RIGHT-WING VIEWS AMONG
DUTCH SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

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Introduction

Young people are generally viewed as being left-wing oriented or at least
progressive. This is an old but persisting fallacy. Karl Mannheim diagnosed it in
1943 and wrote, “When I was young the general opinion was that young people
were progressive by nature. This has since proved to be a misconception . . .
Youngsters are by nature neither progressive nor conservative, but represent a
potential force, ready to support any new beginning”.

In the sixties and early seventies, this new beginning was clearly inspired by
the left. In Holland young voters (and particularly students) turned to the left
(Janssen and Voestermans, 1981 and 1984). Ever since then, the Dutch left-
wing parties could be sure of their support. The conservatives could only argue
and hope that political understanding would come with adulthood. Recent
crusades against nuclear plants, anti-American demonstrations and huge mass
meetings against the installation of cruise missiles have only served to make the
Dutch youngsters’ left-wing image even stronger.

There is, however, an important undercurrent of right-wing preferences and
opinions, especially among young people. In several studies in 1974, 1975 and
1976, there were indications of a slightly growing and, in the end, substantial
shift to the right. Since the last elections, this became manifest in a substantial
increase of the VVD-electorate (1972: 14%; 1977: 18%; 1982: 24%), the VVD
being the Dutch conservative party. Among young voters and secondary school
students, the conservative party is the favourite at the moment (Table 1).

In order to unravel the ‘ideo-logics’ of the recent right-wing shift in opinions,
we drew up an analysis of political beliefs based upon a survey among 4,733
secondary school students (mean age: 16.8; 50% boys, 50% girls).

Method

In Holland there are only a few right-wing political parties. To the left there are
parties representing all kinds of socialism, including anarchism and commu-
nism. To the right we have the VVD – a conservative but clearly democratic
party – and the Centrum Party, a party of the extreme right which, according to
many people, holds racist ideas. There is also an ideological gap between the
two. We tried to fill up that gap by constructing a Guttman Scale, combining

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>University Students</th>
<th>Young Voters</th>
<th>Secondary Pupils</th>
<th>School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Left-wing parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>(CPN, PSP, PPR)</td>
<td>9 43</td>
<td>9 27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8 12.5</td>
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<td>Social Democrats</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(PvdA, D’66)</td>
<td>48 27.5</td>
<td>34 31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36 35</td>
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<td>Christian Democrats</td>
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<tr>
<td>(CDA)</td>
<td>16 9</td>
<td>31 18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34 24.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right-wing parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>(VVD)</td>
<td>27 20.5</td>
<td>26 24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%</td>
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party preferences and scales for conservatism, law and order thinking and extreme right-wing (in some items racist) opinions. The conservatism scale consists of 8 items about leadership, equal opportunities, morals and family (Hagendoorn, 1976). The law and order scale contains 14 items, mostly from the F scale of Adorno et al. (1950). The extreme right-wing scale (9 items) is based on the SINUS research in Western Germany (1982) and contains questions about racism, abortion and nationalism. The alpha reliability coefficients for these scales are reproduced in Table 2.

RESULTS

The Structure of Political Beliefs

The scale we constructed by combining party preferences and the three attitude scales clearly measures the right-left dimension. It meets the criteria for scalability (.72) and reproducibility (.92)*. We now have a scale for party preferences with a built-in ideological precision to the right. Table 2 shows the correlation between the right-left scale, the three subscales and two additional scales for ethnocentrism (16 items) and male-female egalitarianism (6 items).

Although the right and the left on the Guttman Scale differ nearly maximally in content, we also found some similarity. Political activity and the amount of system blame correlate curvilinearly with the Guttman Scale. At both extremes, there is more activism and more system blame. Another important difference pertains to the kind of political activity. To the left, activism is shown in

* It is clear that party preferences are mutually exclusive. The three separate attitude scales also meet the criteria for scalability (.72) and reproducibility (.89). For further 'technicalities', see: Hagendoorn and Janssen (1983), pp. 109-127.
Table 2: The Mean Score for Extreme Right-wing (racist) Opinions, Law and Order Thinking, Conservatism, Ethnocentrism and Male/Female Equality, at the Eight Positions of the LEFT-RIGHT Guttman Scale (N = 473).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>extreme right-wing ideas</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>law and order thinking</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conservatism</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnocentrism</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male/female equality</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>-.58</td>
<td>.76</td>
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overt behaviour (demonstrations, sit-ins, etc.) To the right, political activism is often clandestine (graffiti for instance).

**Right-Wing Views**

On the basis of our data, we estimate that about 8% of the Dutch secondary schools pupils hold extreme right-wing (including racist) ideas; 27% have ethnocentric feelings; 35% preach law and order; 42% have a conservative outlook. These facts and figures may sound familiar for many countries. For Holland, they meant a clear surprise. Our presentation two years ago got enormous attention in the press. It was hot news that extreme right-wing ideas were held by Dutch secondary school pupils.

Although our research meant a surprise, it is not certain that one can speak of a trend to the right, as far as opinions are concerned. Van Deth (1985) has shown a slight trend to the left since 1973, also for the younger generation (15-24). Meloen (1983) reports a steady fall in scores on the authoritarianism scale. Whereas the opinions of Dutch secondary school pupils are perhaps slightly more to the left than some years ago, they were far more to the right than most people expected. In particular the high percentage with ethnocentric feelings got a great deal of attention.

**Determinants of Right-Wing Views**

Although the survey was concentrated upon the measurement of political beliefs and attitudes, there also were questions about background variables such as religion, age, sex, political preferences of both parents and parental professional status. Several additional scales were employed, measuring anomie, the attitude towards gender egalitarianism, radical feminism and the perception of economic opportunities. The degree of urbanisation of the regions where the secondary schools were located and the college types were also known.

The correlations between the Guttman Scale, ethnocentrism, right-wing extremism, authoritarianism and conservatism on the one hand, and the differences in degree of urbanisation, in college type, religion, parents' professional status and age, on the other, are not significant. Anomie only appears to be related to ethnocentrism and extreme right-wing opinions. However, gender, parental political preference and egalitarianism in gender attitudes produce substantial correlations. It is surprising, but in line with prevalent observations about the social characteristics of the supporters of post-war right-wing extremist organisations (Husbands, 1981), that effects of denominational and parental social status differences, traditionally considered the important determinants of (right-wing) political beliefs, are non-existent.

Regression analysis shows that the effect of gender on political beliefs can be interpreted by the attitude towards gender egalitarianism: the correlation between sex and the Guttman Scale (.22) goes down to insignificance (.07) if
gender egalitarianism is partialled out, and the same effect pertains to ethnocentrism (from .17 to .03). This means that egalitarian girls and boys are equally anti-authoritarian, anti-ethnocentric, anti-racist etc., whereas anti-egalitarian boys and girls are equally authoritarian, ethnocentric, racist, and so forth. Parental political preferences, especially the party preference of the mother, and anomie have independent effects.

**Political Socialisation**

The political attitudes of the pupils correlate substantially with the political preferences they attribute to their parents. The Pearson correlation between the Guttman Scale score of the pupils and the voting preference attributed to the father is .45. The correlation for mother-son is .50 and for mother-daughter .53. The correlations between the party preferences of parents and children vary from .50 (father-son) to .57 (mother-daughter). This does not imply that there is a close convergence between parents and children in the party preferred, especially if their party preferences are left-wing. Beck and Jennings (1975) report comparable correlations between parents' and children's political preferences in other countries. These results either indicate pervasive effects of intergenerational political socialisation, or stable effects of environmental pressures, on the views of both parents and children.

**Gender and Political Views**

The effect of gender on political views, expressing itself via gender egalitarianism, is rather amazing and not easy to understand. Previous research gives no indication of differences between male and female youngsters in political preferences, neither with respect to right-wing political views, nor with respect to political attitudes in general. Janssen and Voestermans (1984), surveying about 1,500 Dutch university students in 1974 and 1975 with the same conservatism scale as mentioned above, found no differences in political opinions between male and female students. Neither Jaide (1978) nor Sochatzky (1980), investigating the right-wing political beliefs of college students in Western Germany at the end of the seventies, reported significant effects of gender. Research about authoritarianism in the fifties and sixties in the United States showed no significant differences between males and females, although the averages for women tended to be somewhat lower than for men (Meloen, 1983). With respect to political beliefs in general, some sex differences have been reported, but they do not reveal a consistent pattern. American female students appeared to be more conservative in the beginning of the seventies than male students (Montero, 1975), also when religion, father's occupation and party identification were controlled. Tolly (1977), however, summarizes research up to the seventies indicating that girls are "less willing to support policies they perceive as warlike or aggressive", but found no evidence for sex-related differences in children's orientations to war in general and to the American intervention in
Vietnam. Some ethnologists, generalizing from observations of animals, hypothesize that sex differences in conflict behaviour and aggression seem to be related to levels of sex hormones (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974), especially androgens. This higher male aggressiveness seems to be functionally related to a greater tendency among males to dominate one another. In contrast, girls are more compliant than boys, but primarily towards adults and not to male peers. There is, however, no indication that these behavioural differences lead to gender-specific political attitudes in adolescence (Gallatin, 1980), except perhaps for a generally lower interest in politics among women (Greenstein, 1961).

Why then were Dutch college girls so left-wing and college boys so right-wing in their political views and preferences at the start of the eighties? That the effect of gender is pervasive is illustrated by Table 3: the proportion of girls in the successive right-wing steps of the Guttman Scale declines from 47% at the level of conservatism to 12% at the level of extreme right-wing opinions and party preferences. The fact that boys agree twice as much as girls on almost all the ethnocentrism items refers to the same tendency.

Origins of the Gender Gap

How can one explain this phenomenon? In our opinion, five hypotheses can be formulated.

(a) Political indifference or apathy. The apparent excess of male right-wing preferences and views might actually reflect a lower degree of political indifference. Gender differences in political apathy (Greenstein, 1961) may disguise themselves as a greater proportion of male right-wing preferences. This hypothesis has not been confirmed. On the average, there is no significant gender difference in the amount of ‘neutral’ scores for ethnocentrism and authoritarianism. Actually, girls do score more neutrally on right-wing extremism and conservatism, but boys are more neutral on gender egalitarianism. However, in spite of these differences, girls significantly hold a more left-wing standpoint on 64 of the 67 items stating political views in our survey. This means that the higher right-wing and ethnocentrism scores of boys are not caused by greater political indifference on the part of the girls.

(b) Female moralism. A second hypothesis is that girls are more inclined to apply moral yardsticks to politics than boys, and are consequently more sensitive to the harmful effects of right-wing slogans and actions upon ethnic minority groups. Indeed, the data does reveal a general and consistent difference in the type of articulation of the political views of both sexes. Boys respond more distinctly (less neutrally) to views concerning the societal structural aspects of political life, girls more to the interpersonal aspects. This applies to all the scales used, without any exception. Nonetheless, girls are also more left-wing than boys with respect to the societal structural items. This means that the use of moral, interpersonal criteria for the evaluation of political events and options does not explain why girls are more left-wing than boys, it only explains how they are more left-wing.
Table 3: Distribution of Male and Female Secondary School Pupils on the Left-Right Guttman Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEFT-RIGHT GUTTMAN SCALE</th>
<th>RESPONSES:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 3437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% male</td>
<td>% female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Extreme (Social Democrat) Conservative) (Extreme Right)

(Christian (Liberal Democrat) Conservative) (Authoritarian)

1. 12
2. 16
3. 38
4. 47
5. 61
6. 53
7. 84
8. 88
(c) Women's liberation movement. The women's movement gained momentum in Holland during the seventies. Perhaps the political differences between boys and girls are due to a far-reaching proliferation of moral egalitarian gender attitudes, especially among the younger generation of girls. There is some support in our data for this hypothesis of a 'gender gap' in egalitarianism. The effect of gender can be 'explained away' by the attitude towards male-female egalitarianism, and the gender egalitarianism scale correlates .53 with a 7-item 'radical feminism' scale.

(d) Male reactions to women's liberation. However, the data is inconclusive about the specific type of effect exerted by the women's movement. Possibly it is not the girls who have become more articulate in their egalitarianism. The boys could tend to see the professional emancipation of women as an additional threat to their diminishing economic opportunities. These opportunities quickly declined after 1981, when the youth unemployment rate in Holland rose sharply, and for that reason the boys could have become more anti-egalitarian.

(e) The economic crisis. The fifth hypothesis is that the economic crisis as such is more threatening to boys than to girls. Of course this presumes that both boys and girls perceive their future societal roles in traditional terms, which means that the man is to be the breadwinner and the women is to look after the children. As a consequence of the economic threat to the traditional male role, boys might respond aggressively to all economic competitors by emphasizing racial and gender inequality.

The data shows, however, that boys, when they picture being unemployed, do not significantly differ from girls in their pessimism about their prospects. Moreover, girls are generally more concerned about unemployment and job opportunities than boys. In addition, the right-wing students are the optimists about getting a job, but the pessimists when they picture being unemployed. This means that right-wing opinions can hardly be seen as an effect of the expectation of remaining unemployed. They may be an expression of a traditional work ethos.

**Potential Right-Wing Activism**

Only 1.5% of the pupils surveyed have a preference for a racist political party such as the Centrum Party or the 'Nederlandse Volks Unie' (Dutch People's Union). A much larger percentage of the pupils, however, hold racist views. No fewer than 43% of the potential VVD (conservative) voters have a high score on the ethnocentrism scale, and 11% of these pupils hold extreme right-wing views. To what extent do these pupils intend to become involved in some political organization?

In the future, 33% of the potential Centrum Party voters want to join a political party. This percentage is not as high pertaining to any other political party. Of the pupils with extreme right-wing, racist views, 30% have the intention of joining a political party. If we examine a number of indicators of political interest and activity, then the extreme right-wing pupils once again
have a high score. It appears that two independent forms of political interest can be distinguished. The first one is potential participation, consisting of the intention to join a political party and the desire to discuss politics. This form is characteristic of right-wing and extreme right-wing pupils. The second one is political activism, consisting of interest in taking part in demonstrations, wearing buttons, and publicly displaying slogans. This form of political activity is characteristic of left-wing pupils. This would seem to indicate that pupils with right-wing and extreme right-wing political preferences are potential members of racist parties such as the Centrum Party and will not be likely to engage in political activism outside the framework of political organizations (Hagendoorn, 1984).

COMPARABLE RESEARCH AMONG OTHER GROUPS OF PUPILS

Partially along the same lines as the research described above, De Jong and Van der Toorn-Den Hartog (1984) and Raaymakers et al. (1985) studied the political views of younger pupils and of pupils at vocational schools or four-year secondary schools. De Jong and Van der Toorn-Den Hartog studied the attitude towards ethnic minorities on the part of 519 pupils of the second form at Rotterdam secondary schools. They noted that 51% of the Dutch pupils there have a high score on the ‘prejudice scale’, which is comparable to the ethnocentrism scale referred to earlier in this article. In the Netherlands, there are four-year, five-year and six-year secondary schools. For the sub-group of the pupils of the five-year and six-year secondary schools, this ethnocentrism percentage is 37%, which is 10% more than the national average found in the Hagendoorn-Janssen survey. This can probably be explained by the lower age and local factors. De Jong and Van der Toorn-Den Hartog also confirmed the difference noted above between the political views of boys and girls, and the relation between these views and opinions on gender egalitarianism.

The provisional report on the study by Raaymakers et al., a replication of the study by Hagendoorn and Janssen (1983) with 1,432 pupils at vocational schools and four-year secondary schools, shows that a higher percentage of this category of pupils hold ethnocentric and extreme right-wing views (46%) than of the five-year and six-year secondary school pupils (22%). Nine per cent of vocational school and four-year secondary school pupils express a preference for the Centrum Party. This study also showed a difference between the political views of male and female pupils. The vocational and four-year secondary school pupils differ from the five-year and six-year secondary school pupils in that their political views appear to be less clearly structured. Most of the scales have lower reliability coefficients, and the scalogram structure in party preferences and views could only partially be duplicated. The lower ages and lower educational levels would seem to be responsible for this fact. Nevertheless, these two studies do largely confirm the trends in the results of our research described in this article.
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Right-Wing Views Among Dutch Secondary School Pupils

L. Hagendoorn and J. Janssen

In 1982 and 1983, the political preferences and views were studied of 4,733 pupils in the last forms of fifteen secondary schools in the Netherlands. Eight per cent of the pupils appeared to hold racist and extremely right-wing views. Twenty-seven per cent had a negative attitude towards ethnic minorities. The pupils' party preferences and scores on three opinion scales (conservatism, law and order, right-wing extremism) constituted a left-right scalogram structure (reproducability .92 and scalability .72). The male pupils appeared to hold more right-wing and more extreme right-wing sympathies and to be more ethnocentric than the female pupils. This difference was related to views on gender egalitarianism. Sequel studies in the Netherlands have confirmed these trends.