AfD in terms of right-wing extremism is therefore long overdue (Botsch, in print).

Those who believe that populists are "disappointed democrats" (Vehrkamp & Wratil 2017: 9) because they reject a pluralistic society but affirm the idea of democracy are mistaken. What about a democrat who becomes anti-democratic because she is disappointed with democracy? The right-wing

populism that Gauland is presenting to his readers here is instead a form of propaganda, a technique of agitation that only works because it meets a need among those to whom it is addressed. But how the willingness arises to consume and honour this populist propaganda is rarely the object of research on populism – often explicitly not. Müller, for example, repeatedly and sharply distances himself in his essay from such research. "It is a mistake [...] to psychologize populism", he argues, understandably justifying his demand to "deal with populists on an equal footing", and polemicizing against the constant talk of "concerned citizens" and "fears" (Müller 2016: 20). The political arena is concerned with political conflicts, but ignoring the subjectivity and irrationality of members of society means only being able to understand society incompletely. The concept of populism can perhaps describe – but it cannot understand – the dynamics that lead to the resentment that people feel towards "elites", since the concept is too static. Müller is indeed on the right track when he writes: "Populists should be recognized not by their supposedly resentful voters – but by their words" (65). The words of populists are only addressed to an audience that needs to hear them, and it is only by answering the question of why individuals have this need that we can hope for change. Social psychology is indispensable. If we wish to understand the social reality in which right-wing populism thrives, we cannot simply ignore how this need arose. The agitators do not seduce people; they address almost somnambulistically the needs of their listeners. The latter are not taken in by the populists; rather, each side creates the other. This was already addressed in Leo Löwenthal's classic and now topical study:

> The agitator's statements are often ambiguous and unserious. It is difficult to pin him down to anything and he gives the impression that he is deliberately playacting. He seems to be trying to leave himself a margin of uncertainty, a possibility of retreat in case any of his improvisations fall flat. He does not commit himself for he is willing, temporarily at least, to juggle his notions and test his powers. [...] as in cases of individual seduction neither partner is entirely passive, and it is not always clear who initiates the seduction. In seduction there operates not only mistaken notions or errors of judgment which are the result of ruses but also, and predominantly, psychological factors that reflect the deep conscious and unconscious involvement of both parties (Löwenthal 1949: 5).

This and similar passages seem strangely familiar.[8] They remind us of Donald Trump and Björn Höcke, speakers who can be classified as agitators (Löwenthal would probably have called them fascist agitators) and not as the magicians that they very probably consider themselves to be. They are the spectre that their listeners conjure up and yet have no control over. To understand this dynamic academically has nothing to do with psychological

insinuations, as Müller claims (Müller 2016: 36); rather, it opens up our view of a society that itself constantly creates precisely what threatens it. It is perhaps also these very needs that make the project of a "left-wing populism" hopeless. People are not ignorant about the goals of the AfD; they vote for the party not *despite* its ordoliberal market radicalism, which goes against the interests of most people, but *because* of it. Voting for the AfD is for them about something else.

## The fear of freedom

Attentive observers noticed the special political and economic situation in which the middle strata of society found themselves in the 1920s and 1930s. Geiger, for example, believed that it was above all their shame and fear of social demotion that prepared the ground for fascism (see above). But the sociologist and journalist Siegfried Kracauer also drew a portrait in his *The Salaried Masses* (1929) of a stratum that developed during the Weimar Republic: although seeing themselves as located between the working class and the middle class that Geiger spoke about, salaried employees were always in a precarious economic position. As Kracauer noted: "Uniform professional conditions and collective contracts determine the shape of existence, which, as will become apparent, is also subject to the standardizing influence of enormous ideological powers" (65). Writing in 1935 while already in exile, the social philosopher Ernst Bloch also presented an inventory of the "artificial centre": "Despite miserable pay, assembly line, extreme existential insecurity, fear of old age, obstruction by 'higher' strata – in short, proletarianization – they still feel in fact like a middle-class centre" (Bloch 1935: 33). A self-deception with serious consequences. The employees, Bloch sums up, are "a kind of core group of today's so-called National Socialism" (34).

Kracauer and Bloch belonged to the circle of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt am Main, the source of the most influential empirical studies on prejudice and fascism, Max Horkheimer's *Authority and the Family* (1936). Begun and planned against the background of the political and economic crises of the 1920s, it was designed to obtain information about the political consciousness of workers and employees, and ultimately to gauge the stability of democracy in the Weimar Republic. The authors Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Erich Fromm no longer published their findings in the Weimar Republic, however, but partly in exile, and partly also after the end of the Second World War. The impression that they had gained at the beginning of the 1930s was devastating. By the time that the Institute had evaluated the first 700 of the 3,000 questionnaires, Fromm had already concluded that only 15% of the respondents "could be expected to put up some kind of defence of democracy in critical times" (Fromm 1937/1938: 188). Most respondents did not attach any value to the equality of all and the freedom of the individual. And the times were critical. The fact

that the authors, like most of the Institute's staff, had to escape into exile before the NSDAP's seizure of power was due not least to these findings.

The publication also paid special attention to a position in the economic system: to workers and employees. There was apparently no escaping the tension in which members of society found themselves on account of their social and economic situation. But the authors of the study went further by also exploring the political consciousness of the population, which they did so not only from the classic perspective of Marxism, i.e. by investigating people's position in the economic system. The psychology of fascism could not be overcome by using a simple stimulus-response model from learning theory, and Horkheimer and his co-authors therefore drew on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis to understand the complex formation of consciousness, and indeed its unconscious elements. Through psychoanalysis, they hoped to discover what effects society had on the individuals living in it. The starting point was historical analysis. For Horkheimer, every human society has witnessed the dominance of one human being over another. There has, however, always been resistance to this dominance, to authority as a principle of dominance, which for Horkheimer is the reason that authority has gradually moved further and further into the interior of those dominated (Horkheimer 1936: 357). The agency of control was therefore no longer something external, but had become part of the personality. Social theorists of very different schools had already made this observation: from Karl Marx to Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, as well as Norbert Elias and Sigmund Freud. But Horkheimer was the first to emphasize the paradoxical effect that this internalized authority had: only it can make the subject embrace its own subjugation. But the task that Horkheimer had set himself was to understand why people embrace their own subjugation. Authority was the key – that much was agreed. It was obvious to him from a cultural-historical point of view to start, like Weber, with Protestantism and Calvinism: liberation from the papal yoke was followed by the inner, constant self-control of Protestantism. By liberating themselves from Rome, Protestants had entered into the greatest possible uncertainty, for while the priest had previously vouchsafed the godliness of earthly existence and the imminent joy on the other side, both now remained uncertain in Protestantism. This resulted for Weber in the capitalist's restless accumulation of wealth, for the owner of treasure hopes at least to find in earthly wealth proof of divine grace. Horkheimer took Weber's findings to mean that emancipation from religion had become stuck halfway, with people's willingness to depend on authority characterizing the modern era (384).

Horkheimer drew on Freud's theory of socialization to analyze not only consciousness, but also unconscious identification, thereby focusing his empirical investigation on both individuals and society – and thus on the ambivalent relationship to authority. For, according to Freud, the needs of children are dealt with only through violence or the threat of violence, since

the child does not renounce the universal pleasure principle, its desires, voluntarily, and would not accept the forms of social behaviour through mere pressure. Thus, the question of what society threatens from within became relevant to the investigation. There was something about socialization, about growing into society and its demands, that created a fundamental ambivalence towards this society. The father was still the dominant image of violence in patriarchal society at the beginning of the 20th century. He could demand submission, and in return could promise (his sons) participation in his power. It was this submission that created an ambivalence towards authority: on the one hand, children identified with the goals and norms of the father, but on the other, they had to leave aside their feelings of aggression, which had been created by violence and by the fact that they had had to subjugate their own desires. The weak and apparently deviant provided a valve for their aggression. That is the "authoritarian personality", whose essential characteristics are its readiness to submit to authority, its authoritarian aggression, its emphasis on conventions, its anti-intraception, and its projectivity (the last two would now perhaps be called *reticence* and the *conspiracy mindset*). The authoritarian personality needs the group in which it can identify with a common ideal embodied in authority. Hence, the longing for a leader who constitutes the mass – from which others perceived as weak and deviant can be persecuted.

This preparatory work was followed in the 1940s by a study group that became known as the Berkeley Group after its research centre at the University of California. It included Theodor W. Adorno (an exiled member of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research), Elke Frenkel-Brunswik (a psychologist and psychotherapist who had fled from Austria), and the US social psychologists R. Nevitt Sanford and Daniel J. Levinson. The group presented a study based on interviews and questionnaires in 1950, which was called *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 1950). However, the authors described not only *one* personality type that had authoritarian traits, but in fact, six types of authoritarian "high scorer" and five types of the democrat.

Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Fromm, as well as the Berkeley Group, used the idea of an authoritarian personality to criticize society. Thus, their criticism was focused not on individuals or their prejudices and anti-democratic attitudes, but on society, which formed people into authoritarian personalities. To this end, socialization was understood as a process that mediates the demands that society places on its members, and ensures that these demands are met. How is it that people behave as they are intended to behave, and still feel that their behaviour is the product of their own wishes?

The insight underlying this question is that domination takes the form of brutal command only in the rarest of cases. There is no need in such cases for social theorists to give clever explanations as to why people obey when they are threatened by violence. But the exercise of domination is usually

much more subtle, and requires the insights of social psychology. The crucial decision made by the Frankfurt Institute at the end of the Weimar Republic and by the Berkeley Group was to use psychoanalysis – not as a method of treatment, but as a psychology to explain development. Psychoanalysis helped to reconstruct how society conveys what is desired and what is not, a process that begins in early childhood. The wishes and hopes that motivate the behaviour of adults, even if they are usually unaware of what motivates their behaviour, are formed in childhood. The child absorbs who she is to other people. If all goes well, she forms a stable idea in this stage of life of who she is and what her wishes are, and can separate herself from the demands of the outside world.

The Berkeley Group therefore understood human behaviour primarily as an expression of the desires and conflicts that extend from the childhood past into the adult present. Embedded in the psychological structure of ego and super-ego, early desires make their presence felt retrospectively, enabling people to confront society with their own will and therefore to respond to their environment in a way that is more complex than is allowed for in the stimulus-response model.

The Berkeley Group researchers who were studying authoritarianism at the turn of the 20th century saw the family as the prominent site of socialization. When things went wrong, this socialization produced an authoritarian personality – something that had long been the rule rather than the exception. This was also described by artists and writers such as Heinrich Mann, who condensed the authoritarian personality of the German Empire into the figure of Diederich Heßling (*Man of Straw*, 1914).

The norms of patriarchal society were often imposed by force. A person's ability to recognize her own desires was more a product of chance, with identification with the father leading much more often to what psychoanalysts call "identifying with the aggressor": instead of distancing herself from the patriarchal norms, the person would internalize them. This obedience was "compensated" for by the promise of participation in the power of the authoritarian father, as long as that person conformed. As Fromm put it, the father and all subsequent authoritarian figures provide the authoritarian personality with a "'the security of a prosthesis": the world thereby loses [...] its chaotic character" (Fromm 1936: 179). Hence, the "flight into authoritarianism" always remains a great temptation (Fromm 1941: 300). The "worshipping of authority" is a metaphor, but it points to the fact that it is used as a protective power against unforeseeable threats (Horkheimer 1936: 366).

From a psychoanalytical perspective, the whole ambivalence of the desire for identification with an authoritarian figure, hatred of weakness, and emphasis on conventions is the result of the resolution of the Oedipal conflict. When the child gives up competing with the father and replaces her own desires with identification with the superior power of the father, she affirms her own submission and directs the aggression that results from this at those

who appear to be precisely what forced her to abandon her desires: namely, weak. Fromm understood the resentment that a person feels towards others as being both anger at her own weakness and hatred for the father.

But because parents also had a self-will that could not be reconciled entirely with social norms, the family also provided a shelter at the beginning of the 20th century, one where early interaction (especially with the mother) could coagulate into what psychoanalysts call "psychic structure". The term "structure" is also, of course, a metaphor, and it suggests that identity has something to do with a person's ability to disengage. For a person to give up her own wishes from need or coercion must first know that these wishes exist. Initially, the world is undifferentiated for the infant, and it is only over time that, through contact with the mother, the infant forms an idea of who she is: that is, who she is for the mother. Developed gradually in early childhood, this basal ego structure allows the adult at best and despite later repression to recognise her own wishes and to deal with conflicts – and to reconcile these wishes with the demands both of society and of other people.

These studies are almost 90 years old and describe a social landscape that no longer exists. Horkheimer already pointed out that, although authority is a constant of human existence, it manifests itself differently over time, with the authority that people submit to and that they long for also varying widely. In the 1960s, Herbert Marcuse described a fundamental change to socialization, since the family now had to share its central role with social institutions. The economic hegemony of the father could still be defended for some time, but his direct claim to power over his own property was gradually restricted. According to Marcuse, this led paradoxically to the psychic residuals of the individual becoming *smaller*. The father's loss of power did not lead to a new social tolerance, since the more open the family became, the more the mass media, peers, and social institutions took over responsibility for conveying norms and rules (Marcuse 1963). Socialization still, of course, takes place in the family today, but Marcuse already saw in the last century how the constant media attack enabled social norms to penetrate the inner space of the family, and thus impact on the child much more directly. And what he had in mind were only television and radio; not smartphones and the Internet.

Going back is barely an option for parents. On the contrary, it is they who, with their permanent duty to receive and transmit, demonstrate to the child the rights of access that society has. The fact that authority is not represented through the parents should be clear even to children whose parents try to evoke the bugaboo of past greatness. The constant imperatives of media attention weaken people's ability to disengage, and therefore also their ability to defer action and impose their own will (Türcke 2012). Thus (to continue the spatial metaphor), the psychic structure becomes more permeable, which (and critical theorists are still agreed on this point today) increasingly impacts on individual freedom.

The philosopher Helmut Dubiel (1986) divided the historical process by which domination is internalized into “three sequential types of cultural character”. The first, the character led by tradition, existed up until the 19th century (265). This was followed by the character guided internally, which corresponds to “the capitalist societies of the 19th and early 20th centuries, in which the conformity of social behaviour is produced by the individual internalization of norms” (265). This goes hand in hand with the autonomy of the ego, distancing from society, and an orientation towards instrumental work – whose costs for society lay in authoritarian aggression. According to Dubiel, though, this character also belongs to the past, and has been replaced by the character guided externally, one whom the “loss of autonomy [...] brings to conformity through orienting it to the expectations of others” (265). Thus, for Dubiel: “External control takes place through social objects, indirectly through the mass media, political propaganda and social institutions” (265). The process described by Dubiel has implications for the notion of the authoritarian personality today.

## “It’s the economy, stupid!” – authoritarian dynamics in modern societies

Theodor Geiger was very clear about what led to the strengthening of fascism: “panic in the middle layer of society” at the prospect of demotion, shame, and anger at the loss of respectability. Although this did not yet clarify why panic broke out, an important element for describing the authoritarian personality is also to take account of the economic situation, which leads in most cases to explaining the anti-democratic attitude as the product of the experience or fear of social demotion. This explanation is still popular today, and is the starting point for a number of contemporary studies. However, the debate about the impact of the economic situation is not finished, especially as the situation seems to be worsening for large sections of the population (Goebel et al. 2010; Grabka & Frick 2008). The argument often forwarded is that, when incomes drift apart, then society also becomes polarized politically. But it is an argument that is contradicted almost as often: AfD voters have not been left behind; they are simply xenophobic (Schröder 2018).

The most recent debate on this issue was triggered by a 2017 article in the *Cologne Journal for Sociology and Social Psychology* by the sociologist Holger Lengfeld (2017), who disagreed with the thesis that it those who are affected negatively by modernization who are more prone to right-wing extremism. The data from a nationwide representative survey that he drew on and his analysis of AfD voters showed that, among the influences that explain affinity for the AfD, a person’s own economic situation is negligible. Lengfeld’s claim did not go unchallenged, and not least because the sample that he used contained hardly any unemployed people. Other research groups then joined the debate, and drew on representative data

to argue that the economic situation certainly does have an influence on a person's support for the AfD (Lux 2018). Moreover, although another study found less evidence of a direct link between a person's economic situation and support for the AfD, it did suggest as a more likely cause a shift in society's system of values (Rippl & Seipel 2018). In other words, AfD voters see a threat not to their own economic status, but, as Susanne Rippl and Christian Seipel have noted, to the traditional value system that they feel is being eroded by the opening of society to more diversity and tolerance. But Lengfeld stuck to his core thesis, even though there are more AfD voters among those with a precarious status in society, among the working class, and among those with a low level of social resources (such as a low level of education). According to Lengfeld, redistributing social wealth would therefore not deter AfD voters from voting for the party, since that is simply not why they vote in such a way (Lengfeld 2018).

The question of why people vote for the AfD, therefore, remains contested. It is, in any case, clear that people vote for a party that not only attracts the votes of many right-wing extremists, but that also pursues a radical market programme. That supports Lengfeld's thesis. But the conspiracy mindset that underlies Gauland's ideas supports Rippl and Seipel, and their argument that people's perception of threat is significant.

Contradictory findings can also sometimes be found within a single work. For example, Oliver Nachtwey's 2016 book *Die Abstiegsgesellschaft* (*Germany's Hidden Crisis: Social Decline in the Heart of Europe*) traces the shift from the "social modernity" of the postwar period, which mitigated the risks of poverty, to the "regressive modernity" of the present, which falls short of these social standards (Nachtwey 2016: 75). For Nachtwey, the precarious situation in which many people currently find themselves results in a "regressive rebellion against a democracy that conforms to the market" (218), the consequences of which are "neo-authoritarian currents" (217) and "authoritarian mindsets", since "many people are forced to give subjective affirmation to the imperatives of the market" (222).

However, the current situation cannot really be described as a society in decline. Indeed, this also occurs to Nachtwey, who wonders whether the "findings presented are sufficient to speak of a society in decline? After all, there are still more people on their way up than there are people on their way down" (161). But he concludes nonetheless that, even if the escalator is not going down, then for many people it is also no longer going up. However, does the fact that the promise of social ascent is apparently kept less frequently today really result in "normative uncertainties", because there is a divergence between the claims and reality of the "ascending society"? That must be doubted, if Nachtwey's other observation is correct: namely, that people are increasingly resorting

> to strategies of self-optimization. These result in an intensified, and almost total, devotion to competition. [...] Many people [...] occupy

> themselves productively every day and around the clock. They do without demands on the good life, [...] they push themselves faster and faster (165).

It is true that self-optimization – techniques to fulfil and anticipate the ever-increasing demands of society – has shaped almost everyone into an "entrepreneurial self" (Bröckling 2007). But, where people expend all that energy on meeting standards of performance, they are clearly not uncertain, but indeed quite clear, about social norms: the norms to which they submit themselves are known. If such submission is carried out voluntarily, then it is part of an authoritarian dynamic. But this is not simply a subjective affirmation (Nachtwey 2016: 22). If the economy combines with an authoritarian dynamic, then submission can be secured not only by coercion, but also by people's needs.

However, the integration of the economy into an authoritarian dynamic is not new. Drawing on Horkheimer's suggestion that there are strong links between the affirmation of authority, capitalist accumulation, and the anticipation of salvation, Herbert Marcuse predicted more than 50 years ago that "capitalism" would take on the position of authority (Marcuse 1963). Scholars have spoken increasingly in recent years of an authoritarian market radicalism (Butterwegge 2008). The French social theorist Michel Foucault also observed at the end of the 1970s: "We have in contemporary Germany a state that can be called a radically economic state, if 'radical' is understood in the strict sense of the term: it is completely economic at its roots" (Foucault 1979: 126).

But this analysis of the authoritarian state often suffers from the same flaws as Nachtwey's. When speaking of "authoritarian populism", Alexander Demirović means a strategy of crisis management used by the middle class, the authoritarian attitudes of the population has to mobilized in a second step, is not the driving force but the bitter end of an ideological manipulation (Demirović 2018: 17). The social psychologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer does focus on character, but even this does not close the gap to the interior of the psyche: "The inevitable enforcement of the obligation to become flexible [...] is just as much a part of the new character of an authoritarian capitalism as the deliberate violation of human integrity" (Heitmeyer 2001: 501). By "character", Heitmeyer means not the interior of capitalist society, but the complete disinterest of this society in the human costs of the economic imperative. Yet, as Heitmeyer's criticism of the enforcement of flexibility and Nachtwey's reference to the end of the welfare state in the West Germany of the 1970s suggest, this development is not new. On the contrary, this market radicalism has a long history. And it is also this that makes the AfD's radical market programme so tempting for those who can in fact not hope to benefit from it.

Heitmeyer is indeed right: a society that moulds its members and leaves them hardly any choice is authoritarian. But, although the authoritarian

dynamic is not merely the characteristic of individuals, it also cannot take hold if it does not find a fixed anchor point within individuals. In other words, social authority must find an echo in the individual. We have also described the economy as a "secondary authoritarianism" (Decker 2015b), by which we meant the psychological causes and the effect of this authority, since it is a matter of identification and artificial security. The object of identification is secondary, because, unlike the authoritarian dynamic that prevailed until the mid-20th century, it manages without personal authority; an authoritarian dynamic requires neither father nor leader (*Führer*) to be set in motion. A mass is constituted by an idealized object with which all members are identified. This idea derives from Freud, who distinguished between primary masses, who have a leader, and secondary masses, who are bound together by an abstract ideal (Freud 1921). Football fans are an example of a secondary mass: a football club is an important source of identity for its fans, something that welds complete strangers together. The mechanism is very similar with authoritarian masses; the prosperous economy of postwar West Germany was one such idealized object. Our analysis of numerous group discussions throughout the country shows that this idealized object gave people the feeling that they belonged to the new system, provided the young democracy with legitimacy, and allowed Germans to regain their self-confidence after 1945. The German economic miracle was then able to safeguard – permanently, at least in West Germany – the lost narcissistic dimension that should have been abandoned after the end of the Third Reich. This was made all the easier because an economic miracle had in fact already taken place in 1936. Fired by the production of war material, the economy prospered under the National Socialists, and the "German Economic Miracle" (*Deutsche Wirtschaftswunder*), as it was already called at the time (Priester 1936), provided Hitler and the NDSAP with additional legitimacy. What was astonishing was that the population did not notice anything of the economic boom in their everyday lives, with the standard of living for most people actually declining. But that did not alter the effect: the authority of the *Führer* shone all the more brightly, since he gave the Germans a grandiose experience economically, too. This made it very easy after the war to isolate this part from the whole, and use the economic boom as a narcissistic bolster (Decker 2015b).

As mentioned above, Foucault attested a particular market radicalism to Germany at the end of the 1970s, identifying in it "the basic features of a German governmentality, whose programmatic design seems to me to be one of the basic features of this German neoliberalism" (Foucault 1979: 123). Foucault had a very similar research programme to Critical Theory. He was concerned with how domination is enforced in society. One of his central claims was that the way a society is organized – how needs, crimes or diseases are managed within society – has an effect on the mindset of all its members. He called this link *governmentality*. And it

is precisely with governmentality that the economy in Germany has been concerned since the Second World War:

> A stable Deutsche Mark, a satisfactory growth rate, increasing purchasing power, a favourable balance of payments – these are certainly the effects of good government in contemporary Germany, but it is also [...] the way in which the state-founding consensus is constantly manifested and strengthened (126).

This growth economy served as the latent figure of the centre that postwar Germany desperately needed. Having manifested itself to a certain extent in economic growth, this new centre gave stability to the young republic. This new centre not only legitimized democracy in post-fascist West Germany, but also allowed links to be made with the past. If the Protestant still saw individual wealth as guaranteeing salvation, there developed after 1945 and after the new authority had been found that was so urgently desired a new hope for salvation: "In the Germany of the 20th century, the arbitrary sign of a person's election by God is not the enrichment of a private person, but the enrichment of the totality" (125). This hope for salvation was not without precedent, for even the profit of the first economic miracle consisted not in the happiness of the individual, but more in the proof that it gave that the German *Volk* were the chosen people.

Given this background, it is not surprising that the AfD does not wish to be reminded of the war of annihilation waged by the Germans, since it is a party that initially rejected the euro as a currency and interventions by the central bank to support states, then became nationalist-conservative, and finally developed into a populist-nationalist party. The AfD has, so to speak, engaged reverse gear and is in a psychosocial regression. It promises the restitution of past greatness, while at the same time not relinquishing its Federal Republican surrogate. The picture is completed by the fact that its handling of the shame and guilt handed down from one generation to the next also fulfils the psychological act of denial.

The capitalist economy was perhaps only able to take on the function in Germany that we have described as narcissistic reassurance, because it has this function in countries other than Germany and not only since the Second World War. But fascism and the post-fascist restitution laid the capitalist economy bare as seldom before. Religious hope is manifested not only when individuals accumulate wealth, but also when modern society, in its fixation on growth, betrays its longing for tomorrow, which will bestow legitimacy and meaning on everything in the present. Nachtwey was absolutely right when he spoke of a regressive modernity. Because of the great importance of the economy, there is always the danger that economic regression will be accompanied by psychological and political regression. After examining every financial crisis between 1870 and 2014, the economists Manuel Funke, Moritz Schualrick, and Christoph Trebesch concluded in their study

"Going to extremes" that "policy uncertainty rises strongly after financial crises as government majorities shrink and polarization rises" (Funke et al. 2016). This is worrying news, not only because crisis is part of capitalism like autumn is part of the seasons, but also because economic growth is nearing its end.

The period of economic growth is over because ecological and human exploitation no longer allows any other possibility. This "secular stagnation" had already begun in the previous century: "sick recoveries which die in their infancy and depressions which feed on themselves" (Hansen 1939: 4). Wars still seem the only way to generate growth: first, by producing the necessary weapons; second, by rebuilding what has been destroyed. However, the dual term "secular stagnation" reveals something of the hope for salvation provided by growth. While *saeculum* initially designated in its original Latin a human age or a generation (often in the clearly measured unit of 33 years of life), it was later used to designate a further time span. Its present meaning of "world" or "pushed into the existing world", however, was only given to the term in medieval Latin. A secularized monastery, for example, loses not only its religious function, but also its ability to point beyond the existing, to transcend it. What comes to a standstill in secular stagnation is not simply the economy, but the hope for a redeeming tomorrow to be achieved through growth. With the current emphasis on the importance of industry 4.0, we are witnessing such an "economy of hope".[9] It is not easy to see the limits of growth: there is a desperate search for the next long wave of growth, the next Kondratieff cycle, be it in the commodification of those areas still excluded from the market, such as the human body (Decker 2011). Capitalism lives off this hope, as Stephan Lessenich emphasizes:

> The accumulation dynamics of modern capitalism – which does not want to end, and somehow is not designed to end – meets the deeper human desire for an eternal future. In its processuality of the endless "Keep it up", capitalism binds people's psychic energies to itself; it ties them in their fear of the end to its compulsive programme of boundlessness: so that it may go on and on with life as we live it (Lessenich 2016: 73–74).

Hence, the constant acceleration, the devaluation of the present in favour of tomorrow. It is the breathlessness of a time that has rationalized, but not abandoned, the messianic idea of redemption. But capitalism does not have to tie anyone to itself, since people's longing produces and fuels capitalism at the same time. As strong as the orientation of modernity to the future may be, its source of strength lies in the past. Modern society and capitalism carry with them an "inheritance from pre-capitalist times" (Dubiel 1986: 273). With this orientation towards the future itself reveals this, for it is a radicalized expectation on this side that has not given up the Christian promise of resurrection and reconciliation, but transformed it.

## Authoritarianism and recognition in the barter society

The economy was already a central factor in the Weimar Republic, in Nazi Germany and in the post-fascist landscape of postwar Germany. It is a keystone of German history and also of German reality in the present, which becomes apparent whenever economic regression results in a psychological regression. Whatever is said about "flexibilized" or "new" capitalism (Sennett 1998), its survival strategies have not fundamentally changed. German history shows how this economic model is enduringly embedded in an authoritarian dynamic. Our socio-psychological perspective has led us to denote as "secondary authoritarianism" the way that many people identify not with a personal "leader", but with an abstract object (the economy). The identification with a never fully secularized promise of salvation, with the radicalized expectation of this life that is set aside in capitalism (Benjamin 1921; Deutschmann 1999: 12), leads in moments of its crisis to a shift into the fascist identification with an authoritarian leader. For, the economy that is committed to growth may indeed hold out the prospect of artificial security for the future, but only once a fully developed economy has put the forces of nature at the service of humankind. But for now, the economy, like any authority, first of all needs self-sacrifice. If, as again like any authority, it also indicates that the status of being chosen is in fact out of reach, then it reveals itself as being a kind of "halved authoritarianism" (Menz & Nies, 2019), which must remain as committed to security in the here and now as the Christian religion that it inherited. While it is true that people are very patient while waiting for the promise to be fulfilled, secondary authoritarianism turns cyclically into primary authoritarianism when the pent-up aggression and lack of artificial security make the iron casing of bondage intolerable. Then awakens the longing for the primary leader who allows people to shake off the yoke of self-control without having to give up the promise held out by the capitalist economy.

This constant threat of regression makes it urgently necessary to clarify authoritarian dynamics as well as factors to protect democracy. For, it is becoming increasingly apparent that an economy aimed at growth will not safeguard the basis of human life in the long term, but rather endanger it. And it will also never be able to keep the immanent promise of growth to abolish the finiteness of being. The fact that the limits of growth were identified decades ago, but that modern society is still as addicted as ever to the promise of growth, illustrates the magnitude of the task.

Authoritarianism is the concept that we use to analyze developments in society in which right-wing extremism threatens to unleash this destructive potential. Like all approaches, authoritarianism also needs to be constantly updated if it is not to degenerate into a rigid concept that divides people into "sheep and goats" (Horkheimer & Adorno 1952: 363). To do so means addressing the question of which authority permeates society, what its rationality is, and which social contradictions are manifested in the

irrationality of members of society. Another important element of empirical research on authoritarianism is the question of how subjective identification with authority comes about, i.e. how socialization takes place. This means reconstructing not only early childhood, but also lifelong socialization. The latter will not be the same for all people, and their experience of society and of the authority that governs it must also be distinguished both temporally (between generations; for example, through a changed style of parenting) and in terms of social space (the position in the economic system). If we do not take into account the social situation, then we will not be able to understand authoritarianism, but the social situation is only one piece of the puzzle. Situation also means, to emphasize this once more, not only the individual economic situation, but also the position in the social system in which people experience not only the recognition of their person or function, but also social contradictions.

Authoritarianism is the generic term for a phenomenon that has an individual and a social side. The individual side we call the "authoritarian syndrome"; the social side, the "authoritarian dynamic". The opposite of authoritarianism is democracy (and thus we also have a "democratic syndrome" and a "democratic dynamic in society"). The defining feature of the authoritarian syndrome is a person's affinity with rigid ideologies, which allow her to submit to an authority, to share in its power, and to call for others to be devalued in the name of the system. This longing for authority can be satisfied by ideologies other than just right-wing extremism. Distinguishing them according to "left-wing" or "right-wing" (Altemeyer 1988) obscures the two essential characteristics of the original concept. First, the authoritarian character is less about the ideology with which the individual justifies – or, better, rationalizes – her aggressive need. Second, such a political classification prevents us from analyzing those authorities that cannot be classified according to a political scheme. This is especially the case when religion becomes a factor of conflict.

When we find authoritarian aggression, authoritarian subservience, and conventionalism in a respondent, we do not speak in our study of an authoritarian personality, but of an authoritarian *syndrome*. As with the concept of the authoritarian personality, we assume that society shapes human needs and psychological abilities in a lifelong process of socialization, so that the authoritarian syndrome is the expression and consequence of this ongoing authoritarian dynamic in society. Drawing on concepts of personality in research on political attitudes is also still topical, whether it is embedded in social theory (Brede 1995; Busch 2007), is based on learning theory (Oesterreich 2001), or is descriptive (Sibley & Duckitt 2008). The concept of personality has also enjoyed a renaissance in political science, first as a predictor of electoral behaviour (Schumann 2002), and second as a result of experiences of socialization (Schumann 2005; Seipel & Rippl 1999). However, we agree with Angelika Ebrecht's assessment that, like the changes in early socialization, the

concept of personality needs to be redefined (Ebrecht 2010). However, this is not possible at this point.

What Adorno said about the authoritarian personality also applies to authoritarian syndromes formed under current social conditions: "The extremely prejudiced person tends toward 'psychological totalitarianism', something which seems to be almost a microcosmic image of the totalitarian state at which he aims" (Adorno et al. 1950: 632). Our focus will therefore be on those aspects of subjectivity that are related to the authoritarian syndrome (see chapter 3 in this volume). The term *syndrome* enables us to establish a connection between various phenomena of the authoritarian. Like *personality*, it also comes from psychology. Syndromes are different symptoms that frequently occur together and for which there is assumed to be a common cause or underlying illness. How these characteristics relate to each other is not specified (for example, whether they are in a causal relationship or are independent of each other in the strength of their expression). The same is true of the elements of the authoritarian syndrome, with authoritarian aggression, authoritarian subservience, and conventionalism often occurring together in one individual; and, while the elements can be of varying intensity and their interrelations cannot be clearly defined, they always lead to democratic coexistence being threatened. Although we cannot specify either the relationship between the symptoms or the causal factors behind the formation of the syndrome, it is undisputed that, if people with an authoritarian syndrome make up the majority of society, then this poses a threat to democracy.

The research group led by the social psychologists Andreas Zick and Wilhelm Heitmeyer arrived at a similar finding in their study series *Deutsche Zustände* (*The German State of Affairs*). They also speak of a syndrome in the case of the group-focused enmity that they found (Zick et al. 2008): if, for example, a person is shown to be prone to devaluing Muslims, then it is very likely that that person will also withhold respect from the homeless and women. However, the syndrome of group-focused enmity merely describes the visible phenomenon of devaluing others, i.e. that element of the authoritarian syndrome that we call authoritarian aggression. We, therefore, intend to understand group-focused enmity as part of the authoritarian syndrome: this syndrome *is* authoritarian aggression. As Fromm already pointed out, the object of hatred is relatively arbitrary. Those harbouring these aggressions create the objects to devalue:

> If [the seemingly weaker] do not prove themselves sufficient (women, children, animals), objects of sadism are as it were created artificially, be it by throwing slaves or captured enemies into the arena, or classes or racial minorities (Fromm 1936: 174).

The authoritarian syndrome is therefore also more complex than the syndrome of group-focused enmity because it is composed of several

authoritarian needs on the part of the individual. As we have seen, a person's political standpoint can comprise elements that completely contradict each other, such as support for democracy, the demand for civil liberties, and the call for fundamental rights to be denied to "others". The fact that an authoritarian syndrome can manifest itself through contradictory and divergent positions within one and the same person makes it impossible to speak of *a* syndrome. And, indeed, it can be composed of different types (Adorno 1950), which contain in their mixture not only anti-democratic, but also democratic and liberal, goals. The balance varies between authoritarian aggression, the willingness to be subjugated, and conventionalism on the one hand, and democratic, respectful, and non-destructive needs on the other.[10]

Cognitive psychology also describes reactions that depict a flight into authoritarianism (Tajfel & Turner 1979). Its basic claim is that every person has a fundamental need for self-esteem and approval, which she can satisfy by identifying with a group that is positive for her. As part of this group, she can then revel in its size and splendour, and gain assurance of her own value. This identification means that the norms and goals of a person's group become the central maxims of her own actions. We could say that the increase in self-esteem is balanced out by a decrease in self. Social psychology has been able to show that people take the path or shortcut to self-esteem via the group especially when they cannot achieve self-esteem through their own efforts. When under threat, people give undue emphasis to the norms of their own group.

This mechanism described by Tajfel and Turner is well documented, but it is not simply the effect of a static desire for positive identity. A psychology that would accept this mechanism runs the risk of returning to Pavlov's dog, and progress cannot be made here without analyzing the social framework that produces the identity whose desire for individual recognition can be satisfied by belonging to a group. If the shortest path to a positive identity involves the appropriation of a group identity, then this is more a symptom – a weakness of the ego on the part of the individual. But if this does not remain an individual fate, but occurs in masses, it is the symptom of a social process, which makes clarifying the concrete motives an urgent task.

Unlike other psychological theories, we assume here a dynamic unconscious that contains the essential motives of human action, these motives resulting from processes of identification and the mediation of permissible or impermissible needs, as well as the means of their satisfaction. For us, the reasons for an action are already a compromise between social demands and a person's own desires on the one hand, and at the same time unconscious desires on the other. The sum of these desires also results from a person's lifelong socialization, as well as her ability to interact with the environment and to turn her desires into actions as part of her own personality. We claim that these personality traits are all the more firmly anchored the earlier the desires are mediated and the abilities developed.

Since we do not assume that there is *one* authoritarian personality, we use the term *authoritarian syndrome*. Authoritarian syndromes can differ in terms of their appearance, composition, and strength of individual elements, but they share the characteristics of authoritarian aggression, authoritarian subservience, and conventionalism. Furthermore, we assume that the authoritarian syndrome also includes the conspiracy mindset. The authoritarian syndrome also manifests itself in a reticence and lack of ability to give recognition to and perceive others in their independence. In contrast, the democratic syndrome is characterized by an openness and acceptance of difference, the rejection of authoritarian aggression and of the desire for submission to an authority, and a lack of rigidity in enforcing norms.

No society is without authoritarian dynamics, since authority underlies domination, which itself marks the history of all previous societies, and bringing into existence a society free of authority is a task for the future. However, societies differ in the degree to which they exert pressure on individuals, and how much freedom they allow them to develop their personality and to fulfil their own wishes. A distinguishing feature of an authoritarian dynamic can be those demands that require the subjugation of the individual to the domination of a general principle. The authoritarian dynamic aims to subordinate as much as possible the wishes and life goals of the individual for the benefit of this social ideal. This can also take place quietly, through a "hyperadminstrative state" (Foucault 1979: 135), which weakens the individual and denies her recognition.

The balance of power between the general and the particular, i.e. between society and individual, has shifted in recent years to the detriment of the latter, and the new police laws, for example, suggest that it will probably continue to shift in this direction. Research should therefore focus on the lifelong mediation of domination and redefine the residuals of freedom. As a core hypothesis, we claim that behind the authoritarian dynamic lies a person's experience of being denied recognition and of being socialized in an authoritarian manner, which we understand within the framework of the *spheres of recognition* outlined by the social philosopher Axel Honneth.

Honneth developed these three spheres on the basis of Hegel's "struggle for recognition". The first sphere is the legal relationship in which individuals are recognized as bearers of universal rights and may thus be "certain of the fulfilment [of] claims" (Honneth 1992: 174), since they "belong to the class of morally responsible persons" (182–183). This sphere is anchored in the normative foundations of society, i.e. its laws and basic rights, and has its origins in the legal safeguarding of the contractual capacity of market subjects: "In this respect, any modern legal community, simply because its legitimacy depends on the idea of a rational agreement between equal individuals, is founded in the assumption of the moral accountability of all its members" (184–185). This shows that Honneth meant by this sphere not only political rights of participation, welfare and freedom, but also property rights, "which protect the person from unauthorized interference

by the state with regard to her freedom, her life and her property" (186), with this legal recognition laying the foundations for lasting "self-respect" (195). The second sphere is the contribution that a person makes to society through her own work: "A person can only feel 'valuable' if she knows that she is recognized for achievements that she does not share indiscriminately with others" (203). Unlike in premodern societies, where people gained recognition through belonging to a guild, professional group or trade, today "the social prestige of subjects is measured by the individual contributions that they make to society within the framework of their particular forms of self-realization" (207). The third sphere of recognition are relationships of love, all "primary relationships [...] as far as they consist of strong emotional ties between a few persons according to the pattern of erotic relationships between two people, of friendships, and of parent-child relationships" (153). It is important that such relationships provide emotional security, and that "the person loved maintains her affection even after independence" (173).

The interaction between children and parents, between colleagues at work, and between citizens is a lasting experience of society. Identity is formed in these experiences – that much is true. And yet, conflicts are not simply about the normative recognition of rights, which is what Honneth argues. What becomes visible in social conflicts and in the authoritarian syndrome is not "generally weakened social morality, but rather the social destruction of what is to be held together subjectively by identity" (Gruschka 1998: 18). This reveals the contradictoriness at the heart of society, not just the disintegration of legal norms and legal reality. Critical science should task itself not only with criticizing this disintegration, but with examining it: the issue is why society cannot help but come into conflict with its own norms. What is clear is that social contradictions emerge as conflicts of the individual, and the authoritarian syndrome reveals that identity is just as much a coercive relationship as the precondition of individual freedom. These experiences underlie the individual's identity and are repeatedly brought into the interaction by the individual. The refusal of recognition does not turn into an experience of disintegration, however, as Honneth suspects; on the contrary, it is integrated into an authoritarian dynamic. What the person at the job centre feels when she notices that her rights as a citizen no longer matter is not disintegration (Türcke 1996), but an authoritarian dynamic that robs her of property rights and exposes her to authoritarian aggression. The "identity claims acquired through socialization" (Honneth 2000: 89) are thus themselves the object of social criticism within the framework of a theory of authoritarian dynamics (Mohan & Keil 2012: 252). It has already become apparent in the employment relationships described by Nachtwey, and in the reaction of individuals to optimize themselves, that society has a strong tendency to enforce its general principle at the expense of the particular – namely, of individuals. And that it can count on the alliance of the subjects themselves. Our aim in this

study is to understand that state of integration into society that presupposes that people are willing to forego their own wishes and hopes in life for the benefit of the general.

How fully a person is integrated into the totality of the barter society becomes clear much earlier than with the example of the lost job, however. As shown by the developmental psychology to which Honneth refers, the infant is already integrated. The mother, Honneth states, provides "practical supplements" (Honneth 1992: 158), allowing the infant to determine herself, thereby beginning to perceive the child as "a component of a single cycle of action" (159). Recognition is a mutual act, since the infant must also quickly recognize that the mother belongs to an "objective reality" (163). Until then, "the mother must [survive] her destructive attacks without revenge". A century ago, it was still a matter of growing into a patriarchal and authoritarian society, and the central developmental conflict was therefore Oedipal. Today, though, it seems to be the separation from the exclusive relationship between mother and infant. Initially taking possession of the mother, the infant manages to separate herself from this maternal possession through "transitional objects", through the "strong inclination of children at the age of a few months towards objects of their material environment" (165). Honneth is right, but we should take what he is describing more seriously. This psychoanalytical theory of development traces socialization in a barter society, one in which even mother and infant take possession of each other – a "fetishistic transaction" (Smirnoff 1972) by which the infant both internalizes the dominating principle of barter and becomes acquainted in the material "transitional objects" with the consolation of the commodity, which substitutes for the lost fantasy of fullness in maternal symbiosis (Decker 2015a).

## Notes

1 Der Tagesspiegel, report of 18 June 2018, "More deaths due to right-wing violence since 1990 than previously thought"; https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/bundesregierung-korrigiert-zahlen-mehr-tote-durch-rechte-gewalt-seit-1990-als-bekannt/22700008.html (accessed 14 October 2018).

2 Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung of 4 December 2013, "Possibly more extreme right-wing crimes than previously thought"; https://www.noz.de/deutschland-welt/politik/artikel/433434/moglicherweise-mehr-rechtsextreme-verbrechen-als-bekannt (accessed 14 October 2018).

3 Helmut Kohl's government had already launched federal programmes as a reaction to neo-Nazi outrages. The first was called "Programme of Action against Aggression and Violence, AgAG" (1992–1996), the title illustrating the attempt to turn the political problem into an issue of juvenile violence. Responsibility for the AgAG lay with the then Minister of Family Affairs, Angela Merkel.

4 Statistics on politically motivated crime provided by the Federal Ministry of the Interior for 2017 show 7,170 cases of hate crime committed by the right, of which 821 were violent crimes against human beings. In contrast, there were 44 cases of hate crime committed by the left, of which 11 were violent crimes

(https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/2018/pmk-2017-hasskriminalitaet-2001-2017.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2, accessed 17 October 2018).

5 On the repeated criticism of our methodology, see the statement by Elmar Brähler and Oliver Decker: http://home.uni-leipzig.de/decker/Leipziger%20%E2%80%9EMitte%22-Studie_Stellungnahme.pdf.

6 How far there was a different latent figure in the postwar history of the GDR has not yet been investigated. It is plausible, for example, that after the end of the war the functional elites were recruited much less from the Nazi elites than from the Hitler Youth and *Flakhelfer* generation, who identified differently, but certainly not less, with Nazi Germany. Subsequent developments also show remarkable parallels, though, such as the economic miracle as an important factor of identification to legitimize the two new German states (Merkel & Böske 1996).

7 Third Kyffhäuser meeting of the "wing" on 2 September 2017; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ALZpg3gIGk (15 October 2018).

8 Gauland's contribution in the FAZ is a lesson in such agitation; every element has already been described by Löwenthal, along with the conspiracy mindset that pervades the contribution: "The agitator lays responsibility on an unvarying set of enemies, whose evil character or sheer malice is at the bottom of social maladjustment" (Löwenthal 1949: 7).

9 A formulation that Christoph Türcke used in a personal conversation. I also thank him for pointing out the etymology of the word *saeculum*.

10 This is certainly one reason why the explained variation remains relatively low in many models on the influence on anti-democratic orientation. Where society is contradictory in itself, equally democratic in its composition, and often anti-democratic in reality, the individuals living in it cannot be free of contradictions – and therefore social research cannot grasp the individual according to the criterion of freedom from contradiction. Hence, our subsequent attempt to use a cluster analysis (which is a statistical, but basically heuristic procedure) to record the manifestations of the authoritarian syndrome up to the democratic type in its different hues (see Chapter 3). For, as little as there is a "thoroughly" authoritarian personality, as little can an ideal type of democratic personality be found.

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# 2 The Leipzig Authoritarianism Study 2018

## Methodology, Results, and Long-Term Changes

*Oliver Decker, Johannes Kiess, Julia Schuler, Barbara Handke, and Elmar Brähler*

Our research group has been recording extreme right-wing attitudes in Germany since 2002, conducting representative surveys of between 2,500 and 5,000 people every two years. Our research is based on a notion of right-wing extremism that sees extreme right-wing attitudes as part of an authoritarian syndrome and that contrasts them with democratic attitudes (Decker et al. 2012a; Kiess 2011; see Chapter 1 in this volume). We define extreme right-wing attitudes as "attitudinal patterns that are unified by notions of inequality. These are expressed in the political sphere in the affinity for dictatorial forms of government, chauvinist attitudes, and a trivialization or justification of National Socialism, and in the social sphere by anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and social Darwinism" (Decker et al. 2012a: 18).

The survey is designed to record *attitudes*, and not to observe *behaviour*, although anti-democratic and therefore extreme right-wing attitudes are a *prerequisite* for anti-democratic behaviour. Studies of attitudes may not allow us to predict behaviour, but they do allow us to draw conclusions about behavioural potential, such as the propensity to vote for extreme right-wing parties. They also allow us to draw conclusions as to which motives are deemed acceptable for a particular type of behaviour.

In this chapter, we present the distribution and forms of extreme right-wing attitudes in Germany. We first describe the methodology used in the 2018 survey and then present our main results. Finally, we focus on people's attitudes to democracy and their acceptance of democratic norms, but also on the related attitudinal dimensions of hostility to Muslims, antiziganism, devaluation of asylum seekers, and the propensity for violence.

### Methodology and sample

Since the beginning of our research in 2002, the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study has had at its core the Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes (Decker et al. 2013).[1] In 2018, extreme right-wing attitudes were again recorded using the same six dimensions as before: namely,

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advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, social Darwinism, and trivialization of National Socialism.

This questionnaire was supplemented in the survey waves by further questionnaires that record additional attitudinal dimensions or help to identify causes. In 2018, these were questions about acceptance of democracy. We also widened the recording of elements of authoritarian personality, since our focus has increasingly shifted in recent years to authoritarian dynamics in society (see also Chapter 1). In 2018, we surveyed authoritarian aggression, authoritarian subservience, and the emphasis on conventional values (Beierlein et al. 2014), as well as the conspiracy mindset (Imhof & Decker 2013). These two questionnaires gauge the authoritarian personality through people's demands for strictness and severity in society, and through their belief in secret powers that are at work in the background. In contrast, the third questionnaire on the authoritarian personality focuses more on how respondents see themselves (Oesterreich 1998). The results on this issue are presented in Chapter 4.

As in 2014 and 2016, people's propensity to devalue certain groups of people was gauged with questions on group-focused enmity (Heitmeyer 2012). In 2018, we focused on attitudes to Muslims (hostility to Muslims),[2] Sinti and Roma (antiziganism), and asylum seekers (or their admission to Germany).[3] As in 2006 and 2016, we also used a questionnaire to gauge people's acceptance of and propensity for violence (Ulbrich-Herrmann 1995).

To provide a more nuanced picture, we recorded as standard different socio-demographic characteristics in each wave of the study: besides age, gender and place of residence (federal state), the highest educational qualification attained, religious affiliation, monthly net household income, marital status, and occupation (see Table 2.1). Respondents were also asked to assess the political and economic situation (of the country and individually). These questionnaires serve as indicators of subjective political and economic deprivation.

As with all our previous surveys, the 2018 survey was conducted by an independent opinion research institute (https://www.usuma.com/&lang=en). It consisted of two parts. The first collected the sociodemographic characteristics face-to-face from respondents, and put these on a list. The second asked respondents to fill in the attitudinal questionnaires on their own, without the interviewers being given information on their answers. People tend to be more open in such a "paper-and-pencil" approach than in surveys in which the statements are read out by the interviewer, who then makes a note of the answers (e.g. in telephone surveys). Since the procedure remained constant since 2002, the results obtained between 2002 and 2018 are comparable.

A total of 215 interviewers were deployed, with each conducting an average of twelve interviews. The interviewers also selected the persons to be

*Table 2.1* Sociodemographic description of the sample (only German nationals, 14–91 years of age)

| | | *Total group (N = 2,416)* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age in years | Mean | 48.19 | |
| | Standard deviation | 17.6 | |
| | | Absolute | in % |
| Age groups | Up to 24 | 258 | 10.7 |
| | 25–34 | 358 | 14.8 |
| | 35–44 | 402 | 16.6 |
| | 45–54 | 449 | 18.6 |
| | 55–64 | 466 | 19.3 |
| | 65–74 | 309 | 12.8 |
| | 75+ | 174 | 7.2 |
| Gender | Male | 1,093 | 45.2 |
| | Female | 1,323 | 54.8 |
| Marital status | Married/living together | 1,024 | 42.5 |
| | Married/living apart | 67 | 2.8 |
| | Single | 743 | 30.8 |
| | Divorced | 377 | 15.6 |
| | Widowed | 199 | 8.3 |
| Partnership | Yes (living in a partnership) | 1,415 | 59.5 |
| | No (not living in a partnership) | 964 | 40.5 |
| School-leaving qualification | Without a school-leaving qualification | 81 | 3.4 |
| | Basic school-leaving qualification /year 8 | 741 | 30.7 |
| | Secondary-school qualification/GCSEs | 788 | 32.7 |
| | Polytechnic secondary school in the East/ year 10 | 141 | 5.9 |
| | College | 105 | 4.4 |
| | A-levels/without university degree | 269 | 11.2 |
| | University degree | 224 | 9.3 |
| | Pupil in a general school | 62 | 2.6 |
| Occupation | Full time with ≥ 35 h/week | 1,064 | 44.5 |
| | Part time with 15–35 h/week | 275 | 11.5 |
| | Part time with ≤ 15 h/week | 76 | 3.2 |
| | Voluntary work or maternity/parental leave | 24 | 1.0 |
| | Unemployed/short-time working | 129 | 5.4 |
| | Retired/early retired | 570 | 23.8 |
| | Not working/housewife/ househusband | 72 | 3.0 |
| | In vocational training | 38 | 1.6 |
| | In school education | 145 | 6.1 |
| Household net income/month | Less than 750 € | 60 | 2.6 |
| | 750 to < 1,250 € | 271 | 11.6 |
| | 1,250 to < 2,000 € | 608 | 25.9 |
| | 2,000 to < 3,500 € | 976 | 41.6 |
| | Above 3,500 € | 429 | 18.3 |
| Religious affiliation | No | 619 | 26.4 |
| | Yes | 1,729 | 73.6 |
| East German | | 498 | 20.6 |
| West German | | 1,918 | 79.4 |

surveyed according to USUMA guidelines. They also briefly described the research and the study objectives to respondents, and explained to them the data protection arrangements in line with the European General Data Protection Regulation (EU-GDPR). They obtained informed consent to participate; for persons aged between 14 and 18, in consultation with a parent or guardian.

Participants were selected using a stratified random sample, for which 258 *sample points* (210 for the old federal states, and 48 for the new federal states) were drawn on the basis of a non-overlapping division of the federal territory. Interviewers then selected the households using the random-walk method, and identified the target person in each household using the Kish grid. They then sent the completed questionnaires back to USUMA, which created a digital dataset that it gave to our research group for evaluation.

All interviews were conducted between 7 May and 8 July 2018. The response rate was 47.3%, which is high, especially compared to other methods such as telephone surveys. A total of 5,418 households were visited in order to achieve the objective of 2,500 interviews. In all, 2,516 interviews were conducted. However, not all interviews were included in the evaluation, but only those with persons with German citizenship ($N = 2{,}416$).

We present our central results by giving the values for East and West Germany, and for Germany as a whole. Despite having used this method of presentation since 2002, we discuss the reasons behind our decision to do so each time. We differentiated between East and West Germany in 2018, too, a decision that had a number of motives. Although extreme right-wing attitudes are strong throughout Germany, there are also people all over the country who have attitudes that are consistently positive and democratic. As in previous years, the sample size allows us to make a representative statement above all for the Federal Republic, for East and West Germany, and for the heavily populated federal states. There are also differences between states in the north and south of West Germany, although these differences are not as great as between East and West Germany. It is in no way our intention to single out the population of one part of Germany. On the other hand, the history of Germany means that there are many similarities (but also differences) in political culture between East and West (Mannewitz 2015; Pickel & Pickel 2006). At the level of attitudes, the strength of extreme right-wing attitudes is just as great in the West German state of Bavaria as it is in the East German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Decker et al. 2015); however, at the level of behaviour, there is currently a stronger mobilization of the extreme right in East Germany, which also makes the attitude of the population there particularly interesting in terms of what it can tell us about the acceptability of the extreme right. It is for this reason that we also often present the results for 2018 separately for East and West Germany.

## The results of the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study 2018

To present the main results of the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study, we focus to begin with on the Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes: first, the rates of agreement with the statements of the questionnaire; second, the changes in extreme right-wing attitudes between 2002 and 2018; and, third, the correlations between these attitudes and sociodemographic features.

### *Extreme right-wing attitudes in Germany, 2018*

The Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes records extreme right-wing attitudes according to six dimensions: advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, social Darwinism, and trivialization of National Socialism. Each dimension comprises three statements (see Figures 2.1–2.6). Respondents were asked to rate these statements on a five-point scale (see Table 2.2), ranging from "completely disagree" (value = 1) to "completely agree" (value = 5), with higher values therefore reflecting stronger agreement than lower values. Table 2.3 lists the rates of agreement with the 18 statements according to the five possible answer categories. Using the five-point scale allows us to depict the degree of agreement incrementally. For the sake of clarity, though, the Figures combine the answer categories "mostly agree" and "completely agree".

However, what we can quickly overlook is that respondents who choose the "undecided" option for a statement already show a certain proximity to the idea contained in that statement. The option to choose the middle answer category and thereby to avoid having to commit themselves allows respondents to adapt their agreement to social norms by keeping their – socially undesirable – views within what has been termed with regard to anti-Semitism in communication latency (Bergmann & Erb 1986). However, the "undecided" answer also gives respondents the space to admit an indecisiveness that suggests a latent potential for right-wing extremism in Germany. We would therefore like to give greater emphasis to a distinction

*Table 2.2* Overview of the answer categories used in the Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes

| *Answer category* | *Completely disagree* | *Mostly disagree* | *Undecided* | *Mostly agree* | *Completely agree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Value on the scale | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Content-based classification | Disagreement | | Latent agreement | Manifest agreement | |

*Table 2.3* Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes – agreement at the level of item (in %; *N* = 2,416)

| | | *Completely disagree* | *Mostly disagree* | *Undecided* | *Mostly agree* | *Completely agree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Under certain circumstances, a dictatorship better serves the national interest. | 54.4 | 19.1 | 18.6 | 6.5 | 1.4 |
| 2 | Had it not been for the Holocaust, Hitler would be regarded as a great statesman today. | 53.7 | 19.4 | 17.9 | 7.3 | 1.7 |
| 3 | Germany needs a strong single party that represents the ethnic community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) as a whole. | 38.1 | 18.6 | 24.0 | 14.3 | 5.1 |
| 4 | We should have a leader (*Führer*) that rules Germany with a firm hand for the benefit of all. | 52.4 | 20.0 | 16.6 | 8.1 | 3.0 |
| 5 | Just as in nature, the strongest in a society should always get their way. | 45.2 | 23.4 | 21.6 | 7.9 | 1.9 |
| 6 | Foreigners only come here to abuse the welfare system. | 18.1 | 16.4 | 29.8 | 19.5 | 16.2 |
| 7 | The influence of the Jews is still too strong. | 45.9 | 23.4 | 20.7 | 6.9 | 3.2 |
| 8 | We should dare to have strong nationalist feelings again. | 18.7 | 15.1 | 29.7 | 24.5 | 12.0 |
| 9 | The Germans are actually superior to other people by nature. | 47.9 | 20.2 | 20.5 | 9.2 | 2.1 |
| 10 | When jobs are scarce, foreigners should be sent home. | 27.0 | 19.9 | 26.7 | 15.6 | 10.9 |
| 11 | The crimes of National Socialism have been greatly exaggerated. | 51.5 | 21.0 | 19.5 | 5.8 | 2.3 |
| 12 | Today our country needs to firmly and energetically enforce its interests against other nations. | 17.7 | 17.3 | 31.3 | 21.4 | 12.2 |

*(Continued)*

*Table 2.3* Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes – agreement at the level of item (in %; $N = 2{,}416$) *(Continued)*

| | | *Completely disagree* | *Mostly disagree* | *Undecided* | *Mostly agree* | *Completely agree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | More than other people, the Jews use dirty tricks to achieve their goals. | 50.8 | 20.1 | 21.5 | 5.6 | 2.0 |
| 14 | The highest aim of German politicians should be to ensure that Germany has the power and recognition it deserves. | 24.9 | 21.2 | 29.2 | 18.1 | 6.6 |
| 15 | There is worthy and unworthy life. | 61.2 | 14.9 | 13.8 | 7.2 | 2.9 |
| 16 | Germany is losing its identity because of the large number of foreigners. | 19.9 | 16.4 | 28.1 | 20.2 | 15.4 |
| 17 | The Jews just have something peculiar about them and don't really fit in with us. | 49.3 | 21.5 | 20.1 | 6.7 | 2.4 |
| 18 | National Socialism also had positive aspects. | 49.3 | 20.5 | 21.8 | 6.7 | 1.7 |

already made in the past: namely, between extreme right-wing attitudes that are *manifest* or *latent*.

By "manifest agreement", we mean the openly expressed agreement with extreme right-wing statements ("agree"). In contrast, we classify the two answer categories "completely disagree" and "mostly disagree" as disagreement with extreme right-wing statements. By "latent agreement", we mean a position on extreme right-wing statements that at least partly affirms the ideas contained in those statements ("undecided"). We then combined the manifest statements in the dimensions: those who on average agree with all the statements in each dimension have a closed outlook (e.g. a closed xenophobic outlook).

In the following, we will see differences in attitudes when it comes to groups and survey waves (2016 and 2018). Where these differences are significant (i.e. statistically significant), they are marked by asterisks and explained under the Figures and Tables.

The first dimension, "advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship", was measured with three statements that stand for anti-democratic positions; the fact that fascist, nationalist, or ethnicist motives underlie

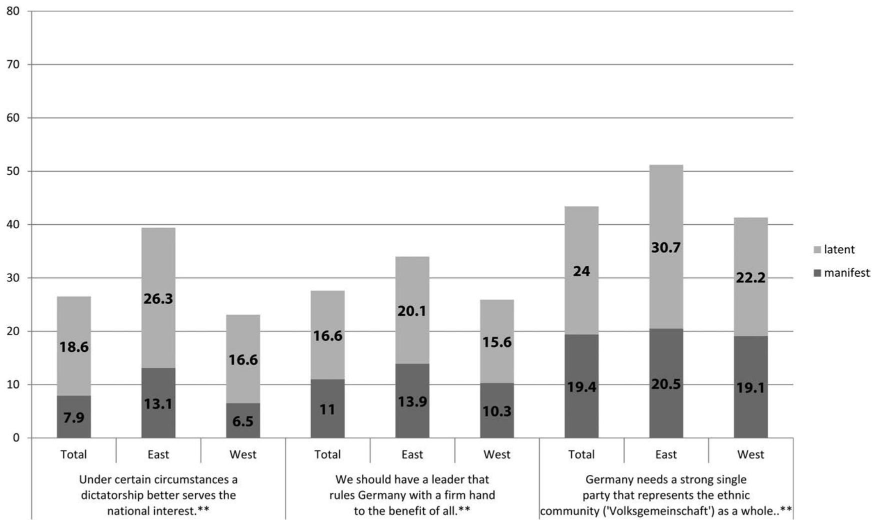


*Figure 2.1* Manifest and latent agreement with the statements in the dimension of "advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship" (in %)

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01

these positions allows us to categorize them as belonging to an extreme right-wing mindset ("dictatorship" in the "national interest", "leader" (*Führer*) as a term with a clear historical link to National Socialism, and "ethnic community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*) as a description of an ancient and homogeneous community with a shared destiny). Figure 2.1 shows both the percentage of manifest agreement ("mostly agree" and "completely agree"), and the percentage of latent agreement ("undecided").

It was the third statement that attracted the strongest manifest agreement, with about 20% of Germans wanting a "strong single party". What is noticeable with the first two items (8% and 11% agreement, respectively) is the stark contrast between the two different parts of the country. More than 13% of respondents from the new federal states ("East") agree with these statements manifestly, and 20% latently; although respondents from the old federal states ("West") do not consistently reject dictatorship as a form of government, the rates of agreement are lower (6.5% manifest, and 16.6% latent), and by some distance for the statement that a leader should rule the country "with a firm hand for the benefit of all" (10.3% manifest, and 15.6% latent; 11% manifest agreement across the country as a whole).

The next dimension, "chauvinism", which gauges exaggerated and aggressive national feelings towards third parties, shows high levels of agreement nationwide, with these levels again being somewhat lower in the West than in the East (Figure 2.2). The first statement hinges in particular on the formulation "again", since it implies that all nationalist feelings are

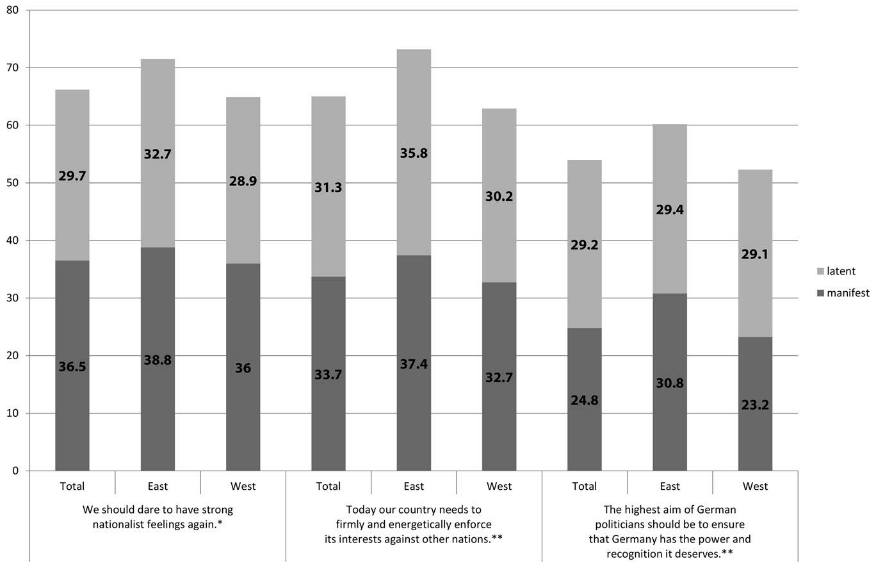


*Figure 2.2* Manifest and latent agreement with the statements in the dimension of "chauvinism" (in %)

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01, *p < .05

suppressed here. The second and third statements foreground Germany's right to assert itself *vis-à-vis* other countries, this right being based on the feeling that Germany has less than "it deserves". Although Germany has a hegemonic position in Europe, and despite its economic success as the world's leading exporter, a third or a quarter of all respondents agree with these statements manifestly.

The dimension of "xenophobia" has particularly high rates of agreement across the whole of Germany (Figure 2.3). Complementary to a person's valorization of her own group (chauvinism), xenophobia gauges the devaluation and aggression shown to a constructed out-group, "the foreigners", who are bundled together and accused of abusing the welfare system, who are only tolerated on the labour market for a limited time, and whose presence is seen as threatening German "identity". Thus, this dimension gauges racist ideas of competition at the workplace (economically motivated xenophobia) on the one hand, and the ethnicist idea that the nation is losing its identity through foreigners on the other.

It is especially respondents in the new federal states who strongly agree with the statements in this dimension, with almost every second person agreeing manifestly with them in some cases. But every third or fourth person in the old federal states also deems them worthy of agreement. What is also noticeable is that only a minority of respondents disagree explicitly with these three statements. Xenophobia thus continues to be widespread

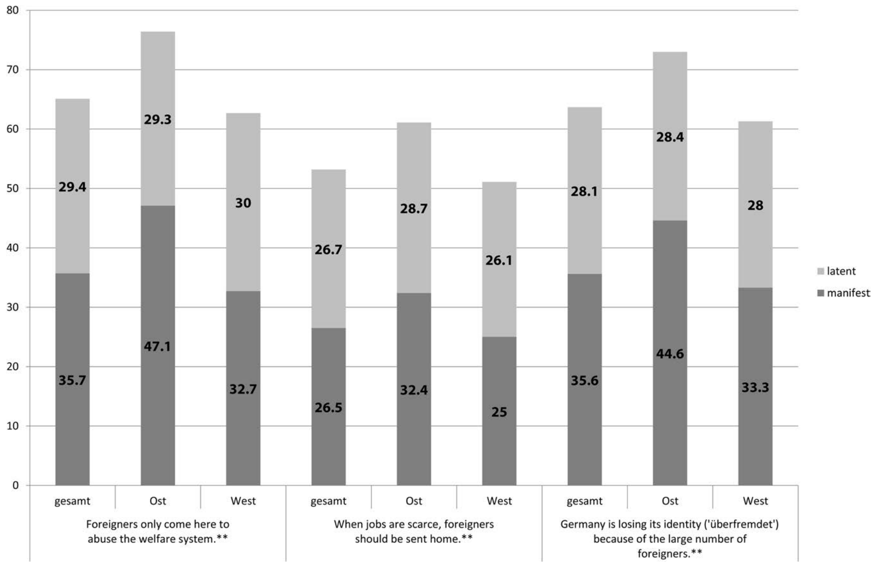


*Figure 2.3* Manifest and latent agreement with the statements in the dimension of "xenophobia" (in %)

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01

throughout the country, and what is more so does the attitude that researchers see as an "entry drug" to right-wing extremism: the threshold preventing people from agreeing with extreme right-wing groups on this issue is particularly low.

Figure 2.4 shows the rates of agreement for the dimension of "anti-Semitism", with the three statements expressing classic anti-Semitic stereotypes. Since latent communication has been most strongly documented for anti-Semitism (Bergmann & Erb 1986), we can expect a dark or hidden field here, which is the reason that in 2018 we undertook a more comprehensive study of the different forms in which anti-Semitism is expressed (see Chapter 5). In the dimension used in each study to measure anti-Semitism, 10% of Germans have the manifest (and 21%, the latent) belief that the "influence of the Jews is still too strong". While manifest prejudice is more widespread in West than in East Germany, the opposite is the case for latent prejudice. Moreover, almost 8% of Germans have the manifest view that Jews use "dirty tricks", and over 9% consider Jews to be "peculiar", which is also why they do not "fit in with us". East Germans express a greater degree of manifest agreement with these two statements. Overall, classic anti-Semitic prejudices are manifest in at least every tenth respondent, while latent prejudices are even more widespread among the population: almost 30% responded with "undecided" in the new federal states, and almost 20% in the old federal states (see also Chapter 5).

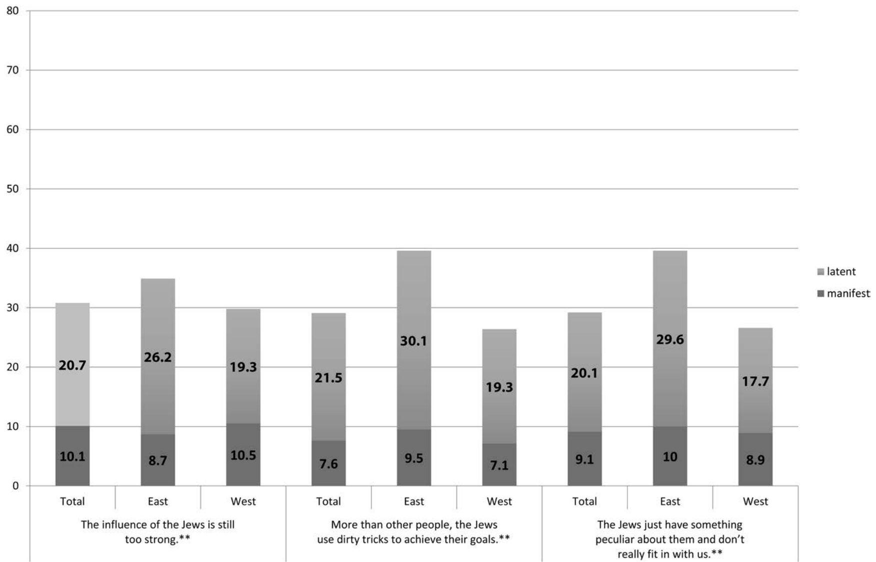


*Figure 2.4* Manifest and latent agreement with the statements in the dimension of "anti-Semitism" (in %)

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01

Figure 2.5 presents the rates of agreement with the statements in the dimension of "social Darwinism", which is an insight arrived at by Charles Darwin for evolution that is wrongly transferred to society. This biologism, which is a component of almost all ethnicist ideologies, emphasizes the survival of the "strongest", i.e. the idea that the stronger the human being is, the more adapted she is to the demands of life. Thus, differences between people are understood as social imperatives.

Nearly 10% of respondents believe that the strongest should "get their way" in human coexistence, with agreement being higher in the East (15.1%) than in the West (9.8%). The latent differences are even clearer: while 19.3% of respondents opted for the answer category "undecided" in the West, that figure was 30.4% in the East. In addition, over 11% of respondents believe that the Germans are superior to other people "by nature" – a clearly racist position. The third statement explicitly formulates the ideology of inequality that underlies the extreme right-wing worldview by speaking in terms of "unworthy life". However, one person in ten still agrees with this statement, although the difference between the two parts of the country is striking: 9% of West Germans, but almost 15% of East Germans, agree with this statement.

Finally, Figure 2.6 shows the rates of agreement in the last dimension, "trivialization of National Socialism". The three historical revisionist statements are directed against the open reappraisal of German crimes

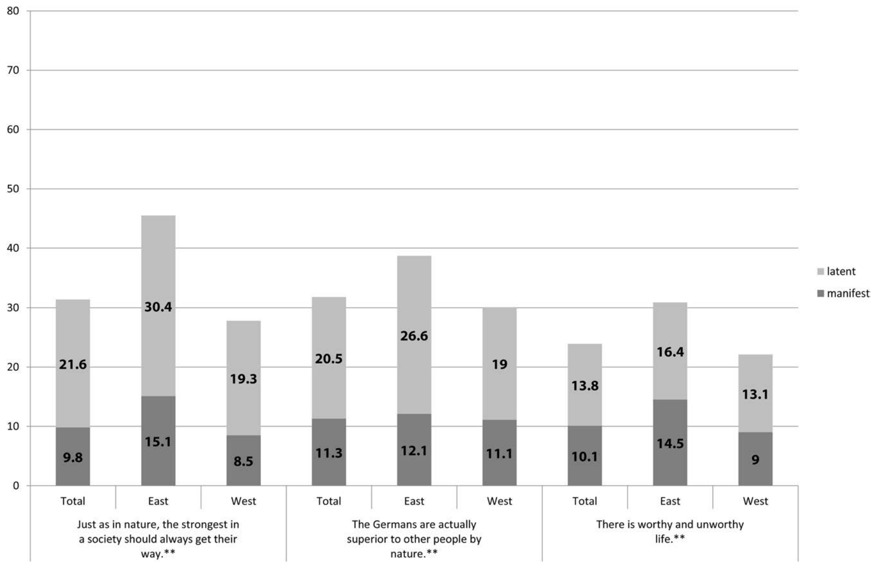


*Figure 2.5* Manifest and latent agreement with the statements in the dimension of "social Darwinism" (in %)

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01

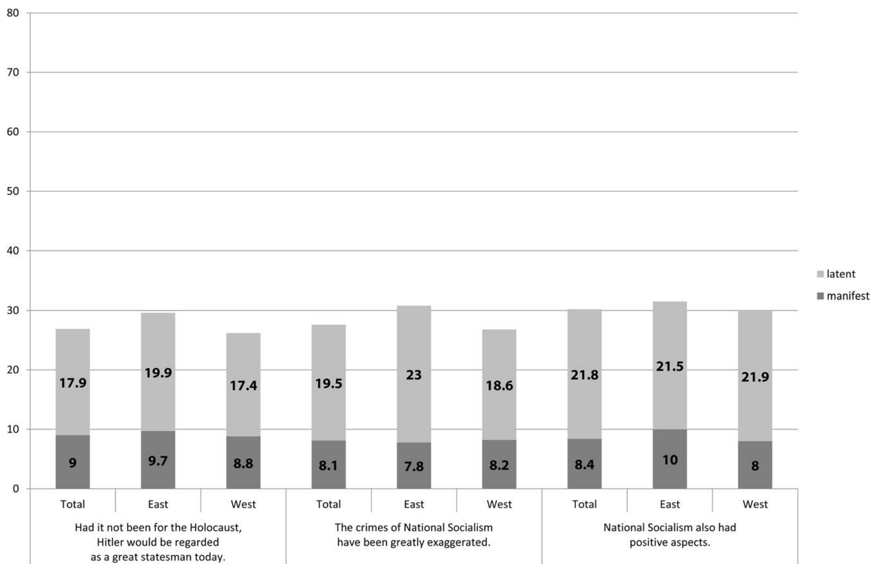


*Figure 2.6* Manifest and latent agreement with the statements in the dimension of "trivialization of National Socialism" (in %)

during the National Socialist era, and instead seek to downplay and gloss over these crimes. In 2018, almost one person in ten agreed with the statement that, had it not been for the Holocaust, “Hitler would be regarded as a great statesman today”, and a further 18% were “undecided”. A good 8% of respondents also agreed with each of the statements that the crimes of National Socialism “have been greatly exaggerated” and that National Socialism also had “positive aspects”. Although the rates of agreement with two of the three questions are slightly higher in the East than the West, this is not statistically significant.

### *Changes in extreme right-wing attitudes in Germany between 2002 and 2018*

We now turn to the question of how the proportion of Germans with extreme right-wing attitudes has changed since 2002. To do so, we will again look at the six dimensions and summarize the three items per dimension. We will only present those respondents who have an extreme right-wing mindset in the respective dimension, and we identify them according to their answers: as already said, the scale runs from 1 to 5, which means that, with three statements per dimension, the value can range from 3 to 15. We only take into account here those who reached or exceeded a value of 12 per dimension, and therefore *at least predominantly agreed* on average with the statements (manifest agreement). This results in some cases in lower rates of agreement than for the individual items. But this value is suitable from our point of view for depicting over time the proportion of manifestly extreme right-wing respondents with a closed mindset in each dimension.

Figure 2.7 shows how agreement in the dimension of “advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship” has changed over time. In 2018, there was 3.6% manifest agreement, which is relatively low, especially compared to the years 2002 and 2004. However, agreement only decreased in the old federal states (2002: 6.5% *vs.* 2018: 2.7%), while there was no long-term decrease in the new federal states (2002: 8.9% *vs.* 2018: 7.0%).

There was a strong rise in the dimension of “chauvinism” (Figure 2.8) in East Germany in 2008, 2010 and 2012, followed by a rapid fall in 2014. We explained this fluctuation in 2014 by pointing to the financial crisis across the globe, which also led to similar trends in xenophobia (Figure 2.9) and anti-Semitism (Figure 2.10). Given the all-encompassing processes of transformation in the 1990s, reaction to economic crises appears to be more intense in the East. In 2014, Germany’s “economic insularity” created a temporary acceptance of basic democratic values in both parts of the country (Decker et al. 2014). In 2016 and 2018, there was a return to the 2002 level, as well as an alignment between East and West. Apart from the important rogue result in the middle of the time series that we have already

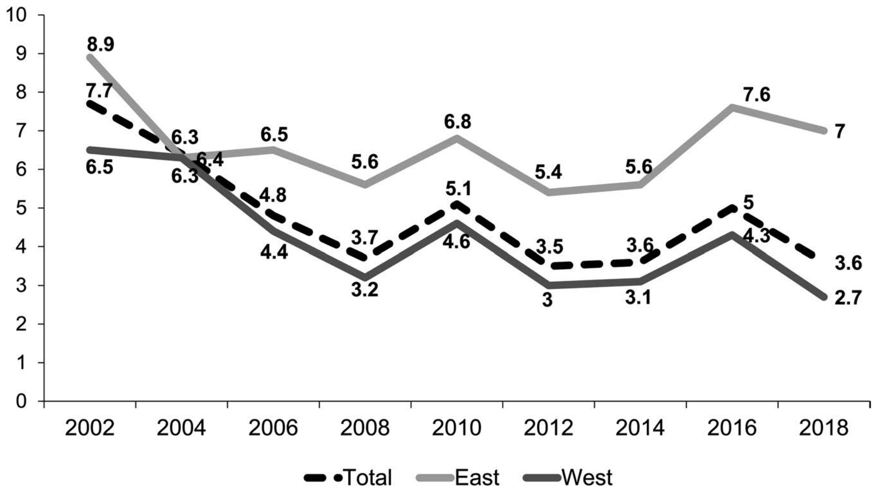


*Figure 2.7* Proportion of manifest agreement in the dimension of "advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship", 2002–2018 (in %)

Significant decline in Germany as a whole and in West Germany between 2016 and 2018 (Pearson's chi-squared test: $p < .05$); significant difference between East and West Germany (Pearson's chi-squared test: $p < .01$)

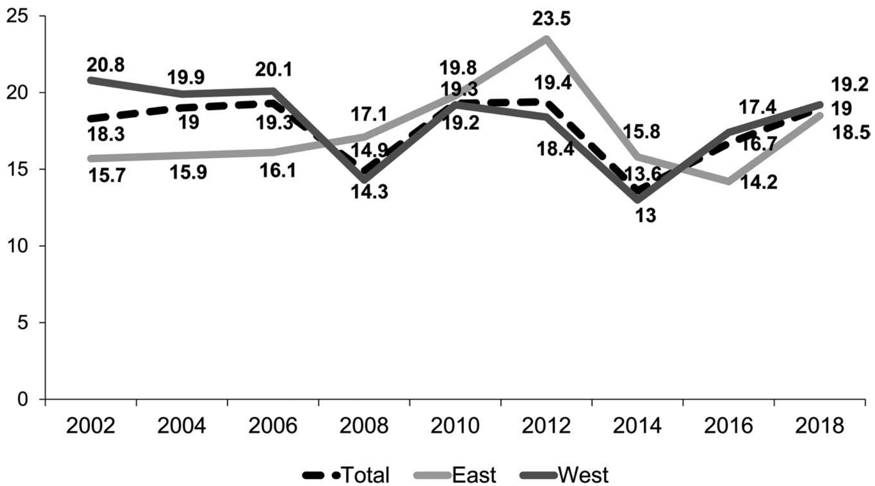


*Figure 2.8* Proportion of manifest agreement in the dimension of "chauvinism", 2002–2018 (in %)

Significant increase in Germany as a whole and in East Germany between 2016 and 2018 (Pearson's chi-squared test: $p < .05$)

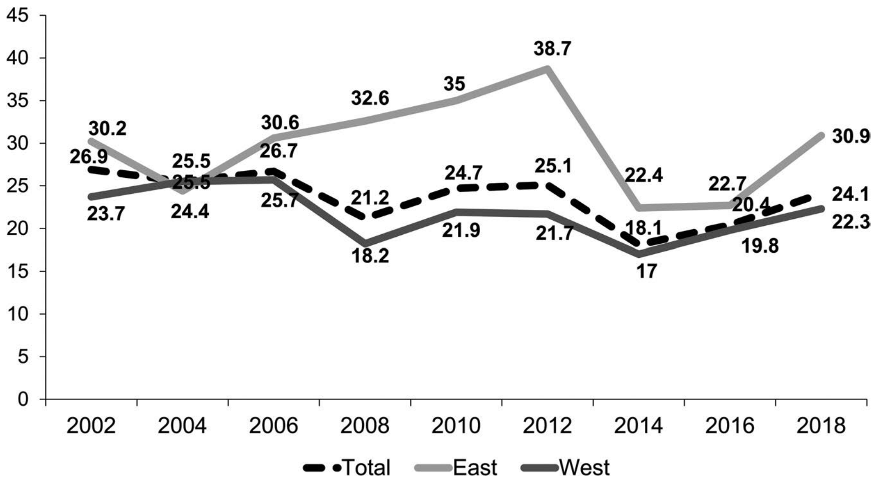


*Figure 2.9* Proportion of those with a closed and manifest xenophobic mindset, 2002–2018 (in %)

Significant rise in Germany as a whole and in East Germany between 2016 and 2018 (Pearson's chi-squared test: $p < .01$); significant differences between East and West Germany in 2018 (Pearson's chi-squared test: $p < .01$)

mentioned, agreement in this dimension seems to be permanently located at around the 20% mark.

The curve is similar for the dimension of "xenophobia" (Figure 2.9). Here, too, there was a strong rise in East Germany between 2008 and 2012, and a subsequent fall. But, as with "chauvinism", this fall was also (as we now know) temporary, with xenophobia having now returned to its original level in the new and the old federal states (slightly weaker in the latter), at a very high rate of 24.1%, which means that a quarter of the population have a closed xenophobic mindset. Seen positively, this does not exceed earlier rates, despite the ubiquitous rhetoric of crisis and the feverish debates on immigration. On the other hand, though, the normalization of intercultural exchange does not seem to lead to a widespread dismantling of prejudices. "Foreigners" remain a familiar enemy.

As Figure 2.10 shows, the proportion of those with a closed anti-Semitic mindset decreased over the time period (2002: 9.3% *vs.* 2018: 4.4%). But this does not mean that anti-Semitism actually shrank. Since anti-Semitic statements are subject to a high level of social ostracism, the reality is that the proportion is probably larger, and all we can say here with certainty is that this ostracism still has an effect (on the manifest and latent anti-Semitic mindset, see Chapter 5). As for differences between East and West, the closed anti-Semitic mindset was almost always more widespread among West than among East Germans between 2002 and 2016. However, agreement with anti-Semitic statements rose sharply in the East between 2008

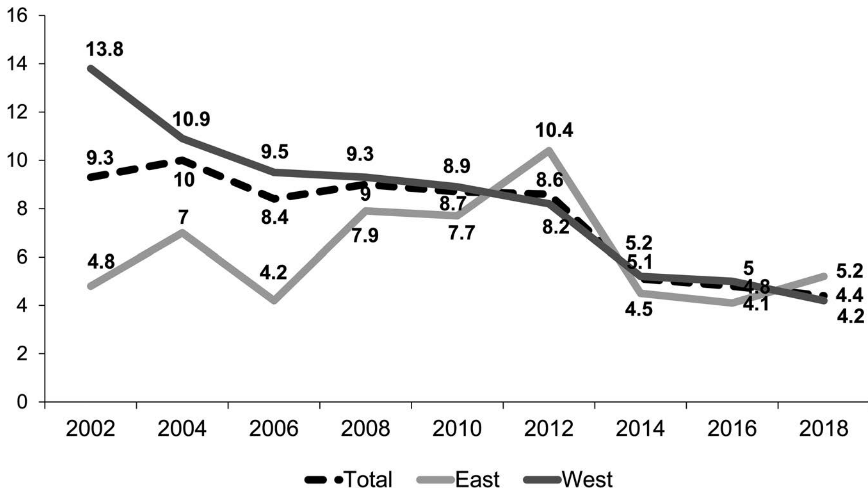


*Figure 2.10* Proportion of those with a closed and manifest anti-Semitic mindset, 2002–2018 (in %)

Significant differences between East and West Germany (Pearson's chi-squared test: $p < .05$)

and 2012. While the rates in East and West were very similar between 2008 and 2010, the proportion of those with a closed anti-Semitic mindset in the East rose well above the West German level during the period of the financial crisis and the subsequent global economic crisis. After aligning again in 2014 and 2016, the rates in 2018 were slightly higher in the East (5.2%) than in the West (4.2%).

Agreement in the dimension of "social Darwinism" is relatively low and has a downward trend (2002: 5.2% *vs.* 2018: 3.2%; Figure 2.11). While the decline was slow and continuous over the entire time period in the old federal states, the curve shows large fluctuations in the new federal states. Overall, agreement with social-Darwinian statements was also significantly higher in the East (except in 2008) than in the West, including for the 2018 survey wave (West: 2.8% *vs.* East: 4.6%).

The rates of agreement in the final dimension of "trivialization of National Socialism" declined slightly over the time period, although there was a recent increase (from 2.1% in 2016 to 2.7% in 2018; Figure 2.12). As with social Darwinism, the rates in the West fell relatively steadily (until 2016), while the curve in the East oscillated strongly. Agreement in the East was initially lower than in the West, but the two parts of the country have since converged. The rates in East Germany in 2018 were for the second time (after 2012) slightly higher than those in West Germany.

A further rate that indicates how strong and widespread these attitudes are is the proportion of respondents with a closed right-wing mindset. We define those respondents who reach a rate of at least 63 across all

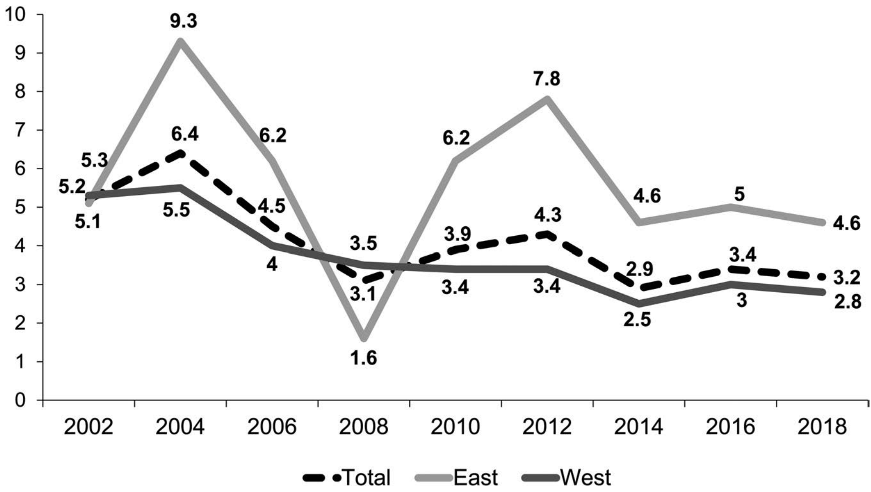


*Figure 2.11* Proportion of those with a closed and manifest mindset in the dimension of "social Darwinism", 2002–2018 (in %)

dimensions as having such a mindset, since they reach an average rate of 3.5 for the individual statements and thus agree on average with all 18 statements of the questionnaire on extreme right-wing attitudes. We call this mindset *manifest* because such respondents agree expressly with the statements, and do not use the opportunity to choose an evasive answer ("undecided"); and *closed* because it extends over all six dimensions. Unlike with

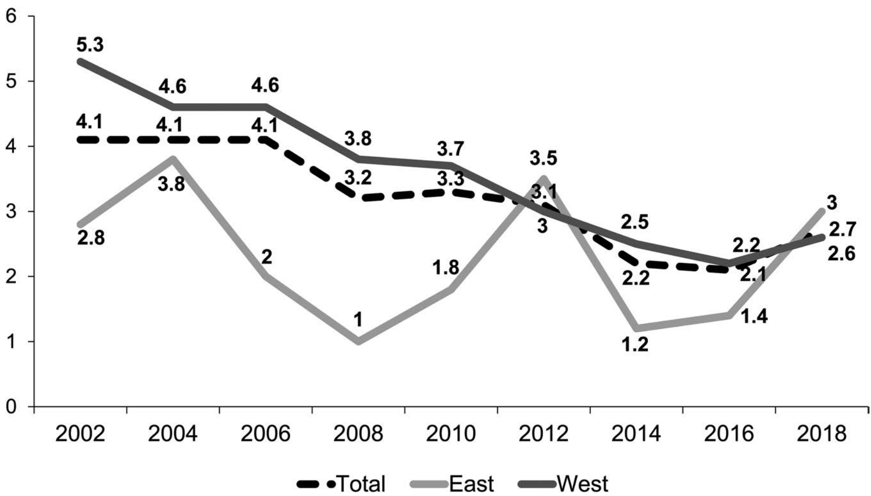


*Figure 2.12* Percentage of those with a closed and manifest mindset in the dimension of "trivialization of National Socialism", 2002–2018 (in %)

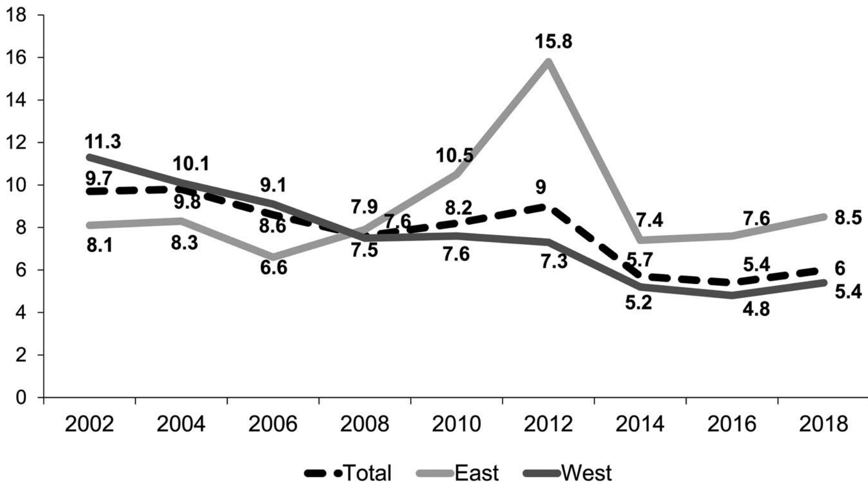


*Figure 2.13* Proportion of respondents with a closed right-wing extremist mindset, 2002–2018 (in %)

the dimensions, we opted with the index for the overall scale for a slightly lower average value to determine the manifest and closed mindset.

In 2018, the proportion of respondents with a manifest and closed extreme right-wing mindset remained roughly at the level of the two previous waves at 6% (2014: 5.7%; 2016: 5.4%; Figure 2.13). This is surprising, since the number of politically motivated crimes and acts of violence against refugees and those with different opinions rose sharply between 2014 and 2016:[4] from 17,020 politically motivated right-wing crimes in 2014, through 22,960 in 2015, and up to 23,555 in 2016 (Federal Ministry of the Interior 2017: 3). The fact that this increase at the level of action is not accompanied by an increase in the number of right-wing extremists is something that we explained in our previous survey by pointing to the radicalization of right-wing authoritarian milieus (Decker & Brähler 2016), which transformed attitude into action. A comparison of the two parts of the country reveals that there was a peak in 2012 in East Germany (15.8%), a figure that was not repeated in the subsequent survey (2014: 7.4%). However, the proportion of manifest right-wing extremists in the new federal states has risen again since then to 8.5%, and there has also been a slight increase in the West from 4.8% to 5.4%. However, the difference between East and West in 2018 was significant ($p < .01$).

### *Extreme right-wing attitudes and sociodemography*

We will now look at the distribution of right-wing extremists according to selected sociodemographic features, which we use to gauge the spread

*Table 2.4* Closed and manifest extreme right-wing attitudes by dimension in West and East Germany (in %)

| | *Total* | *East (N = 498)* | *West (N = 1,918)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship** | 3.6 | 7.0 | 2.7 |
| Chauvinism | 19.0 | 18.5 | 19.2 |
| Xenophobia** | 24.1 | 30.9 | 22.3 |
| Anti-Semitism | 4.4 | 5.2 | 4.2 |
| Social Darwinism* | 3.2 | 4.6 | 2.8 |
| Trivialization of National Socialism | 2.7 | 3.0 | 2.6 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

of anti-democratic attitudes among population groups, but not to identify their cause. Gender, for example, is not a factor in itself, even though extreme right-wing attitudes are more common among men.

Where significant differences are indicated under the Tables, these were calculated using Pearson's chi-squared test, with levels of significance corresponding to the values given. No significance tests were performed where the number of cells was too large or where some were not filled (see, for example, Table 2.8). In such cases, the significance values found cannot be meaningfully categorized or interpreted, since differences between all cells are tested. The information below the Tables relates to these chi-squared tests.

Let us begin with the place of residence of respondents in the new or old federal states (Table 2.4), where there are clear differences for some of the dimensions: in particular, xenophobia, the advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship, and social Darwinism are more firmly anchored in East Germany. This does not mean, however, that all West Germans have a democratic mindset. Rather, the difference between the two parts of the country is slight, and the proportion of people in the West who also agree, for example, with chauvinistic and xenophobic statements is by no means negligible.

Most noticeable perhaps is the correlation between extreme right-wing attitudes and level of education, with people who have achieved at least A-levels (*Abitur*) being significantly less likely to have an extreme right-wing mindset across all dimensions (with the exception of the dimension of social Darwinism) than those without A-levels (Table 2.5). This raises the hope that a higher level of education and learning about history and society could help break down misanthropic attitudes. We should also bear in mind, though, that a higher level of education also leads to people being more aware of statements that are socially desirable (Heyder 2003; Rippl 2002; for anti-Semitism, Beyer & Krumpal 2010), with people with A-levels revealing extreme right-wing attitudes less often than those without A-levels – even in anonymous surveys. If we take this into account, then the effect of education may well be weaker.

*Table 2.5* Closed and manifest extreme right-wing attitudes by dimension and level of education (in %)

| | *A-levels (N = 493)* | *Without A-levels (N = 1,918)* |
|---|---|---|
| Advocacy of a right-wing dictatorship* | 2.0 | 4.0 |
| Chauvinism** | 10.5 | 21.2 |
| Xenophobia** | 12.6 | 27.0 |
| Anti-Semitism** | 2.0 | 5.0 |
| Social Darwinism | 2.0 | 3.5 |
| Trivialization of National Socialism* | 1.0 | 3.1 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01, *p < .05.

Compared to previous survey waves, differences between the genders (Table 2.6) widened in 2018, with men recording higher rates than women across all dimensions.

Having already drawn attention to the different age structure of right-wing extremists in East and West Germany in 2013, we were particularly interested in this distribution in 2018, too (Decker et al. 2013: 104–105). Looking at extreme right-wing attitudes in a comparison of generations is especially revealing if we take into account the East-West difference (Table 2.7). For the first dimension, "advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship", agreement increases with age in the East, while in the West it is the other way round. There is no difference between East and West when it comes to the dimension of chauvinism, however, with the older cohorts being more chauvinistic, and the younger cohorts being relatively hostile to nationalism, in both parts of the country. A similar picture emerges with anti-Semitism. In the case of xenophobia, which is the dimension with the highest values, the proportion is lowest among younger West Germans (at 15.8%), with this figure rising with age (to 26.8% for West Germans who are 61 and over). In the dimension of "social Darwinism", it is only this age group 31–60 that has the highest values (6.3%). The dimension of

*Table 2.6* Closed and manifest extreme right-wing attitudes by dimension for men and women (in %)

| | *Men (N = 1,093)* | *Women (N = 1,323)* |
|---|---|---|
| Advocacy of a right-wing dictatorship** | 4.8 | 2.7 |
| Chauvinism | 21.1 | 17.3 |
| Xenophobia* | 26.3 | 22.2 |
| Anti-Semitism* | 5.3 | 3.6 |
| Social Darwinism* | 4.1 | 2.4 |
| Trivialization of National Socialism** | 3.7 | 1.8 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01, *p < .05.

*Table 2.7* Closed and manifest extreme right-wing attitudes by dimension, according to age (in %)

| | | *14–30 (East: N = 92; West: N = 387)* | *31–60 (East: N = 237; West: N = 1,062)* | *61 and over (East: N = 169; West: N = 469)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Advocacy of a right-wing dictatorship | East | 4.4 | 7.2 | 8.3 |
| | West | 3.4 | 2.8 | 1.9 |
| Chauvinism | East | 12.0 | 19.1 | 21.3 |
| | West | 13.7 | 19.2 | 23.7 |
| Xenophobia | East | 27.2 | 36.7 | 24.9 |
| | West | 15.8 | 22.7 | 26.8 |
| Anti-Semitism | East | 3.8 | 4.6 | 6.6 |
| | West | 3.4 | 4.1 | 5.0 |
| Social Darwinism | East | 2.2 | 6.3 | 3.6 |
| | West | 2.9 | 2.8 | 2.6 |
| Trivialization of National Socialism | East | 1.1 | 3.4 | 3.6 |
| | West | 3.1 | 2.2 | 3.0 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: ** $p < .01$.

"trivialization of National Socialism" has the lowest agreement among the youngest East Germans, while the same age group in the West has relatively high values (3.1%).

Table 2.8 shows how extreme right-wing attitudes are distributed among different occupational groups. It was the unemployed who most frequently agreed with the statements presented, closely followed in the dimensions of "xenophobia", "chauvinism" and "anti-Semitism" by pensioners. For both groups, there are probably strong overlaps with the factors of education and age. There are also overlaps for those respondents still in

*Table 2.8* Closed and manifest extreme right-wing attitudes by dimension, according to occupational groups (in %)

| | *School/ vocational training (N = 207)* | *Employed (N = 1,415)* | *Unemployed (N = 129)* | *Housewife/ husband (N = 72)* | *Retired (N = 570)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Advocacy of a right-wing dictatorship** | 2.9 | 3.4 | 9.4 | | 3.5 |
| Chauvinism** | 12.1 | 17.2 | 30.5 | 12.7 | 24.3 |
| Xenophobia** | 16.9 | 22.9 | 32.0 | 25.0 | 27.3 |
| Anti-Semitism* | 1.6 | 3.8 | 6.4 | 8.5 | 6.0 |
| Social Darwinism | 1.9 | 3.1 | 6.3 | 1.4 | 3.4 |
| Trivialization of National Socialism | 1.5 | 2.4 | 4.7 | 1.4 | 3.5 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

vocational training, but these overlaps operate conversely, with this group having the lowest proportion of right-wing extremists in all dimensions. The largest group, comprising employees, have average values. On the one hand, housewives and househusbands are relatively seldom manifestly chauvinistic, but on the other are more xenophobic and anti-Semitic than the other groups.

Of particular socio-political relevance is the question of how extreme right-wing attitudes are distributed among party voters (Table 2.9), with respondents therefore being asked whether they would vote if the *Bundestag* elections were to take place next Sunday, and, if so, which party they would vote for. We do not make an election forecast here, since, for example, we interviewed people under the age of 18, who are not yet eligible to vote. Rather, we want to investigate the link between political attitudes and party preference.

What is immediately noticeable is that there are hardly any differences between supporters of the Social-democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and the Christian-democratic Union (CDU/CSU) when it comes to the proportion of people with a manifestly extreme right-wing mindset. Among these supporters, as among Free Democratic Party (FDP) supporters, it is above all xenophobia that is relatively high, at around 20% in each case. The FPD also has a comparatively large following (6.5%) with social-Darwinist views. What is surprising is the proportion of supporters of *Die Linke* (the Left) who agree with historical-revisionist statements. Supporters of the Green Party have the lowest values when it comes to agreeing with extreme right-wing statements, although they do not reject certain extreme right-wing statements consistently (chauvinism: 11.6% and xenophobia: 11.0%).

Alternative for Germany (AfD) voters differ greatly, however. As in our 2016 survey (Decker et al. 2016b: esp. 74–77), their values were by far the highest in all dimensions in 2018, too. This again confirms a finding from other recent studies: namely, those who vote for the AfD differ primarily from voters of other parties in terms not of sociodemography (e.g. place of residence or income), but above all of political attitudes, which very often means xenophobic and anti-democratic attitudes (see Chapter 1; see above all Schröder 2018; but also Eversberg 2017; Lengfeld 2017).

Table 2.10 shows how those respondents whom we claim have a closed extreme right-wing mindset answer the question of how they would vote. Thus, the calculation is now based only on those respondents who exceeded the value (> = 63) for the entire questionnaire on extreme right-wing attitudes, a total of 138 people. Of these, 73.2% said that they would vote, with a third voting for the AfD, almost 20% for the CDU/CSU, and almost 10% for the SPD. By way of comparison, a quarter of this group had said in 2014 that they would vote for the CDU/CSU, and a further quarter for the SPD, which confirms an observation from the previous survey: namely, that voters with a closed and manifest extreme right-wing mindset have found a form of political expression in the AfD. While older extreme right-wing

*Table 2.9* Closed and manifest extreme right-wing attitudes by dimension among party voters (in %)

| | *CDU/CSU (N = 444)* | *SPD (N = 425)* | *FDP (N = 92)* | *Greens (N = 173)* | *The Left (N = 167)* | *AfD (N = 160)* | *Non-voters (N =312 )* | *Undecided in terms of party (N = 137)* | *Undecided in terms of whether to vote (N = 202)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Advocacy of a right-wing dictatorship** | 2.3 | 1.9 | 4.3 | 1.2 | 1.8 | 13.1 | 4.5 | 3.7 | 2.5 |
| Chauvinism** | 17.5 | 19.5 | 15.4 | 11.6 | 12.7 | 40.0 | 19.2 | 12.4 | 18.7 |
| Xenophobia** | 22.0 | 22.8 | 18.5 | 11.0 | 15.0 | 55.6 | 26.6 | 18.3 | 26.2 |
| Anti-Semitism** | 2.5 | 4.3 | 3.3 | 1.2 | 3.7 | 12.5 | 7.1 | 3.7 | 1.5 |
| Social Darwinism** | 2.9 | 2.1 | 6.5 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 7.5 | 3.5 | 2.2 | 4.5 |
| Trivialization of National Socialism** | 0.9 | 0.9 | – | – | 3.0 | 10.0 | 4.2 | 2.9 | 2.5 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: ** $p < .01$, ** $p > .05$.

*Table 2.10* How do right-wing extremists vote (in %)?

| | *Total (N = 138)* | | | *Among those voting (N = 101)* | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Those voting* | *Not voting* | *Undecided whether to vote* | *CDU/ CSU* | *SPD* | *FDP* | *Greens* | *The Left* | *NPD* | *AfD* | *Not yet decided as to which party* |
| 2018 | 73.2 | 15.9 | 6.5 | 18.8 | 9.9 | 5.0 | 1.0 | 6.9 | 4.0 | 33.7 | 7.9 |

parties such as the NPD were unable to establish themselves in the political spectrum, the AfD has managed to tap into the long-standing potential (a potential that we have demonstrated since 2002). Our figures also show that the number of people with a closed extreme right-wing mindset who intend to vote corresponds approximately to the actual number of people in the total population who do vote, which contradicts the notion that right-wing extremists are politically excluded in this respect. We know from other studies that it is social exclusion that plays a role in elections, with people from the lower social strata rarely using their right to vote (Schäfer 2013, 2014). In other words, it is not right-wing extremists that are politically marginalized, but socially disadvantaged people.

Table 2.11 shows the correlations between the sociodemographic feature of church affiliation and the dimensions of extreme right-wing attitudes. Overall, differences between members of the Protestant Church, of the Catholic Church, and people with no religious affiliation are negligible. In some dimensions (such as the advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship, anti-Semitism, and the trivialization of National Socialism), those with manifestly extreme right-wing attitudes are often found amongst people without a religion. In other dimensions, though, it is those tied to a denomination that more often agree with extreme right-wing statements;

*Table 2.11* Closed and manifest extreme right-wing attitudes by dimension and church affiliation (in %)

| | *Protestant (N = 904)* | *Catholic (N = 808)* | *No religious affiliation (N = 633)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Advocacy of a right-wing dictatorship | 3.1 | 2.7 | 5.0 |
| Chauvinism | 18.5 | 20.2 | 18.3 |
| Xenophobia | 24.4 | 25.8 | 22.5 |
| Anti-Semitism | 3.6 | 3.9 | 6.4 |
| Social Darwinism | 2.7 | 3.6 | 3.6 |
| Trivialization of National Socialism* | 1.6 | 2.8 | 4.1 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: *$p < .05$.

for example, chauvinism and xenophobia are strongest among Catholics. With one exception ("trivialization of National Socialism"), the differences are not statistically significant, so that we can claim that extreme right-wing attitudes among church members reflect how these attitudes are distributed in society as a whole.

## Democracy, plurality and equality; hostility to Muslims, antiziganism, and devaluation of asylum seekers

Besides extreme right-wing attitudes, we have also been recording since 2006 the extent to which the population accepts democracy, with respondents being asked about their agreement with "democracy as an idea", with the constitutional norm ("democracy as laid down in the constitution"), and with the constitutional reality ("democracy as it functions in Germany"). Overall, the majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with democracy (Figures 2.14–2.16).

What is also apparent, however, is that the more abstract the idea of democracy becomes, the higher the level of agreement. For example, the highest acceptance among the population is for "democracy as an idea", with a total of 93.3% favouring democracy over other forms of government (Figure 2.14). Support for "democracy as an idea" continued to rise in the new federal states after 2016, and, at 95.2%, was higher in the East in 2018 than in Germany as a whole. There was a slight decline at an overall high level for West Germany. However, this is an abstract norm (also emphasized by the term "idea"), and can contain very different ideas.

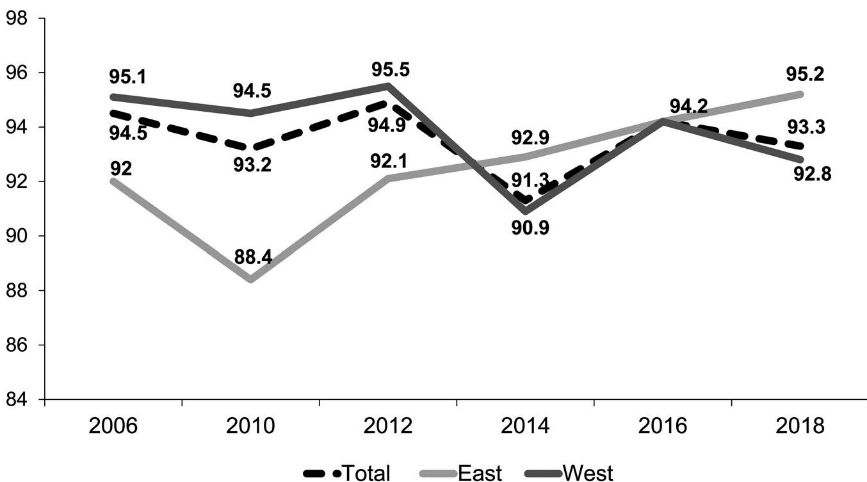


*Figure 2.14* Agreement with "democracy as an idea", 2006–2018 (in %)

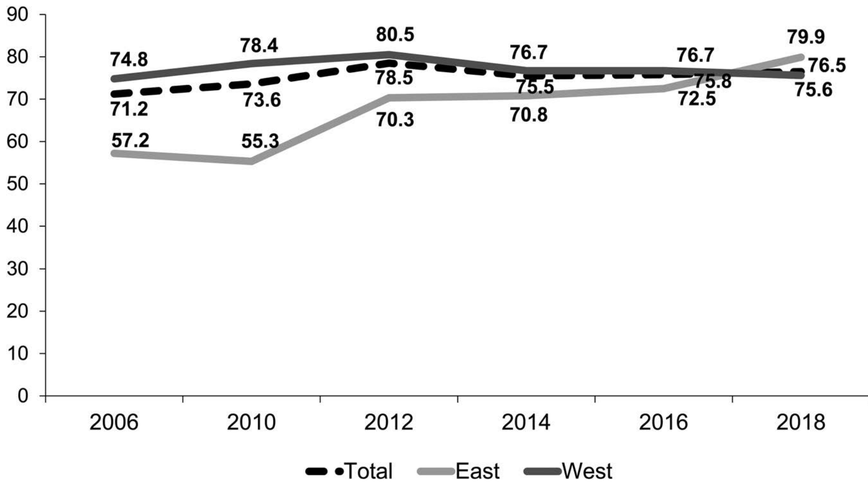


*Figure 2.15* Agreement with "democracy as laid down in the constitution", 2006–2018 (in %)

Significant increase in East Germany between 2016 and 2018; Pearson's chi-squared test: $p < .01$

In 2018, the more concrete question about satisfaction with the form of democracy enshrined in the German constitution was answered positively by 76.4% of respondents, which is a significantly lower proportion than above (Figure 2.15). The entire period of the study saw only slight changes in the old federal states, while satisfaction slowly increased in the new

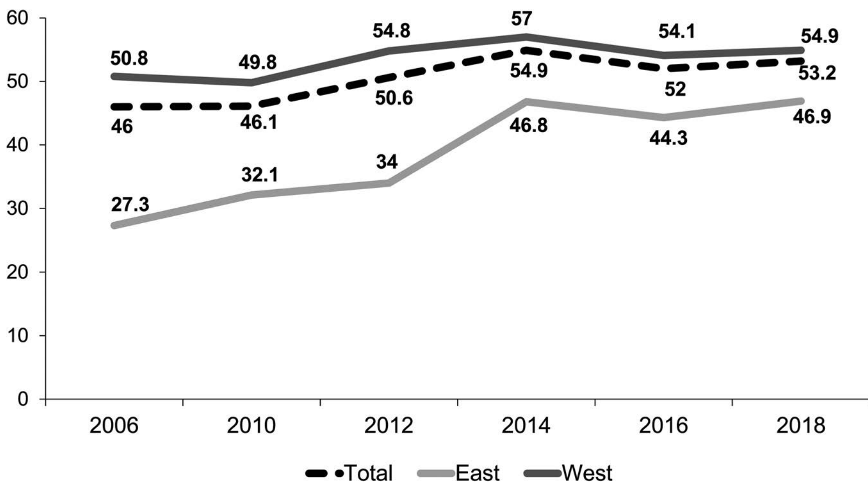


*Figure 2.16* Agreement with "democracy as it functions in Germany", 2006–2018 (in %)

Significant differences between East and West Germany in 2018; Pearson's chi-squared test: $p < .01$

*Table 2.12* Political deprivation (in %)

| | *Total* | *East* | *West* |
|---|---|---|---|
| People like me don't have any influence on what the government does anyway.** | 70.0 | 78.3 | 67.9 |
| I think it's pointless for me to be involved in politics.** | 58.2 | 69.0 | 55.4 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: ** p < .01.

federal states after 2010 (55.3% in 2010 to 76.5% in 2018). The proportion of those satisfied in the East also grew significantly after 2016, and is now even greater than in Germany as a whole.

In contrast, "democracy as it functions in Germany" was met with approval by only 53.2% of respondents, the lowest value of the three items on democracy. The long-term increase of recent years continued in the new federal states, although the rates of agreement also remained significantly higher in the old federal states in 2018 (East: 46.9% *vs.* West: 54.9%).

A comparison of the rates of agreement for democracy across the three items reveals three things. First, the idea of democracy meets with broad agreement and still seems to be regarded as a normative ideal. Second, in 2018, only half the respondents were satisfied with the actual functioning of democracy, and the other half not. Third, agreement with democracy only increased continuously in the new federal states.

The clear differences between how people evaluate the idea of democracy, the constitutional norm, and (not least) the constitutional reality indicate a problem for representative democracy: namely, that people do not have a strong sense that they themselves can influence politics (see Table 2.12). This sense of being excluded from the political domain is called *political deprivation*. Although the constitution and the democratic polity offer numerous opportunities for involvement, political deprivation is very strong in Germany, and is again much more common in East than in West Germany.

Since "democracy" has many different associations, we developed a further questionnaire for the 2018 survey. This investigated people's identification with (more concrete) norms of equality and plurality, with respondents being asked to rate five statements (Table 2.13) on a five-point scale (from 1, "completely disagree", to 5, "completely agree").

Those statements pointing at the equal rights and chances of everybody in society are supported by a clear majority (statement 1: 80.9%; statement 4: 76.5%). However, the demand for certain groups to be exempted is also supported by a majority, with more than half the respondents (53.7%) agreeing with statement 2. We interpret this contradiction as meaning that respondents probably see the demand for rights of freedom for everybody

*Table 2.13* Evaluation of statements on norms of equality and plurality (in %)

| | | *Completely disagree* | *Mostly disagree* | *Undecided* | *Mostly agree* | *Completely agree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | An important political goal is to ensure equal rights for everybody. | 1.2 | 2.5 | 15.3 | 22.6 | 58.3 |
| 2 | Some groups should not be surprised if the state restricts their rights. | 6.4 | 9.5 | 20.4 | 29.3 | 24.4 |
| 3 | Those who do not work should not have the same rights as others. | 22.4 | 29.0 | 28.2 | 17.7 | 12.8 |
| 4 | Everybody should have the same chances to stand up for their interests. | 1.6 | 3.5 | 18.4 | 32.0 | 44.5 |
| 5 | The rights of the individual should take a backseat to the interests of society as a whole. | 11.2 | 19.1 | 39.2 | 20.7 | 9.8 |

as relating to their *own* person and group, and think of *others* when denying these rights. If we summarize statements 1 and 4 as norms of equality, and statements 2, 3 and 5 as norms of anti-plurality,[5] then the following distribution emerges (Table 2.14).

Table 2.13 shows the proportion of those who agree with each statement on average (equality > 6; anti-plurality > 9). This results in the same picture as at item level: although the majority of respondents would like to see the safeguarding of universal rights of freedom, there is also a sizeable proportion who are against extending these rights to everybody. Agreement with both egalitarian and anti-plural demands is slightly higher in the East than in the West, where agreement with the latter is just under half (47.7%).

*Table 2.14* Support for principles of equality, and rejection of plurality in society (in %)

| | *Total* | *East* | *West* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Equality | 86.2 | 88.3 | 85.6 |
| Anti-plurality** | 47.3 | 57.0 | 47.7 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: ** p < .01.

This confirms once again that people like to claim their own rights of freedom, but half of those surveyed do not accept the rights of people who are perceived as members of a different group.

We can substantiate this explanation by examining the attitudes of the German population to those groups perceived as different or foreign. Besides the Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes, we have also been collecting data on hostility to certain groups perceived as homogeneous (e.g. homosexuals, Sinti and Roma, and Muslims) since 2014. To do so, we use some of the questionnaire in the study series *Deutsche Zustände* (*Conditions in Germany*), which the social scientists Wilhelm Heitmeyer and Andreas Zick used from 2001 to 2011 (Heitmeyer 2012).

By gauging hostility to Muslims, antiziganism, and the devaluation of asylum seekers, we focused in 2018 on those groups that are currently particularly affected by prejudice and xenophobia (see Decker et al. 2016a). Respondents were asked to evaluate the statements presented to them on each group on a four-point scale (from 1, “completely agree”, to 4, “completely disagree”), with response categories 1 and 2 being summarized as agreement in Figures 2.17–2.23.

The results show that hostility to Muslims has continued to rise, with 44.1% of respondents now agreeing with the statement that “Muslims should be prohibited from migrating to Germany” (Figure 2.17), and this figure even rising to 50.7% in the new federal states. The proportion of those who “feel like a foreigner” in their own country because of the “many Muslims

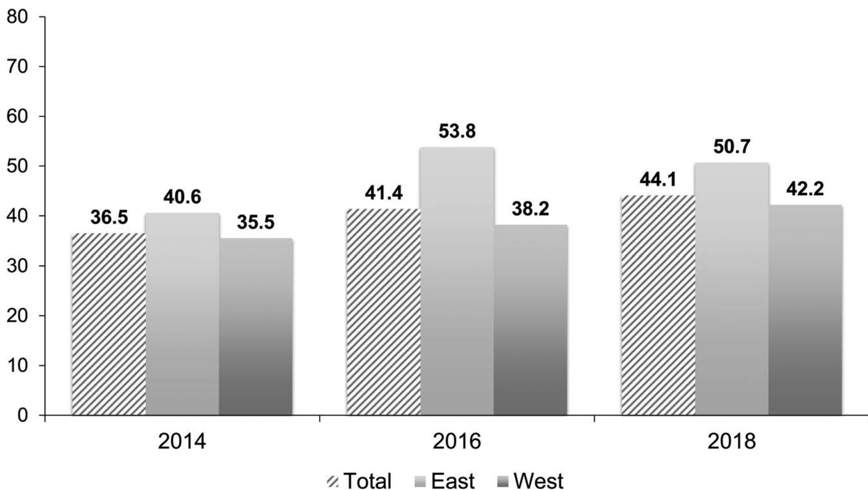


*Figure 2.17* Hostility to Muslims: “Muslims should be prohibited from migrating to Germany”, 2014–2018 (in %)

Significant increase in West Germany; Pearson’s chi-squared test: $p < .01$

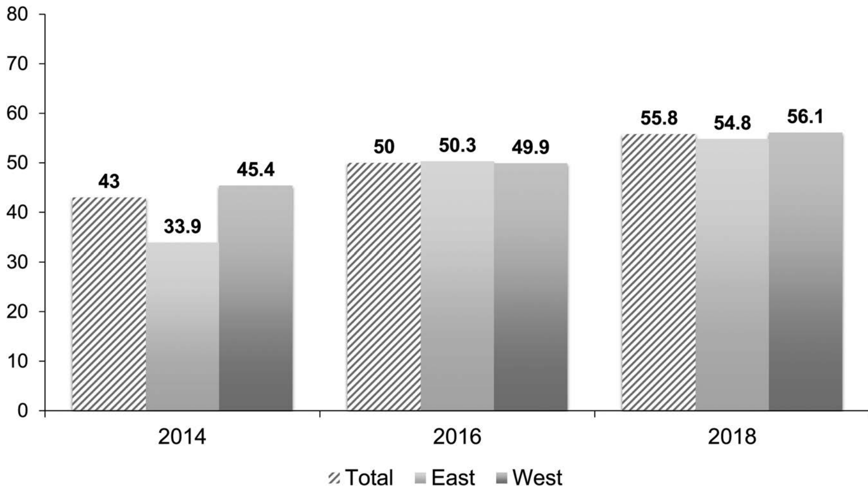


*Figure 2.18* Hostility to Muslims: "The many Muslims here sometimes make me feel like a foreigner in my own country", 2014–2018 (in %)

Significant increase between 2016 and 2018 in West Germany and in Germany as a whole; Pearson's chi-squared test: $p < 0.1$

here" rose to 55.8% in 2018 (Figure 2.18). These findings appear paradoxical at first: on the one hand, immigration has drastically fallen since the peak of 2015, while on the other Muslim immigration is still felt to be something that has a significant effect on society. The authoritarian syndrome can explain this paradox, however, since the devaluation of "the Muslims" is less a reaction to the (at least imagined) threat posed by a foreign group, and more an opportunity to express aggression. The devaluation of Muslims is decidedly anti-democratic, as it violates both the norm of equality for everybody and religious freedom.

The rejection of Sinti and Roma also continues to be a social reality, with 56% of respondents saying that they would be opposed to Sinti and Roma living in their area (Figure 2.19). Agreement with this statement is particularly high at 60.3% in the new federal states. Nationwide, almost every other respondent (49.2%) thinks that "Sinti and Roma should be banned from town centres" (Figure 2.19). The proportion of respondents who believe that Sinti and Roma are prone to crime has also risen again slightly (to 60.4%) (Figure 2.21), with 69.2% of those surveyed agreeing with this view in East Germany.

The devaluation of asylum seekers increased in 2018, with 79.1% of respondents rejecting generosity when it comes to the processing of asylum applications (Figure 2.22). In addition, 61.5% still could not or did not want to believe that asylum applications are justified, and agree with the view that "most asylum seekers do not really fear persecution in their home

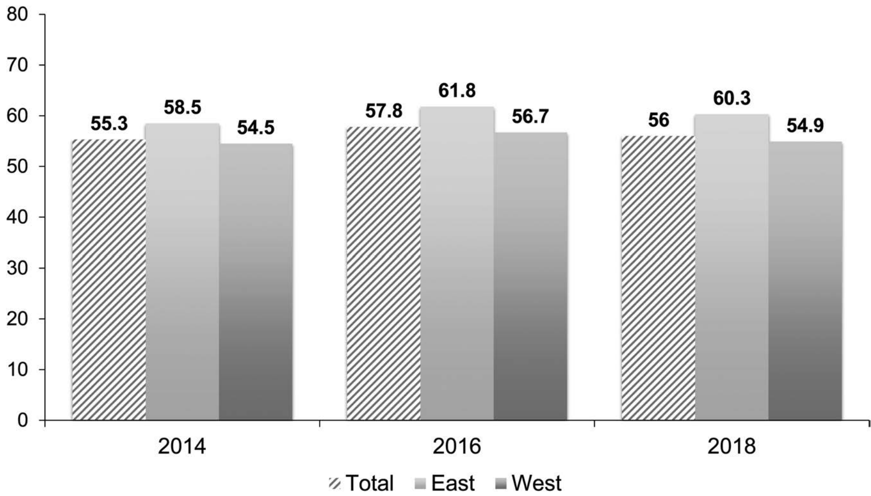


*Figure 2.19* Antiziganism: "I would be opposed to Sinti and Roma living in my area", 2014–2018 (in %)

country" (Figure 2.23). These statements also cast doubt on democratic values and norms, in this case the right to asylum, which was enshrined in the Basic Law after the Second World War precisely because of the crimes of National Socialism: those who escaped the Nazis only did so by being allowed to enter other countries.

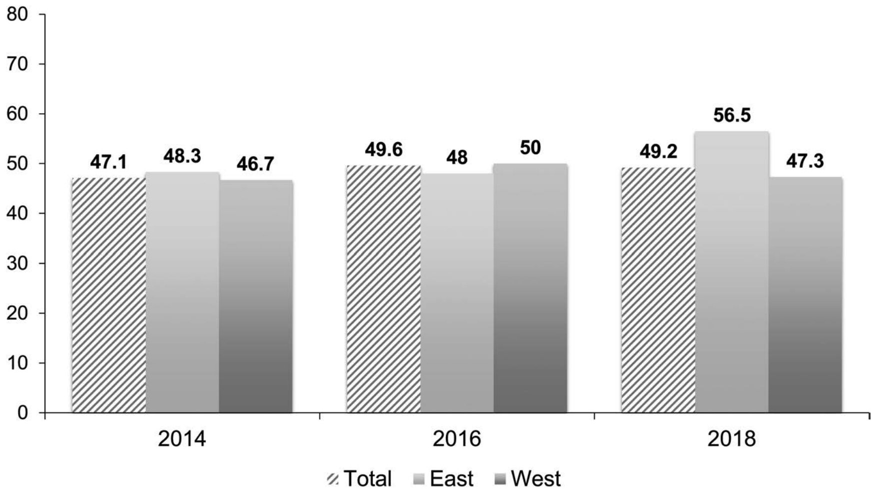


*Figure 2.20* Antiziganism: "Sinti and Roma should be banned from town centres", 2014–2018 (in %)

Significant increase in East Germany; Pearson's chi-squared test: $p < .01$

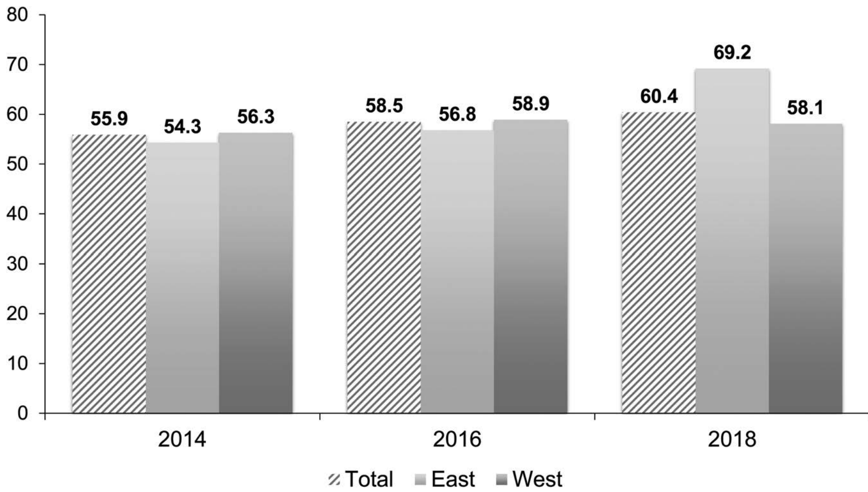


*Figure 2.21* Antiziganism: “Sinti and Roma are prone to crime”, 2014–2018 (in %)

Significant increase in East Germany; Pearson’s chi-squared test: p < .01

In summary, the groups that we focus on here face considerable hostility, with asylum seekers facing the greatest hostility, followed by Sinti and Roma, and finally Muslims (whom are nonetheless viewed negatively by half the population). Behind this hostility is the fact that these groups are on the one hand imagined as a threat to culture, security and economic

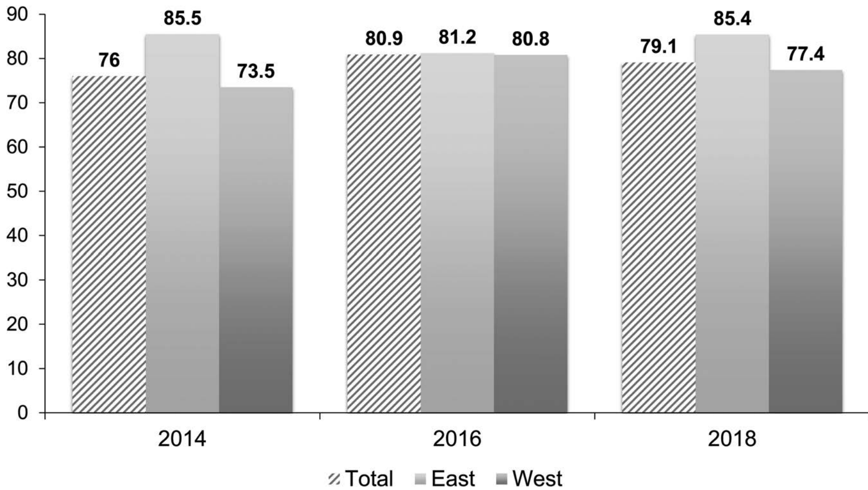


*Figure 2.22* Devaluation of asylum seekers: “The state should not be generous when processing asylum applications”, 2014–2018 (in %)

Significant increase in East Germany; Pearson’s chi-squared test: *p < .05

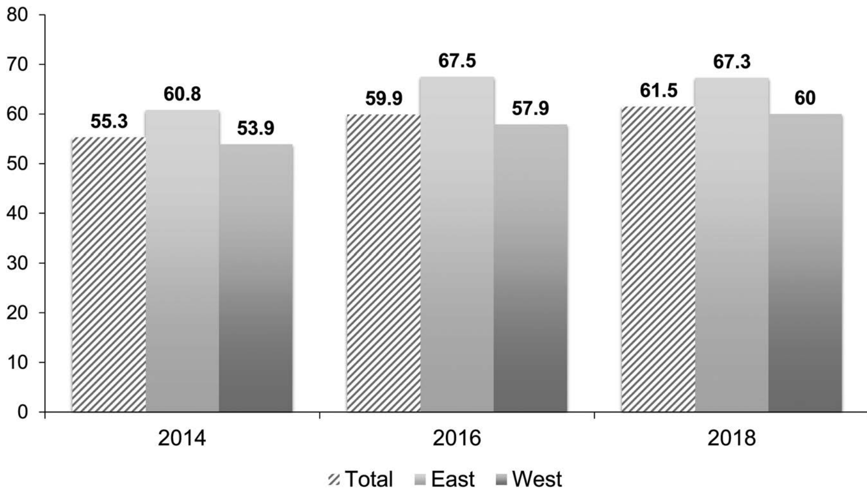


*Figure 2.23* Devaluation of asylum seekers: "Most asylum seekers do not really fear persecution in their home country", 2014–2018 (in %)

well-being, and on the other made into lightning rods for people to channel their aggressions (both their own and those arising from other causes). While many respondents expressed the propensity to devalue migrants only latently (see Figure 2.3), with one third being "undecided", this propensity came to the fore in relation to actual groups that are imagined as being weaker. The four-point scale, which forces people to take a position, certainly also contributed to these clear findings. Moreover, the devaluation of these groups shows clearly once again the anti-democratic force of such attitudes, since people claim democratic norms as the privilege of their own group, while wishing to withhold such norms from other groups.

## Acceptance of and propensity for violence

As in 2006 and 2016, we investigated in the 2018 survey how respondents relate to violence as a means of asserting their interests. The questionnaire that we used differentiated between behavioural intention, i.e. people's propensity to use violence themselves, and the acceptance of violence when used by others (Ulbrich-Herrmann 1995). In our last publication, we showed that, although the extreme right-wing mindset had not grown between 2006 and 2016, the propensity to use, and acceptance of, violence had. This was true in particular of extreme right-wing milieus, which became more radical and increasingly deemed the use of violence for their own interests as legitimate (Decker et al. 2016a).

Figures 2.24 and 2.25 show how the attitude to violence developed over the three points in time. In 2018, about one in six respondents (13.9%) stated that they were prepared to use physical violence to assert their own interests.

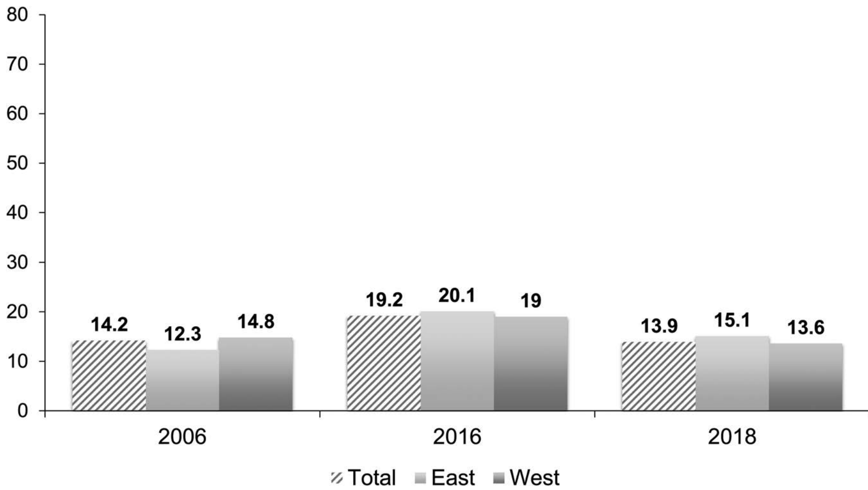


*Figure 2.24* Propensity for violence: "In certain situations, I am quite prepared to use physical violence to assert my interests", 2006, 2016 and 2018 (in %)

Significant decline in West Germany and in Germany as a whole; Pearson's chi-squared test: **P< .01; in East Germany, Pearson's chi-squared test: * p < .05

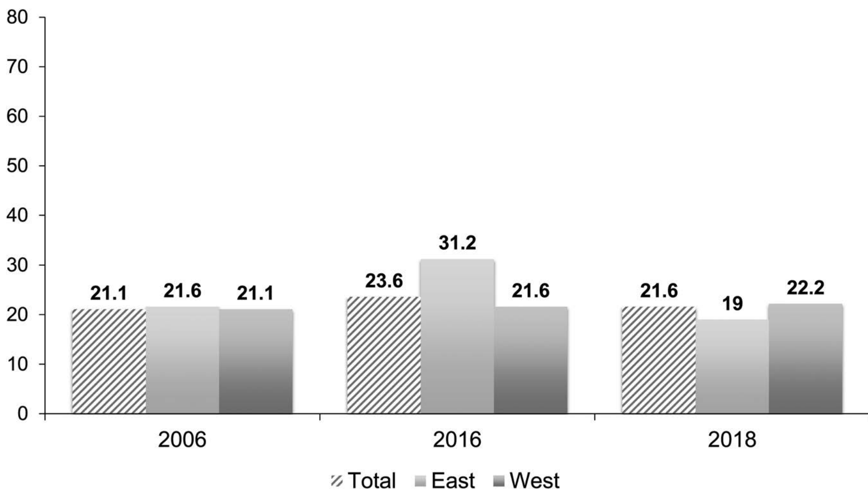


*Figure 2.25* Acceptance of violence: "I would never use violence myself, but it's good that there are people who let their fists do the talking when things can't be solved any other way", 2006, 2016 and 2018 (in %)

Significant decline between 2016 and 2018 in East Germany; Pearson's chi-squared test: p < .01

However, the acceptance of violence when used by others only declined slightly nationwide. This slight decline since 2016 can be seen only in relation to Germany as a whole, but it is composed of contrary developments in the two different parts of the country: the acceptance of violence by others fell significantly in the East (2016: 31.2% *vs*. 2018: 19.0%), whereas it rose slightly in the West (2016: 21.6% *vs*. 2018: 22.2%; Figure 2.24).

## Summary and discussion

Since 2002, we have documented every two years people's advocacy of a dictatorship, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, social Darwinism, and the trivialization of National Socialism as components of an extreme right-wing mindset. In 2018, we conducted for the ninth time a representative survey of extreme right-wing and political attitudes among the German population. In all, 2,516 people throughout Germany were interviewed in their homes by trained interviewers, and 2,416 questionnaires were evaluated.

To conclude this chapter, we wish to summarize and discuss once again the central findings, and then present the in-depth analyses in the chapters that follow (3, 4, and 5). Our summary follows the structure of the chapter, i.e. it begins with the 2018 results, and then moves on to the long-term developments.

*Extreme right-wing attitudes, 2018:*

- Advocacy of a dictatorship: 11.0% of respondents would like a "leader" (*Führer*), 19.4% a "strong single party", and a further 24.0% are not entirely averse to either of these options ("undecided").
- Chauvinism: 36.3% of respondents openly demand "strong nationalist feelings", 33.7% for Germany's interests to be enforced "firmly and energetically", and 24.8% "power and recognition" for Germany. The proportion of "undecided" responses is approximately one third in each case.
- Xenophobia remains the most widespread anti-democratic attitude in Germany, with 35.7% of respondents believing that migrants "abuse the welfare system", a figure that rises to 47.1% among East Germans, and 35.6% (44.6% in the East) fearing that Germany is "losing its identity because of the large number of foreigners". Also high in this dimension is the additional latent agreement, since between 26% and 30% can only answer "undecided" in each case.
- Anti-Semitism is the attitude in Germany that has a particularly high level of latent communication. Nevertheless, around 10% of respondents openly agreed with the anti-Semitic statements presented to them. The real (but hidden) situation can be gauged by the fact that 20% of all answers nationwide are "undecided" (and in the new federal states, about 30%).

- The proportion of manifest agreement in the dimensions of “social Darwinism” and “trivialization of National Socialism” ranges from 8.1% to 11.3%, although the element of latency is significant here, too, with around 20% partially agreeing with each of the two statements.
- Both latent and manifest agreement with the extreme right-wing statements is almost consistently lower in the old federal states than in the new federal states.

*Extreme right-wing attitudes over the time of the studies:*

- The proportion of respondents with a closed extreme right-wing mindset was 6.0% in 2018 (East: 8.5%, West: 5.4%), which represents a slow decline over the time series as a whole, from 9.7% in 2002 (East: 8.1%, West: 11.3%). Until 2008, the proportion of people with such a mindset was higher in the old federal states, but now the situation is reversed. In addition, the figures in the new federal states vary considerably between the survey years.
- There is still considerable agreement with extreme right-wing statements. This is most evident in the dimension of “xenophobia”, which, despite some fluctuations, has now returned to its 2002 level. Closed xenophobia increased between the penultimate and the last survey wave (2016: 20.4% *vs*. 2018: 24.1%), with this increase being more drastic in the new federal states (2016: 22.7% *vs*. 2018: 30.9%).
- We can see a similar development in how people evaluate their own group. While 18.3% of respondents manifestly agreed with chauvinistic statements at the beginning of the survey series in 2002, that figure was 19.0% in 2018, so that here, too, the levels of agreement stagnated at a high level, both in the old and new federal states. As with the dimension of “xenophobia”, the figures rose again slightly between 2016 and 2018 (from 16.7% to 19.0%).
- As for the number of people with a closed anti-Semitic mindset, the time series paints a more positive picture (2002: 9.3% *vs*. 2018: 4.4%), but caution is required (see the presentation of results on latent anti-Semitism above; see also Chapter 5).
- More respondents agreed with the statements trivializing National Socialism in 2018 than in 2016 (2016: 2.1% *vs*. 2018: 2.7%). Overall, though, this figure had fallen slightly since 2002 (4.1%). Nevertheless, the threat to democracy should not be underestimated here (proportion of “undecided” answers).
- The rates of agreement for the dimensions “advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship” and “social Darwinism” fell slightly over the time series, a trend that continued between 2016 and 2018. In the first case, from 7.7% in 2002 to 3.6% in 2018, and in the second from 5.2% in 2002 to 3.2% in 2018.

*Attitude to democracy:*

- “Democracy as an idea” is held in high esteem in Germany (93.3%). In the East, agreement rose further after 2016, and was at 95.2% in 2018, a proportion higher than in the West (92.8%).
- Similarly, large sections of the population are committed to the constitutional democratic order (76.5%), with the proportion of East Germans (79.9%) again being higher than for West Germans (75.6%).
- Only about half the respondents (53.2%) were satisfied with the democracy that they experience in real life, the level of agreement being higher in the old federal states (54.9%) than in the new (46.9%).
- Despite an increase in satisfaction with democratic practice in East Germany, political deprivation is a clear warning signal for representative democracy, since people do not experience representative democracy as something that they can help shape. This subjective perception does not say anything about attempts made or actual opportunities to shape the democratic process, but it does show that there is a rift between people and the institutions of democratic mediation.
- If, however, we consider this level of agreement in the light of actual democratic demands, then it becomes apparent that democracy is understood to mean very different and contradictory things. The demand for equal rights for everybody is questioned by very few people, but where these rights are to apply to *others* as well, then anti-pluralist attitudes prevail: only 47.3% of Germans believe that rights of freedom apply equally and unconditionally to all groups.
- Thus, the more abstract democratic principles are, the more they are welcomed: the idea and constitutional form of democracy, as well as individual rights of freedom, are met with a high level of agreement. But, where matters become concrete, many respondents arrive at a different assessment, are dissatisfied with the democracy that they experience, and have anti-pluralist attitudes. In the reality of democracy, however, the democratic rights of freedom are a stumbling block when they benefit *others*, and are then rejected by a majority.

*Hostility to Muslims, antiziganism, devaluation of asylum seekers:*

- Hostility to Muslims continued to rise, with 44.1% of respondents agreeing with the demand to prohibit Muslims from migrating to Germany, a figure that is once again much higher in the new federal states (50.7%) than in the old (42.2%). Moreover, 55.8% agree with the statement that they “feel like a foreigner” in their own country because of the “many Muslims here” (54.8% in the East, and 56.1% in the West). Both items saw an increase of 10 percentage points since 2014.
- Sinti and Roma are the object of even more aggression than Muslims: 56.0% of respondents “would be opposed to Sinti and Roma” living in

their area, 49.2% want to ban them from town centres, and 60.4% say that this group of people are prone to crime. All three items show that antiziganism is more widespread in the new federal states than in the old, where the underlying level is already very high.

- However, the group that attracts the most hostility are asylum seekers: 79.1% of respondents believe that generosity should not be shown by the state when processing asylum applications, and 61.5% think that most asylum seekers do not fear persecution in their home country. The levels of agreement are 7 to 8 percentage points higher in East Germany than in West.

*Acceptance of, and propensity to use, violence:*

- 13.9% of respondents said in 2018 that they were prepared to use violence, which is significantly less than in 2016. In East Germany, the sharp rise to 20.1% that we measured in 2016 fell to 15.1% in 2018.
- 21.6% of respondents said in 2018 that they accepted the use of violence by others. Since this figure is roughly the same as in 2006, the increase to 23.6% in 2016 can be regarded as a temporary blip. East Germans now accept violence less often than West Germans (East: 19%, West: 22.2%).

### *Outlook*

German society is permeated by extreme right-wing attitudes. This is true of the population in the West, but even more so of those in the East. The high propensity to devalue others is manifestly demonstrable; in addition, a large proportion of respondents do not unequivocally acknowledge the equal position of all people in society ("undecided" answers, or so-called latency). A potential threat to democracy becomes visible in people's ambivalence towards democratic norms (their own rights of freedom, yes; universal rights, no): namely, some of the population can be mobilized for extreme right-wing goals. Hostility to groups that are perceived as foreign or different is manifest or at least latent in both East and West Germany.

The question of what conditions foster democratic, or indeed extreme right-wing, objectives is therefore an issue of real contemporary relevance, and is the focus of the following chapters. In order to identify the social conditions fostering anti-democratic attitudes, we first examine (Chapter 3) the factors influencing right-wing extremism (in particular, authoritarianism and recognition). We then describe (Chapter 4) with the help of a typology the people who are particularly prone to extreme right-wing propaganda, and those who have built up the greatest resilience to authoritarian temptations. Thereafter, we deal (Chapter 5) in detail with anti-Semitism in Germany.

## Notes

1 This publication also describes the cut-off scores and the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Using the survey from 2018, we can replicate the factor structure described there: Cronbach's alpha for the total scale in 2018 is .94, and for the individual dimensions: 1) .77; 2) .81; 3) .89; 4) .90; 5) .77; 6) .81.
2 The term *hostility to Muslims* is taken from Pfahl-Traughber (2012). We no longer use the term *Islamophobia* for several reasons. On the one hand, the questionnaire of the research group "Conditions in Germany" that we adapt contains two anti-Muslim statements, while Islam as a religion is not an issue. The statements reflect resentment towards members of this religious group and not objections to the religion, as the term *Islamophobia* suggests. On the other, the conceptual clarification counteracts the argument repeatedly put forward that *criticism of Islam* as criticism of a religion is stigmatized by the term *Islamophobia*. Criticism of religion is an academic task; and religious freedom in the Enlightenment sense means not least the right to freedom *from* religion. However, our survey does not measure criticism of religion, but resentment (Decker et al. 2012b).
3 We could not include other dimensions in 2018. On the dimensions of homophobia and sexism, see the 2016 survey (Decker et al. 2016a).
4 Police crime statistics comprise reported offences that the investigating authorities classify as "politically motivated". The number of unreported cases is therefore higher.
5 A factor analysis confirms the two dimensions of the questionnaire. Statements 1 (.863) and 4 (.860) relate to a factor (equality), and statements 2 (.727), 3 (.719) and 5 (.616) to a second factor (anti-plurality). The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of the dimension of equality was acceptable ($\alpha = .70$), whereas the internal consistency of the dimension of anti-plurality was only $\alpha = .45$.

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# 3 The Authoritarian Syndrome Today

*Oliver Decker, Julia Schuler, and Elmar Brähler*

There is one thing that Germans can agree on immediately: that democracy is the ideal form of government. In 2018, about 94% of respondents supported the "idea of democracy" (on this and the following results, see Chapter 2). As good as this news is, though, we must temper it for several reasons. Seventy percent of people feel that they have no influence on politics, and almost 60% deem it pointless to be involved politically. It is, therefore, not surprising that only about 50% are satisfied with how democracy is practised in Germany. Thus, many seem to lack the opportunities to participate in representative democracy. This is not a recent development: a deficit in the legitimacy of parliamentary democracy was already identified in the 1970s (Habermas 1973), and the reputation of democratic practice has been further damaged in recent years by the apparent "lack of alternatives" to political decisions (Blühdorn 2013; Crouch 2008).

However, the results of the 2018 survey continue to show that respondents are dissatisfied not only for these reasons; they are also dissatisfied because fundamental rights are granted to *others*, too. While 86% of respondents explicitly agree with the notion that the individual has protective rights, it is also clear that people believe that these rights should not apply equally to everybody: almost 50% of respondents in West Germany, and 57% in East Germany, want to restrict the rights of certain groups. This is alarming, since individual protective rights are among the most important prerequisites of a plural democracy, and recognizing these rights cannot be separated from democracy itself (see Chapter 4). In other words, either fundamental rights apply universally, i.e. to everybody, or they do not guarantee to anybody what is implied by their nomenclature: fundamental protection.

If we look at the situation in greater detail, it becomes clear what many respondents (about half in each case) associate with fundamental democratic rights: they would welcome the restriction of rights along ethnocentric or culturalist lines, e.g. when it comes to banning Sinti and Roma "from town centres". But it is not only apparent foreignness that underlies this devaluation of people: 30% of respondents also demand restrictions on the rights of people who do not work. Both examples also show how irrational and charged with resentment such demands are. In a sense, what shows

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itself here is the inner core of society, the subjectivity of its members, who represent a "paradoxical inner environment" of society (Habermas 1973: 19) when they express hostility and at the same time advocate democracy. Members of society are its product, and at the same time confront society with their own self-will (Adorno 1955: 49). In other words, if this self-will contradicts the basic democratic values of a plural society, then a problem of this society is expressed within it.

It is clear that these negative attitudes threaten democracy. A person who demands her own rights of freedom while at the same time denying the rights of others is sawing at the branch that she is sitting upon, and is therefore behaving irrationally. Devaluing others undermines democratic society, which needs protective rights for the individual to ward off the interventions both of the majority and of state institutions (Buchstein & Jörke 2003). For, democracy must be understood as a process in two senses: as a process to negotiate various interests in the present, but also as an unlimited and potentially illimitable process by which society is democratized (see Buchstein & Jörke 2003). Giving recognition to the other is prerequisite and test for both processes.

This aspiration is directed on the one hand at the democratic society as a demand to ensure the legal and institutional recognition of individuals (see Chapter 4), and on the other at the members of society themselves: "Being or becoming democratic involves self-reflexivity and the openness to revise one's own views in line with new experiences and instructive encounters with others, a willingness to cooperate and broaden one's horizons, as well as respect for other opinions" (Saar 2013: 409–410). In other words, there are not only democratic and undemocratic societies, but also individuals who support democratic or anti-democratic societies.

The seemingly contradictory demands for individual rights of freedom *and* for these rights to be restricted for the "other" emerge from almost identical needs: a person wants to be protected from the majority, while at the same time being able to devalue "others" from within this majority. This shows the contradiction between the ideal of democratic recognition and the reality of competition in the market society. The less regulated the market is, the more its rule results in the devaluation of others. This cannot be rationalized as "exclusive solidarity", since the market selects: "What is unfit is left behind". Human labour is also a commodity in this logic, and people suffer when they themselves are dispensed with (Türcke 2002: 61). But it is only "those who had previously been integrated into the constraints of the collective" that can be "excluded" from the market (62–63). A person's experience of being left behind is all the worse, the more tightly she had been integrated into these market constraints and had integrated them herself (or, in psychological terms, identified with them so that they can no longer be separated from her own will and aspirations). A person's readiness to submit to the authority of the market, and her uncertainty at the degree to which she participates in its power, lead to resentment, which is manifested

in the willingness or even desire to be subjugated to a strong authority, in the emphasis on conventions, and not least in the demand for harsh punishments when these conventions are violated. Authoritarian subjugation, conventionalism, authoritarian aggression, and the propensity to devalue others – these are the core elements of a "potentially fascistic individual" (Adorno et al. 1950: 1; see also Fromm 1936). The recognition of difference is opposed by the idea of a "homogeneous" ethnic population (*Staatsvolk*) (Saar 2013), an idea that excludes people from democratic participation. But this devaluation of others also satisfies individual needs, which can be seen altogether as a desire for control (Fritsche et al. 2017), for a positive identity (Tajfel & Turner 1979), and for self-esteem (Greenberg et al. 1986), or as the narcissistic phantasm of a unified and strong nation (Bohleber 1992; Decker 2015). In any case, they reveal the need that people have to ward off the experience of their own weakness and of being under threat, a need that is well-founded:

> "Today anyone who fails to comply with the economic rules will seldom go under straight away. But the fate of the *déclassé* looms on the horizon. [...] the refusal to play the game arouses suspicions and exposes offenders to the vengeance of society even though they may not yet be reduced to going hungry and sleeping under bridges." (Adorno 1955: 48).

In this chapter, we will therefore first describe the distribution and characteristics of authoritarianism. We will then identify how this syndrome is manifested, which means using the last dataset to form authoritarian types of people and to contrast them with democratic types.

## Elements of the authoritarian syndrome and how they are distributed

As in earlier survey waves, we also used a questionnaire on authoritarianism in 2018 (Beierlein et al. 2014, abbreviated version), which enabled us to describe the characteristics of the authoritarian syndrome along the three core dimensions (Table 3.1). What is noticeable is the very high level of agreement given to the first statement, "Troublemakers should be made very aware that they are unwelcome in society", with two thirds of respondents agreeing explicitly and one in five latently ("partly agree"), which means that only one person in six actually rejects authoritarian aggression. The second statement, "Important decisions in society should be left to its leaders", measures people's authoritarian subservience (Table 3.1). Although the proportion of those who manifestly agree with this statement is lower, more than 50% of the population still partially support such subservience or think that it is good. The third statement gauges the level of conventionalism. Here, more than 70% of respondents are against the questioning of tried and tested practices (39.8%, manifest and 31.1%, latent). These results

*Table 3.1* Agreement or disagreement in the dimensions of authoritarianism, 2018 (in %)

| | *Dimensions of authoritarianism* | *Completely/ mostly disagree* | *Partly agree* | *Mostly/ completely agree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Troublemakers should be made very aware that they are unwelcome in society. (*N* = 2,396) | 14.3 | 21.0 | 64.6 |
| 2 | Important decisions in society should be left to its leaders. (*N* = 2,406) | 43.4 | 33.3 | 23.3 |
| 3 | Tried and tested practices should not be called into question. (*N* = 2,396) | 29.2 | 31.1 | 39.8 |

Scaling: 1 = "completely disagree", 2 = "mostly disagree", 3 = "partly agree", 4 = "mostly agree", 5 = "completely agree"; a factor analysis (Oblim) determined a common factor, all three statements show high factor loadings (statement 1 = .731; statement 2 = .767; statement 3 = .835); Cronbach's alpha = .674.

reveal a risk to democracy, since they show how responsive people are to an authoritarian form of government. Even if the vast majority of people agree with democracy as an abstract idea, this idea itself has little to do with democracy in the sense of equal and pluralistic coexistence.

Figure 3.1 shows that there was a drop overall in the level of manifest agreement ("mostly/completely agree") with the first statement (authoritarian aggression) between 2016 and 2018, although the level of agreement was still very high in 2018 at almost 65%. The drop only occurred in West Germany, though, while in the East there was a slight rise. There is a similar pattern, albeit at a lower overall level, with the second statement (authoritarian subservience): while agreement fell slightly in the West, it increased dramatically in the East. Finally, tried and tested practices were defended even more strongly nationwide in 2018 than in 2016, meaning that conventionalism is now present in about 40% of the population.

A further element of the authoritarian syndrome is the belief that there are foreign "powers" at work, i.e. the propensity to discern conspiracies in the world (Imhoff & Decker 2013). The conspiracy mindset is based on the notion that there are persons or groups in the background that are controlling political and social processes. We are not denying here that some interest groups in society are in a better position to assert their interests than others; and nor that it is often difficult to see through social and political processes or to understand their dynamics. It is not our intention to discredit criticism of opaque structures. Rather, we are gauging here a *mindset* (Graumann & Moscovici 1987), one that sees in the world planned and coordinated action by groups that act mostly in bad faith, and in any case stealthily and secretly. Such a mindset does not criticize structural

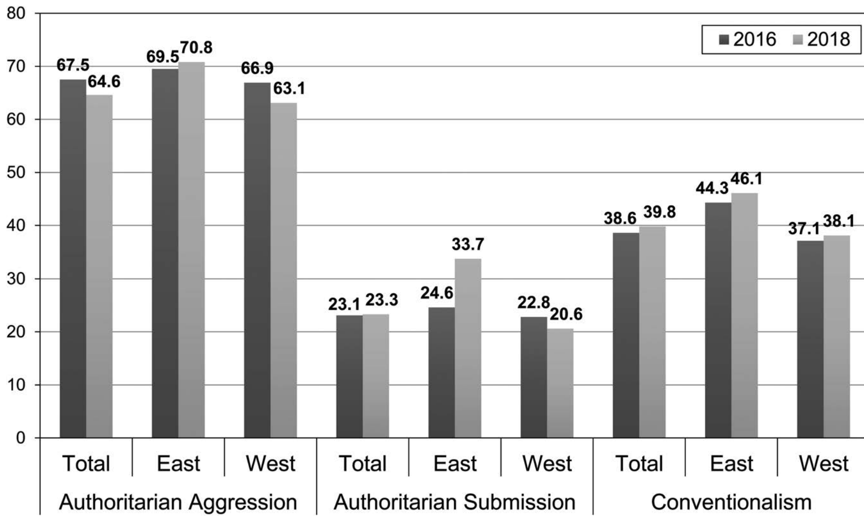


*Figure 3.1* Agreement with authoritarianism in Germany as a whole, and in an East-West comparison (in %)

2018: significant differences between East and West; Pearson's chi-squared test: $p < .01$

conditions or social interests, but rather identifies threatening and overpowering persons or groups that control society down to the smallest units, and that, once identified, can be fought against. While this mindset helps people to have a sense of control over their own lives, it also allows them to satisfy authoritarian aggression.

Table 3.2 shows how the conspiracy mindset is distributed. A majority of respondents reject the statements on "secret organizations" and "secret

*Table 3.2* Agreement with the conspiracy mindset (in %)

| | | *Disagree (1–3)* | *(4)* | *Agree (5–7)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Most people do not realize how far our lives are determined by conspiracies that are concocted in secret. (*N* = 2,405) | 57.9 | 20.7 | 21.3 |
| 2 | There are secret organizations that have a great influence on political decisions. (*N* = 2,401) | 51.2 | 19.8 | 29.0 |
| 3 | Politicians and other leading figures are only puppets of the powers behind them. (*N* = 2,392) | 48.2 | 21.0 | 30.8 |

Scaling from 1 = "completely disagree" to 7 = "completely agree"; no semantic classification in the intermediate stages; a factor analysis (Oblim) determined a common factor, all three statements show high factor loadings (statement 1 = .867; statement 2 = .928; statement 3 = .892); Cronbach's alpha = .877.

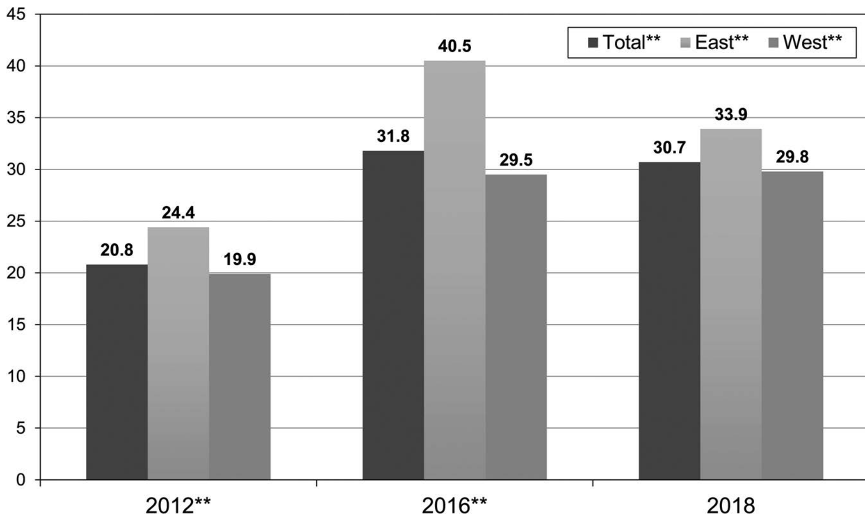


*Figure 3.2* Manifest conspiracy mindset, 2012, 2016, and 2018, with three items summarized (in %)

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01 (East/West differences are given/stated in the year, and differences between the years in the legend; case number at the given place and Chapter 2)

conspiracies", but more than half do not deem the idea that politicians are "puppets" to be false.

Figure 3.2 shows the proportion of people who reach a value greater than 12 (i.e. average agreement across all three statements). The proportion of respondents across the country who agree manifestly did not change significantly between 2016 and 2018, with 30.7% of respondents still revealing a conspiracy mindset in 2018. Worth noting, however, is the decline in East Germany between 2016 and 2018 (from 40.5% to 33.9%).

Besides the usual three dimensions of authoritarianism and the conspiracy mindset, we have also used three statements from the authoritarianism scale developed by Detlef Oesterreich (Oesterreich 1998), who formulated his questionnaire to gauge authoritarian personality traits in interpersonal contacts (Table 3.3). We selected which statements to use according to whether they featured recognition of and openness to the interests of others, since we were concerned with empirically investigating the preconditions for plural democracies outlined above. By assessing people's willingness to take their own stance against a majority, we also wanted to gauge their capacity to behave autonomously with regard to a majority (statement 3). Our aim was to bring authoritarian and democratic personality traits into the analysis. The first two statements show that difference is accepted by part of the population, but not by the majority, with a large proportion either rejecting the two statements or placing caveats on them.

*Table 3.3* Agreement with statements in the dimension of "openness and autonomy" (in %)

| | | *Completely disagree* | *Undecided* | *Completely agree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I enjoy dealing with unfamiliar ideas. ($N = 2{,}410$) | 39.9 | 30.0 | 30.8 |
| 2 | I like spontaneous people, even if they're somewhat unpredictable. ($N = 2{,}407$) | 23.3 | 32.7 | 44.0 |
| 3 | I take my own stance in discussions, even if it differs from the majority opinion. ($N = 2{,}413$) | 13.8 | 23.9 | 62.4 |

Unlike Oesterreich, we chose a simple five-step Likert scale (1 = "completely disagree", 5 = "completely agree"). A factor analysis yielded a single factor, all three statements show high factor loadings 1 (.737), 2 (.802), and 3 (.676); the internal consistency is satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha = .613). We use in the following a dimension from statements 1 and 2 as a measure of openness; they both load on a common factor (.926) and gauge the recognition of difference (Cronbach's alpha = .636).

In contrast, two thirds claim that they can take their own stance against a majority, although the effect of what is socially desirable undoubtedly played a role in yielding this high figure.

We then created an index value that combines statements 1 and 2 into the dimension of "openness" (Table 3.4). This shows that only about 25% of the population are open to unfamiliar ideas and give recognition to difference; more than half are partially open; and about 21% are not open at all (these figures are not depicted).

Table 3.5 presents selected correlations between sociodemographic characteristics (e.g. place of residence, age, education) and elements of the authoritarian syndrome. We can see that almost one in four East Germans and one in five West Germans describe themselves as closed. Authoritarian aggression is particularly strong in East Germany (at 70.8%), but authoritarian subservience and the emphasis on conventions are also much more widespread in the East. The factor of age is also significant, since there are clear differences across all elements of the syndrome: the older people are, the higher the proportion of those who are authoritarian.

*Table 3.4* "Openness to others and difference" in Germany (in %)

| | |
|---|---|
| Openness ($N = 583$) | 24.3 |
| Limited openness ($N = 1{,}325$) | 55.1 |
| Closedness ($N = 498$) | 20.6 |

Values from 2 (disagreement) to 10 (agreement). Openness: >= 8, medium openness: 5–7, Closedness: <= 4.

*Table 3.5* Elements of the authoritarian syndrome, sociodemographic characteristics, and political self-assessment (in %)

| | *Authoritarian aggression* | *Subservience* | *Conventionalism* | *Conspiracy mindset* | *Closedness* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ** | ** | ** | | * |
| East (N = 492) | 70.8 | 33.7 | 46.2 | 33.9 | 23.7 |
| West (N = 2,196) | 63.1 | 20.6 | 38.1 | 29.8 | 19.8 |
| Age groups | ** | ** | ** | | ** |
| 14–30 (N = 478) | 56.3 | 20.1 | 29.4 | 28.8 | 14.3 |
| 31–60 (N = 1,298) | 65.5 | 21.8 | 38.1 | 31.5 | 18.1 |
| 61 and older (N = 637) | 69.2 | 28.8 | 51.0 | 30.3 | 30.7 |
| Own financial situation | | | * | ** | ** |
| Good, so-so | 65.0 | 23.8 | 40.6 | 28.7 | 19.6 |
| Bad | 62.4 | 19.9 | 33.8 | 45.0 | 27.9 |
| National financial situation | | ** | | ** | ** |
| Good, so-so | 64.7 | 34.1 | 39.6 | 28.7 | 19.7 |
| Bad | 64.3 | 22.2 | 41.0 | 49.1 | 29.6 |
| Level of formal education | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** |
| No A-levels (N = 1,915) | 68.2 | 25.8 | 43.6 | 32.2 | 23.5 |
| A-levels (N = 493) | 50.5 | 13.4 | 25.1 | 24.9 | 9.2 |
| Political self-assessment | ** | ** | ** | ** | ** |
| Far left (N = 50) | 48.0 | 16.0 | 32.0 | 34.0 | 20.0 |
| Left (N = 766) | 59.2 | 22.5 | 32.6 | 26.9 | 16.8 |
| Centre (N = 1,037) | 63.9 | 19.7 | 38.3 | 28.0 | 19.4 |
| Right (N = 486) | 75.7 | 31.5 | 53.6 | 40.8 | 26.6 |
| Far right (N = 20) | 80.0 | 35.0 | 40.0 | 52.6 | 45.0 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01.

We cannot ignore the fact that authoritarian aggression is very common across all sociodemographic characteristics. Conventionalism and the conspiracy mindset are consistently present in at least one third of people. Half the respondents with A-levels show authoritarian aggression, and a quarter also emphasize conventions or are prone to a conspiracy mindset; it is only authoritarian subservience that is low among this group, while openness towards others is widespread. Not surprisingly, then, a higher level of education at least partly counteracts the tendency towards authoritarianism. Having a negative view of the national financial situation leads to a much

more conspiratorial mindset, a lack of openness, and the desire for a strong authority to provide orientation in life. This is not the case for those who have a negative view of their own financial situation. It is noticeable that those who have a positive view of their own financial situation are much more likely to emphasize conventions.

We also asked respondents to assess their politics on a scale from "far left" to "far right". As expected, authoritarian aggression, conventionalism, and the conspiracy mindset are present regardless of political orientation. However, authoritarian subservience is very rare among those who position themselves on the political left, whereas the traits of the authoritarian syndrome are particularly strong among those who position themselves on the political right or far right. It is only the emphasis on conventions that does not increase linearly when it comes to the "far-right" group. Although people on the far left are often a little more closed than those on the left and in the centre, these three groups differ little from each other. The difference becomes clearer when we look to the right of the centre: those on the right or the far right are more often closed to other people and to their "unpredictability" and "ideas". Thus, we should emphasize once again that the authoritarian syndrome can express itself independently of concrete political ideas and therefore illustrates the anti-democratic potential that exists across society as a whole.

In the following, we examine the correlations between elements of the authoritarian syndrome and various factors in the authoritarian dynamic, beginning with how respondents remember their upbringing. The individual adopts social norms in the process of socialization and upbringing, this applying equally to authoritarian and democratic tendencies. Early work on the authoritarian character surmised that authoritarian structures in the family are responsible for inculcating these norms (Fromm 1936), an idea that more recent studies have adopted (Hopf & Hopf 1997; Oesterreich 2000). However, reference was also made in as early as the 1960s to changes in social conditions, which shifted socialization away from the family and to social entities instead (Marcuse 1963) – for example, to peer groups for young people (Friedrichs & Sander 2010), but also to more abstract entities that have an effect on a person's entire lifespan and that impart authoritarian statehood, such as the media (Decker & Türcke 2018) and bureaucracy (Adorno 1953). It was for this reason that we surveyed how respondents remember their upbringing in three dimensions: memories of emotional closeness, which indicate a style of parenting based on recognition ("Did your parents comfort you when you were sad?"); memories of harsh punishments, which indicate a style of parenting that is authoritarian ("Did your parents punish you harshly, even for minor things?"); and memories of excessive demands, which indicate a style of parenting geared towards norms of social achievement ("Did your parents try to drive you to be 'the best'?"). (All questions from Schumacher et al. 2000). We also used the three spheres of recognition outlined by Honneth (1992; for a theoretical

*Table 3.6* Elements of the authoritarian syndrome and upbringing (in %)

| | *Authoritarian aggression* | *Subservience* | *Conventionalism* | *Conspiracy mindset* | *Closedness* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Harsh parental punishments | | | | ** | ** |
| Yes, often/ always ($N = 226$) | 67.7 | 23.2 | 42.1 | 40.5 | 38.4 |
| No/occasionally ($N = 2{,}165$) | 64.2 | 23.3 | 39.5 | 29.6 | 18.7 |
| Excessive parental demands | | | * | | ** |
| Yes, often/ always ($N = 567$) | 66.3 | 23.3 | 41.4 | 33.3 | 21.7 |
| No/occasionally ($N = 1{,}805$) | 64.1 | 23.2 | 34.6 | 29.8 | 17.1 |
| Emotional closeness to parents | * | * | | | ** |
| Yes, often/ always ($N = 1{,}432$) | 66.3 | 21.7 | 40.1 | 29.2 | 16.4 |
| No/occasionally ($N = 976$) | 61.9 | 25.6 | 39.1 | 32.7 | 26.9 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

justification, see Chapter 1; for a test-statistical description, see Chapter 4): recognition as a citizen, as a person, and as a working human being.

People who as children experienced harsh punishments and little emotional closeness from their parents are more likely to display an authoritarian syndrome in adulthood (Table 3.6), although there are significant differences in only two areas: those who remember harsh punishments emphasize conventions more strongly and are more closed to other people; and those whose parents made excessive demands of them are much more likely as adults to be closed to others and more strongly bound by conventions, with the conspiracy mindset being slightly but not significantly more prevalent among this group (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 also yields a surprising result, since those who experienced emotional closeness to their parents tend towards authoritarian aggression, i.e. are more likely to demand sanctions against deviant groups. However, this value is an exception in an otherwise consistent picture, with the other elements of the authoritarian syndrome being weaker in this group: people who had a loving upbringing are more open to difference and less willing to submit to authority. Thus, it seems to be precisely the dimension of "openness"

*Table 3.7* Elements of the authoritarian syndrome and recognition (in %)

| | *Authoritarian aggression* | *Subservience* | *Conventionalism* | *Conspiracy mindset* | *Closedness* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Recognition as a citizen | ** | | | ** | ** |
| No recognition as a citizen ($N = 557$) | 74.9 | 25.8 | 42.3 | 48.7 | 28.6 |
| Recognition as a citizen ($N = 1,837$) | 61.5 | 22.6 | 39.0 | 25.2 | 18.2 |
| Recognition as a working human being | | | ** | | ** |
| No recognition as a working human being ($N = 172$) | 61.8 | 27.3 | 50.6 | 33.1 | 50.3 |
| Recognition as a working human being ($N = 2,231$) | 64.9 | 23.0 | 38.9 | 30.5 | 18.4 |
| Recognition as a person | * | | | | ** |
| No recognition as a person ($N = 81$) | 53.3 | 25.9 | 42.5 | 35.1 | 46.9 |
| Recognition as a person ($N = 2,325$) | 65.0 | 23.2 | 39.7 | 30.5 | 19.7 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: $^{**}p < .01$, $^{*}p < .05$.

that is strongly correlated with style of parenting: the more emotional recognition from parents, the more open the child is (and later the adult); the more demands or harsh punishments, the less open.

One claim that we make is that the authoritarian syndrome is also influenced by a person's later, i.e. lifelong, authoritarian or democratic socialization, which means that it is important for a person to experience recognition not only in childhood (few harsh punishments, much emotional closeness), but also in adulthood (Table 3.7).

The findings are unequivocal: an authoritarian syndrome is much more frequent among people who experience no recognition as a citizen, which supports our claim that lifelong social dynamics have an effect on whether the authoritarian syndrome emerges. Subservience and conventionalism are no longer significant, but they are nonetheless stronger among this group. Experiencing no recognition as a citizen is also accompanied much more often by a conspiracy mindset and closedness, while recognition as a person

and as a working human being increases a person's capacity for respecting difference, with those who experience recognition in these spheres being more open to other people and more accepting of difference.

Interestingly, two phenomena that already occurred in connection with parental upbringing occur once again here. If parental recognition was associated with a higher level of authoritarian aggression, then recognition as a person (i.e. by other people who are important) is more often associated with a propensity for authoritarian aggression. And, like parental demands to achieve, not having recognition as a working human being is more often accompanied by conventionalism. Those who do not experience recognition in their working life are also more likely to believe that there are powerful groups secretly controlling society.

## Democratic, ambivalent, and authoritarian syndromes

The state of democracy is evident not only when support for democratic (or, conversely, extreme right-wing) positions is surveyed explicitly, but also where the focus seems at first to be on something else: namely, on the capacity to accept difference and diversity. This capacity does not seem at first to have anything to do with how people assess themselves politically or with their support for a democratic party, but the idea that it does was something already pointed out by one of the first investigations into attitudes: namely, Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse's *Studies on Authority and Family*. This may not have been as methodologically mature as today's surveys, but this milestone in empirical social research (Fahrenberg & Steiner 2004) took an interesting approach to social dynamics. Using psychoanalysis to investigate the interior of society, the authors found a social dynamic that led to the emergence of an authoritarian personality structure in the individual. These early studies on authority and family showed that the authoritarian tendency is not, or is only loosely, linked to politically left-wing or right-wing ideas. Indeed, progressive political goals can exist alongside regressive psychological needs in the same person at the same time. But, where authoritarian aggression, authoritarian subservience, and conventionalism exist in a respondent, we do not speak in terms of an authoritarian character or an authoritarian personality, but of an *authoritarian syndrome* (see Chapter 1). This is not to reject the basic tenets of critical theory and psychoanalysis, but is due to the difficulty of adequately developing the concept of personality in a way that follows current psychoanalytical debates.

In order to identify the manifestations of authoritarian and democratic syndromes in the population, we have calculated a cluster analysis (*k*-means clustering). Cluster analyses are generally used to search for patterns in a dataset, and are employed in social research to describe people who are particularly similar to each other and easily distinguishable from other respondents in terms of certain characteristics. The procedure is similar

*Table 3.8* Political syndromes in the population (proportion in %)

| | *Political syndromes* | *Proportion* |
|---|---|---|
| I | The democrats | |
| I.1 | The conservatives | 14.0 |
| I.2 | The performers | 14.8 |
| II | The ambivalents | |
| II.1 | The adapted | 9.6 |
| II.2 | The borderless young | 7.7 |
| II.3 | The stability-oriented | 10.9 |
| III | The authoritarians | |
| III.1 | The subservient | 5.2 |
| III.2 | The new-right functional elite | 12.9 |
| III.3 | The paranoid conformists | 14.7 |
| III.4 | The closed conventionalists | 9.2 |

to the description of political milieus that we undertook in our 2016 study (Decker & Brähler 2016). This time, though, we focused not on the political climate, but on aspects of personality, with our search being for similarities and differences in terms of openness and autonomy (see Table 3.3), the conspiracy mindset (see Table 3.2), and authoritarian aggression, authoritarian subservience and conventionalism (see Table 3.1). In doing so, we found a total of two types (or syndromes) with a democratic tendency, three that are susceptible to authoritarian escapism, and four strongly authoritarian types (Table 3.8; for results of the cluster analysis, see Table 3.9).

*Table 3.9* Results of the cluster calculation (active variables; mean values)

| | *Syndrome* | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *I.1* | *I.2* | *II.2* | *II.2* | *II.3* | *III.1* | *III.2* | *III.3* | *III.4* |
| Openness and autonomy | 9.07 | 12.22 | 5.90 | 12.01 | 9.09 | 5.31 | 12.64 | 9.63 | 8.74 |
| Belief in internal control | 8.71 | 9.09 | 7.85 | 6.96 | 5.82 | 5.03 | 8.82 | 8.73 | 7.98 |
| Belief in external control | 3.75 | 3.71 | 4.31 | 6.94 | 5.46 | 6.94 | 4.84 | 4.03 | 7.31 |
| Conspiracy mindset | 1.86 | 2.01 | 2.91 | 4.48 | 2.96 | 3.62 | 4.15 | 4.63 | 4.02 |
| Authoritarian aggression | 3.42 | 3.51 | 3.56 | 3.36 | 3.56 | 4.07 | 4.43 | 4.31 | 4.25 |
| Authoritarian subservience | 2.20 | 2.20 | 2.61 | 2.14 | 2.57 | 3.18 | 3.29 | 2.91 | 3.37 |
| Conventionalism | 2.76 | 2.63 | 3.25 | 2.40 | 3.01 | 3.61 | 3.70 | 3.49 | 3.59 |

The names for the syndromes are the result of an interpretative process or montage (Decker 2018), based on questionnaires where respondents describe their personality, their essential values, and their political orientation. Personality includes on the one hand a person's assessment of who has control over her own life (belief in internal or external control; Kovaleva et al. 2014), and on the other the six dimensions from the Gießen test (social resonance, dominance, control, underlying mood, permeability, and social potency). Using this psychoanalytical personality test, respondents described themselves in their interactions with other people (Beckmann et al. 2012), and we then related this description of personality to the parental style of upbringing that respondents remember (see Table 3.6; Schumacher et al. 2000) and to the spheres of recognition (see Chapter 4).

We also used a questionnaire to gauge respondents' essential values (Boer 2014), since, even if people share the same values in principle, it is initially unclear which values the individual particularly esteems. Values can be individual objectives or express a preference for social norms, and both have been recorded here. Finally, we drew on the Leipzig Questionnaire on Right-Wing Extremism to describe a person's political outlook (Decker et al. 2013), and expanded the questionnaire in two ways. First, to include questions on the acceptance of democracy, support for norms of equality, and anti-pluralism; on political self-assessment, and the propensity to use and acceptance of violence; and on antiziganism, hostility to Muslims, and the devaluation of asylum seekers (see Chapter 2). And, second, to include a questionnaire on anti-Semitism in communication latency (see Chapter 5). All this information was supplemented by where a person locates herself on the left-right political scale and by her preference for a particular political party.

We based our interpretation on the results for each syndrome, either on the mean values and the distribution in the syndrome, or on the percentages of agreement. Reference point for the interpretation was in each case the total mean value or the strength of the characteristic in comparison to other syndromes. In the following, we will present the democratic, ambivalent, and authoritarian syndromes separately.[1]

### *I. The democrats*

Two types can be regarded as strong pillars of democracy, and they account for 28.2% of the population. Men and women are represented equally, but there are more West Germans and fewer East Germans than in the distribution across Germany as a whole. Democrats have a disproportionately high level of education (33.3% with A-levels), and have very seldom been unemployed. Younger people up to the age of 30 are comparatively numerous among democrats.

*I.1 The conservatives* ($N = 312$, 14%; 47.4% men, 52.6% women; 18.5% East Germans, 81.5% West Germans): *Senior and qualified employees, upper-grade*

*civil servants; rarely blue-collar workers; hardly any self-employed people. Above-average positive evaluation of the country's and their own economic situation in the present and the future.*

While conservatives do not perceive themselves as closed, they are also not marked by any particular openness towards other people, and they do not search for experiences of difference. They see the effect that they have on their social environment as consistently positive; they receive a great deal of resonance from their fellow human beings, and are able to pursue their interests in life. They know how to make use of the opportunities available to them. Although they claim that they can take a stance that differs from the majority opinion, they are in fact quite willing to adapt. They have a certain tendency to subordinate themselves, which is also expressed in their ability to control their impulses. This makes them appear less dominant, but very controlled. In terms of their personality, they tend towards order and show little inclination for uninhibited behaviour. They are the most compulsive of all the types. Their mood is balanced, and they are self-confident, have a low level of anxiety, and can also express their dissatisfaction. They also know how to build close relationships with other people, to articulate their wishes openly, and to face the world with an underlying feeling of trust. Conservatives did not experience excessive parental demands or violence in their childhood, and as adults they are sure of gaining recognition in their private and working lives, and in their interaction with state institutions.

Their values are independent thinking and creativity, as well as the appreciation of people and nature. Although social prestige and personal success are important to them, they are less important than they are to other people, which is also true of sensuous pleasure and the appeal of the new. Their values are geared towards tolerance and the well-being of others. Complying with social norms and expectations is important to them, as is the stability and well-being of society. They belong to those people who demand the acceptance of traditions, customs and religions.

Conservatives find their political home mainly in the CDU (Christian Democratic Union); no other type vote so often for this party. In contrast, the AfD (Alternative for Germany) is certainly not an option for them, and they would instead tend to vote for the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany), the Greens or the Left. They locate themselves in the political centre. Conservatives do not comprise people with manifestly extreme right-wing attitudes. And, even if they are not averse to devaluing outgroups, their prejudices are clearly weaker than is the case with other people. Conservatives oppose authoritarian subservience and conventionalism. They occasionally display authoritarian aggression, but to a much lesser extent than the rest of the population. This is also the type that tends least towards the conspiracy mindset, and conservatives are not receptive to authoritarian relations.

*I.2 The performers* (*N* = 358, 14.8%; 48.6% men, 51.4% women; 14.8% East Germans, 85.2% West Germans): *Self-employed, independent professions,*

*senior and qualified employees, middle-, upper- and higher-grade civil servants; fewer blue-collar workers. Extremely positive evaluation of the country's and their own economic situation; expectation that the country's economic situation will remain as it is, and that their own situation will improve.*

Performers describe themselves as being very open, and they do not avoid experiences of difference. At the same time, they are also willing to express their opinion in an environment that is predominantly different. They lead their lives in a very self-determined way and believe that they hold their destiny in their own hands. Performers describe themselves as being highly respected and popular. They are well received and very rarely experience frustration. No other type manages has so much resonance in social contacts. Performers are hardly ever caught up in conflicts, and internal psychological conflicts do not result in impulsive reactions; on the contrary, performers describe themselves as patient. Hence, they also see themselves as being very conscientious or even perfectionists. They are the most self-controlled of all the syndromes, with this feature being accompanied, though, by a lack of exuberance. This does not affect the autonomy of performers, who are very sure of themselves and value their independence. They are not familiar with a subdued mood or with anxiety. This also relates to their willingness to compete, which in turn underscores their self-confidence. It is not surprising that performers hardly ever remember harsh parental punishments, but instead an emotionally loving upbringing in which social norms of achievement were not passed on in a manner that they found excessive. As adults, they find recognition in all areas: hardly any experience no recognition as a person, almost all report a high level of recognition as a working human being, and as citizens they feel just as much recognition as conservatives.

Very important to performers, however, is the gratification of their desires, and social status, personal success and an exciting life are also more important to them than to conservatives. Especially important for them are independent thinking, creativity, and the courage to embrace the new. Universal and humanistic values are important to them, and they avoid breaking with social expectations and norms. Similar to conservatives, they have a high level of acceptance when it comes to traditions and customs. They place a very high value on stability in society and in personal relationships.

Politically, performers position themselves further to the left than all the other types, although they do not vote for the Left (*die Linke*) any more than the population as a whole. Instead, they often vote for the Greens, but the FDP (Free Democratic Party) also has more supporters among this type than it does among the other types. Performers are completely opposed to extreme right-wing attitudes, and they display hardly any prejudices to specific out-groups. They give the strongest support to egalitarian norms, which, as with conservatives, is accompanied by a strong pluralism. Moreover, no other type reject violence to assert their own interests as

vehemently as performers. They identify very much with democratic ideas of society.

### *II. The ambivalents*

Three types cannot be assigned clearly to either the democrats or the authoritarian syndrome, with the ambivalents accounting for 28.2% of the population. With them, it is open as to whether they support plural democracy and how susceptible they are to escaping into authoritarianism. The proportion of East Germans (18.9%) and West Germans (81.1%) in this category is about the same as in the population as a whole. Women are overrepresented (57.2%) and the level of educational attainment is lower than among democrats (17.8% with A-levels or higher). Half have already been unemployed at some point, and about a third more than twice in their lives. The middle age group is somewhat underrepresented among this group, while young and older people are represented somewhat more frequently.

*II.1 The adapted* (*N* = 227, 9.6%; 41.9% men, 58.1% women; 21.1% East Germans, 78.9% West Germans): *Blue-collar workers shaped by social democracy and low-level employees; represented equally in East and West Germany. Majority assess the country's and their own economic situation as being good, and do not expect fundamental changes in either case.*

The adapted are characterized by a very high level of closedness. They avoid experiences of difference, i.e. with unknown people and unfamiliar ideas. Where the majority opinion differs, the adapted would rather remain silent than defend their opinions with confidence. Whether their own lives are shaped by external influences or by their own achievements is a question that they do not deem relevant. However, they are more likely than other types to reject authoritarian aggression, inconspicuous with regard to authoritarian subservience, but emphasize conventions. They tend not to have a conspiracy mindset, which reveals a positive side to the lack of imagination that prevails as a personality trait in this type.

The adapted experience little resonance in interpersonal contact and contact with people at work, but also hardly any frustration, which can be explained by their relatively low inclination to compete and to set their own creative goals. Their tendency to appear dominant with regard to others is a sign not of self-confidence or of having their own goals, but instead of their underlying mood: they lack self-reflection and self-awareness, e.g. of feelings or wishes. That this makes them appear rather closed to others is something of which the adapted are aware, which reveals a factor of doubt or shame that can derive from an early phase of life. The adapted experienced less emotional warmth as children, and more harsh parental punishments, which may have led to less autonomous and more distrustful and contact-avoiding behaviour in personal contact with others. Hence, the adapted are rarely high-spirited and tend instead to be compulsive. They also tend to be inconspicuous in terms of their sociability, being neither particularly sociable nor

especially inhibited. They are given an average level of recognition as citizens, as working people, and as private individuals.

The adapted are also unremarkable in terms of the values that they deem important in life. They say that they find universal values relevant, but not personal success, social power, or prosperity. Nor do they attach much importance to having an exciting life, and simply want to be able to enjoy life as it is. More important to them, however, is conformity and the curbing of behaviour that could disturb others or break with social conventions. What is noticeable is their strong desire for security, both in their own personal relationships and in relation to society as a whole.

These personality traits are reflected in their socio-political attitudes. For example, the adapted have neither a high propensity for violence, and nor do they advocate the use of violence by others. Although the adapted emphasize universal values at a manifest level, they also reject equal rights for everybody more often than most other types. Alongside the subservient, the adapted agree the least with the idea of democracy and the German constitution. The adapted are comparatively seldom manifestly right-wing extremist, but what they do show is anti-Semitism and antiziganism. This is all the more striking because they devalue neither asylum seekers nor Muslims. Besides solidarity with migrants, this group also display traditional prejudices against those whom they deem “foreign”.

The adapted vote most often for the SPD, followed by the CDU and the Left. The FDP and the Greens have the fewest supporters among this group, but the AfD and the NPD also have little appeal for them. Although the adapted do not give right-wing parties a high level of support and do not present themselves as particularly authoritarian, they do locate themselves on the far right of the political spectrum, and are therefore close to the paranoid conformists in terms of how they vote and where they locate themselves politically. Nonetheless, they differ markedly in their rejection of authoritarian aggression and their immunity to the conspiracy mindset.

This type is particularly noticeable in terms of age structure (especially prevalent among persons older than 61, but rare among those between 31 and 60) and level of education (seldom with A-levels). The age structure of this group probably also explains why its members experienced more often than many other types harsh punishments and little emotional warmth in their upbringing. The adapted have found their place in society and are not looking to change the status quo. They do not pose a threat to democracy, but do not give it much support, either.

*II.2 The borderless young* (*N* = 182, 7.7%; 50.5% men, 49.5% women; 18.1% East Germans, 81.9% West Germans): *Borderless young people in the neoliberal, meritocratic society; highest level of educational achievement, self-employed, freelancers, trained employees. Evaluate the country’s economic situation somewhat negatively, and their own definitely negatively, with the same applying to how both will develop in the future.*

The young borderless are unusually contradictory. They are open to new ideas and to spontaneous people, and are very prepared to argue their position against a majority, but nevertheless tend to see themselves as avoiding conflict. They are not particularly concerned with creating a positive impression on their surroundings, while also managing not to give offence: they do not feel that they make either a particularly good or a particularly bad impression on their fellow human beings. Nor do they tend towards authoritarian roles and are even more willing than others to sit back and watch, something that they are helped in by the fact that they have (self-)control without being compulsive. As their avoidance of conflict has already made clear, the borderless form their social relations without aggression, not even in a sense of suppressed aggression. They are much less open than most people, experience others as distant, and hold back their own needs. This shows uncertainty about their own abilities and a somewhat diminished self-confidence. Although they did not experience harsh punishments in their upbringing, what seem to have been present were social norms of achievement. At the same time, they experienced less emotional closeness and comfort from their parents. Similarly, they are given less recognition than other types in their private life and at work. Alongside the closed conventionalists, this group experience the least recognition as citizens in their interaction with authorities and institutions.

Social status and prestige tend to be unimportant to them. What is certain, however, is that they attach great importance to self-determination. Also important are universal and humanistic values. They also emphasize the value of traditions and the importance of avoiding behaviour and impulses that could harm or annoy others, which corresponds to the fact that they mention harmony and stability in society and personal relationships as goals. This type is also concerned with security.

They are in favour of a plural society, and they have the lowest values for the three elements of the authoritarian syndrome (authoritarian aggression, subservience, and conventionalism). However, and here is where the contradiction really becomes visible, this type is strongly susceptible to the conspiracy mindset, and see even their own lives as being shaped essentially by external forces. And, although they uphold the idea of democracy, they are the most dissatisfied with the constitutional norm and reality of democracy in Germany. Their longing for solid ground in a dynamic and confusing world is condensed in their desire for traditions and stable relationships, as well as in their conspiracy mindset. This is probably why they are prepared to use violence to fight for their own interests if necessary; but they are less willing to accept the use of violence by others.

Their rejection of authorities and a conspiracy mindset are accompanied by a polarized pattern of voting. The CDU and the Greens meet with very little approval, while the Left is the party that this group most often vote for, followed by the SPD. Surprisingly, it is this type that also votes disproportionately often for the AfD, with the party having the highest

explicit popularity among members of this type after the SPD and the Left. Also, the second largest group of NPD voters (after the subservient) can be found among this type, and only the new-right functional elite and the closed conventionalists have a similarly high preference for the AfD. Unlike the latter two authoritarian syndromes, though, the majority of this type tend to locate themselves politically to the left of the centre.

This ambiguous picture becomes further complicated on closer inspection. For example, this type believes somewhat more often than other types that an authoritarian dictatorship would better serve the national interest. While this type agrees comparatively little with traditional anti-Semitism, they certainly find anti-Semitism attractive in communication latency; they also trivialize National Socialism somewhat more frequently than others. What should concern us is that this type has relatively often achieved a high level of formal education, and that they are young (people under 30 are overrepresented among this type). It is difficult to predict whether they will pose a threat to democracy in the long run. On the one hand, they tend towards extremism: anti-Semitism, the conspiracy mindset, trivialization of Nazism, propensity for violence, and sometimes preference for extreme right-wing parties. On the other, they reject most strongly authoritarian aggression, authoritarian subservience, and conventionalism. In other words, they are still looking for their niche.

*II.3 The stability-oriented* (*N* = 257, 10.9%; 38.1% men, 61.9% women; 17.5% East Germans, 82.5% West Germans): *Low-level employees and middle- and higher-level civil servants. Mostly assess the country's economic situation positively, but their own economic situation negatively; do not expect changes to either in the future.*

This type shows very little willingness to express their own, different opinion in public or in groups, and their openness to other people is comparatively small. They do not have a resonating effect on their surroundings, but they also do little to present themselves, and indeed are not able to do so well and have little inclination. If the social situation and their role allow it, they can be high-spirited. Their underlying mood fluctuates between irritation and an anxious, more dependent attitude. Although this type describes themselves as neither particularly open nor closed, their greater social mistrust and low openness are stronger than in the other types. Their self-confidence is relatively low, which is shown in their less competitive attitude, but also in their reserve and lack of ideas. But what really marks this type out is their low level of belief in their ability to influence relevant aspects of their lives and their environment through their own actions, holding on instead to tried and tested practices. Their parents brought them up a little more harshly and with less emotional closeness than is the case with other types. They usually feel recognition as citizens and actually always as people. It is only in their working environment that there is a deficit of recognition in comparison to other types.

They tend to prioritize enjoyment and rewarding themselves. They also feel committed to traditions and avoid violating social expectations and norms. They consider the harmony and stability of society and interpersonal relationships to be important values. This corresponds to how they vote, with this type not voting for the Left and rarely for the AfD; indeed, hardly any other type so clearly position themselves in the political centre. However, they also have a tendency to trivialize National Socialism and reveal their anti-Semitism in communication latency, although they devalue Sinti and Roma, Muslims and asylum seekers much less than the population as a whole.

It is all the more surprising, then, that this type should have an increased propensity for violence and do not reject violence when it is used by others. This is probably where the personality trait comes into play that goes hand in hand with the propensity to channel anger externally. This type is the least egalitarian and agree much more often than others with anti-pluralist statements. They are certainly not a threat to democracy, but to what extent they are willing and able to protect democracy is unclear.

### *III. The authoritarians*

The authoritarian syndromes are present in 42% of the population (in 23.9% of the population in the East, which is somewhat higher than the proportion of East Germans in the population as a whole). In contrast, the sexes are represented proportionally (women, 55%). The four authoritarian types are made up of people with little education (only 13.1% with A-levels). The majority have already experienced unemployment (53%), a quarter more than twice (25.9%). Most people with an authoritarian syndrome are aged between 31 and 60 (57.5%), and the fewest are under 30 (15.1%).

*III.1 The subservient* (*N* = 125, 5.2%; 34.1% men, 65.9% women; 27% East Germans, 73% West Germans): *Traditional proletarian milieu, low-level employees, blue-collar workers, no management or employment requiring qualifications, below-average level of education, many more women and East Germans, more experience of unemployment. Negative assessment of the country's and their own economic situation; tend to expect the situation of both to deteriorate in the future.*

The subservient are very closed and strongly reject spontaneous people and those with a different opinion. They would also never express their own dissenting opinion in a group. They do not believe that they can actively shape their lives through their own efforts, but feel instead that their destiny depends on uncontrollable external factors. The subservient receive little positive feedback from their surroundings, and can also find it difficult to gauge the wishes and expectations of others. They are headstrong, and in a complicated way dominating and impatient. Although they cannot be high-spirited, they also lack steadiness and the ability to control themselves. Their underlying mood is often very gloomy and marked by fear, and they

more often tend to react impulsively to the pressure of internal conflict. To compensate for their lack of self-confidence, they enter into relationships of dependency with others. But they do not feel close to these people, either, and can barely feel any affection. They are insecure and inhibited with others, which leaves unfulfilled their need for recognition and confirmation. Undoubtedly related to this is the fact that as children they were often harshly punished by their parents, and were given no comfort or emotional affection. They were also never required or driven to perform better. In short, they report of a neglected childhood marked by parental violence.

It is also striking that in adulthood the subservient experience hardly any recognition as citizens, and rarely any recognition in their social and working environment. They claim that social status is unimportant to them, and they also dismiss ambition. Like the young borderless, however, they also find it difficult to free themselves entirely from the desire for personal success. They express themselves less ambivalently with regard to self-determination, since they set great store by this value. Most important for them, though, is respect for customs and traditions.

In terms of political opinion, the subservient are the type that most strongly reject the idea of democracy, and they are also the most dissatisfied of all the types with constitutional democracy in Germany and how it functions. The desire within the personality structure to enter into supporting and dependent relationships is reflected in the socio-political domain in their desire for authority. Their emphasis on conventions visibly serves to legitimize their authoritarian aggression against those who deviate from the norm and against people who oppose authority. Not surprisingly, the conspiracy mindset is also very prevalent, with the subservient seeing dark forces at work that secretly control the world. The manifestly extreme right-wing mindset is most common among this type. They reject "foreigners" and "others", regardless of the group: Jews, Sinti and Roma, asylum seekers, Muslims, and migrants in general. The subservient are also strongly anti-Semitic, which is particularly evident in communication latency. They have a strong propensity for violence and very much support the use of violence by others. They reject equality and diversity in society, and therefore locate themselves to the right or the far right of the political spectrum. They often do not vote; when they do, they sometimes vote for the NPD. They do not vote for the SPD, FDP, or Greens. They support the CDU, AfD, and the Left, but no more or less than the population as a whole. All elements of the authoritarian syndrome are pronounced among the subservient, and they would very much approve of a strong authoritarian leadership instead of a plural democracy.

*III.2 The new-right functional elite* ($N = 312$, 12.9%; 47.4% men, 52.6% women; 22.1% East Germans, 77.9% West Germans): *Self-employed, low-level and trained employees, middle-, upper- and higher-level civil servants, less often blue-collar workers. Largely positive assessment of the country's economic situation and more positive assessment of their own economic*

*situation than the rest of the population; expectations for the future are also more positive, in terms both of their own economic situation and that of the country as a whole.*

The new-right functional elite present themselves as being open. None of them feel that they are unwilling to accept other opinions. They are also always prepared to voice their own opinions against a majority. They feel that others have little influence on them, and are confident that they can influence their lives through their own actions. People from this new-right functional elite tend to feel that others gravitate towards them, and they come out of their shell more often. However, they are anxious not to rub people up the wrong way. They rarely come into situations of conflict and are willing to toe the line. They are very controlled and controlling, with order being very important to them. Members of this type are rarely gloomy; they can show their displeasure and are rarely anxious. One outstanding personality trait is their openness; they are open-minded and can approach others well, which also shows a high degree of self-confidence. They value sociability and are natural, though competitive, in social interaction. They remember from their childhood loving and devoted parents, hardly any harsh punishments, but the strong presence of social norms of achievement – that is, the new-right functional elite were driven by their parents to be better than others. This type receives a great deal of recognition in their work and in their social relationships, and also more recognition as citizens than most ambivalent and authoritarian syndromes. However, they complain more often about the lack of recognition as citizens than is the case with the democratic types, who have a similar occupational embedding and a comparable educational background.

Social status is important to them, but not more important than it is for others, and the same is true of personal success. Much stronger is their hedonistic desire to lead an exciting life and to enjoy it to the full. Self-determination is just as important to them as universal and humanistic goals, and they therefore also agree with egalitarian values. When asked about the rights of actual groups, however, they are clearly anti-pluralistic – they reject an open society more than other people. The new-right functional elite have a very strong desire for security, both in their social relations and in society, and feel excessively committed to traditions.

This type votes especially often for the AfD, but also for the CDU. Some can also identify with the FDP and SPD, but they clearly locate themselves to the right of the political spectrum. Like the subservient, they have a clear tendency towards right-wing extremism. They advocate a right-wing dictatorship, are very nationalistic, xenophobic, and more anti-Semitic than the majority in society. A distinctive feature is also their strong social Darwinism: in line with their achievement ethos, they believe that those who do not work should not enjoy the same rights. This type is the most hostile to asylum seekers. They also devalue Sinti and Roma, as well as Muslims, albeit to a lesser extent. They use communication latency to express their

anti-Semitism. They are more likely to find the statement that "some people find Jews unpleasant" plausible than all the other types. Nevertheless, they have little propensity to engage in violent conflicts themselves, but welcome the use of violence by others.

In short, it is among the new-right functional elite that the authoritarian syndrome is at its strongest. In addition, they also have a particularly strong propensity for the conspiracy mindset. Although they generally support the idea of democracy, people with this syndrome clearly oppose plural societies. The majority of those who expressly advocate a right-wing dictatorship can be found among this type. Since they are well-educated and communicative functionaries in the middle stage of life, the threat that they pose to democracy is all the greater.

*III.3 The paranoid conformists* (*N* = 346, 14.7%; 46% men, 54% women; 22.8% East Germans, 77.2% West Germans): *Low level of education; low-level, middle-level and trained employees; middle and senior civil servants; skilled blue-collar workers. Negative assessment of the country's economic situation, but predominantly positive assessment of their own economic situation; expect hardly any change for the country, but tend to expect their own situation to improve.*

The paranoid conformists are closed to other opinions and reject difference in society. Although they claim that they also voice their opinions against a majority, they also describe themselves as being overlooked and unable to assert themselves. They seem to gain little confirmation of their self-confidence, and instead tend to find themselves in a relationship comprising authoritarian roles. They therefore see themselves as being very compliant, which contradicts their claim that they are autonomous in expressing their opinion. Although they depend on the support of others, they tend to discharge anger or pressure impulsively on those weaker than them. Besides this impulsiveness, they also have over-controlled and compulsive personality traits that contribute to their being hard-working and diligent, but not creative or high-spirited. Nevertheless, they are seldom gloomy or anxious, and tend to be trusting with people that they know. Like the new-right functional elite, they largely escaped harsh parental punishments and were instead given somewhat more emotional affection, but at the same time were strongly exposed to the social demands to achieve. They now feel recognition in social relationships and in the work context, and do not feel any less recognition as citizens than others – also similar to the new-right functional elite.

This type states that social status and prestige are not particularly important to them, and they also tend to attach little importance to personal success. On the other hand, pleasure and fulfillment of desires, but also self-determination, are of great value to them. When asked about the specific rights of individual groups, they respond in a much more anti-pluralistic way than most other people. They feel committed to traditions, and also value the curbing of behaviour that violates social expectations and norms.

They also emphasize the importance of protecting harmony and stability in society.

The conformists consistently locate themselves to the far right of the political spectrum, but usually vote for the SPD in elections. They support the AfD a little more, but give little support to the Greens and FDP. Particularly strong among members of this type are chauvinism and xenophobia. They are especially hostile to asylum seekers, while their hostility to Muslims is below average. On the other hand, their strong anti-Semitism is especially noticeable, particularly in communication latency. It is therefore not surprising that the conspiracy mindset is also extremely prevalent among members of this type – to such an extent, in fact, that we can speak of a paranoid personality trait. Their authoritarian aggression is noticeable: although they vehemently reject the use of violence as a means to push through a political agenda, they do welcome the use of violence by others. Their strong resentment makes them a threat above all to individual groups in society. The impulsiveness of their character makes planned action against others unlikely, and they at least seem to follow the norm of non-violence; but they would be prepared to place severe restrictions on the rights of others, and to use opportunities to release their authoritarian aggression.

*III.4 The closed conventionalists* ($N = 216$, 9.2%; 46.3% men, 53.7% women; 26.4% East Germans, 73.6% West Germans): *Low formal education, low-level blue-collar workers, skilled workers, low- and middle-level employees, but also civil servants at all levels. Predominantly positive assessment of the country's and their own economic situation, with changes for the worse only expected for their own situation.*

The conventionalists are closed to other opinions and ways of life, and do not appreciate the experience of difference. Although they would not hold back their opinion in a group where the majority holds a different opinion, they tend to avoid conflicts. They are very controlled and tend towards compulsiveness. Emotionally, they are particularly inhibited and less able to gauge the needs of others. They find it difficult to deal openly with people. In relationships, they rarely feel interesting or attractive, and tend to be unsociable. Their childhood seems to have been marked by neglect: they have no recollection of emotional warmth, but almost as rarely of demands and control. These experiences have continued into their current lives, albeit in a modified form: although they feel too little recognition as citizens, they do feel at least partial confirmation in their personal and working lives.

It is important to them to achieve success in line with social standards through their own efforts. They are interested not in new stimuli and hedonistic pleasures, but instead in controlling and dominating other people. They are opposed to the plurality of society, which links them to the other authoritarian syndromes; what distinguishes them is their rejection of norms of equality, whereas other authoritarian syndromes claim a kind of exclusive freedom. This type emphasizes the importance of customs and traditions,

as well as the observance of social norms. Particularly important to them are the protection and harmony of society.

The closed conventionalists vote more often than the average, with especially the AfD finding more voters among this type than among the population as a whole. Even more striking is that they state their support for parties that are not currently in the *Bundestag*. This type stands out due to their strong authoritarian attitudes; they demand massive sanctions to be taken against deviations from the norm, have a high propensity for subservience, and only the new-right functional elites insist just as strongly on conventions. They are not averse to conspiracy theories, and also believe more strongly than all the other types that their own lives are shaped by external forces. Extreme right-wing attitudes are particularly prevalent, something that they themselves are aware of, since they very often locate themselves to the right or far right of the political spectrum. Not only is the desire for an authoritarian dictatorship much stronger among this type than it is among others; this type is clearly anti-democratic in the other dimensions of extreme right-wing attitudes, too. Most evident is their hostility to Muslims, whom they reject even more strongly than they do asylum seekers. But they are also hostile to Jews, which they show not only in classic anti-Semitic tropes, but also in communication latency. Their own propensity for violence is not particularly strong, but they do welcome the use of violence by others. People with this syndrome are willing to support authoritarian rule, and reject a plural society and the recognition of others.

## Discussion and summary

To describe the authoritarian syndrome, we supplemented the distribution of the elements of authoritarianism with further data such as the conspiracy mindset. Particularly widespread and powerful among the German population are authoritarian aggression and the propensity to devalue others. In addition, many respondents in all syndromes attach importance to their own norms, and demand that everybody observe them. It is also important to stress this in order to recall the effect that an authoritarian dynamic has on democratic syndromes, too: this shows indirectly that there is still an authoritarian dynamic in society. Such a rigid emphasis on conventions is a symptom of social crisis, suggesting as it does polarization, but also the desire for control and a strong sense of threat. One third of the population satisfy this desire for control through a conspiracy mindset. In contrast, there is currently a low level of openness to difference among a significant proportion of the population, especially in authoritarian syndromes, with 25 to 40% lacking understanding for the interests of others. Although this openness is the basis for a plural society, our analysis shows that it is in fact limited. This shows how strong the need is for an escape into authoritarian security. The susceptibility to authoritarian temptations is great, be they the temptations of right-wing extremism or of other ideologies. Authoritarian

reactions are particularly widespread in the new federal states, and the desire for an authoritarian leadership has clearly become ever more urgent in the East.

In order to account for these authoritarian reactions in a nuanced way, we identified nine political syndromes, which indicate the form in which the authoritarian propensity for subservience and aggression is anchored in society. More than 40% of respondents show a manifest propensity to support an authoritarian system – this is the section of the population with an authoritarian syndrome. In contrast, just under 30% are explicitly democratic and advocate values of plurality and equality, with a further third being undecided. The strength of creating this typology on a test-statistical basis lies in the fact that it allows us to understand various factors and to identify correlations and causes. This procedure makes sense especially because a simple causal correlation between different factors cannot be expected.

Possible causes for the emergence of an authoritarian syndrome in the individual are upbringing and socialization, but also regressive tendencies. We can see how authoritarian and anti-democratic experiences in upbringing and socialization are correlated with personality traits, which in turn correlate with political goals. People who were brought up with violence as children, or who were confronted with great social demands to achieve, tend to develop an authoritarian syndrome in later life. But experiences in adulthood also play a role; social conditions that give recognition to people and are thus democratic have an effect here, with people of the democratic type (the conservatives and the performers) usually experiencing recognition as citizens, while the other types usually do not.

Although people with authoritarian syndromes also often consider their own economic situation to be good, we can see that the two democratic types belong to an upper educational level that also ensures better career positions. With the exception of the new-right functional elite, the authoritarian types mostly consist of people with little education and in subaltern jobs. This finding coincides with the conclusion made by other studies that a resigned and authoritarian social milieu (Vester 2003) is more likely to be found among the former working class (Scheuregger & Spier 2007) or among the victims of modernization (Rippl & Seipel 2018). The latter are affected in the first instance not economically, but rather in the loss of security and the respectability of their class. We can therefore surmise that a *cultural backlash* is inflaming authoritarian syndromes, i.e. the longing for safe times when apparently traditional values and norms provided some kind of orientation. The fact that this escape into authoritarianism is also accompanied by a loss of equality and emancipation is forgotten in the face of the desire for authoritarian subservience.

What distinguishes the "initial conditions" of the new-right functional elites from the two democratic milieus is above all the strong presence in childhood of social norms of achievement. They share these norms not

only with the other authoritarian syndromes, but also with the ambivalent and the borderless, the latter belonging to a layer of young and well-educated people who, despite having managed to achieve respectable professional positions, show great deficits in terms of recognition – economically, in their working life, and as citizens. They internalized the social norm of achievement in their childhood and, although they no longer unreservedly accept this norm, their education and occupation nevertheless indicate that they do fulfil the norm. However, and although the borderless attach great importance to self-determination, they do not feel that they have control over their own lives, which results in a conspiracy mindset and in great dissatisfaction with democracy in Germany. Many even seem to find appealing the idea of an authoritarian dictatorship under such conditions, since it would provide for clear relations. This also matches the findings of a study by the Hans Böckler Foundation: namely, that it is particularly those who feel the effects of globalization (digitization, lack of control over life) who tend towards authoritarian populism (Hilmer et al. 2017: 48).

It is possible that the effects of globalization and digitization will have an effect on the binding power of the abstract authority accepted by the German population up to now: namely, the national economy. Those who have a negative assessment of the economic situation are more likely to want a strong authority. The situation is of course more complicated in the syndromes, but there are similar influences among the authoritarians. We know that almost all Germans seek to identify with the strong German economy as a secondary authoritarianism (Decker 2015), but there still seems to be a "halved authoritarianism", as Wolfgang Menz and Sarah Nies have noted: if the authority of the economy is not questioned either, then it obviously also offers an increase in self-esteem for those who identify with it, since it provides the artificial security that people hope for from authoritarian rule (Menz & Nies, 2019). The fact that people do not gain gratification from their own subservience releases authoritarian aggression against those who seem different or deviant or who do not bear the traces of subservience. And it increases the need for escape into authoritarian security. Whoever offers authoritarianism to these people does not seduce them, but satisfies a need.

## Note

1 We draw here on the criteria that Adorno formulated for a critical typology (Adorno 1950: 749–750).

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# 4 Recognition and Authoritarian Statehood

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## Introduction[1]

Extreme right-wing attitudes are widespread in German society, but what causes them is a matter of debate. People's concerns about their material status are often cited as an explanation: those who are worse off or who fear a decline in their economic status are presumed to have a higher propensity for extreme right-wing slogans and demands. At first glance, this thesis has always had on its side the link between economic and democratic crises: hardly had the unemployment figures risen at the end of the Weimar Republic than voters flocked to the Nationals-Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). But whether the individual was motivated to embrace the fascist movement by her economic situation cannot be proven empirically. This is true also of the most recent rise of a party that has in parts an extreme right-wing agenda, the Alternative for Germany (AfD, see also Chapter 1 in this volume; Falter et al. 1983; Lengfeld 2017; Schröder 2018). Nevertheless, the economic explanation has lost none of its pull to this day. While it is very difficult to discern whether right-wing extremists fear economic decline at an *individual* level (Rippl & Seipel 2018), it has been clear in recent years that extreme right-wing attitudes are fuelled by the subjective perception of a *national* economic crisis (Decker et al. 2013; Rippl & Baier 2005).

There is certainly a pragmatic reason for claiming that the economic decline of the individual (or her fear of such a decline) is the cause of extreme right-wing radicalization: the social issue is a core component of social-democratic, social-liberal, and left-wing politics. To use this issue to counter the threat to democracy is very tempting, but we should think hard as to why the answer to economic inequality is to devalue others, and especially those who are worse off or whose position in society is seen as being even weaker. A more effective solution would surely be solidarity with other disadvantaged people in society, and above all a joint call for resources to be shared more equitably.

Social psychology and sociology have put forward a different explanation for the growth of extreme right-wing attitudes (Asbrock et al. 2012; Fuchs 2003): namely, authoritarianism shapes the perception of crisis

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(Cohrs & Ibler 2009) and conflicts in contacts with people perceived as belonging to *other* groups (Asbrock et al. 2010). Those who are prepared to devalue others (authoritarian aggression), to bow to an authority (authoritarian subservience), and to emphasize rigid rules (conventionalism) also tend to absorb the slogans of the extreme right.

While there is little dispute in the research that authoritarianism plays a role, it is unclear how it emerges. Authoritarianism means that the individual is subjugated to an authoritarian rule, and that she embraces this rule. This propensity to bow to an authority has always been a central component of the notion of the authoritarian character. However, when the theory of authoritarianism was first developed in the early 1930s (Fromm 1936), the focus was still on socialization in the family: the more authoritarian the parental home, the greater the likelihood of the child developing an authoritarian character. Regardless of theoretical perspective, the importance of early experiences are still given emphasis today (Oesterreich 2000), but quite how this works remains open. Are social norms really still conveyed in the parental home through authoritarian subservience? And what is the effect of lifelong socialization? Erich Fromm, who gave the notion of the authoritarian character its foundations in social psychology, already pointed out that, although the authoritarian character is sown in childhood, it requires an authoritarian society to survive in adulthood (Fromm 1936: 147). However, social psychology and sociology have now largely abandoned the psychoanalytical approach to development, and thus also the reconstruction of how the authoritarian dynamic emerges. And there is also some evidence that the effect of upbringing should be redefined, since the media, the strengthening of children's rights, and the expansion of educational institutions have made the parental home more open, meaning that social rules are communicated less and less by parents. Thus, the personality structure with which the grown-up leaves the family must also change (see Chapter 4 in this volume).

The social philosopher Helmut Dubiel described the social character that he observed in the 1980s in the "advanced capitalism" of the Thatcher years as "externally directed" (Dubiel 1986: 264). For him, this character contrasted with the "internally directed character" of the 19th and early 20th century, when the individual adopted the social rules by identifying with the parental authorities, internalizing the norms and roles expected of her, and making them an integral part of her personality. This resulted for adults in the autonomy of the ego, social distancing, and an instrumentalist work ethos. In contrast, the externally directed character faces the pressure to conform, which is conveyed via permanent external control (or *appeal* in today's terms), through the ubiquitous media and through social institutions (Dubiel 1986: 264–265). The factors influencing the externally directed character have developed into important research issues in the social sciences over the past few years, such as with governmentality studies (Bröckling et al. 2000) or criticism of the sensation- and attention-deficit culture (Türcke 2011).

This chapter undertakes an empirical investigation of social institutions: Do they contribute to the authoritarian dynamic? And is it possible to identify the relationship between these institutions and the familial reality?

Society is unimaginable without organization, whether as institution or as process, and this applies not only to the modern period. Organization is the prerequisite for human coexistence. But what conditions turn administration and bureaucracy into what Max Weber called the "legal" and "rational" type of rule? The tying of bureaucracy to rules, the separation of office and person, the impersonality of decisions, and rationality – these are all the civilizational achievements of modern statehood. They strengthen the position of the individual in the social fabric because they ensure that state decisions are transparent and open to scrutiny. Everyone is subject to the same law, even those who apply the law (Weber 1922). But not everything is open to scrutiny of course; and bureaucratic procedures are not that transparent. The administration has always had a double character, for even if the ideal of legal rule were to be achieved, it still remains *rule*. This "organizational violence" characterizes the "horror of the bureaucratized world" (Adorno 1953: 442). However, recent years have seen a crucial development, one whose effect can be understood as authoritarian socialization. This development has been accelerated by the apparently inherent urge on the part of the bureaucracy to expand ("The immanent logic of the economic process is the tendency towards absolute bureaucracy" (Horkheimer 1936/1937: 42)), but also by the increasing transfer of decisions from parliaments to administrative and executive bodies. These have nothing to do with the sensible organization of society, and everything to do with economic interests. While in exile in the US in the 1930s, Max Horkheimer wrote:

> The contradiction between the consciousness of freedom and the *de facto* dependence on the most diverse powers in society is also expressed in the contradictory personality of the modern human. The uncertainty of existence gives rise ultimately to the psychological need for submission to and security in a power with which the person can identify (Horkheimer 1936/1937: 64).

This is clearly less about the fascist state, from which Horkheimer had just fled, and more about modern societies, since they are societies of organization. The fact that this permanent expansion of administration is accompanied by an increasing dismantling of individual rights of protection in the bureaucratized world is no coincidence. Such "organizational violence" (Nadai 2006) can be seen in the effect that liberalized employment conditions have, and in the reforms to the labour market and "Hartz IV", which disenfranchised people who (have to) depend on solidarity. Those who become unemployed lose their protective rights *vis-à-vis* the state, which does not exclude them, but which captures them completely (Decker et al. 2009;

Weißmann 2016). But this shift can also be seen in the way that federal states have tightened police legislation and dismantled civil liberties. We can describe such a dynamic as "authoritarian statehood", even though Nicos Poulantzas, who coined the phrase, meant something slightly different (Poulantzas 1977). As the social psychologist Helmut Dahmer puts it: "The 'insecure' are powerless on all sides in the face of the intangible and abstract conditions in which they are positioned, and their feeling of powerlessness turns into anger" (Dahmer, 2019).

This contradicts not only the idea of a free society, but the ideals of modern societies *per se*. The sociologist Thomas H. Marshall traced the emergence of civil rights, a process closely linked to the development of modern societies, arguing that the civil right of citizenship came first (in the 18th century), followed by the political and social (in the 19th and 20th century, respectively) (Marshall 1950). Thus, the right to freedom of expression (in civil law) was not yet linked to the political right to vote or to assume a political mandate (just as little, incidentally, as the right of citizenship was linked to social protection, even if from today's perspective such protection was the only way to guarantee that people could participate in society at all). For Marshall, the 20th century then saw the rights of citizenship combine in the factories into an "industrial citizenship" (Brinkmann & Nachtwey 2017). This extended the rights of citizenship to the economic domain, the trade union movement leading to the parallel establishment of a political and economic right of citizenship (Marshall 1950: 63–64). The fundamental democratization of companies was ensured by the right to elect a body to represent particular interests, with workers being granted those civil and political rights that they had outside the factory or office. However, this development was the product of political pressure; it had to be fought for through a workers' movement. In practice, these events involved the formal recognition of people as subjects in the core areas of everyday life, with people thereby being granted the fundamental capacity and right to participate in the life of society, and to enjoy protective and participatory rights in society and the political domain. This legitimized civil society, and thus gave it the power to integrate people. The social conditions of the class society were not affected fundamentally, but civilizational standards were brought into the foundations of the social edifice: fundamental rights recognized each member of society as entitled and able to participate equally in social processes, while at the same time guaranteeing a minimum standard of living.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, almost every citizen now sees the importance of individual freedoms. Unfortunately, though, people's readiness to restrict the freedoms of others is almost as great, and is part of the anti-democratic dynamic that we are examining here. Freedoms are by no means abstract: their very declaration has an effect, even if they are not perceived actively. Suffering ensues when they are withdrawn, and not least where the state makes its presence felt: in its agencies and bureaucracy, where people experience either responsibility and integrity as citizens, or humiliation in

"authoritarian institutions". Thus, drawing on Marshall's history of citizenship rights, the Israeli social philosopher Avishai Margalit wrote that "a decent society does not [violate] the civil honour of its members … There cannot be any second-class citizens … The first form of discrimination occurs when certain rights are denied to some citizens or are applied unequally" (Margalit 1996: 154).

The balance of power between the general and the particular, i.e. between society and the individual, has shifted in recent years to the disadvantage of the latter. At the same time, domination is being transmitted less and less within the family, which may no longer even be the most important factor. Hence, our focus here will be on the lifelong transmission of domination, and on redefining the residuals of freedom. In order to define the relationship between authoritarian and democratic socialization, we draw on the spheres of recognition outlined by the social philosopher Axel Honneth (Honneth 1992; see also the discussion in Chapter 1). Behind this is the idea that the experience of recognition can be used as an experience of democratic society. Recognition can thus be understood as a complementary notion to authoritarian dynamics.

The three spheres of recognition that Honneth outlines and that we use to explain the experience of recognition and of authoritarian socialization are: love, law and work/solidarity (Honneth 1992). As our core hypothesis, we assume that extreme right-wing attitudes are based on negative recognition and authoritarianism. The three spheres of recognition can be translated for empirical social research as

- love: recognition as a **person,**
- law: recognition as a **citizen**, and
- work/solidarity: recognition as a **working person**.

This gives rise to two research questions. First, which forms of recognition can be discerned today, and how do they correlate with two central socio-structural features (education and income)? Second, how do the spheres of recognition correlate with authoritarianism, right-wing extremism, and the conspiracy mindset?

## Results

For the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study of 2018, we developed nine statements to measure the recognition that people actually experience or that they perceive (Table 4.1), with respondents being asked to take a position on these statements. Table 4.1 shows a factor analysis that reveals three extracted factors. Factor 1 denotes recognition as a person, and comprises the statements: "I have someone very close whom I can always count on for help"; "When I am ill, I can without hesitation call on friends to sort out important things for me"; and "If I ever feel down, I know whom I can

*Table 4.1* Factors of recognition

| *Factor* | *Statement* | *Recognition as a person* | *Recognition as a citizen* | *Recognition as a working person* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I have someone very close whom I can always count on for help. (79.8%) | .854 | | |
| | When I am ill, I can without hesitation call on friends to sort out important things for me. (80.3%) | .869 | | |
| | If I ever feel down, I know whom I can go to without further ado. (77.5%) | .854 | | |
| 2 | I often feel at the mercy of authorities and administrative bodies. (35.2%) | | .740 | |
| | I sometimes feel that I am being treated as a second-class person. (29.2%) | | .894 | |
| | I sometimes have the impression that my rights exist only on paper. (35.0%) | | .851 | |
| 3 | What I do is appreciated by my colleagues and fellow human beings. (64.2%) | | | .796 |
| | I have the feeling that I make an important contribution to society. (47.6%) | | | .822 |
| | I give a lot, but also get a lot back from other people. (55.0%) | | | .743 |

Factor analysis: main axis analysis (Oblimin); Cronbach's alpha for total scale: .813; for recognition as a person: .894; for recognition as a citizen: .867; for recognition as a working person: .828. The percentages after the statements refer to the agreement categories "partly agree" and "completely agree".

go to without further ado". Factor 2, recognition as a citizen, comprises the three statements: "I often feel at the mercy of authorities and administrative bodies"; "I sometimes feel that I am being treated as a second-class person"; and "I sometimes have the impression that my rights exist only on paper". Factor 3, recognition as a working person, comprises the following statements: "What I do is appreciated by my colleagues and fellow human

*Table 4.2* Recognition as a citizen: lack of recognition in East and West (in %)

| | *East* | *West* |
|---|---|---|
| Feel like a second-class person | 33.6 | 28.2 |
| My rights exist only on paper | 40.0 | 33.6 |
| Feel at the mercy of authorities | 37.8 | 34.7 |

beings"; "I have the feeling that I make an important contribution to society"; and "I give a lot, but also get a lot back from other people". The rates of agreement for the individual statements (Table 4.1, in brackets) show that the majority of the population experience recognition as people and in their work, while about one third do not feel recognition as citizens.

The question now is: who experiences a lot of recognition, and who receives little? We will also clarify how the three forms of recognition are distributed across the social structure. To do so, we calculated the mean value of the three statements for each of the three factors. This showed that, with regard to gender, there is only *one* significant correlation: women experience recognition somewhat more often than men in the social environment (M: 4.3 *vs.* 4.2). As for place of residence, a significant difference is that East Germans more often feel a lack of recognition as citizens than West Germans (M: 3.1 *vs.* 2.9), which is also apparent from the percentages (Table 4.2).

There is no significant or relevant correlation between the forms of recognition and age (correlation: Pearson's $r = -0.057$, $p < 0.01$), with older people feeling slightly less recognition in their work than younger people.

Not surprising, but nonetheless still interesting, are the correlations between recognition and education. Since education is a central resource that has gained enormous importance in the "post-industrial" society (Hradil 2001: 148–149), its unequal distribution inevitably leads to problems that may also impact on the recognition that people experience in various areas of society. Figure 4.1 shows that those who experience more recognition as people have a high level of education, while those who experience less recognition have a low level of education, although this only really becomes clear for those who have no qualifications at all.

Even clearer is the correlation between education and recognition as a citizen (Figure 4.2),[2] with those who have completed only basic secondary school having a significantly lower mean value than those with higher qualifications. These discrepancies are likely to become sharper in the future as education becomes an even more important resource in the fight for jobs.

The correlation already identified is also evident when we consider the mean values for the dimension of "recognition as a working person", where it is particularly those with a low level of qualifications or (as yet) no qualifications who experience little recognition (Figure 4.3).

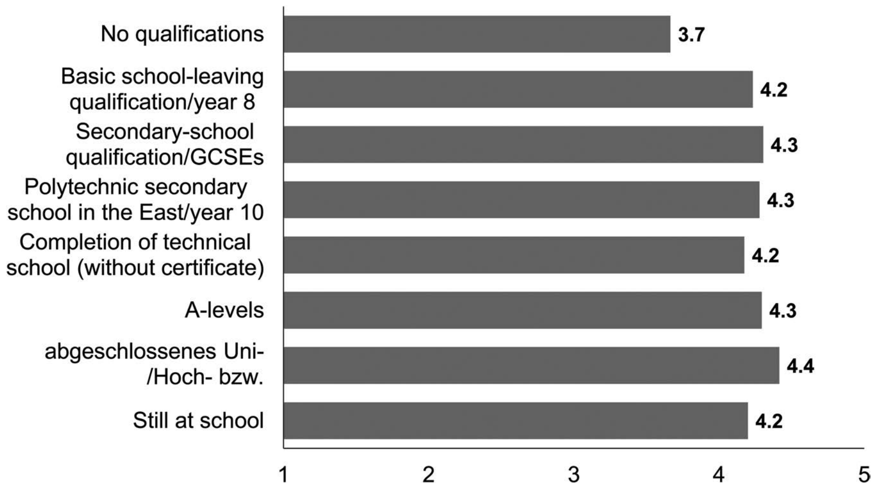


*Figure 4.1* Experience of recognition as a person according to level of education (mean values: max. value = 5, min. value = 1)

Recognition as a person
For individual statements, see Table 4.1; analysis of variance: $p < 0.001$

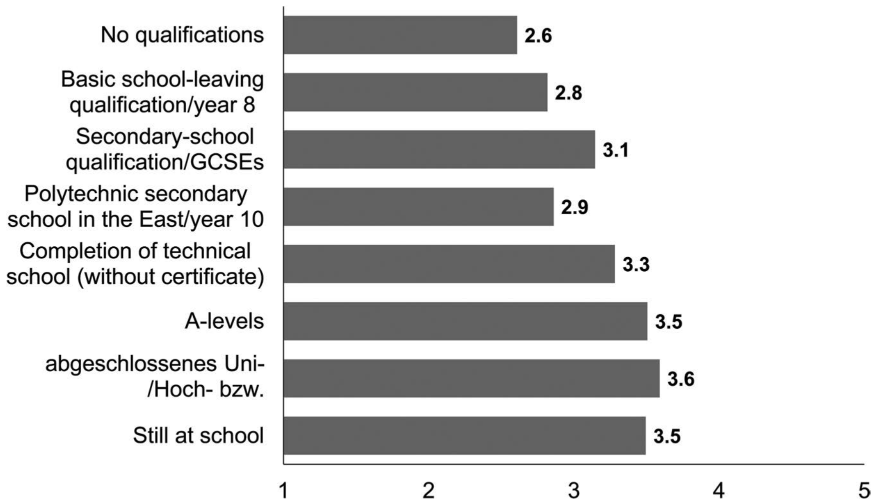


*Figure 4.2* Experience of recognition as a citizen according to level of education (mean values: max. value = 5, min. value = 1)

Recognition as a citizen
For individual statements, see Table 4.1; analysis of variance: $p < .01$

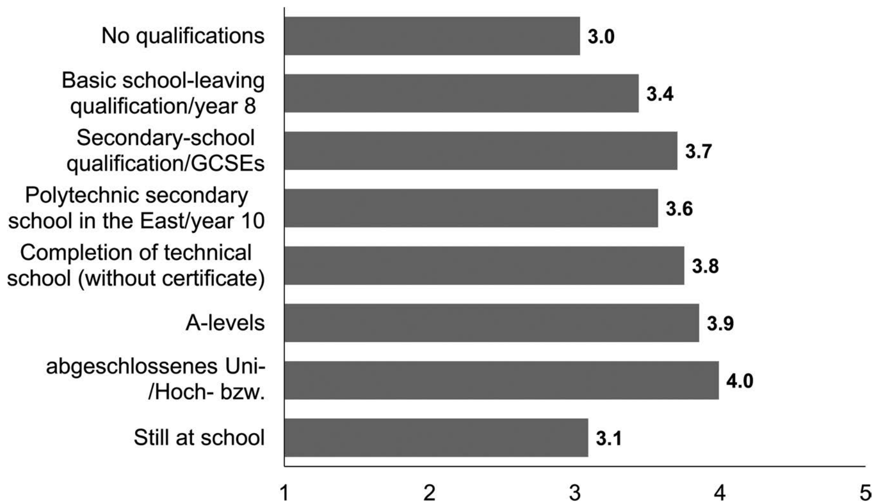


*Figure 4.3* Experience of recognition as a working person according to level of education (mean values: max. value = 5, min. value = 1)

Recognition as a working person
For individual statements, see Table 4.1; analysis of variance: $p < .01$

There are similar correlations between the dimensions of recognition and income (Figure 4.4). In the first dimension, "recognition as a person", those who experience more recognition are those who earn more.[3]

However, Figure 4.5 shows that income also correlates positively with recognition as a citizen, with people from high-income households being less likely to experience a lack of recognition as citizens than those on low incomes. Thus, greater financial resources seem to give people more chance to represent their own interests as citizens – for example, by taking legal advice in disputes with the authorities. A further explanation could be the habitus of the higher earners, which is reflected in their dealings, for example, with the authorities. In addition, recognition as a citizen has been objectively limited for the lower groups of the labour force. For example, the "Hartz IV" reforms have permanently curtailed the rights of the unemployed as citizens – by reversing the burden of proof when they deal with the "Employment Agency". The state thus conveys to them that they no longer have the moral integrity accorded to them by their rights of citizenship (Lessenich 2006). We can assume that there are more people who are dependent on transfer payments in the lower income groups.

There is a similar correlation between income and recognition as a working person (Figure 4.6), with the lower income groups tending to experience less recognition. Higher income therefore means higher recognition,

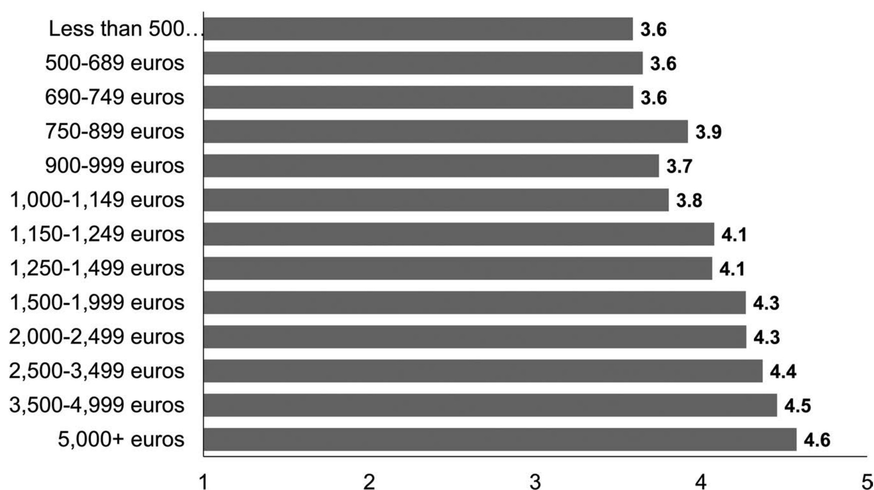


*Figure 4.4* Experience of recognition as a person according to household income (mean values: max. value = 5, min. value = 1)

Recognition as a person
For individual statements, see Table 4.1; income is based on information given to the question: "In which group would you classify your household from the total monthly net income?"; analysis of variance: $p < .01$

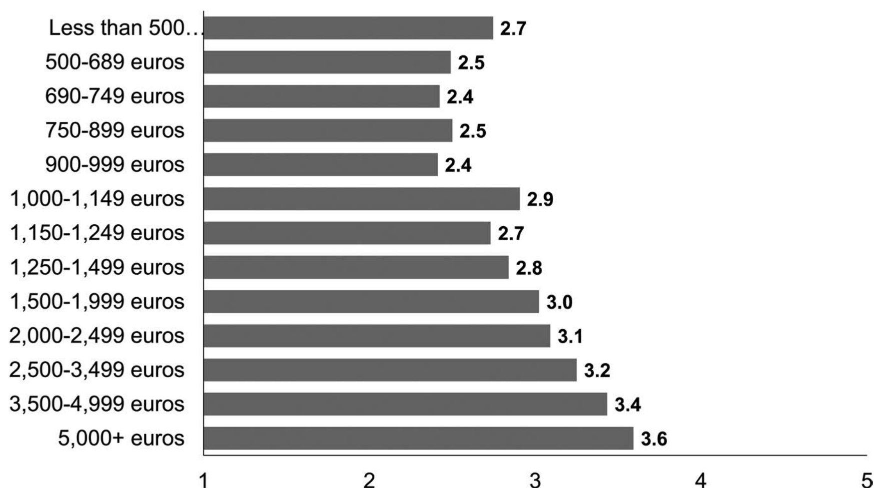


*Figure 4.5* Experience of recognition as a citizen according to income group (mean values: max. value = 5, min. value = 1)

Recognition as a citizen
For individual statements, see Table 4.1; income is based on information given to the question: "In which group would you classify your household from the total monthly net income?"; analysis of variance: $p < .01$

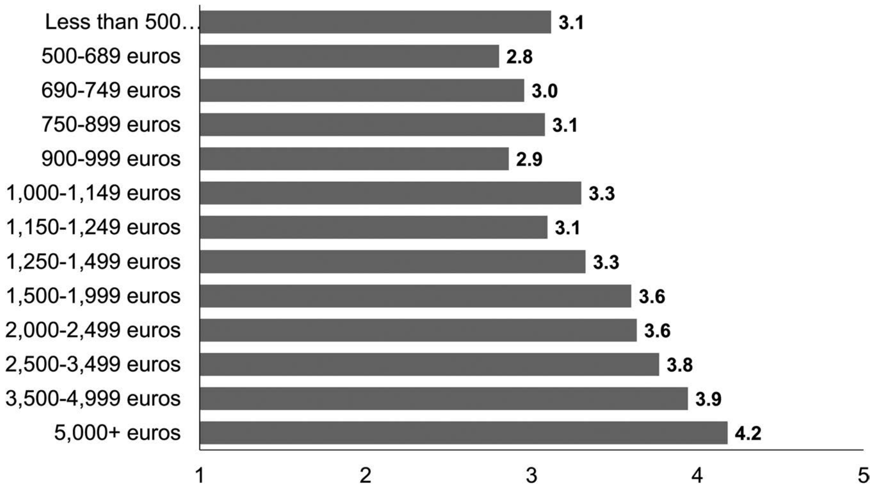


*Figure 4.6* Experience of recognition as a working person according to income group (mean values: max. value = 5, min. value = 1)

Recognition as an active human being
For individual statements, see Table 4.1; income is based on information given to the question: "In which group would you classify your household from the total monthly net income?"; analysis of variance: $p < .01$

probably also because well-paid jobs are often accompanied by a higher degree of social prestige than simple and less well-paid jobs, which are also therefore given less recognition. In addition, a higher household income enables more social participation and involvement, which in turn creates opportunities for experiencing recognition.

In summary, both education and income are important resources for the gaining of recognition, which is distributed according to the Matthäus principle: those who already have a lot of education and income also receive a lot of recognition, while people with a low level of education and income receive less recognition in their social environment, as citizens and in their work.

## Recognition in correlation with authoritarianism, the conspiracy mindset, and right-wing extremism

Recognition, then, is distributed unequally in society. We will now examine the correlation between the dimensions of recognition and authoritarianism, the conspiracy mindset, and extreme right-wing attitudes. Besides the dimensions of recognition, we will now also look at signs pointing to *lack* of recognition in the parental home, which we summarize in Table 4.3 as "harsh parental punishments".

*Table 4.3* Recognition in correlation with authoritarianism, the conspiracy mindset, and right-wing extremism (correlation coefficients)

| | *Harsh punishments in childhood* | *Recognition as a person* | *Recognition as a citizen* | *Recognition as a working person* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Authoritarianism | .046** | n.s. | −.095** | n.s. |
| Conspiracy mindset | .097** | −.087** | −.278** | −.079** |
| Right-wing extremism | .149** | −.102** | −.250** | −.118** |

Average values for the three dimensions of recognition; for individual statements, see Table 4.1; correlation coefficient: Kendall's tau coefficient b, $p < .01$.

We thus follow Axel Honneth's argument that recognition already plays a decisive role in a child's development (Honneth 1992: 161ff), and include the experiences of recognition on the part of respondents both today and in the past. We also consider as factors the propensity for authoritarianism, the mean value of the three statements in the questionnaire on authoritarianism, and the conspiracy mindset. We measure extreme right-wing attitudes through the sum of the answers given to all the statements in the questionnaire on extreme right-wing attitudes; the higher the value, the clearer the extreme right-wing attitudes (see Chapter 2).

Table 4.3 shows the correlations that we found. It is clear that a lack of recognition as a citizen correlates particular strongly with the conspiracy mindset and right-wing extremism. However, recognition at work and harsh parental punishments also play a statistically significant role when it comes to right-wing extremism, although the correlation is weaker. The other correlations are either not significant or weak. What is surprising is that the correlations with authoritarianism are weak or not significant at all.

## Which factors influence extreme right-wing attitudes?

Table 4.3 shows that the dimensions of recognition correlate with extreme right-wing attitudes. Let us now turn to the question of how recognition as a factor behaves when we take into account other indicators derived from prominent theories explaining right-wing extremism. What, then, influences right-wing extremism? What role is played by recognition, authoritarianism, the conspiracy mindset, and the forms of economic deprivation discussed at the beginning, and how do these factors interact?

The regression model in Table 4.4 shows the influence of various indicators on extreme right-wing attitudes. For the linear regression analysis, we used the following indicators: the three dimensions of recognition, the denial of recognition (harsh parental punishments), authoritarianism, the conspiracy mindset, two statements on trust ("In general, people can be

*Table 4.4* Indicators of right-wing extremism (linear regression model)

| *Indicator* | *Regression coefficient* | *Beta* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recognition as a person | –1.446 | –0.089 | ** |
| Recognition as a citizen | –1.606 | –0.126 | ** |
| Recognition as a working person | n.s. | | |
| Lack of parental recognition (harsh punishments) | 1.413 | 0.067 | ** |
| Authoritarianism | 6.616 | 0.397 | ** |
| Conspiracy mindset | 2.320 | 0.258 | ** |
| Trust 1: general trust | n.s. | | |
| Trust 2: no reliance on people | –0.860 | –0.047 | ** |
| General economic situation in Germany today (good) | 1.772 | 0.104 | ** |
| General economic situation in Germany in one year | n.s. | | |
| Own economic situation today (good) | –1.289 | –0.073 | ** |
| Own economic situation in one year (bad) | 1.312 | 0.057 | ** |
| Age | n.s. | | |
| Sex | –1.259 | –0.043 | * |
| Unemployment (frequency) | n.s. | | |
| Income | n.s. | | |
| A-levels | –2.828 | –0.079 | ** |
| East/West | –1.747 | –0.048 | ** |
| Corrected $R^2$ | .438 | | |

Values unweighted, *p < .05, **p < .01.

trusted" and "You can no longer rely on anyone today"), a person's assessment of the general economic situation in Germany at present and in one year, a person's own economic situation at present and in one year, as well as age, gender, frequency of unemployment, income, A-levels (yes/no), and place of residence in West or East Germany.

What we notice at first is that for research in the social sciences the overall model with a corrected $R^2$ has a high explained variance of .438. The most important result of this regression analysis is that it is authoritarianism that has the greatest influence on extreme right-wing attitudes (Beta = .397, **p), followed by the conspiracy mindset (Beta = .258, **p), recognition as a citizen (Beta = –.126, **p), and a person's assessment of the general economic situation in Germany today (Beta = .104, **p). Still significant, but weak, are recognition as a person and the lack of recognition as a child (harsh parental punishments), as well as the statement that no one can be trusted. Those who have a positive assessment of their own current economic situation are more likely than others to be right-wing extremists. Women are less so than men, and education is also a factor: respondents without A-levels are more likely to be right-wing extremists. Place of residence does not play an important role, with East Germans being only slightly more likely to be right-wing extremists than West Germans.

The significant results show that an individual's good economic situation has at least a slight effect on extreme right-wing attitudes – the effect being that such attitudes increase. This fits in with the fact that a person's anticipation of economic decline also causes extreme right-wing attitudes to increase. What seems decisive is therefore not a respondent's current economic situation, but her sense of impending threat. What could be making their presence felt at this point are secondary authoritarianism and the fragility of accomplishments (Menz & Nies, 2019), although we should emphasize that these are in any case very weak effects – more important are a person's propensity for authoritarianism and the conspiracy mindset.

Not significant are recognition as a working person, general trust in people, assessment of the general economic situation in one year, unemployment, age and income. These results are also interesting. It is clear that the effect of living in the East is only slight, and the objective factors of individual economic deprivation, such as income and unemployment, do not affect extreme right-wing attitudes, something already seen in the fact that respondents who had a positive assessment of their economic situation were less likely to reject extreme right-wing statements. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these three factors (place of residence, income, unemployment) have already been explained by the factor of education: due to the emigration of highly educated people from East Germany, the level of education is lower there, and a low level of education is accompanied by a higher risk of unemployment and a low income, making the influence of these factors disappear.

## Summary

In the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study of 2018, we investigated not only the dimensions of right-wing extremism, but also the three dimensions of recognition: recognition as a person, as a citizen, and as a working person. It is in particular the lack of recognition as a citizen that correlates with extreme right-wing attitudes, although the effect is by no means as strong as it is in the correlation between extreme right-wing attitudes and the propensity for authoritarianism, the latter proving in a multifactorial hypothesis model to be the strongest and thus the decisive factor. It is far more relevant than, for example, a person's subjective assessment of her own and Germany's economic situation. The East-West difference has hardly any impact, either: there is a stronger propensity for extreme right-wing attitudes in the East, but this is caused by the proven influence of education.

The likelihood of right-wing extremism increases among those who feel that they are second-class people, who often feel at the mercy of official institutions, and who believe that their rights exist only on paper. This confirms our initial thoughts, with the conspiracy mindset fitting into this overall picture as another important factor: those who see themselves as being at the mercy of depersonalized forces can regain control by believing that the world is being shaped by secret groups in the background; this at least gives people the feeling that they know who is controlling them.

The dismantling of social, civil or industrial rights of citizenship will probably lead to the strengthening of authoritarian dynamics – weakening the individual in her dealings with authorities and state agencies will increase the number of right-wing extremists. However, we could not confirm the notion that there is a direct correlation between recognition and authoritarianism. Since we see authoritarianism as a personality trait, it does not seem to be influenced by a lack of recognition. What is certain, however, is that both factors – authoritarianism as a variable of personality and the experience of authoritarian statehood – have an influence on extreme right-wing attitudes. The more the state strengthens the position of authority (for example, in police laws, labour law, or in dealing with the weakest members of society), the more this fuels the authoritarian dynamic. What we should emphasize once again is that this dynamic is triggered not only by those whose rights have already been eroded. All other members of society are also caught up in the authoritarian dynamic, since they are always potentially at risk of losing their rights of citizenship, and therefore also their rights of protection.

We cannot completely clarify the proportion of objective reasons for a subjective lack of recognition, since it was only the latter that we investigated. However, the analysis of how recognition is distributed across society indicates that the lack of recognition increases among those who have a low income and who ended their education particularly early. This represents a socio-political and educational challenge.

We obtained the results presented in this chapter through a factor analysis and a regression analysis. To broaden the perspective, we will now present in Chapter 4 a typology of democratic and authoritarian personalities, thereby supplementing the analysis with further factors of personality or socialization, and differentiating between different elements in the devaluation of others.

## Notes

1 We briefly repeat here the detailed theoretical presentation of the first chapter.
2 Due to the negative wording, we have recoded the dimension "recognition as a citizen" in such a way that the mean values now also rise in the direction of rejection. High values now also therefore mean a high level of recognition; low values, a low level of recognition.
3 In the lower two categories, the mean value does not continue to decrease as expected. This is probably due to the fact that these are increasingly people who live on the income of others, e.g. spouses or the nuclear family.

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# 5 Anti-Semitic Attitudes in Germany

## Their Prevalence and Causes

*Oliver Decker, Johannes Kiess, and Elmar Brähler*

2018 marked 80 years since the *Reichspogromnacht*. The night from 9 to 10 November 1938 represents the moment when the anti-Semitism deeply rooted in the German population turned into the annihilation of Europe's Jews. The central role of anti-Semitism for fascism in Nazi Germany is well known: Jews were the absolute enemy in National Socialist ideology. In the 1930s, the longstanding rejection, devaluation and exclusion of Jews in Europe, and especially in Germany, offered ideal conditions to mobilize people for Shoah and a war of aggression, which is the reason that anti-Semitic crimes and the spread of anti-Semitic attitudes are still the focus of great attention today. Although anti-Semitism is more strongly ostracized by a social norm than, for example, xenophobia (Bergmann & Erb 1986; Beyer & Krumpal 2010), it is still anchored in the thinking of many people, and can be seen as a core element of extreme right-wing attitudes (see Chapter 2). At the same time, there has been an increase in recent years in anti-Semitic crimes, with Jewish cemeteries being desecrated and acts of violence against Jews on the rise.

In this chapter, we therefore deepen our empirical analysis of the spread of anti-Semitism in Germany, and explore in more detail how anti-Semitism emerges. We will first deal with its forms and the question of what role it plays in the authoritarian dynamic of modern society. In doing so, we will follow on directly from the central finding in Chapter 3: namely, that authoritarianism is and remains even in contemporary society the most powerful anti-democratic factor. In order to differentiate between elements of anti-Semitism, we will then clarify the concept. This is followed by an analysis of the spread of anti-Semitism, and then finally an examination of the factors influencing anti-Semitism. Our initial questions are: How far is it possible to differentiate between different forms of anti-Semitism empirically? What sociodemographic and biographical features are linked to anti-Semitism? Can anti-Semitism at an individual level be understood as part of the authoritarian syndrome? In other words, is anti-Semitism closely correlated with certain personality traits? And, finally, can the authoritarian dynamic in contemporary society be linked to this individual syndrome?

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## Anti-Semitism as part of the authoritarian syndrome

The term *anti-Semitism*[1] denotes *prejudice* against Jews, and is largely used uniformly in empirical social research and public debate. In general, prejudices are also directed against other people as soon as they are perceived as members of a group, for example as a French person or a woman. When we speak of prejudice in our research, we are drawing on a notion that was shaped mainly by research in cognitive psychology.

Cognition in the broader sense first of all means thought processes. In the narrower sense of psychology, this denotes the processing of information. For the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, cognitive processes are attempts to reduce the multitude of sensory impressions. Put simply, people arrange their sensory impressions according to previous experiences, with a new experience, such as meeting an unknown person, being linked to earlier experiences. This schematization of experience begins in early childhood and lasts a lifetime, and it is only when the schemata used prove too crude that they are refined or supplemented by new ones. Categorizing therefore means assigning new impressions to old experiences. According to this principle, stereotypes about people are the effects of such categorization. People are assigned to a group, and the characteristics attributed to this group are then also expected from the actual individual. On the other hand, if the experience with an actual person is generalized to the entire group, this is also the result of schematization.

Prejudices may not be identical to stereotypes, but they are based on them. Prejudice is accompanied by a feeling or motivation, such as a person's desire to shore up her own self-worth by devaluing others. The significance of prejudice for a person's self-esteem is the basis of group conflict theory (Tajfel & Turner 1979), and when we today speak of anti-Semitism as a prejudice, we are (maybe unknowingly) making use of this concept from cognitive psychology.

It is obvious that the psychological understanding of anti-Semitism also requires taking account of emotions and affects, since anti-Semitism openly manifests hatred for Jews. That anti-Semites have a motive, i.e. a drive, for their hatred is also plausible – but this is not always as obvious as the affect. However, there is an important reservation regarding how cognitive psychology explains anti-Semitism, since group conflict theory would imply a link between a person's experience of Jews and her devaluation of them, which would suggest that one of the causes of aggression against Jews is experience of them (a similar criticism is also made by Fein 2012: 67ff; and, in more detail, by Ranc 2016). This is the reason that the researcher on anti-Semitism Julijana Ranc argues that such an explanation of anti-Semitism seeks to understand in scientific terms what the core of anti-Semitism is, and to explain the negative image of Jews through their behaviour. As Ranc argues, to do so is a causal deception (Ranc 2016).

For, anti-Semitism works without any previous contact, something that Adorno pointed out when he wrote in the *Minima Moralia*: "anti-Semitism is the rumour about the Jews" (Adorno 1954: 125). Brian Klug, another researcher on anti-Semitism, put it as follows: "In short, anti-Semitism is the process of turning Jews into 'Jews'" (Klug 2003: 137). In other words, the idea of the Jew already exists before the contact, with the actual person then being adapted to this idea. This process can be illustrated with the story of Bertolt Brecht's Herr Keuner:

> "What do you do", Herr K was asked, "when you love a human being?" "I make a sketch of the person", said Herr K, "and see to it that the one becomes like the other". "What? The sketch?" "No", Herr K said, "the person" (Brecht 1995: 336).

What Herr Keuner does when he comes into contact with a person whom he loves is precisely what the anti-Semite does *before* she has contact with Jews: the anti-Semite already has a grudge against Jews, which she then rationalizes by pointing to the behaviour of "the Jews". She sketches a negative picture of a Jew, regardless of whether Jewish people actually give her reasons for her negativity. Anti-Semitism is therefore not a prejudice, since it is not based on a (false) judgement.

There are other reasons why anti-Semitism should not be seen as a prejudice. For example, the sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman distinguishes between the juxtaposition of friend and foe that creates order on the one hand, and the figure of the other that questions this quasi-natural difference on the other: "The threat of the other is more frightening than the threat of the foe. The other threatens socialization itself – the very *possibility* of socialization" (Bauman 2005: 95). First, the other "brings to light the naked 'historicity' of existence" (102) – that is, the other confronts people with the finitude of their own lives. Second, the other questions the alleged naturalness of the nation and its ethnic identity – and thus also its persistence. It is therefore never quite clear whether the figure of the other is an unfaithful friend or a cunningly disguised enemy (104), and the other represents – for the anti-Semite, in the ideal form of the Jew – "a constant threat to the order of the world" (101).

A further indication that anti-Semitism is not a prejudice links sociology to psychoanalytical theory. As the sociologist Robert Michels put it in 1925: "The other represents the unknown" (see Michels 1925: 303), and symbolizes uncertainty. But, according to Freud, this unknown is all too familiar (Freud 1919), since it is precisely what a person cannot allow and represses under the pressure of social norms that seems particularly alien in the other, which is why the "other" is both tempting and threatening (Graumann 1997): the other reminds a person of her own desires and prohibits them anew. But the "other" also offers a solution to this conflict, since what a person had to repress can be fought particularly well in the figure of

the "other". Indeed, these motives shaped the anti-Semitic caricatures that appeared in the Nazi weekly newspaper *Der Stürmer* from 1923 to 1945, and can be found today in the resentful fantasies about the wonderful lives of "foreigners", full of everything that is frowned upon: drugs, happiness without having to work, a fulfilled sexual life (see Decker et al. 2008). People can therefore use the other to give free rein to their own aggression and justify doing so both to themselves and others, pointing out, for example, that they feel persecuted by evil powers or are simply punishing the violation of social rules. This dual psychological function is also behind anti-Semitism: the projection of what is repressed onto Jews, and also the valve for people's anger at their own abstention.

Thus, the authoritarian dynamic feeds on a person's own submission to an authority (representative of the social norm that makes a person suppress her own wishes) and on authoritarian aggression towards those who have apparently not submitted themselves. This dynamic is expressed as authoritarian aggression in anti-Semitism, and therefore arises not from a (false) judgment about Jews, but from submission to an authority. Such an authority does not always have to be a fascist agitator. Indeed, there are today mainly *secondary* authorities in the form of collective ideals, such as the nation: that there is a link between perceived threats to national identity and anti-Semitism can be proven throughout Europe (Bergmann 2008).

But identifying with a nation does not always have to manifest itself as nationalistic bluster. Nationalism can also express itself as a defence of the economic location, where all conflicting interests are apparently abolished. In the constant emphasis on economic constraints and people's willingness to recognize these constraints as collective imperatives, the German economy is one such "secondary authority" (see Chapter 1; Decker 2015). Reference to the economy can allow for deep cuts to be inflicted on people's lives. And, like every authoritarian submission, the submission to economic rationality is not merely forced on people, but is also something that people choose and accept. Their motivation is the hope that they can boost their self-worth by feeling part of something bigger, such as a strong national economy, the "engine of Europe" or the "world's leading exporter". But this authority also needs sanctions, and is represented at present by the administration, which monitors observance of economic rationality and punishes all those who do not meet the demands of authority by withdrawing recognition (see Chapter 3). This threat by the more powerful authority is also part of the authoritarian dynamic.

However, submission remains ambivalent and is accompanied by a person's latent anger at her own not-lived life. This anger becomes manifest at the latest when authority is perceived as weak. Its strength was the reason for submission: both because the person had to bow to a stronger power and because she wanted to bow to it. If a person has accepted its rules, then the weakness of authority is an affront. Not only is there no gratification in being part of something big and strong; a person's humiliation is reinforced

by the fact that she had submitted herself to something so weak. Her anger is not directed against authority, however, since the goal is to restitute authority; it is directed against those deemed weaker. Research in social psychology has shown that a threat to group norms leads to an authoritarian reaction (Duckitt & Fisher 2003; Fritsche et al. 2017), and especially in people who were authoritarian from the outset (Cohrs & Ibler 2009). The attempt to master the feeling of threat and loss of control can only succeed at the expense of reality in anti-Semitism, too. As with any other group formation, the perception of reality is adapted to the psychological needs of group members (Freud 1921).

Another element of the authoritarian syndrome comes into play here: namely, the conspiracy mentality, which has a special link to anti-Semitism. Anti-Semites imagine Jews as other, and attribute special powers to them as a collective. As the social philosopher and researcher on anti-Semitism Moshe Postone has pointed out: "It is not only the extent but also the quality of the power attributed to the Jews that distinguishes anti-Semitism from other forms of racism. The Jews stand for a tremendously powerful and incomprehensible international conspiracy" (see Postone 1982: 244). It may seem paradoxical that security is offered precisely by the idea that there are powerful groups secretly pulling the strings. In the logic of the psyche, though, this hallucination creates the much-needed sense of control over the relevant areas of life: people think that they know who controls the destiny of the world and where the enemy stands. It is for this reason that the conspiracy mentality is just as much a part of the authoritarian syndrome as it is of anti-Semitism (Graumann & Moscovici 1987; Imhoff & Decker 2013).

It is clear that modern societies demand from the individual the constant recognition of a rationality that does not grow out of her own desires and goals in life – a rationality whose rule and operation are becoming increasingly inscrutable. As the rumours about "the Jews" and their alleged involvement in conspiracies show, it is especially anti-Semitism where the "unease with modernity" (Berger et al. 1975, our translation) manifests, an unease reinforced by constant acceleration and social upheavals (Decker & Kiess 2013; Rosa 2005).

Whether a person is only exposed to these processes, or whether she can play some part in shaping them depends on individual factors such as occupation, income, education, habitus and wishes. It has been shown, for example, that a person's (job-related) position in current modernization processes influences authoritarian attitudes (Kiess et al. 2017), but also that it is those who feel dependent on "decisions made somewhere else in the world" and who are at the mercy of digital acceleration that vote for the right-wing authoritarian AfD (Hilmer et al. 2017: 49). If everyday life constantly forces a person into submission, then this influences how she perceives the world; the manifold processes of modernization therefore help to form the authoritarian character. This process of creating the authoritarian

syndrome is what we call the authoritarian dynamic; it continues to permeate contemporary society.

## Forms of anti-Semitism today: primary and secondary anti-Semitism, communication latency and indirect communication[2]

Information from the Federal Ministry of the Interior on hate crime shows a high number of anti-Semitic crimes, almost 90% of which are committed by right-wing extremists.[3] According to the independent documentation portal Research and Information Centre on Anti-Semitism (RIAS), the number of anti-Semitic crimes is increasing significantly.[4] If we look at the results of the 2018 survey, however, we notice that only 4.4% of the population are manifestly anti-Semitic, with the trend being one of apparent decline. We must, therefore, begin with a paradoxical observation: there are no longer any, or at least only very few, anti-Semites in Germany (Horkheimer & Adorno 1944: 230). In other words, we are living in a period of "anti-Semitism without anti-Semites" (Marin 1979: 546).

But that only means that a handful of anti-Semites reveal themselves. For, although anti-Semitic attitudes exist and are expressed in insults and even violence against Jews, hardly anyone still admits to harbouring such attitudes. Even those who agree with anti-Semitic statements or have committed anti-Semitic crimes themselves usually deny being anti-Semites. They feel misunderstood and insist that the Jews really have something peculiar about them. This reveals a shift within anti-Semitism from, for example, the Nazi era. The phrase "anti-Semitism without anti-Semites" denotes an altered anti-Semitism, a post-Holocaust anti-Semitism.

This was something that Peter Schönbach described in his doctoral thesis at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research in the early 1960s. In his investigation he was interested in the first wave of anti-Semitic disturbances in the young Federal Republic at the end of the 1950s and in the motives behind the series of attacks, and put forward as an explanation a phenomenon that he termed "guilt-deflecting anti-Semitism", a "reaction of defiance that keeps traditional anti-Semitic ideas alive for the sake of justifying them, be they a person's own or their parents' ideas" (see Schönbach 1961: 80). It was also Schönbach who coined the term "secondary anti-Semitism" for this (80). This secondary anti-Semitism appears not despite, but because of, Auschwitz (Claussen 1987). And it is more frequent than "traditional anti-Semitism". It was for this reason that we included an additional questionnaire on secondary anti-Semitism in the survey of 2012, and indeed respondents were much more willing to agree with these statements compared to statements measuring traditional anti-Semitism (Heyder et al. 2005; Ullrich et al. 2012).

Anti-Semitism has therefore by no means disappeared, although it now only occasionally manifests itself in the public domain. The reasons for this

probably lie in socio-cultural changes. Acts of public remembrance have anchored anti-anti-Semitism in Germany since the 1970s, and especially since the 1980s, when the Holocaust received greater global attention. Since then, anti-Semitism has been less tolerated in the public domain; it is subject to a social norm that makes it taboo, but does not eliminate it or make it less potent.

Drawing on similar findings, Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb spoke in 1986 of "anti-Semitism in communication latency" (Bergmann & Erb 1986).[5] They were explicitly concerned not with whether anti-Semitism is conscious or unconscious for the individual (225), but rather with anti-Semitism expressed publicly, and came to the conclusion that the communication of anti-Semitism is kept out of the public eye, is privatized, or is given new forms of expression. This creates an indirect communication that camouflages anti-Semitism – for example, through "criticism of Israel" or through the use of other terms as ciphers that can be easily understood by people with the same attitudes, such as anti-Americanism and "East Coast capital" (Beyer & Liebe 2010).

Anti-Semites pretend to be more naive than they really are, as Julijana Ranc's qualitative study has recently shown. Drawing on a multitude of group discussions and individual interviews, she described the communication of anti-Jewish attitudes, concluding that those who "communicate anti-Semitism know full well, or at least have a good idea of, what they are doing and are by no means unaware that they are pricking a taboo, the anti-Semitism taboo" (Ranc 2016: 31). The compulsion to be anti-Semitic is apparently so great that it seeks detours if it is not allowed to express itself directly. But manifest itself it must, since the psychological motive is too strong, be it in the form of "traditional", secondary or Israel-related anti-Semitism.

These findings in no way make superfluous the survey of primary anti-Semitism that we have been conducting since 2002. Although anti-Semitism has changed its face over the centuries, there are still continuities in what motivates it and periods when anti-Semitism is particularly strong. Since the proportion of open anti-Semites in the "traditional" form increased in East Germany to over 10% in the years of the financial crisis (see Chapter 2), open agreement with anti-Semitism may also rise again in the future.

Table 5.1 presents the terms that we use to describe the forms in which anti-Semitism is communicated. To distinguish between manifest and latent communication, we use a threshold value: those who agree explicitly with the statements communicate anti-Semitic attitudes *manifestly*, and those who partly agree and partly disagree display a *latent* communication. This distinction can apply both to traditional anti-Semitism and to anti-Semitism in indirect communication. The former is aimed directly against Jews and has no secondary form (post-Holocaust anti-Semitism), whereas the latter comprises primary and secondary anti-Semitism, with anti-Semitism seeking to express itself by shifting communication to seemingly

*Table 5.1* Forms of communication of anti-Semitism

| *Communication* | *Traditional* | *Indirect* |
|---|---|---|
| Manifest (explicit agreement in questionnaire) | Primary anti-Semitism (e.g. "Jews have too much influence") | Primary anti-Semitism (e.g. "Israeli politics make Jews unlikable") Secondary anti-Semitism (e.g. "Holocaust industry benefits clever lawyers") |
| Latent (part agreement, part disagreement in questionnaire) | Primary anti-Semitism (e.g. "Jews have too much influence") | Primary anti-Semitism (e.g. "Israeli politics make Jews unlikable") Secondary anti-Semitism (e.g. "Holocaust industry benefits clever lawyers") |

harmless areas ("turn the Jewish state into a 'Jewish' state", as Klug (2003: 125) has put it).

The question that arises here is how much agreement with anti-Semitism there is if we take into account latent communication and indirect communication. We would also like to know whether our findings on people's attitudes correlate with the high and apparently rising number of anti-Semitic crimes.

To investigate this, we again measured secondary anti-Semitism in the 2018 survey wave by using an additional questionnaire with five statements that we compiled on the basis of previous studies. Table 5.2 shows the exact wording of the statements. Statements of both primary (directly targeting Jews) and secondary (post-Holocaust) anti-Semitism belong to the anti-Semitism expressed in indirect communication thus measured.[6]

*Table 5.2* Questionnaire to measure anti-Semitism (indirect communication)

| | *Statement* | *Factor loading* | *Year used* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I can well understand why some people find Jews unpleasant. | .763 | 1999, 2002, 2003 |
| 2 | Israeli politics make Jews increasingly unlikable. | .786 | 2012 |
| 3 | It makes me angry that the expulsion of Germans and the bombing of German cities are always regarded as more minor crimes. | .795 | 2012 |
| 4 | Reparations claims against Germany often do not benefit the victims at all, but a Holocaust industry of clever lawyers. | .802 | 2012 |
| 5 | We should focus more on current problems than on events that took place more than 70 years ago. | .712 | 2012 |

Factor analysis: principal component analysis (Oblimin); internal consistency: Cronbach's alpha .828.

The first two statements refer directly to Jews and the attributes ascribed to them (primary anti-Semitism). Statement 1 ("I can well understand …") makes it easier for respondents to express their anti-Semitism since it requires them to reveal little about themselves. Statement 2 offers an indirect communication related to Israel, and the final three statements inquire into the secondary anti-Semitism ("despite or because of" Auschwitz) discussed above. Statements 2 to 5 are taken from the questionnaire designed by the social psychologist Roland Imhoff (Imhoff 2010), which we already used in 2012 (Ullrich et al. 2012). We already used statement 1 in 1999, 2002 and 2003 (Brähler & Decker 2003). The factor analysis produced one factor on which all five statements load, which suggests that the five statements measure the same thing: namely, anti-Semitism.

The internal consistency of the questionnaire is sound (.828), and its validity can also be demonstrated by the link with other questionnaires on related constructs (Table 5.3). For example, there is a very clear link to the "anti-Semitism" dimension in the Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes (FR-LF; correlation coefficient of .675). This high value suggests that the questionnaire on indirect communication also measures anti-Semitism. Moreover, those who trivialize National Socialism tend to agree with the statements on anti-Semitism in indirect communication. The clear correlation with hostility to Muslims reveals that the argument often put forward by anti-Muslims that their hostility serves to protect Jews is specious. Rather, people with a high level of agreement with anti-Semitic statements are also more likely to devalue asylum seekers and Sinti and Roma, and to reject the pluralistic society in general. In addition, those who locate themselves to the right or the far right of the political spectrum show significantly higher levels of anti-Semitism. Finally, the propensity to use and acceptance of violence are more widespread among anti-Semites. These

*Table 5.3* Correlations between anti-Semitism in indirect communication and other dimensions of devaluation and of anti-democratic attitudes

| | *Anti-Semitism in indirect communication* |
|---|---|
| Dimension of anti-Semitism, Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes (*N* = 2,382) | .675** |
| Dimension of Nazi trivialization, Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes (*N* = 2,392) | .539** |
| Hostility to Muslims (*N* = 2,379) | .389** |
| Devaluation of asylum seekers (*N* = 2,372) | .355** |
| Antiziganism (*N* = 2,342) | .336** |
| Anti-pluralism (*N* = 2,391) | .338** |
| Political self-assessment: left/right (*N* = 2,348) | .285** |
| Propensity to use violence (*N* = 2,392) | 117** |
| Acceptance of violence (*N* = 2,388) | .172** |

Measure of correlation: Kendall's tau b; significant double-sided ** p < .01.

findings suggest that behind the devaluation of other people, and especially of Jews, there is an authoritarian aggression that is part of the authoritarian syndrome. This aggression is also expressed in anti-pluralism, in the rejection of equal rights for all members of society.

## The anti-Semitic attitude: facets of a worldview

We will first present the items that we have consistently used in the Leipzig study since 2002, and distinguish between manifest and latent anti-Semitism over this period. We will then present the results, which are based on the additional questionnaire used. We will then turn to socioeconomic factors and the correlation between anti-Semitism and personality traits. Finally, we will examine how the authoritarian syndrome is involved in the emergence of anti-Semitism, and the extent to which this can be proven empirically.

### *Traditional anti-Semitism*

The idea that "the Jews" have had a particularly strong influence on (the history of) the world is one of the classic narratives of anti-Semitism, and clearly shows that what is at stake is more than "just" the devaluation of a group of "others". Rather, Jews as a collective are ascribed some kind of special power. As Figure 5.1 shows, manifest agreement with this statement declined between 2002 and 2018. However, we can also observe an increase

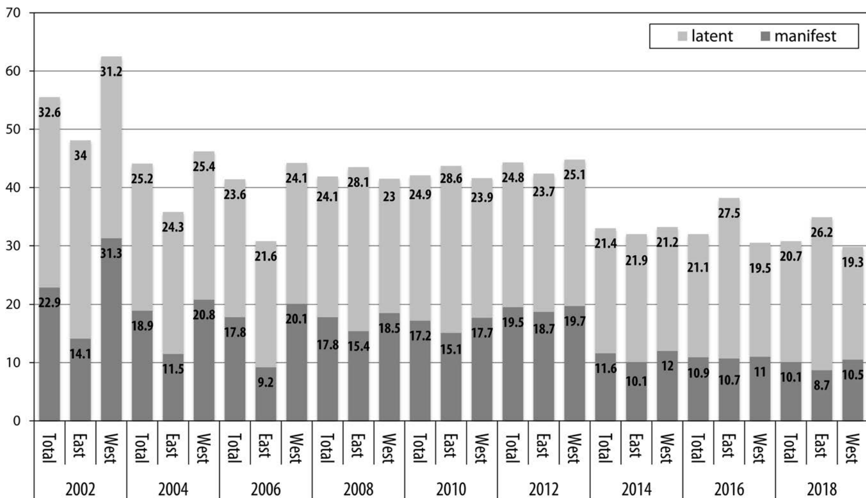


*Figure 5.1* Agreement with the statement "The influence of the Jews is still too strong", 2002–2018 (in %)

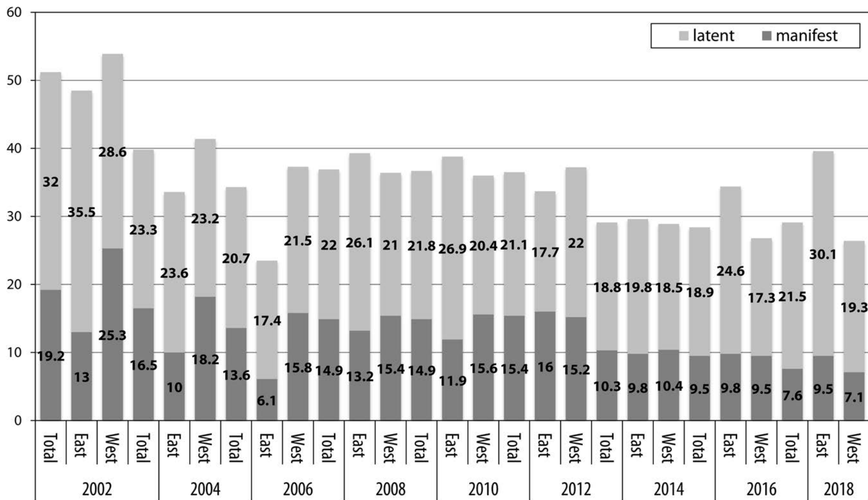


*Figure 5.2* Agreement with the statement "More than other people, the Jews use dirty tricks to achieve their goals", 2002–2018 (in %)

in the manifest and latent expression of anti-Semitism in the period from 2008 to 2012, which means that the decline was not continuous. Overall, the proportion of those who agreed with, or at least partially accepted, this anti-Semitic topos did not fall below 30%. The East-West comparison is also interesting. While half the respondents clearly disagreed with this statement in 2002 in the East, that figure was only a good third in the West. Moreover, while the proportion of manifest agreement in 2018 in the East was still below the figure in the West, the proportion of latent anti-Semites was larger in the East.

Figure 5.2 shows the distribution of responses to another anti-Semitic statement, one that accuses "the Jews" of using "dirty tricks" more than others do. While agreement in West Germany has steadily declined (from a comparatively high level), we can observe fluctuations in the East, where the peak was reached in 2012 and agreement in 2018 was only slightly lower than in 2002 (and higher than in 2006).

The third statement captures the idea that people perceive Jews as being "different" and as not belonging to their own group, as "peculiar" and alien in the sense discussed above. Agreement with this statement (both latent and manifest) has also declined since 2002 (Figure 5.3). Once again, though, the level of agreement declined steadily in the West, while there were fluctuations in the East. It is clear that the "anti-anti-Semitism" norm does not work across the board.

In summary, we can say that both manifest and latent agreement with the anti-Semitic statements declined continuously and more strongly in the East than in the West between 2002 and 2006. Agreement in East Germany

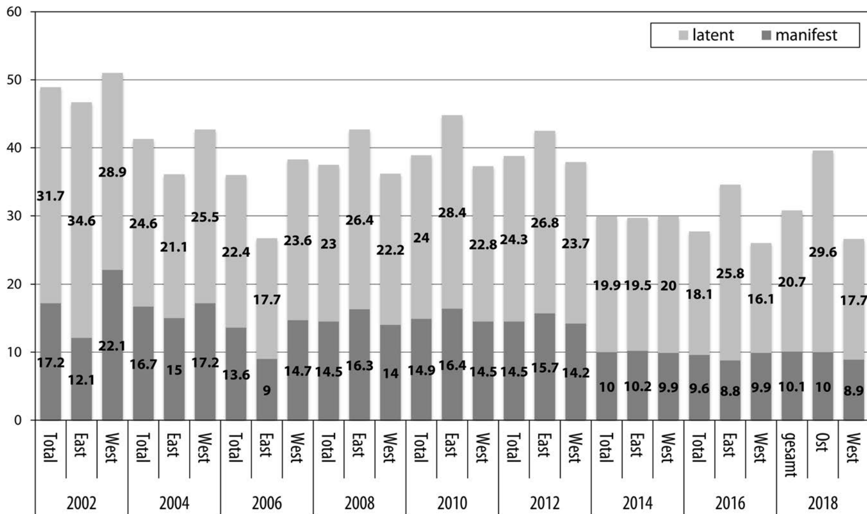


*Figure 5.3* Agreement with the statement "The Jews simply just have something peculiar about them and don't really fit in with us", 2002–2018 (in %)

then increased sharply in 2008, however, and in parts remained at a higher level than in West Germany during the years of economic crisis. This period saw the decline in anti-Semitism stagnate in the West, before the downward trend was then resumed. This suggests that the population is highly susceptible to anti-Semitism in situations of crisis.

### *Anti-Semitism in indirect communication*

Statements that give indirect expression to anti-Semitism tend to meet with more agreement than traditionally anti-Semitic statements (Figure 5.4). This is particularly the case for statement 5, with the majority of respondents explicitly supporting the view that we should focus more on current problems than on past events, with only about one person in every five openly disagreeing with this statement. There are also significant differences for all statements between East and West: there is almost consistently higher manifest agreement in the West, but higher latent agreement in the East. The fourth statement, "clever lawyers" benefit from reparations to victims, is the only one that East Germans more often agree with manifestly (41.9%). This statement expresses both the desire for a clean break with the past and the idea of Jews as "greedy". Nevertheless, there is also widespread agreement with this statement in the West, too (34.5%). Moreover, we can see that agreement with the first two statements (primary anti-Semitism) is lower than it is with the other statements (secondary anti-Semitism) at least in the West. Put simply, agreement with the topos of having a clean break is greater than the direct and indirect devaluation of Jews, although, as our

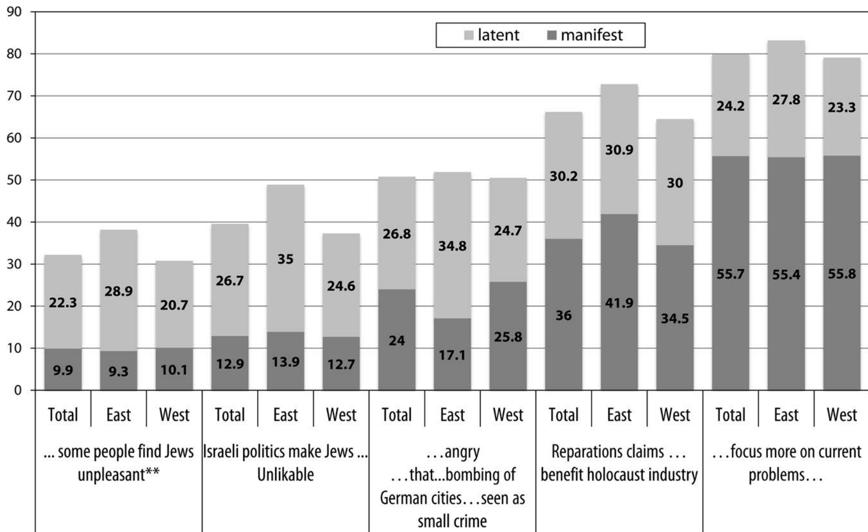


*Figure 5.4* Latent and manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication (for complete statements, see Table 5.2) (in %)

statistical investigations suggest, this topos is also closely correlated with anti-Semitism.

Figure 5.5 shows a positive result: the number of people agreeing with the statement "I can well understand why some people find Jews unpleasant" was much lower in 2018 than in any other survey year. What is noticeable

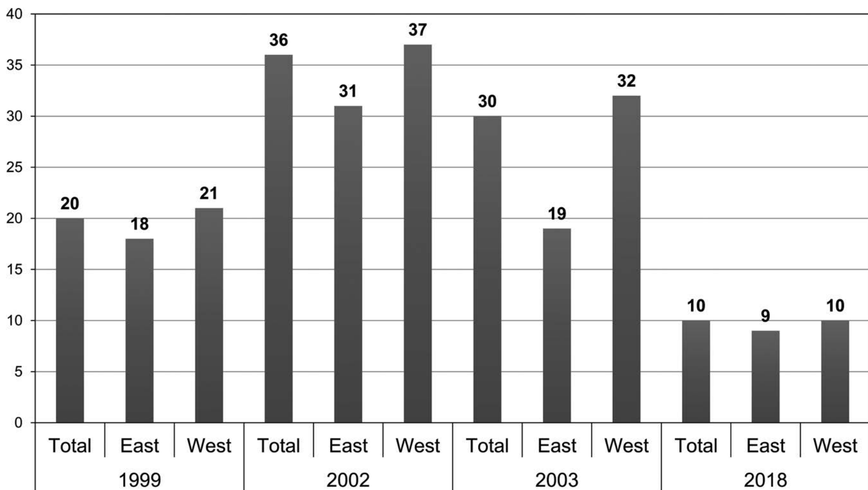


*Figure 5.5* Manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2018 (rounded-off agreement: "I can well understand why some people find Jews unpleasant") (in %)

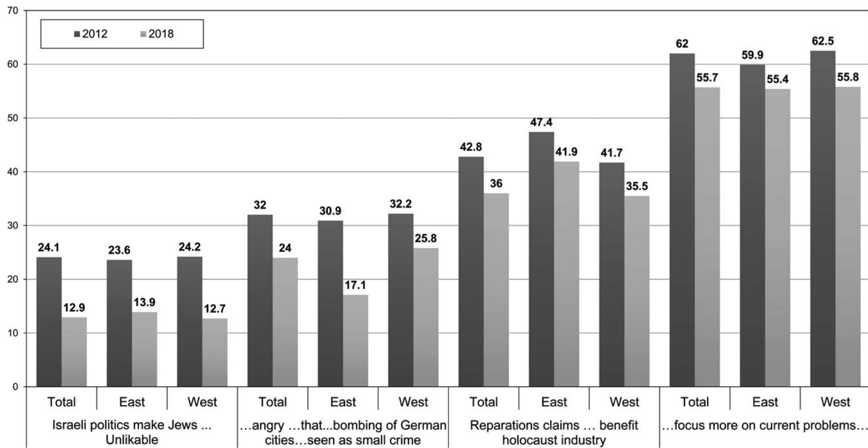


*Figure 5.6* Manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication, 2012 and 2018 (in %)

are the high values in 2002, probably an effect of the anti-Semitic election campaign run in 2002/2003 by the late FDP politician Jürgen Möllemann, who in interviews made anti-Semitic remarks especially in indirect communication about Israel. It is likely that this public breach of taboo led to a temporary shift of the social norm, thereby exposing the potential for anti-Semitism in Germany (Grünberg 2002).

For the other four statements, we only have representative comparative values for 2012 (Figure 5.6). Overall, they also show a decrease in anti-Semitism in indirect communication. This can mean on the one hand that anti-Semitism is still present in latent communication, i.e. has not disappeared but only gone underground, and on the other that the cause can at least partly lie in cohort and educational effects, since dealing with the Holocaust (e.g. in schools or in the culture of public remembrance) is more a matter of course now than it was in the 1980s. Not least, important memorials such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin have only been erected in the recent past.

In summary, anti-Semitism in indirect communication is as expected much higher than traditional anti-Semitism as measured by the Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes (Chapter 2). We should also emphasize with regard to the extended questionnaire that there is a very high level of agreement with the statements measuring secondary anti-Semitism, which confirms our suspicion that anti-Semitism is veiled by a social norm, but is nonetheless deeply rooted in German society. This at least partly explains the paradoxical situation that the (apparently) decreasing number of people with anti-Semitic attitudes is not accompanied by a decrease in anti-Semitic crimes. The barely veiled anti-Semitism can serve as a breeding ground and as a “justification” for such crimes.

## Anti-Semitism as a problem across society

Empirical social research uses sociodemographic characteristics to describe the susceptibility of a particular statistical group to anti-Semitism.[7] Conversely, looking at such groups can also show whether an attitude is spread across the entire population. We also pointed out in Chapter 1 and the introduction to this chapter that anti-Semitism is not an isolated phenomenon, but is closely related to other dimensions of the authoritarian syndrome. We can therefore expect that both certain attitudes (intention to vote in a particular way, conspiracy mentality, left-right classification, propensity to use and acceptance of violence), and factors of socialization (a person's memory of how her parents brought her up, recognition as an adult) are correlated with anti-Semitism.

We will first look at how widespread anti-Semitism is in indirect communication in certain statistical groups (Table 5.4; for traditional anti-Semitism, see Chapter 2). A linear effect can be clearly seen with regard to age: the older the group, the higher the proportion of those who show themselves to be manifestly anti-Semitic. As for gender, men more often agree with the statements. Even clearer is the difference when it comes to formal qualifications: respondents who have passed their A-levels at least are less likely to hold anti-Semitic views.

Another important factor for the development of anti-Semitic attitudes is the frequency with which a person has experienced unemployment (Table 5.5). The answers to the extended questionnaire also show that the higher the frequency of unemployment, the higher the values tend to be for anti-Semitism. However, people who have never experienced unemployment also agree with relevant parts of the statements, which again shows that the phenomenon of anti-Semitism cannot be reduced to one factor alone (in this case, that of job (in)security).

*Table 5.4* Sociodemography and manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication (in %)[8]

| | | *Manifest anti-Semitism* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Absolute* | *%* |
| Age** | 14–30 | 66 | 13.9 |
| | 31–60 | 231 | 17.9 |
| | 61+ | 159 | 25.3 |
| Gender* | Female | 228 | 17.4 |
| | Male | 228 | 21.0 |
| Education** | A-levels | 56 | 11.5 |
| | No A-levels | 399 | 21.0 |
| Residence* | East Germans | 115 | 23.4 |
| | West Germans | 341 | 17.9 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: ** p < .01; * p < 0.5.

*Table 5.5* Frequency of unemployment and manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication (in %)

| *Frequency of unemployment* | *Never (N = 1,318)* | *Once (N = 486)* | *Twice (N = 281)* | *Three times (N = 137)* | *Four times or more (N = 155)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manifest anti-Semitism** | 16.6 | 21.8 | 19.2 | 24.8 | 26.5 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: ** p < .01.

Table 5.6 shows that a person's assessment of her own economic situation has no influence on anti-Semitic attitudes. On the other hand, a person's assessment of her country's situation does have a strong effect, i.e. those who have a negative assessment of the national economic situation are much more likely to be manifestly anti-Semitic.

Table 5.7 shows the correlation between anti-Semitism on the one hand, and voting behaviour on the other. The statistical groups were formed by using the answers to the question, "If there were elections to the *Bundestag* next Sunday, would you vote and, if so, for whom?" There is manifest agreement in almost equal proportions in most groups, although agreement is at its lowest among supporters of the Green Party (9.2%) and at its highest among AfD voters (42.5%) – the latter far higher than it is among non-voters (19.4%). The historical-revisionist and anti-Semitic statements of AfD figures are apparently falling on fertile ground.

We also measured how respondents position themselves on the left-right political spectrum, which reveals a clear correlation with anti-Semitism (Table 5.8): the further to the right, the higher the level of agreement with the anti-Semitic statements in indirect communication ("far right", 55%; "right", 33.5%). In contrast, agreement is much rarer among those respondents who see themselves on the other side of the political spectrum: agreement with these anti-Semitic statements among those defining themselves as "left" and "far left" is much lower (12.2% and 14.3%, respectively).

A decisive role in explaining authoritarianism is also played by upbringing, socialization, and a person's relationship to her parents (see Adorno et al. 1950; Altemeyer 1988; Decker et al. 2012; Horkheimer et al. 1936). As

*Table 5.6* Assessment of the economic situation and manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication (in %)

| | | *Good or neither/nor* | *Bad* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Manifest anti-Semitism | Own economic situation | 18.6 | 21.9 |
| | Country's economic situation** | 17.9 | 30.1 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: ** p < .01, *N* = 2,395.

*Table 5.7* Voting behaviour and manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication (in %)

| | *Electoral participation* | | *Party preference*** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *No participation (N = 310)* | *Participation uncertain (N = 201)* | *CDU/CSU (N = 443)* | *SPD (N = 424)* | *FDP (N = 91)* | *Green (N = 173)* | *The Left (N = 166)* | *AfD (N = 160)* | *Do not yet know which party (N = 136)* |
| Manifest anti-Semitism | 19.4 | 18.4 | 18.5 | 19.1 | 14.3 | 9.2 | 16.9 | 42.5 | 15.4 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: p < .01.

*Table 5.8* Anti-Semitism in indirect communication and left-right classification (in %)

| *Left-right classification*** | *Far left (N = 49)* | *Left (N = 761)* | *Centre (N = 1032)* | *Right (N = 486)* | *Far right (N = 20)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication | 14.3 | 12.2 | 17.2 | 22.5 | 55.0 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: ** p < .01.

*Table 5.9* Parents' parental behaviour and manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication (agreement at item level) (in %)

| | | *No/occasionally* | *Yes* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Manifest anti-Semitism | Did your parents punish you harshly, even for minor things?** (1) | 18.4 | 25.5 |
| | Did your parents try to drive you to be "the best"? (2) | 19.7 | 17.0 |
| | Did your parents comfort you when you were sad?* (3) | 21.2 | 17.6 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01; *p < .05.

1 No/occasionally total: $N$ = 2,159; yes total: $N$ = 231

2 No/occasionally total: $N$ = 1,816; yes total: $N$ = 571

3 No/occasionally total: $N$ = 962; yes total: $N$ = 1,425

expected, the results in Table 5.9 show a clear correlation between a person's experience of a harsh upbringing and lack of affection on the one hand, and anti-Semitism in indirect communication on the other (unlike the other two statements, the first statement is formulated negatively).

We saw in Chapter 3 that extreme right-wing attitudes are linked to lack of recognition as a citizen, and we are therefore interested in whether the various dimensions of recognition (as a citizen, as a person, as a working person; see Chapter 3) also have an influence on anti-Semitism in indirect communication. A simple group comparison shows that there is only a correlation for those who feel no recognition as citizens, i.e. those who experience authoritarian statehood (Table 5.10).

Table 5.11 shows the correlation not previously documented between manifest traditional anti-Semitism and the presence or absence of recognition. What becomes clear is that the three spheres of recognition do have an effect on the propensity for traditional anti-Semitism, with manifest anti-Semites being much more often in the group of those who experience both authoritarian statehood and a lack of recognition in their working lives.

We have already argued that anti-Semitism is more than "just" a prejudice. This is evident in the fact, for example, that anti-Semitic stereotypes devalue Jews while ascribing certain characteristics or power to them as a collective. The conspiracy mentality should therefore be strongly correlated with anti-Semitism, and this is in fact the case for anti-Semitism in indirect communication (Table 5.12), with respondents without a conspiracy mentality agreeing with the anti-Semitic statements much less frequently (5.6%) than respondents with a strong conspiracy mentality (24.5%).

Table 5.13 presents the correlation between anti-Semitism and authoritarianism. As expected, there is also a strong correlation here: those who are authoritarian are also more anti-Semitic.

*Table 5.10* Spheres of recognition and manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication (in %)

| | | *Recognition* | *No recognition* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Manifest anti-Semitism | Recognition as a citizen** (1) | 15.5 | 30.9 |
| | Recognition as a person (2) | 19.1 | 18.5 |
| | Recognition as a working person (3) | 18.9 | 21.2 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01.

1 Recognition total: $N$ = 1,839; no recognition total: $N$ = 553

2 Recognition total: $N$ = 2,314; no recognition total: $N$ = 81

3 Recognition total: $N$ = 2,225; no recognition total: $N$ = 170

*Table 5.11* Recognition and manifest traditional anti-Semitism (in %)

| | | *Recognition* | *No recognition* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Manifest traditional anti-Semitism | Recognition as a citizen** (1) | 2.8 | 9.1 |
| | Recognition as a person (2) | 4.2 | 7.4 |
| | Recognition as a working person** (3) | 4.0 | 8.1 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01.

1 Recognition total: $N$ = 1,853; no recognition total: $N$ = 560

2 Recognition total: $N$ = 2,335; no recognition total: $N$ = 81

3 Recognition total: $N$ = 2,244; no recognition total: $N$ = 172

*Table 5.12* Anti-Semitism in indirect communication and the conspiracy mentality (in %)

| | *No manifestation (N = 840)* | *Average manifestation (N = 1,210)* | *Strong manifestation (N = 310)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conspiracy mentality ** | 5.6 | 11.7 | 24.5 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: **p < .01.

*Table 5.13* Authoritarianism and manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication (in %)

| | *Disagree* | *Agree* |
|---|---|---|
| Troublemakers should be made very aware that they are unwelcome in society.** | 60.7 | 83.1 |
| Important decisions in society should be left to its leaders.** | 19.8 | 37.9 |
| Tried and tested practices should not be called into question.** | 34.7 | 61.5 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: ** p < .01.

*Table 5.14* Propensity for violence and manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication (in %)

| | *Disagree* | *Agree* |
|---|---|---|
| Propensity to use violence** (1) | 18.3 | 23.5 |
| Passive acceptance of violence* (2) | 18.0 | 23.1 |

Pearson's chi-squared test: ** $p < .01$, * $p < 05$.

1 Disagree total: $N = 2{,}060$; agree total: $N = 332$

2 Disagree total: $N = 1{,}872$; agree total: $N = 516$

Finally, Table 5.14 presents the correlation between anti-Semitism and the propensity for violence, this propensity being higher among those who agree with the anti-Semitic statements.

We can now identify the factors behind agreement with anti-Semitic statements. There are differences between age groups, but also between gender. Moreover, we found evidence of an authoritarian dynamic at work: first, the focus on the national economy indicates that this acts as a secondary authority; second, both the lack of recognition as a citizen and the experience of violence in childhood show how crucial authoritarian socialization is for the emergence of anti-Semitism. The fact that anti-Semitism in indirect communication is embedded in an authoritarian syndrome is shown by the support given to the right-wing authoritarian AfD, but also by the strong correlations with conspiracy mentality, authoritarianism and the propensity to use and acceptance of violence. In the following section, we wish to validate our preliminary findings so that we can draw a conclusion.

## Anti-Semitism and authoritarianism

Our theoretical reflections lead us to assume that there are several factors involved in the emergence of the authoritarian dynamic in society, which includes submission to an authority – something that we can currently see in people's identification with a strong national economy. This submission is invoked by authoritarian upbringing as a child and by authoritarian statehood, the latter experienced as a lack of recognition in adulthood. This authoritarian dynamic leads to an authoritarian syndrome that is manifested in conspiracy mentality and authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission, and conventionalism. We therefore expect that people who are exposed to this multifactorial phenomenon will be anti-Semitic.

Table 5.15 shows the correlations between these dimensions and anti-Semitism. To measure the correlations, we calculated total values for each case: for anti-Semitism including both forms ("traditional" and "indirect communication"); for authoritarianism including the three dimensions of aggression, submission and conventionalism; and for conspiracy mentality based on the three statements, "conspiracies that are concocted in secret",

*Table 5.15* Correlation between anti-Semitism and elements of authoritarianism

| | *Anti-Semitism* |
|---|---|
| Authoritarian character | |
| Authoritarianism | .463** |
| Conspiracy mentality | .375** |
| Authoritarian or democratic socialization | |
| No recognition as a person | −.041* |
| No recognition as a citizen | .281** |
| No recognition as a working person | −.112** |
| Harsh parental punishments | .157** |
| (Not) comforted by parents | −.045* |

Significant correlations: Kendall's tau b **p < .01, *p < .05; no significant correlation: parental pressure to succeed.

"secret organizations that have a great influence", and "leading figures are only puppets" (the questionnaires are presented in Chapter 3). Moreover, we measured the spheres of recognition with our own questionnaire (see Chapter 4), based on the theory of recognition outlined by Axel Honneth (Honneth 1992). We used a further abbreviated questionnaire to record in three dimensions how respondents recollect being brought up by their parents (see Chapter 3; Schumacher et al. 2000).

As expected, the bivariate correlations are statistically significant throughout. Authoritarianism and conspiracy mentality correlate strongly with anti-Semitism, and we can therefore assume that these factors have a strong influence on the emergence of the authoritarian syndrome. The variables summarized under the heading "authoritarian or democratic socialization" also have statistically significant correlations with anti-Semitism.

To validate the influence of the different variables, we conducted a multivariate regression analysis, which not only tests the influence of several variables on a dependent variable, but also weights the variables against one another. This allowed us, for example, to examine how important an individual's socioeconomic situation is compared to ideological factors. To verify the results, we added mistrust and locus of control (i.e. whether respondents think that they can shape their own lives) to the variables of personality, and included some sociodemographic features (Table 5.16).

Our regression model explains .293 of the variance of the dependent variable (anti-Semitism), a good value for an investigation in the social sciences; moreover, the model allows for detecting reciprocal effects. First, the regression analysis shows that education, age and gender have a weak but statistically significant influence on anti-Semitism: older people, men and respondents with a lower level of education are more anti-Semitic. In contrast, unemployment, low income, and place of residence in East or West Germany have no effect. This shows that in many cases differences between individual statistical groups cannot explain, or can only inadequately explain, the complexity of the phenomenon. Second, it confirms our

*Table 5.16* Results of the regression analysis (high beta weights correspond to high level of influence)

| *Indicator* | *Regression coefficient* | *Beta* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Authoritarian character | | | |
| (High) authoritarianism | .671 | .366 | .000 |
| (High) conspiracy mentality | .683 | .231 | .000 |
| Internal locus of control (high) | .152 | .053 | .007 |
| Current economic situation in Germany (bad) | .196 | .038 | .046 |
| Authoritarian or democratic socialization | | | |
| No recognition as a citizen | .126 | .089 | .000 |
| Harsh parental punishments | .499 | .073 | .000 |
| Recognition as a person | .119 | .067 | .001 |
| Sociodemography | | | |
| Education (low) | −.680 | −.057 | .002 |
| Gender (male) | −.448 | −.046 | .009 |
| Age (high) | .011 | .041 | .023 |
| Corrected $R^2$ | | .293 | |

findings that there is a clear correlation between authoritarianism and conspiracy mentality on the one hand, and anti-Semitism on the other. With beta weights of .671 and .683, the authoritarian syndrome has the strongest influence on the emergence of anti-Semitic attitudes.

Third, the weak but significant effects of socialization also fit in here. The experience of authoritarian parents and of harsh punishments does indeed have an influence on the emergence of anti-Semitism, as do experiences of authoritarianism in adulthood, where the lack of recognition as a citizen has the highest correlation with anti-Semitism. Fourth, the locus of control among anti-Semites is significant: they feel that they have their own lives under control. The projection of "secret powers", i.e. the conspiracy mentality, clearly helps them to feel that they are in control, which also corresponds to the fact that anti-Semites feel a high level of recognition as people. Their attempt to stabilize their own relationship to the world through anti-Semitism can also be a factor here.

Linear regression with gradual exclusion of cases, without significant influence: East/West, unemployment, net household income, own economic situation, recognition as a working person, comforted by parents, external locus of control, mistrust; level of significance as indicated in each case in column p.

## Summary of results

### *High prevalence of anti-Semitism in Germany*

Anti-Semitism is widespread in Germany. About 10% of respondents from the most recent Leipzig Authoritarianism Study (2018) explicitly agreed with traditional anti-Semitic statements, while between 10% and over 50%

agreed with anti-Semitic statements that are formulated in such a way that they allow anti-Semitism to be communicated indirectly. If we also take into account communication latency ("undecided" answers), then in 2018 the proportion of traditional anti-Semites rose to almost 40% in the East, and to over 25% in the West, and in indirect communication to between about 40% and slightly over 80% in the East, and to between 30% and almost 80% in the West. The highest rates of agreement were with post-Holocaust demands for a clean break with the crimes that the Germans committed during the Second World War.

### *Simultaneous decline in anti-Semitism since 2002*

As for anti-Semitism that is communicated openly, the rates were highest in West Germany in 2002. Over the period covered by our study (2002–2018), we can discern a decline in manifest anti-Semitism, which pertains both to the questionnaire used throughout, and to the supplementary questionnaire on anti-Semitism in indirect communication. There is no alteration to the trend if we take into account not only manifest but also latent agreement with anti-Semitic statements. However, there were also fluctuations over the period, which suggests that the strength of anti-Semitic attitudes among the population correlates with the stability of social norms, and that the potential for anti-Semitism is even greater than our study could gauge.

We should point out once again here that the representative survey was conducted in the households of respondents, where the interviewer gave the questionnaire to the respondent to fill out herself. The respondent is therefore in a private and familiar environment, and can reveal her real opinions on the statements without fearing social norms. We can therefore assume that disclosure is easier in this anonymous form than using other methods (e.g. telephone surveys, participant observation, group discussions). However, the social norm will still dampen to a certain degree the respondent's willingness to disclose her opinions, since the social norm is not disabled completely through the anonymous survey situation.

### *Violence and anti-Semitism*

Anti-Semitic attitudes and the propensity to use or acceptance of violence correlate with one another, albeit weakly. Combined with the high level of latently anti-Semitic individuals, this correlation provides an explanation for the increase in anti-Semitic crimes and the simultaneous decline in anti-Semitism: people's underlying propensity for violence and their knowledge that there is an acceptance of violence among like-minded people lead them in the current social situation to convert their attitudes more often into action than was the case a few years ago. This also matches our findings on the radicalization of right-wing authoritarian milieus (Decker & Brähler 2016: 95).

***The authoritarian dynamic fosters anti-Semitism***

Anti-Semitism is fostered by the authoritarian dynamic in society, since it is a reaction to experiences of authoritarianism as children and adults. Anti-Semitism is part of an authoritarian syndrome in the individual, who, in submitting to the rules of economic rationality, needs a valve for the affronts produced by this submission. Many people seem to find this valve in anti-Semitism. Through projection, the conspiracy mentality gives people the feeling that they are keeping their bearings in a confusing world. And the higher rates of manifest agreement in the years of economic crisis from 2008 to 2012 indicate the threat posed by this attitude.

## Notes

1 The term emerged in the second half of the 19th century and, unlike the usual terms *anti-Jewishness* and *anti-Judaism*, referred explicitly to the racist justification for rejecting Jews. It has been used since the 1940s to denote hostility to Jews.

2 Latency refers to agreeing partially to ant-Semitic statements (level 3 of a 5-step scale), whereas indirect communication is the (full) agreement with statements that use ciphers like "US East Coast capital" instead if directly using the word Jew/Jewish.

3 See, for example, the answer to the last inquiry made by the Bundestag delegates Petra Pau, André Hahn, Gökay Akbulut, other delegates and the parliamentary group the Left, German Bundestag printed matter 19/3522.

4 https://report-antisemitism.de/ (19 September 2018).

5 By that, they did not mean *psychological* latency. This misunderstanding can easily occur, since latency is also spoken of with regard to the individual when a person is not aware of her own wishes. Bergmann and Erb, however, were concerned with *social* latency in the sense of indirect communication, and not with psychological repression.

6 For a comparison with our usual questionnaire, see chapter 2.

7 A statistical group, such as "all women" or "all men aged between 31 and 60", is not a social group in the sense that its members are in some way related to each other. A statistical group is formed solely on the basis of the common characteristic "female gender" as determined in the survey.

8 Here and in the following, we use a threshold value of **18≥ to measure manifest anti-Semitism in indirect communication (see Table 5.1).** Respondents evaluate each statement on a scale of 1 to 5. With a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 25 points, the value 18 is higher than the average value of a person who always gives "undecided" answers (15). For us, 18 represents manifest agreement.

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# 6 Religion as a Factor of Conflict in Relation to Right-Wing Extremism, Hostility to Muslims, and Support for the AfD

*Gert Pickel and Alexander Yendell*

**Religion, authoritarianism, and right-wing extremism**

Discussions in extreme right-wing circles today are strongly shaped by current migration. In this context, there is (quite heated) debate within extreme right-wing movements and parties about how best to exploit issues at the centre of society, although the potential for right-wing extremism among the German population far surpasses the devaluation of refugees and asylum seekers. It is not yet clear how far these attitudes towards refugees and immigration are the first signs that extreme right-wing attitudes are spreading in society. Also unclear is whether the polarization of citizens in their attitudes towards flight and migration endangers social cohesion and the democratic political culture in Germany (Almond & Verba 1963; Pickel & Pickel 2006), and radicalizes sections of the population (Pickel & Pickel 2018).

One way to understand this dynamic could be to explore how public debates refer to the religious affiliation of refugees, and in particular to religious fanaticism and the lack of cultural fit between immigrants (especially Muslim immigrants) and Christian and secular Europe. These debates also connect up with demands for the "Christian Occident" to be defended against the Muslim "influx". All this raises the question of the position taken by the Christian churches to flight, migration, Islam and right-wing populism (Adida et al. 2016; Hidalgo & Pickel 2018). What is contested is the precise position that the churches take, and whether this position is adopted by the faithful. The different viewpoints can be mapped according to two questions. First, do religious affiliations and Christian beliefs act as *immunizing factors* against authoritarianism and right-wing extremism? The leaders of the two main Christian churches in Germany have taken a clear stance on refugees, and, as position papers and public statements make clear, they assume, or at least hope, that the church can exercise an influence in this area. Second, though, is it not also the case that belonging to a Christian church and sharing its beliefs can actually *increase* people's openness to authoritarianism and right-wing extremism? A number of findings make such a claim plausible, with recent studies pointing to the

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interdependence of specific religious attitudes and prejudices, and showing that attitudes such as religious dogmatism and authoritarianism are linked statistically (Hunsberger & Jackson 2005; PEW 2018).

But we should not see religion simply as a factor that promotes authoritarianism, xenophobia, and hostility to Muslims. Belonging to a religion can also serve as a point of reference for rejecting such attitudes and prejudice. It is clear that those sections of the population that are open to extreme right-wing propaganda reject not only immigration (Pickel & Pickel 2018), but also and especially *Muslim immigration*. This allocation of people to a group based on their religion is confirmed in demonstrations, such as by Pegida in Dresden, or in statements by Alternative for Germany (AfD) politicians, where great play is made of the threat posed to Germany and its culture by Muslim immigration (generalized as the Islamist threat). It is still unclear how deep this image of an "enemy" is embedded in the population, and how far it undermines the basic principles of a pluralistic democracy. What cannot be denied, though, is that, despite its loss in social significance in terms of membership and number of believers, religion still plays an important role in public discussions today (Pickel 2017; Pollack & Rosta 2015), and the idea that a certain religious affiliation is particularly threatening is held by secular people, too.

A further question concerns the impact that these perceptions have on political behaviour and on attitudes to democracy. Recent studies have shown the significance of anti-Muslim attitudes for the election of populist parties, and especially in Germany of the AfD (Arzheimer 2015; Häußler 2016; Hambauer & Mays 2018; Lengfeld 2017, 2018; S. Pickel 2018; Rippl & Seipel 2018). What is unclear, though, is the significance that these attitudes have in comparison to other factors. The electoral successes of the AfD could also be due to pure protest, to people's own experiences of being devalued (for example, as a member of the social group of East Germans), or a mixture of underlying authoritarian attitudes. What is interesting is to see whether the focus on Muslims as the "enemy" could lead to a breach in the dam that has so far kept openly extreme right-wing positions at bay. For example, research on populism talks in terms of fluid borders between positions classified as *right-wing populist* on the one hand, and *right-wing extremist* on the other (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017; Priester 2007), with the core attitude of populism (against elites and for the *Volk*) allowing overlaps with the goals pursued by the political right. Conversely, there is discussion as to whether it is at all legitimate to associate those who vote for the AfD with right-wing extremism. Thus, the attitude to Muslims and refugees is central in public debate. What is difficult to deny is the major role that the distinction between religions plays in the successes of extreme right-wing movements and the AfD (Wodak 2017).

These are the questions that we address in this chapter. First, we examine whether religious affiliation (or no affiliation) is correlated with authoritarian attitudes.[1] Our thesis is that this correlation is only minor, since the

composition of church members barely differs from the composition of the population as a whole. Second, we turn to the attitudes of Germans to Muslims, and attempt to classify these attitudes according to a framework of authoritarian attitudes. Finally, we analyze the impact of hostility to Muslims on attitudes to democracy and voting behaviour.

## Affiliation to Christianity as an immunizing factor?

There has been repeated discussion of the role that religious affiliation and identity play in authoritarian attitudes and people's openness to right-wing extremism (Adida et al. 2016; Liedhegener 2016; Pickel 2018). Who should want to remain in the church in modern, secular times, except dogmatists and people lacking rationality? If we take seriously the claim that religious dogmatism and authoritarianism are closely related, then this should also affect political attitudes (Pickel 2017). A recent study by the Pew Research Centre (PEW 2018) caused something of a stir. Not only did it challenge the common assumption that Christianity acts as a kind of buffer against authoritarianism, extremism and populism; it even came to the opposite conclusion, arguing that Christians, and especially active Christians (measured according to regular churchgoing), reject immigrants and people from other religious communities more strongly. These findings do not correspond to the findings of other surveys, however, with similar calculations directly contradicting the Pew Centre's findings, and suggesting that members of Christian churches have a more positive attitude to migration (Pickel 2018). The data of the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study of 2018 do confirm the findings of the Pew Research Centre in one respect, though: members of Christian churches seem to be somewhat more open to authoritarian attitudes than those without a religion (Figure 6.1).

However, the differences are minor. The willingness to follow and the desire for security that are contained in the items for authoritarianism seem to appeal to some church members, and it is quite possible that there are overlaps between dogmatic religious groups and extreme right-wing groups in terms of voting. But this also applies to the group of non-religious people, who differ only slightly from church members. The fact is, though, that Christianity in general does not protect people from authoritarian attitudes. Figure 6.2 illustrates this once again. It shows that the average values on the overall scale of right-wing extremism (these values are calculated from the rates of agreement with the 18 extreme right-wing statements; see Chapter 2) do not in fact vary between Catholics, Protestants and those without a religion. This also shows, on the other hand, that there is no evidence that being a Christian strengthens extreme right-wing attitudes. Thus, church membership neither prevents people from adopting extreme right-wing attitudes, and nor acts as a breeding ground for such attitudes.

Appropriately, there is also no significant difference between Catholics, Protestants and the non-religious when it comes to selected group-focused prejudices that we recorded with statements from the survey of

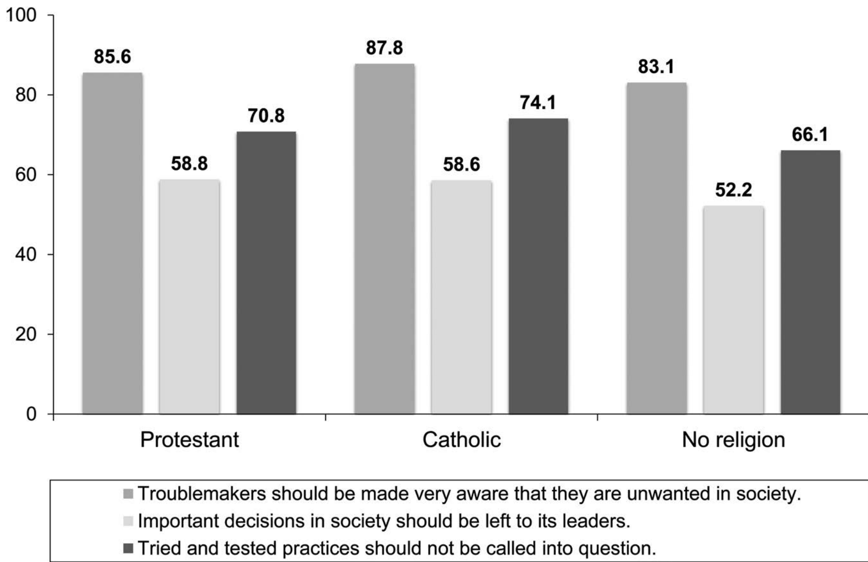


*Figure 6.1* Patterns of authoritarian attitudes by denomination (in %)

Agreement with the three statements (answer categories: partly agree, mostly agree, completely agree)

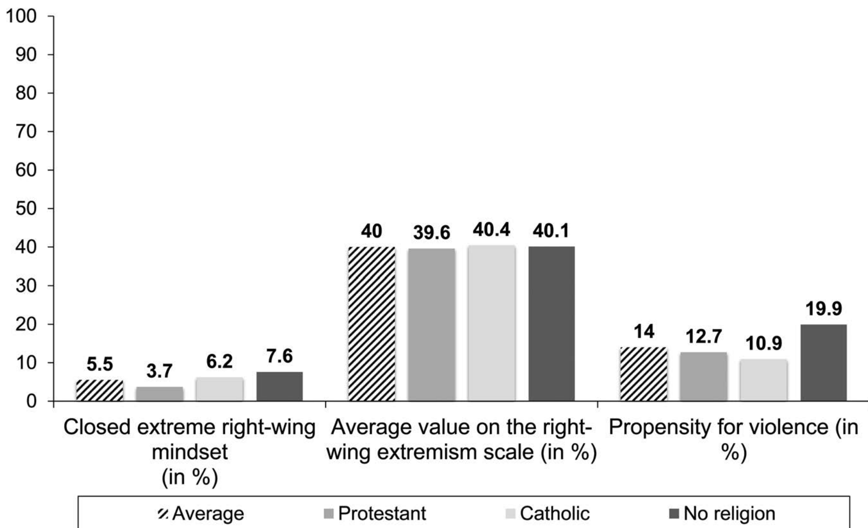


*Figure 6.2* Extreme right-wing attitudes and the propensity for violence by denomination

Proportion: closed extreme right-wing mindset by denomination in %; presentation of average values by denomination on the basis of all 18 statements measuring right-wing extremism (see Chapter 2); propensity for violence = agreement with “I am quite prepared in certain situations to use physical violence to assert my interests”

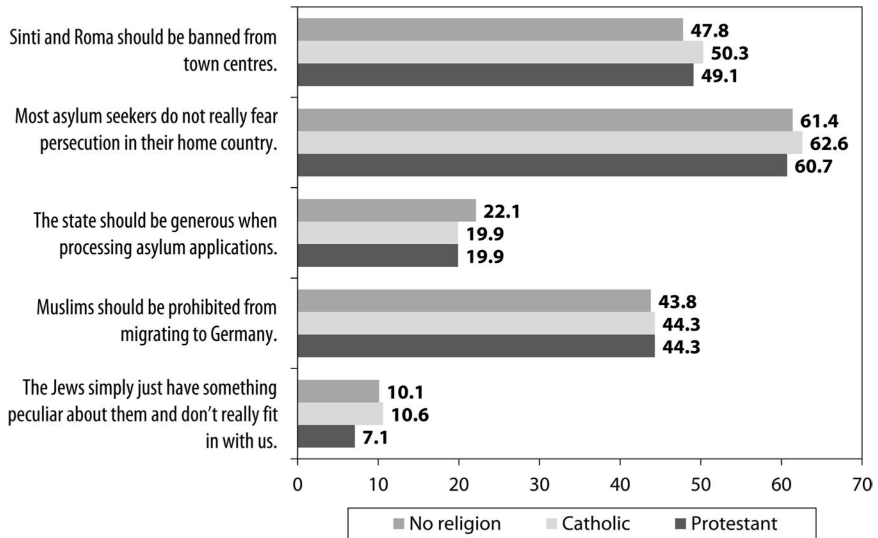


*Figure 6.3* Group-focused enmity by denomination (in %)

Group-focused enmity
Percentages for answers "partly agree" and "completely agree" for the first four statements; percentages for answers "mostly agree" and "completely agree" for the last statement

group-focused enmity (Heitmeyer 2012; Zick et al. 2016) (Figure 6.3): religious affiliation (or no religion) is not a decisive factor in anti-Semitism, antiziganism, or hostility to Muslims. The differences between Christians and the non-religious regarding the individual statements in the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study of 2018 amount to a maximum of three percentage points, which means that church members *per se* are neither more positive nor more negative to people, with the same applying to their attitude to foreigners in general. What is worth noting, though, is that church members are much less willing to use violence to assert their beliefs, with only just under 12% agreeing with the statement "I am quite prepared in certain situations to use physical violence to assert my interests" (in contrast to 20% for the non-religious).

Table 6.1 shows the correlation between voting behaviour and denomination: the SPD is the most popular party among Protestants, and the CDU/CSU is the most popular party among Catholics. The Left is the most popular party among those without a religion. The proportion of AfD voters among the non-religious is 16%; among Protestants and Catholics, 8% and 7%, respectively. This difference cannot be explained solely by the fact that the proportion of those without a religion is higher in the East than in the West, since the proportion of AfD voters among the non-religious is comparable in the East and West (14% *vs.* 17%). What is important here (besides the

*Table 6.1* Party preference by denomination (in %)

| | *Protestant* | *Catholic* | *No religion* |
|---|---|---|---|
| CDU/CSU | 24.0 | 42.0 | 12.1 |
| SPD | 34.4 | 20.1 | 18.1 |
| FDP | 5.0 | 5.3 | 6.8 |
| Greens | 10.1 | 10.7 | 10.1 |
| Left | 7.3 | 4.1 | 22.7 |
| AfD | 8.1 | 7.1 | 15.7 |
| NPD | 0.5 | 0.8 | 1.3 |
| Other | 1.9 | 2.1 | 3.5 |
| Explicit refusal to vote | 11.3 | 13.1 | 16.7 |

Answers to the question: "If there were elections to the *Bundestag* next Sunday, would you vote and, if so, for whom?"

strong tradition that dictates how someone votes, e.g. CDU-Catholic) is the low propensity among the non-religious to vote for the mainstream parties.

## Hostility to Muslims among the German population

The question remains as to the significance of religious affiliation for authoritarian attitudes. One possibility is the devaluation of members of a certain other religion. The toolbox to measure group-focused enmity has been added to in recent years to include the devaluation of Muslims (Zick et al. 2016), which can be seen as a reaction to the increasing hostility to Muslims that first became visible in public discourse at the latest when the "refugee crisis" began. Following this discourse and the political points of attack, especially those made by the AfD, we can see that the focus on *members of "Islam"* has become *an anchor point for the dynamization of authoritarian attitudes*. A distinction must be made here between two groups: people with a closed extreme right-wing mindset, and people without such a mindset who are nonetheless opposed to immigration, Muslim immigration, and Islam. The rejection of Islam and its members seems very much to exceed the hard core of right-wing extremists in the German population, something true not only of Germany, but also of other European countries (Strabac & Listhaug 2007). Critics of religion usually argue that the rejection of Muslims is linked to scepticism and criticism of Islam, and has less to do with prejudice and xenophobia. "Justified criticism of Islam" is then occasionally used to legitimize what are actually anti-Muslim statements, i.e. attitudes that hugely devalue a specific group of people. It was for this very reason that the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study of 2018 explicitly investigated hostility to Muslims and not Islamophobia (see Chapter 2), and drew on the construct of group-focused enmity, even though some of the statements may depict not so much hostility as discomfort ("Muslims make me feel like a foreigner in my own country"). The results show that 44% of respondents believe that

Muslim migration to Germany should be prohibited (although only 15% agree with this statement completely; see Figure 2.17 in Chapter 2). More than half said that Muslims made them feel like foreigners in their own country (see Figure 2.18 in Chapter 2). Thus, negative attitudes to Muslims and their migration to Germany have increased again since 2016 (Decker et al. 2016: 50), which is hardly surprising given the prevalence of public debates and discussions on Muslim immigration. Indeed, what is surprising is that, despite all the debates, the majority of Germans still reject such a prohibition on immigration. The rates of agreement with a prohibition on immigration are sometimes lower in other surveys (Pickel & Yendell 2016; SVR 2016; Zick et al. 2016), which is due to the different survey methods used (here: self-completion in face-to-face surveys). But, regardless of how high rates of agreement are exactly, there has nowhere been a decline in the time period covered in criticism of Muslim immigration, not even after the significant decline in real immigration after the 2015 peak. We can see a comparable trend regarding attitudes to asylum seekers, which are closely linked to hostility to Muslims. Although only two thirds of the refugees are Muslims, many Germans see them all as Muslim (Pickel 2018).

What is noticeable is how consistent the discrepancy is between the old and the new federal states: about half the respondents in the East advocate imposing a prohibition on Muslim immigration, while in the West that figure is 42%. This attitude is particularly strong in areas where the proportion of Muslims in the population is less than 1%. This corresponds to other results (Pickel & Yendell 2016), which see the reason for this attitude as lying partly in the lack of contact with this "foreign group" (Tajfel 1982). This provides fuel for extreme right-wing movements and the AfD, and explains why East Germans, who are often already negatively influenced by the media, are easier to mobilize against Muslims, refugees, and those speaking out in their defence. Apart from this regional difference, socio-structural characteristics make hardly any difference in people's attitudes to Muslims and asylum seekers (Table 6.2): anti-Muslim attitudes tend to be more common among men than women, among people without A-levels, and among those from lower income groups. What is noticeable is the high proportion of those advocating a prohibition on immigration among people in the youngest age group studied. In general, the older generations have a somewhat more negative attitude to Muslims, and older citizens are somewhat more likely to suspect asylum seekers of not really feeling persecuted. More interesting is the fact that the generations differ only slightly from each other in their attitude to Muslims. Social status (income) and level of education represent a line that distinguishes the attitudes of the population. At the same time, the social structure contributes relatively little to explaining hostility to Muslims.

On the other hand, the influence of attitudinal patterns on how people see members of the Islamic religious community is much stronger, with the statistical correlations between authoritarianism and hostility to Muslims

*Table 6.2* Agreement with statements expressing hostility to Muslims and devaluation of asylum seekers by sociostructural characteristics (in %)

| | *Muslims should be prohibited from migrating to Germany* | *Most asylum seekers do not really fear persecution in their home country* |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 42.2 | 58.2 |
| Male | 46.4 | 65.4 |
| A-levels | 27.2 | 48.4 |
| No A-levels | 48.4 | 64.9 |
| 14–19 | 46.8 | 57.9 |
| 20–39 | 40.7 | 60.0 |
| 40–59 | 45.2 | 62.0 |
| 60+ | 45.6 | 62.9 |
| Income below 1,000 euros | 47.2 | 61.8 |
| Income 1,000–1,999 euros | 44.2 | 63.5 |
| Income 2,000+ euros | 40.8 | 57.1 |
| East | 50.7 | 67.3 |
| West | 42.4 | 60.0 |

being considerable. If we assume that, as personality traits, authoritarian attitudes are more deeply rooted in the reservoir of attitudes that people have than attitudes to individual social groups, then the causality is clear: such attitudes promote a negative attitude to Muslims. This is something that the statistical results of the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study confirm (Table 6.3). Extreme right-wing and anti-Muslim attitudes correlate highly with each other, as is shown by calculating the measures of correlation. Unsurprisingly, the dimensions of group-focused enmity and openness to right-wing extremism correlate closely, with many respondents thereby having negative attitudes to more than just one social group. Their group-focused prejudices (Allport 1979) combine to form a general misanthropy directed against various social groups (Zick et al. 2016). At the same time, the rejection of Muslims is prominent since it (like the rejection of asylum seekers and Sinti and Roma) is particularly widespread.

Table 6.3 provides statistical evidence of the correlation already mentioned between hostility to Muslims and the devaluation of asylum seekers. Religious affiliation (to an Islamic religious community) is the central point of reference for negative and authoritarian attitudes, with many respondents seeing a link between attitudes to refugees, asylum seekers, and Muslims.[2] Devaluing Muslims unites different groups of people. On the one hand are people who, due to insecurity and fear of terrorism, distance themselves from Islam and Muslims (Hafez & Schmidt 2015; Pickel & Yendell 2016; Yendell & Pickel 2017). They come from the centre of society, are not necessarily anti-democratic, but have often internalized aspects of social inequality. On the other are people hostile to Muslims who have clearly authoritarian or extreme right-wing attitudes. This rejection of Muslims is promoted by a

*Table 6.3* Correlations between hostility to Muslims and authoritarianism (measures of correlation)

| | *Muslims make me feel like a foreigner in my own country* | *Muslims should be prohibited from migrating to Germany* |
|---|---|---|
| Troublemakers should be made very aware that they are unwelcome in society. | .213** | .219** |
| Important decisions in society should be left to its leaders. | .147** | .213** |
| Tried and tested practices should not be called into question. | .174** | .197** |
| Right-wing extremism | .374** | .408** |
| Devaluation of asylum seekers | .373** | .317** |
| Conspiracy mindset (scale) | .202** | .228** |
| Propensity for violence | .134** | .160** |

Right-wing extremism = overall index of all 18 statements; devaluation of asylum seekers = index from the two statements "The state should be generous when processing asylum applications" and "Most asylum seekers do not really fear persecution in their home country"; measure of correlation: Kendall's Tau-b; ** = $p < .01$.

fear anchored in sections of the population of a cultural "swamping" by foreigners (Pickel & Pickel 2018; S. Pickel 2018), with people deeming Islamic beliefs to be incompatible with their own culture, be it Christian or secular. This fear is closely linked in turn to authoritarian attitudes and the desire to solve (supposed) immigration problems by sealing off borders. Immigrants are regarded as being essentially "different" and these cultural differences as being static, which is based on the idea of an immutable cultural essence. Interestingly, what people cite as the reasons for rejecting Muslims are precisely their purported unwillingness to compromise, religious dogmatism, and the propensity for violence, with the rejection of Muslims being fostered by references to their strong religiosity and their dogmatism (Koopmans 2017). Those hostile to Muslims also often draw on fake news and conspiracy theories, and dramatize individual cases to justify their goals.

Data from the 2018 Leipzig Authoritarianism Study and from the other studies cited reveal a potential problem for German society, one that gives shape to the otherwise often empty statements about a "return of religions", with this return to be understood largely as a discussion about Islam and the integration or inclusion of its members into German society and culture. Stereotypes, group-focused prejudices, and the perceived link between Islam, Islamism, and terrorism play just as important a role in how people position themselves as the sense of a "cultural swamping" by an Islam deemed culturally alien (Pickel & Yendell 2016; Pollack et al. 2014). This view of Islam is transferred to its members, making them a particularly prominent and critically perceived group in the German population. The link

between this perceived threat and the consequent devaluation of Muslims in society matches the otherwise cautiously expressed idea of Islamophobia (Halliday 1999; Helbling 2012).

## Is voting for the AfD a political consequence of authoritarianism and hostility to Muslims?

What conclusions can be drawn from these observations? If we look at the public debates, strongly marked as they are by slogans against Muslims, the question arises as to how these attitudes are reflected in modes of behaviour. Voting behaviour is of particular importance for democracies, since political power is distributed through the election of political representatives. It is striking here that various parties have recently adopted positions that emphasize security and the restriction of immigration (and of Muslim immigration in particular).

The AfD takes a particularly clear position here. Their programme, as well as the public statements made by their politicians, are explicitly opposed to immigration and to what they see as the spread of "Islam" in Germany, and they criticize multiculturalist ideas and how Germany deals with Muslims. We can, therefore, assume that the AfD is particularly attractive for voters who are hostile to Muslims, and that they, more than supporters of other political parties, tend towards ideas of inequality. These assumptions were confirmed in the Leipzig *Mitte* Study of 2016 (Decker et al. 2016: 67–94; Yendell & Pickel 2017), and the picture did not change significantly in 2018, either (Table 6.4): by far the strongest hostility to Muslims and rejection of asylum seekers can be found among AfD voters, with 74% thinking that Muslims should be prohibited from migrating to Germany (compared to less than 50% of voters for other parties), and 84% agreeing

*Table 6.4* Voter preferences by hostility to Muslims and devaluation of asylum seekers (in %)

| | *Muslims should be prohibited from migrating to Germany* | *Asylum seekers do not really fear persecution in their home country* | *Germany is being dangerously swamped by foreigners* |
|---|---|---|---|
| CDU/CSU | 44.1 | 62.1 | 33.7 |
| SPD | 38.8 | 59.0 | 35.8 |
| FDP | 34.4 | 65.6 | 24.7 |
| Left | 32.9 | 47.9 | 24.0 |
| Greens | 24.3 | 42.8 | 18.5 |
| AfD | *73.8* | *83.8* | *67.3* |
| Don't know | 36.5 | 60.0 | 32.6 |
| Explicit non-voters | 52.1 | 64.7 | 42.9 |

Prohibit immigration as a scale with five response categories; statements on asylum seekers and Muslims: as a scale with four response categories.

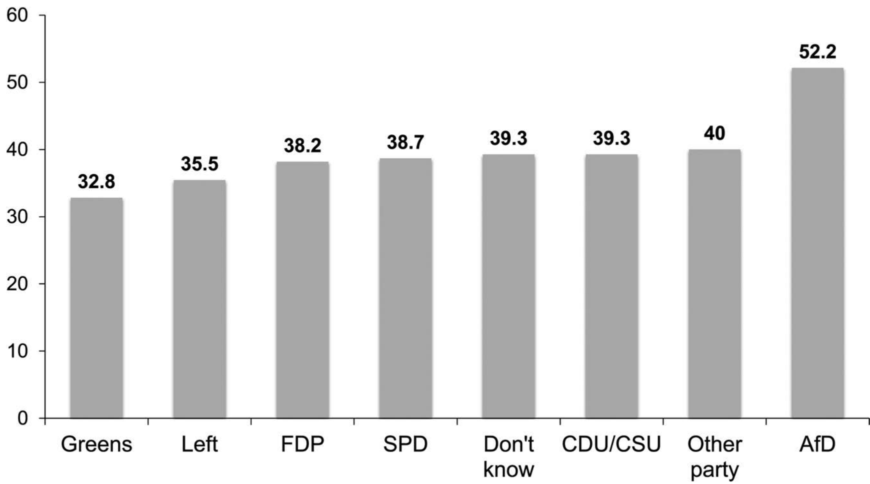


*Figure 6.4* Extreme right-wing attitudes by voter behaviour (in %)

Right-wing extremism
Average values for all statements in the Leipzig Questionnaire on Extreme Right-Wing Attitudes (FR-LF) (min. 18 = completely disagree, max. 90 = completely agree)

with the statement that asylum seekers do not really fear persecution in their home country (compared to less than two thirds of voters for other parties). Although the proportion of those agreeing with such statements is high in general, the gap to those voting for the AfD is nonetheless wide. They are most closely followed by the group of non-voters, who (still) choose the exit option over the protest option, although many have similar attitudes to AfD voters when it comes to Muslims.

The radicalization of the AfD electorate already described in 2016 did not abate in 2018 (Decker et al. 2016: 77–78, 93). At the opposite pole to AfD voters are still those who vote for the Greens, who agree the least with extreme right-wing statements, although there are still people among them with anti-Muslim views (albeit fewer than in the other established parties) (Figure 6.4). The scale depicting right-wing extremism makes clear the radicalness of the AfD electorate (minimum value 18, maximum value 90). As was the case in 2016 (Decker et al. 2016: 78), AfD voters are by far the highest on this scale, and again reached a value above 52 in 2018. This also means that the increase in the number of AfD voters has hardly altered the structure of the party electorate since 2016, and that the party can motivate an above-average proportion of people with extreme right-wing attitudes to vote for the AfD. The party is thus proving to be a reservoir for anti-Muslim voters from both the right-wing conservative and the right-wing extremist camps.

However, how people vote does not depend on one factor only. Especially for the AfD, there is still a lack of experience and empirically sound knowledge that would enable us to identify all the factors behind a person's decision to vote for the party. Because the AfD is a recent phenomenon, for example, people do not identify with the party as strongly as they perhaps do with the established parties, even though there are initial signs of this; also, because there is a dearth of candidates for leadership positions at federal and state level, there has not yet developed a focus on certain figures. In this way, the issues and ideas that the AfD represents remain the same like the voters want.

Table 6.5 depicts a binary logistic regression model that shows the influence of various indicators on voting or not voting for the AfD. It takes the following indicators into account: the overall right-wing extremism index, the overall conspiracy mindset index, the overall hostility to Muslims index, the overall devaluation of asylum seekers index, the three dimensions of recognition (as a person, as a working person, as a citizen), two statements on trust ("In general, people can be trusted" and "You can no longer rely on anyone today"), people's assessment of the general economic situation in Germany at present and in one year, a person's own economic situation at present and in one year, as well as age, gender, frequency of unemployment, income, A-levels (yes/no), and region (West and East Germany).

*Table 6.5* Regression models on voting for the AfD

| *Indicator* | *Beta* | *p* |
|---|---|---|
| Right-wing extremism (scale) | .057 | ** |
| Position towards asylum seekers | n.s. | |
| Hostility to Muslims | .426 | ** |
| A lot of recognition as an individual | n.s. | |
| A lot of recognition as a citizen | n.s. | |
| A lot of recognition as a working person | n.s. | |
| Harsh parental punishments | n.s. | |
| Authoritarianism (scale) | .324 | * |
| Conspiracy mindset (scale) | .175 | ** |
| Trust 1: general trust | .367 | ** |
| Trust 2: no reliance on people | n.s. | |
| Negative assessment of general economic situation in Germany | n.s. | |
| General economic situation in Germany in one year | n.s. | |
| Negative assessment of own economic situation today | .228 | * |
| Negative assessment of own economic situation in one year | n.s. | |
| Age | .018 | ** |
| Gender | .537 | ** |
| Unemployment (frequency) | n.s. | |
| Income | n.s. | |
| A-levels | n.s. | |
| East/West | n.s. | |
| Nagelkerke's $R^2$ | .266 | |

Which factors, then, explain voter preference for the AfD? The calculations show that hostility to Muslims is a central factor. Also important are the effects of authoritarianism, the conspiracy mindset, and people's negative assessment of their own current economic situation. A lack of trust in fellow human beings (the central indicator for measuring (a lack of) social capital) also encourages people to vote for the AfD. Extreme right-wing attitudes also play a role, but the statistical effect in the multivariate model clearly lags behind the effects of authoritarian attitudes and hostility to Muslims. Besides age having a weak effect, it is also men who tend to vote for the AfD. What is interesting is that objective factors of deprivation such as low income or unemployment are not decisive in comparison to other explanatory factors. In other words, these results suggest that social deprivation, fear of social demotion, and fear of being excluded from the labour market are of only minor significance. Voting for the AfD is instead motivated more by fears of a "cultural swamping", an ethnocentrism that has perhaps long existed, and the massive rejection of Muslims. Also plausible is the finding that voting for the AfD goes hand in hand with a conspiracy mindset, since the AfD often paint the press and its fake news as an (additional) enemy.

The results of the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study of 2018 confirm current explanatory models for why people vote for the AfD. There is much to be said for the *cultural backlash* thesis, which states that people turn to right-wing populist slogans or parties from a mixture of fear of a cultural "swamping" and rejection of (sometimes never accepted) modern values and changes (Inglehart 2018: 173–199; see also Inglehart & Norris 2016; Rippl & Seipel 2018). The results of the 2018 study also support the idea that voting for the AfD is based on cultural factors, on authoritarianism and xenophobia, and in particular on hostility to Muslims (Bieber et al. 2018; S. Pickel 2018). On the other hand, what proves unsound as an explanation is the idea that modernization has left AfD voters behind in socio-structural terms (Lengfeld 2017, 2018). The fundamental argument here is that those socio-structurally disadvantaged sections of the population have (or at least think they have) fallen behind in the context of accelerated modernization and globalization. This then leads people to be defensive regarding alteration and social change, and to glorify the past and their own group, the Germans. If we look at the data a little more closely, however, then there is actually not much to suggest that AfD voters are primarily losers in the process of modernization. They may feel a little more often that they can no longer keep up with the developments of globalization and are thus falling behind, but this is not the most important factor behind how they vote. Rather, how they vote is due to a mixture of authoritarianism, political alienation (manifested primarily in disenchantment with politicians and political parties), and concern about a "cultural swamping". This attitude finds its enemy in various groups in society that are perceived as different, such as Muslims. Openness to extreme right-wing positions and voting for

the AfD comes about through a mixture of different factors: people's mistrust in the established elites, fear of a "cultural swamping", social marginalization and nationalism, the feeling that their own identity is devalued, and the devaluation of social groups perceived as different. But AfD voters are above all, and more often than average, both hostile to Muslims and authoritarian. This also reveals the close proximity of AfD voters to supporters of the Pegida movement (Vorländer et al. 2016; Yendell et al. 2016).

We will now examine what this voting behaviour means for people's attitudes to democracy. Following Lipset (1981) and Pickel and Pickel (2006), research on political culture distinguishes between how people assess democracy today and political legitimacy (i.e. democracy as a principle of government). There were three items in the 2018 survey: agreement with democracy as an idea, with democracy as laid down in the constitution, and with democracy as it functions in Germany (see Chapter 2, Figures 2.14–16). The data show that dissatisfaction with democracy as an idea is barely stronger among AfD voters than it is among voters of other parties. However, this positive attitude changes as we approach the existing political system. For example, dissatisfaction with the constitution and with how democracy functions in Germany is far greater among AfD voters than it is among voters of other parties, and even among non-voters, who already exhibit a high level of dissatisfaction with democracy (see Table 6.6). Besides the protest nature of this attitude, AfD voters are disproportionately often close to an extreme right-wing position that rejects the democratic and constitutional form of government. Since the AfD also proposes few constructive alternatives regarding political action, and generally resorts to (populist) polarizations between a (homogeneous) *Volk* and the political elites (or those not deemed part of the *Volk*), what the AfD is primarily making the enemy here is the understanding of democracy as pluralistic and liberal. Such an understanding of democracy is certainly a threat to the democratic form of government (Mounk 2018).

*Table 6.6* Voting for the AfD and satisfaction with democracy (in %)

| | *Dissatisfaction with democracy as an idea* | *Dissatisfaction with democracy as laid down in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany* | *Dissatisfaction with democracy as it functions in the Federal Republic of Germany* |
|---|---|---|---|
| CDU/CSU | 6.1 | 15.1 | 34.2 |
| SPD | 5.2 | 19.0 | 32.8 |
| Left | 3.0 | 25.7 | 50.9 |
| Greens | 3.0 | 9.0 | 27.2 |
| AfD | 6.3 | 42.5 | 76.3 |
| Non-voters | 10.8 | 30.7 | 59.8 |

## Political polarization and dealing with religious-cultural differences in the population

As we have seen, belonging to a Christian church shields people from neither authoritarian nor extreme right-wing attitudes. The key factor is how the believer understands the values that she associates with Christianity. And even that may not be decisive if the individual's religion is strictly separated from political ideas, as is often the case in secularizing societies. For a deeper analysis of the effects of different forms of religiosity, be it the tendency towards religious dogmatism or prosocial values, we require further data than those provided by the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study of 2018. However, the data collected confirm what other surveys also show: namely, that *being a Christian alone does not immunize people against extreme right-wing or authoritarian attitudes*.

Religious affiliation comes into play elsewhere – as a *point of reference* for xenophobia, ethnocentrism, dissociation from others, and the perception of a looming "cultural swamping". And it is here in particular that Muslims, i.e. a social group identified solely by religious affiliation, are deemed (more so in East than in West Germany) to be dangerous, unmodern, and incompatible with Germany (see Chapter 2, Figures 2.17 and 2.18; Pickel & Pickel 2018; Pickel & Yendell 2016; Pollack et al. 2014). Religious affiliation is to a certain extent ethnicized and transferred to all Muslims living in Germany, whether they have just entered the country or have now been here for two or three generations. Other studies (Pickel & Pickel 2018) have shown that rejection of Muslims is based less on personal experience than on characteristics attributed to Muslims and group-focused prejudices. This rejection of Muslims is fostered by authoritarianism, xenophobia, and other attitudes from the spectrum of group-focused enmity. The media (Pickel & Yendell 2016) and sections of the academic discourse (Bleich 2011; Helbling 2012) are also helping to make affiliation to a particular religion an important factor in current political debates. The negative assessment of Muslims offers the opportunity to identify them as a foreign and hostile group, an opportunity seized by a large proportion of the German population. We should not confuse here the far-reaching rejection of Muslims with the legitimate criticism of Islam or its representatives, but be careful not to overextend the argument justifying criticism of Islam. Data from the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study of 2018 also show that hostility to Muslims exceeds general xenophobia. Muslims are often burdened with additional characteristics (e.g. refugees or asylum seekers), which compounds their position as outsiders in Germany (and other countries).

The AfD would not have been so successful had there not been a refugee debate linked to Islam: the party benefits from the verbal struggle against the "cultural swamping" caused by Muslim immigration. In fact, this is simply a (re-)adoption of the widespread thesis of a "clash of cultures" (Huntington 1996). AfD politicians thus disregard basic democratic

principles of equality, while at the same time immunizing their supporters against criticism and arguments from other sections of society by encouraging a conspiracy mindset. Voting for the AfD is to absorb this rhetoric. It is above all the clear rejection of immigration, especially by Muslims, that motivates people to vote for the AfD – a multi-causal analysis shows that this is the most important explanatory factor. The profound political alienation of this electorate from the established political system (or, rather, parties and politicians) is the necessary basis for this development. There occurs a *cultural backlash* (Inglehart 2018; also discussed by Lengfeld 2017), with a return to nativism, an ethnicist nationalism (Holtmann 2018), and authoritarianism serving to defend the country against cultural swamping.

Earlier data from the Leipzig *Mitte* studies show that the radicalization of the AfD electorate has continued; or that, despite the increase in the number of its voters, the AfD has maintained its radicalism. Although the AfD also wants to establish its electoral base in the conservative political milieu, the political attitudes of its electorate indicate that it is more its extreme right-wing rhetoric that counts, with the great majority of AfD voters displaying ideas of inequality and attitudes that are not (or at least not always) compatible with the basic democratic values of Germany. Through its tactic of escalation and its strong symbolism, the AfD pursues policies with this clientele in mind that help to polarize society, thereby encouraging its supporters to adopt a position that sometimes crosses the border to right-wing extremism (Pickel & Decker 2016). Some already had such extreme right-wing beliefs; others are susceptible to such beliefs through the rejection of certain elements of democracy. AfD voters have a disproportionately strong tendency towards authoritarianism. The AfD electorate is thus made up largely of authoritarian nationalists and ethnocentric citizens from the centre of society, whose stance on democracy as it has established itself in Germany ranges from the sceptical to the thoroughly negative. How far the growth of this electorate threatens democracy in Germany is still open, as is the size of this electorate that democracy can cope with (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018). Polarization is seen as a particular danger to the fundamental and longstanding consensus on how to deal with one another, and poses a threat to the social cohesion of the German population. But what does “social cohesion” mean in a largely heterogeneous and individualized society? It is perhaps above all dealing sensibly with other people and their opinions, as well as accepting social pluralism. And, despite all the alarming results presented here, it is important to remember that the majority of the German population are *not* hostile to Muslims (almost 60% reject a prohibition on Muslim immigration) and can let other people live their lives (most recently, SVR 2018). It is important to agree on what the central values of a democracy are, and they should certainly include rejecting the exclusion of certain social groups and accepting an essentially pluralistic society.

## Notes

1 Due to the small number of cases, it is not possible to gain reliable insights for religious groups other than Christians and those without a religion.
2 Unfortunately, it was not possible to survey another central point of attack that the extreme right-wing spectrum makes on democratic and pluralistic ideas of society – namely, anti-genderism, which is closely linked to group-focused prejudices.

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# 7 Authoritarian Dynamics and Social Conflicts

## The Leipzig Authoritarianism Studies

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The Leipzig Authoritarianism Studies working group has been surveying political attitudes in Germany since 2002. In this book, we have reflected on the theoretical ideas and the findings up to 2018, and we now wish to provide an outlook of what from our point of view these findings imply, with regard to political developments not only in Germany, but also beyond.

### What is unique about our investigations: continuous study of extreme right-wing attitudes

This series of investigations was prompted by an unprecedented wave of right-wing extremist attacks in unified Germany in the 1990s. There was very little political reaction initially, the then CDU/FDP (Christian Democratic Union and Free Democratic Party of Germany) Federal Government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl actively denying that there was a right-wing extremist background to the attacks. For example, the Ministry for Family and Youth Affairs, then led by Angela Merkel, launched a programme in response to the attacks, but all its activities were initiatives against violence only, while it ignored the political motivation behind the attacks. At the same time, Chancellor Kohl had been repeating the mantra "Germany is not a country of immigration" since his government policy statement of 1989. Hence, it can be assumed in retrospect that there was tacit agreement, if not with the violence, then with the ideological goals of the xenophobic attacks. The first visible reaction to right-wing extremism was the establishment of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation in 1998, named after a refugee from Angola who had been murdered in Eberswalde in eastern Germany in 1990. Since then, the foundation has documented more than 200 murders committed by right-wing extremists.[1]

The foundation was established as a result of private commitment, and was by no means an expression of a developing awareness of the dangers of right-wing extremism among the political elites. Thus, resistance to the extreme right formed initially in civil society. At the same time, there was an upsurge of scholarly research on the threat to democracy, including

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social-psychological research in Germany. This scholarly research comprised two series of studies, each unique in terms of the international comparison that they made. On the one hand, these studies documented the spread of ideologies of inequality among the population, while on the other seeking to determine the causes for this threat to democracy. The initial question that they sought to address can be summed up as follows: How widely did the general population share ideologies of inequality?

After a number of smaller studies in the 1990s, the Bielefeld social-psychologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer (2002) launched the study series "German Conditions" (*Deutsche Zustände*) in 2001 to focus on the spread of group-related prejudices – or, to use Heitmeyer's phrase, group-focused enmity (*gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit*). Just a year later, in 2002, we also began our study of right-wing extremist and authoritarian attitudes in Germany (Decker, Niedermayer & Brähler 2003). While Heitmeyer's series of annual studies was designed to last for ten years and concluded in 2011 (Heitmeyer 2012), our longitudinal, biannual study continues to this day. Both study series – Heitmeyer's and our own – made use of representative surveys based on standardized questionnaires. However, while Heitmeyer's was oriented more toward models of social cognition, assuming as it did that various forms of group-focused enmity were caused primarily by intergroup processes, ours looks more closely at the connection between social contradictions and psychological reactions to them. Therefore, we use the questionnaire on right-wing extremist attitudes to record not only group-related devaluations of other people (captured in our questionnaire by the dimensions of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and social-Darwinism), but also people's desire for authoritarian structures in society and their idealization of Nazi Germany (captured by the following dimensions: advocacy of a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship, chauvinism, and the trivialization of Nazi crimes; see Chapter 2).

To take account of what we consider to be the most important factor of influence, we also included from the beginning a questionnaire on authoritarian orientation. It is this particular focus on the political level of the extreme right-wing worldview that allows us to develop a comprehensive view of the phenomenon, and that makes our study series unique in Germany and beyond: to our knowledge, there are as yet no similar studies (Kiess & Decker 2016). Although phenomena such as historical revisionism and anti-pluralist, pro-dictatorship attitudes are also prevalent in other societies, the division of research that is common internationally into (social-psychological) research on prejudice on the one hand, and research (mainly in political science) on authoritarianism on the other, means in our view that central elements of authoritarian dynamics in modern contemporary societies are not captured adequately.

Both study series, Heitmeyer's and our own, are able to provide an unambiguous answer to the initial question: from the outset, a key finding was how widespread and how consistent anti-democratic and authoritarian

attitudes have been over the years among large segments of the population. Xenophobia, it became clear, was the gateway to right-wing extremism; almost every second person shared this core element of right-wing extremism (i.e. xenophobia) in one way or another. Moreover, in socio-demographic and political terms, prejudice and elements of right-wing extremist ideology are prevalent at the *center* of society, rather than at its fringes. It was for this reason that until 2016 we called our series the Leipzig "Center" Study. In doing so, we drew on the ideas of Seymond Lipset (Lipset 1959) and Theodor Geiger (Geiger 1930; Decker & Brähler 2016), who were able to show that NSDAP voters in the 1920s and 1930s did not develop their political orientation from the social margins, but rather migrated from parties of the "center" (cf. Falter 1981). The paradoxical notion of a "right-wing extremism of the center" indicates that the threat to democracy even in the new century is not limited to the fringes of society, as may be suggested by the term "extremism" and by the state-sanctioned horseshoe theory, which postulates the idea that there is an extremism-resistant "center" and equivalent dangers at the fringes. Heitmeyer's title was also intended to emphasize the scandalous normality of prejudice and right-wing extremism. When it came to the details and analyses of such extremism, however, our study differed significantly to Heitmeyer's.

Our approach goes well beyond the social-cognitive conception in contemporary social psychology in terms not only of its underlying precept (*right-wing extremism of the center* rather than *group-focused enmity*), but also of its theoretical orientation. Focusing much more on the causes of such phenomena, our approach has given increasing weight to the concept of authoritarianism. This can be seen in the present publication, where we have also highlighted our focus on authoritarian dynamics in the title. Moreover, we distinguish between the notion of authoritarian dynamics and that of authoritarian syndromes, the former being used to denote social conditions, and the latter, individual responses to socialization. This distinction is obviously based on the classical studies of the authoritarian character, which, using the psychoanalytic social psychology of Erich Fromm, Theodor Adorno, and Else Frenkel-Brunswik, gauged the impact on the individual of the social relations of power and violence (Fromm 1936; Adorno et al. 1950). Like these early studies on authoritarianism, we also use focus groups and in-depth methods in addition to representative surveys. For this purpose, we regularly conduct group discussions in various projects and analyze these discussions using depth-hermeneutic methods (e.g. Decker et al. 2008). Again in our view, this combination of methods allows for analyses of contemporary modern society that are much more subtle.

With a series of studies that has been conducted for almost 20 years, it is perhaps not surprising that the research design should undergo constant development in response to findings made and to additional group discussion studies. The research results presented in this book show how much,

for example, the conspiracy mindset is related to authoritarian attitudes, and it therefore occupies a special position in the authoritarian syndrome. Scholarly attention has focused increasingly in recent years on an individual authoritarian need (albeit, one that is shared by many), this focus being the result especially of recent social and political developments, and the increasing global impact of conspiracy narratives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like xenophobia and anti-Semitism, the conspiracy mindset can, on account of its prevalence, serve as a hinge or code among anti-democratic milieus that primarily share a rejection of liberal and pluralistic society. This and other findings of the Leipzig Authoritarianism Studies have relevance beyond the German context, as we would now like to explain in the remainder of this conclusion.

## The classical concept of authoritarianism: potentials for international research

The concept of authoritarianism has recently undergone three reductions in the way that it has been perceived and adopted, these reductions having significant implications for the analytical strength of the concept. First, following Bob Altemeyer (Altemeyer 1981), the reduction to three dimensions of authoritarianism; second, the reduction to a social-cognitive understanding of prejudice that abandons the insights on socialization provided by psychoanalysis (Sibley & Duckitt 2008). Both reductions result in the complete concealment of the context both of intergroup conflict and of the emergence of the need for group identity. Third, the sociological literature understands authoritarianism today primarily as a form of domination, rather than as a need, one whose emergence may well be shaped by society and certainly by the prevailing violence and contradictions within it, but which cannot be understood without taking account of the subject's own logic. One example of this reduction is the understanding developed in the wake of Stuart Hall's work (Hall 1982; Demirović 2018; Heitmeyer 2018) of authoritarianism as a neo-liberal strategy of crisis management.

The Leipzig Authoritarianism Studies attempt to address these deficits by using both a psychoanalytical understanding of subjectivation, and a critical-theoretical understanding of social change. The latter characterizes continuous social change in modern society in terms of existing antagonisms, each of which derives from present relations of power and authority, but equally in terms of historically overarching (though not ahistorical) fault lines of processes of emancipation from natural relations. The two central authors of Critical Theory, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, summed up this perspective in the double definition of resentment, and especially of anti-Semitism, in the well-known formulation: the "rancor of the dominated subjects of the domination of nature" (Horkheimer & Adorno 1944, 238).

Exemplary for this research, as well as for the relevance of our empirical results for authoritarianism research outside of Germany, can be the dynamics of a "secondary authoritarianism" that we have described elsewhere (Decker 2019). The prevailing image within the public and scholarly debate of authoritarian movements as comprising a "leader" obscures the view of authoritarian social dynamics that are entirely devoid of personal leaders. In his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (*Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse,* Freud 1921), Freud described how groups or masses are constituted as the result of communal processes of identification; in the terminology of psychoanalysis, authority in the psychic structure of group members takes on the character of an ideal that replaces the ego.

As an ego ideal, this leader performs three functions. First, it allows for the binding of anxieties through participation in fantastic greatness and power; by submitting to authority, all group members can share in this power. Authority thereby draws in patriarchal societies on the father of early childhood: the violence of the father forces children to accept his rules, and they are then compensated for their obedience with the prospect of sharing in his power. Second, this early experience of the father includes aggression and hatred for the father precisely because of the violence experienced: it is only the threat, or the actual experience, of violence that gives recognition to the reality of the paternal law and turns the father into the ideal. Third, the authoritarian mass offers a simple solution to these acts of aggression: they can be directed from the group at those who do not belong to the group.

This description has some justification, and is also supported empirically by social-cognitive research on inter- and intra-group relations (Stellmacher & Petzel 2005). What often becomes lost, however, is the "secondary mass" also described by Freud, i.e. that group which is indeed produced by identification with a common ideal – through being tied not to a person, however, but to (for example) a theory or ideology. In post-Nazi Germany, the economy assumed the position of such an idealized authority, one that can secure a person's self-worth if she identifies with it and that may require submission to its demands, as a "narcissistic filling" (Decker et al. 2013). It substituted for the lost *Herrenmenschen* ideology as much as it suppressed guilt and shame for the war of aggression and extermination waged by Germans.

This has repercussions to this day: it was not during the 2015 movement of refugees that xenophobia and anti-Semitism rose to alarming levels in Germany, but in 2012, at the height of the global economic crisis (at a time when the situation in Germany had in fact already improved, but when the crisis still loomed and posed a threat in Europe and globally; see Kiess & Lahusen 2018). When the idealized object is threatened, authoritarian resentment is at its strongest. This means that authority depends much more on the needs of the group than on the seductive skills of the fascist propagandist. What is more, we can only understand authoritarian dynamics in

the first place if we take into account the needs of individuals, which can be manipulated, put into service, and used for social conflict. What is crucial for understanding authoritarian needs is the question of the social genesis of desires and wounded subjectivity. It is precisely this question that the analysis of contemporary society and its authoritarian dynamics must address.

This finding is relevant beyond Germany for two reasons. First, we must reckon with an increasing authoritarian dynamic even when there seems to be no personal authority. In general, the function of authority seems to have changed, this ideal following less of an identification with the father (as it was still described at the beginning of the 20th century), and more a fusion with an all-powerful (mother) figure. This change is also of great relevance for the societal structure. While the father authority offers power and prosthetic security, it also demands that its claims in reality be recognized. Only, the actual father no longer has this prominent position in the family. This development cannot pass the figure of authority by without leaving a trace; the character of the leader is also no longer the same as it was at the beginning of the 20th century. Not only has the father lost his legal and economic supremacy (Federn 1919; Mitscherlich 1969), the function of the leader in the authoritarian group has also changed with the demise of the Oedipus complex. Not that authority has disappeared completely – but it is now no longer the ambivalent father-imago that is re-constituted by the group through identification.

This does not mean that the need for authority has disappeared, and nor has the authoritarian dynamic with its acts of aggression toward “others”. But even in groups where a leader is to be found – such as Trump, for example – it is no longer the leader but the group itself that serves as wish-fulfilment and prosthetic security: authority is represented no longer by a paternal power in which the group participates, but exclusively by the group itself. Leo Löwenthal already showed in his analysis of fascist propagandists that it is not so much that such propagandists seduce the audience as that they read the audience’s wishes from their eyes and deliver what they want to hear (Löwenthal 1949). He already characterized the essential element of the fascist propaganda of the first half of the 20th century as ambiguous and unserious. This presupposes something other than a father proclaiming his own law. Moreover, this high sensitivity to the moods of the audience can be found in today’s agitators, whose success depends even more on their own need for recognition from the group in front of them. They are much more part of the group and the group illusion. For, fusion in the group is now intended to heal the narcissistic wound so that there is no need to acknowledge the offending reality (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1975). This suggests that it is not about the father, but about an earlier love object whose power is to be reinstated. In this respect, the importance of the person Donald J. Trump (or other right-wing populist politicians such as Vladimir Putin, Boris Johnson, and Jair Bolsonaro) is clearly overestimated, but the authoritarian dynamics within the United States and other

societies are underestimated to at least the same extent. Identification with authority in terms of a mother bond serves to empower thought and deny reality (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1975). This aspect is especially important for understanding the conspiracy mindset and superstition as a component of the authoritarian syndrome.

The second reason why this finding is relevant beyond Germany is that the idealization of economic strength in Germany sheds light on the significance of capitalist modes of production in general. After all, economics could only have acquired such a significant function in postwar Germany because the economic sector had already had such a function. Marx pointed out that private wealth can only be accumulated because it has been extracted from elsewhere; in other words, wealth is based on a fraud that permanently leads to conflict in societies with a capitalist mode of production (Marx 1867). The fact that the cause of the conflict is hidden partly because this expropriation of surplus value also contradicts the ideological self-understanding of bourgeois society as a system that comprises market subjects, equal in rights and acting under free and fair conditions. Therefore, according to Marx, people lead themselves up the garden path and establish a fetish in the middle of society. Marx's explanation is perspicacious on the one hand. On the other, though, despite all the religious metaphors in his writings, Marx ignored the fact that there is a close relationship between religion and capitalist commodity production. Why the compulsion not only to constant accumulation, but also and especially to permanent growth?

The sociologist Max Weber (Weber 1904/1905) saw this more clearly when he exposed the motive behind capitalist accumulation. The communal working of nature by humans has always had the goal of satisfying sensual-bodily needs through providing the means for survival. But the ever further refinement of this activity, i.e. the working of nature, also had another drive that points beyond the moment of the mere satisfaction of needs in the here and now. One could also say: by always refining the means of production and always using the forces of nature ever more comprehensively, the species still pursues the desire to step out of the mere compulsion of nature, not only to satisfy needs, but to eliminate scarcity in the long run. Hence, the dread of stagnant growth, which threatens not only the status quo, but also capitalism's specific promise of salvation. If Weber is correct, then this thesis will not only apply in Germany, but also (in part) decide on the legitimacy of the political system in other societies.

It is here that the points mentioned separately come together. The authority of the capitalist economy derives its power from the promise of salvation. The absolute wealth that is available to individuals places the entire range of commodities at the service of the satisfaction of needs – or, in terms of drive psychology, promises the unrestricted satisfaction of all sensual-bodily needs (Deutschmann 1999). And, even if the circle of persons who have these means at their disposal must remain limited, the unfolding of the productive forces has been conflated with the promise to eliminate suffering

and death since the beginning of capitalist commodity production. In this respect, the shift of the authoritarian dynamic can also be described in terms of psychodynamics. Instead of acknowledging the reality of the paternal law, the group's fantasy of omnipotence helps to deny the mortifying reality, which is a mystical-political conviction (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1975, 90). Not only those who directly reveal their authoritarian need through their ideology are affected by an authoritarian dynamic; the dynamic must also leave its mark elsewhere. If this understanding of the authoritarian dynamic is correct, then we must concede that its effect can also be observed in groups that pursue emancipatory goals, but operate in the reality of the group ideal (Pechriggl 2013).

## Note

1 https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/todesopfer-rechter-gewalt/ (accessed 25 August 2021).

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