

## A psycho-political profile of party activists and left-wing and right-wing extremists

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**Abstract.** Previous studies comparing ideological groups have been restricted to tests of between-group differences in the means of relevant political psychological variables, thereby neglecting group differences in the variances, meanings and nomological networks of the tested variables. A first exploratory study used data from the European Social Survey ( $N = 7,314$ ) comparing groups of political party members on the basis of their scores on a self-placement left–right scale. The second study ( $N = 69$ ) constituted an in-depth test for the presence of differences between samples of political activists of moderate parties, communists, anarchists and right-wing extremists. **The results revealed that there is a fair amount of heterogeneity within left-wing and right-wing extremists, indicating a substantial amount of within-group variance of social attitudes, values and prejudice.** Moreover, the extremist ideologies are best approached as distinct ideologies that cannot be reduced to extreme versions of moderate ideology, and differences in the meanings and nomological networks of the various extremist ideologies were also obtained. It is erroneous to consider members of extremist groups as being ‘all alike’. The findings obtained from samples of political moderates are not a particularly solid basis for theories about extremism.

**Keywords:** anarchism; authoritarianism; communism; European Social Survey; extremism; ideology; right-wing ideology

What does it mean to be an ‘extremist’? Dictionary.com defines an extremist as a person who goes to extremes, especially in political matters, or someone who is a supporter or advocate of extreme doctrines or practices. In the present studies, we tightly stick to this definition, investigating people who locate themselves on the extremes of a political left–right self-placement scale, and studying members of extremist groups (anarchists, communists and extreme rightists) as well. We believe that it is important to stress that specific political ideas should be considered within their specific cultural-historical context. Ideas that are considered ‘very extreme’ in one context may be very ‘moderate’ in another. As Sidanius (1985: 369) has put it: ‘[B]elief in political and social equality of Blacks would most certainly have been a very “extreme” idea in the America of 1776 and is now becoming a very moderate idea in the America of 1984.’ According to the same logic, members of the communist

party in Western countries should be considered extremists fighting the Establishment, while in the former Soviet Union an adherent of the communist party should be considered a moderate (Altemeyer 1996).

The present research represents an in-depth exploration of similarity and distinctiveness. **In particular, the goals of our studies are threefold. First,** we investigate differences in the variability of scores on measures of important political psychological variables between various ideological groups. In other words, we assess the amount of homogeneity observed among activists in particular groups. **Second,** in light of the expected mean-level differences in the political psychological variables under study, we investigate whether moderates and extremists also differ in the meanings and nomological networks corresponding to these variables. In other words, are concepts like 'authoritarianism' and 'racism' similarly understood in samples of extremists and moderates? As we will argue, if significant differences exist, the processes driving extremism and non-extremism should be considered truly distinct, or alternatively stated, extremism should be considered as its own type of ideology. **Third,** we investigate whether these differences in the meanings and nomological networks also arise among various extremist groups.

### **Political psychological contributions to extremism**

From the early days of the study of political psychology, the study of extremism has elicited a vast amount of interest (Adorno et al. 1950; Eysenck 1954; Rokeach 1960). The widespread attention given to this fascinating phenomenon can also be inferred from the hundreds of empirical studies (for reviews, see, Altemeyer 1981; Meloen 1993) as well as the repeated heroic (and intellectually stimulating) clashes among scholars studying political extremism (see Eysenck 1954, 1980–1981; Ray 1983; Stone 1980; Stone & Smith 1993). Two major perspectives have traditionally dominated the field.

**First, according to the authoritarianism of the right theory, right-wing extremists are cognitively deficient people who tend to feel anxious and threatened. Jost et al. (2003)** provided a highly cited meta-analytic integration of the psychological basis of right-wing political attitudes that tended to support this theory, revealing that a set of interrelated epistemic, existential and ideological motives relate to right-wing beliefs. **In particular, moderate-to-strong relationships with right-wing ideology emerged for 'uncertainty avoidance; integrative complexity; needs for order, structure, and closure; and fear of threat in general . . . dogmatism, intolerance of ambiguity, openness to experience, mortality salience, and system instability' (Jost et al. 2003: 366).**

Second, according to extremism theory, authoritarian cognition and threat proneness is not only typical for the extreme right-wing side of the political spectrum, but also for adherents to extreme left-wing ideology (Eysenck 1954; Rokeach 1960). According to extremism theory, extremists on both sides show deficient personalities, attitudes and cognitions. It should, however, be mentioned that the empirical database regarding extremism theory is rather weak and inconclusive (e.g., Brown 1965).

Although both the authoritarianism of the right and extremism theories were formulated with true political extremists (fascists and communists) in mind, scholars typically have applied these ideas to the study of ideology in moderate samples. Many of these studies have revealed that measures like authoritarianism and dogmatism are powerful predictors of, among other things, conservative beliefs, motivated cognition and prejudice (e.g., Adorno et al. 1950; Altemeyer 1998). Surprisingly, hardly any data have been collected on true extremists. Adorno et al. (1950), for example, collected data from a wide variety of samples including more than 2,000 participants, but they did not try to collect data from well-known extremist groups. It should be stressed, however, that the few studies of right-wing extremists have revealed higher authoritarianism scores (Bhushan 1969; Knutson 1974; Sherwood 1966; Rocatto & Ricolfi 2005; Steiner & Fahrenberg 2000). Some other studies have gathered data from respondents with a broad range of ideologies (from extreme right-wing to extreme left-wing), with the results aligning well with authoritarianism theory. Knutson (1974), for example, reported significant differences between extreme right-wing adherents and moderate and extreme left-wing groups.

Extremism theorists were also aware of the necessity to study members of fascist and communist groups as the ultimate empirical validation of their theory, as evinced by their attempts to collect these difficult data. Eysenck (1954) collected data on 43 fascists and 43 communists, whereas Rokeach (cited in Brown 1965: 542) managed to find 13 communists in a student sample. However, these studies did not yield conclusive evidence for extremism theory. Another study conducted by McCloskey and Chong (1985) reported that extremists on both sides resemble each other and differ from moderates. Unlike these authors, Jost et al. (2003) and Stone and Smith (1993) have argued – after close inspection of these data – that the results should be interpreted as corroborative evidence for authoritarianism of the right theory.

As can be inferred from this brief overview, the question of whether members of extreme left-wing and extreme right-wing movements share similar characteristics or, alternatively, are highly dissimilar has elicited a vast amount of empirical work and theoretical debate. The statistical analyses typically conducted along this line of inquiry are limited to comparisons of

group means (for an exception, see Rocatto & Ricolfi, 2005, who reported on the poor stability of the relationship between authoritarianism and social dominance orientation in various ideological groups). However, as we will argue below, this analytical strategy is not very informative and should be complemented with tests of the between-group stability of psychometric properties of the measures as well as the interrelationships among these measures and eventual mediation and moderation effects.

### **Homogeneity of members of extremist groups**

Imagine two extremists: would you consider them to be more alike to each other than two moderates would be? You probably do. It seems to be common knowledge that members of extremist groups are 'all alike', and this idea also seems to pervade the literature, although it is difficult to provide citations that explicitly convey this message. There are, however, social psychological explanations for why extremist groups are often considered to be composed of homogeneous members. For example, almost by definition most people are moderates, and there is only a small number of extremists, which places them in an outgroup position. Social categorisation theory asserts that outgroups tend to be perceived not only as different from the ingroup, but also as more homogeneous (the outgroup homogeneity effect), which may explain why members of extremist groups are perceived as being very similar to one another (e.g., Vonk & van Knippenberg 1995).

The issue of homogeneity among extremists, however, is also implicitly present in political psychology. Indeed, some scholars have tried to describe activists of extreme parties in terms of the characteristics of the movement itself (see Stone 1980; Stone & Smith 1993). The tendency to infer characteristics of an individual based on his or her group membership is referred to as 'essentialism'. According to Haslam and Levy (2006: 471): 'Such an essence . . . is implicitly understood to determine the identity of category members, to render them all fundamentally alike, and to allow many inferences to be drawn about them.' By trying to understand extremist individuals through their political movements, it is implicitly assumed that these individuals are fundamentally alike.

The catastrophe model of attitudes (Harton & Latané 1997; Latané & Nowak 1994; Liu & Latané 1998) is most explicit on the issue of distinctiveness. According to this model, members of small, extreme movements (irrespective of left-wing or right-wing orientation) may have non-modal political attitudes that sharply contrast with societal consensus. The attitudes among extremists are organised and represented as black-white categorical variables ('us against

them'). Conversely, for the mass public, the distribution of political attitudes is expected to be normal, dispersed as points along an underlying dimension.

As has already been mentioned, there are two competing perspectives on the relationship between extremism and deficient cognition, which are also relevant to distinguish in the context of homogeneity. Authoritarianism of the right theory (e.g. Adorno et al. 1950) would only ascribe greater homogeneity to fascists, who are proclaimed to differ fundamentally from moderates and left-wing extremists. Conversely, extremism theory (e.g., Eysenck 1954; Taylor 1960) asserts that *all* extremists – irrespective of their position on the left–right continuum – should resemble each other, having a similar deeper-level cognition, being more authoritarian, rigid and intolerant of ambiguity than moderates. According to extremism theory, then, homogeneity should occur among members of all extremist groups (e.g., group members believe in only one truth and consequently all share the same convictions). In the present study, we test the relative homogeneity of various ideological groups by comparing the variances in important political psychological variables, with high levels of variance indicating low levels of homogeneity, and a low amount of variance indicative of high homogeneity.

This brings us to another important question. It seems to be common knowledge not only that members of extremist groups are 'all alike', but also that they are 'fundamentally distinct' from moderates. Do extremisms constitute different qualities? Are they based on different processes? A search of the political psychology literature reveals that, with the exception of the catastrophe model, existing theories do not provide adequate answers to these questions.

### **An empirical framework of mean-level differences versus distinctiveness**

The interesting question of whether adherents to different political ideologies are distinct types has not yet been formally investigated. Nevertheless, similar questions have been posed and successfully addressed in clinical and forensic psychology (O'Connor 2002; Shiner & Caspi 2003; Van Leeuwen et al. 2007). To illustrate the relevance of our central research question, consider the following forensic example. If two groups of offenders differed only in terms of mean levels of a particular variable, one would expect that the criminal careers of both of these groups could be attributed to a similar developmental pathway, would be based on similar dysfunctional mechanisms, and would be responsive to the same type of treatment. However, if the groups show differences with respect to meaning and nomological network, different developmental pathways, dysfunctional mechanisms and treatments are suggested. As

this example illustrates, the issue of distinctiveness is of great importance because it implies the operation of different processes in different groups. The relevant question here, of course, is whether such differences would arise between moderates and extremists as well as among extremist groups with different ideologies.

Van Leeuwen et al. (2007) proposed a framework that provides a formal test of the paramount issue of mean-level versus qualitative differences between groups. Four levels are distinguished. Level 1 pertains to mean-level differences between groups, which is the analytical strategy adopted in most psychological studies as well as in studies of political extremism. Level 1 analyses, however, do not provide an answer to the question of whether any significant differences obtained merely reflect mean-level differences or, instead, reflect differences in meaning and nomological network. In order to probe further into the very nature of such differences, analyses at levels 2 to 4 should be conducted.

Level 2 corresponds to differences in the psychometric properties of measures between groups, whereas Level 3 refers to differences in the magnitudes and directions of the relationships among variables. Finally, at Level 4, whether moderation and mediation effects obtained in one group replicate in the other group is investigated. Levels 2 to 4 thus capture the co-variation among the tested variables and hence verify whether the same theoretical relationships apply across various ideological groups. Differences in psychometric properties (e.g., a scale shows internal consistency in one sample, but not in another) and the correlations between variables (e.g., a pair of variables shows a significant correlation in one sample, but not in another) attest to differences in the meanings of these variables – in other words, whether concepts are similarly represented in various groups or, alternatively, show a stable ‘nomological network’ (see Cronbach & Meehl 1955).

In sum, as can be seen in Figure 1, if one is able to illustrate significant between-group differences at levels 2 to 4, the mean scores of the focal variables should not be directly compared (even in the case of nonsignificant mean-level differences) because of differences in the structures, meanings and nomological networks of these variables. Conversely, it is only when the level 2–4 differences do *not* emerge that level 1 analyses become informative. In particular, when level 1 analyses yield significant results, mean-level differences can be inferred. Indeed, the presence of non-significant differences at levels 2 to 4 indicates that the focal variables share similar meanings across the groups. A last possible result is that no differences are found. In the absence of any significant differences, of course, one can only conclude that there is no evidence for differences between the tested groups.

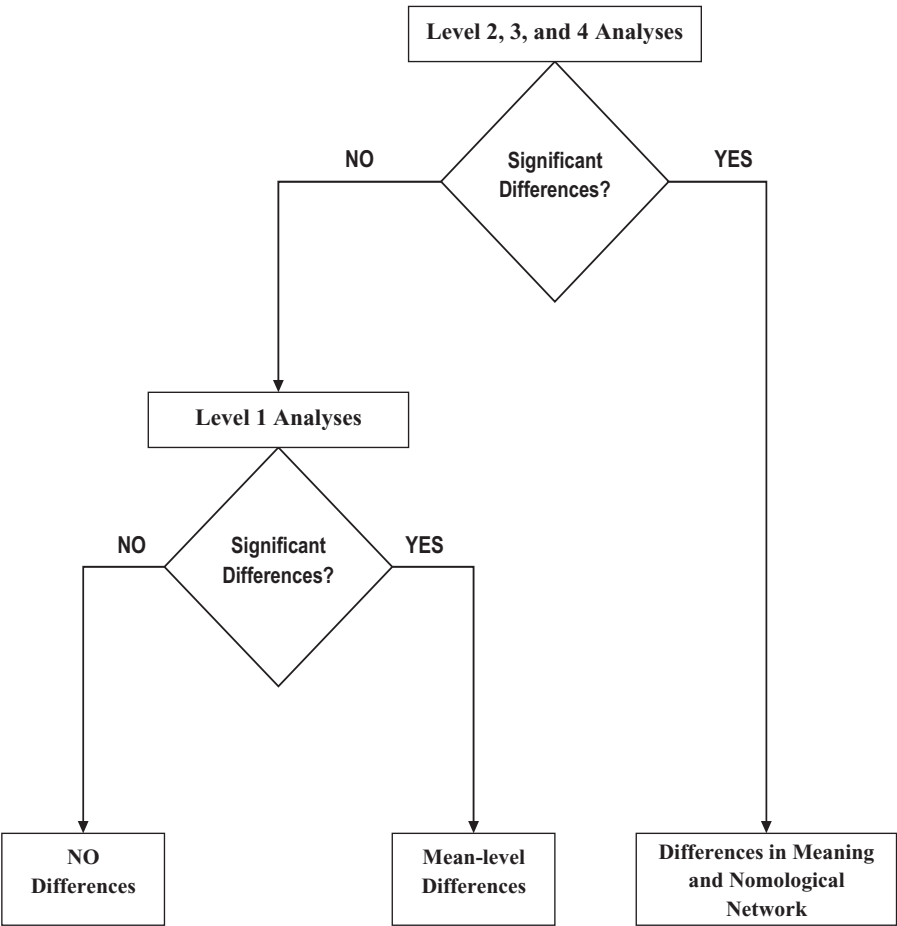


Figure 1. The four-level model: Three possible outcomes.

The limited number of previous studies of true extremists did not systematically investigate the presence of differences in the meanings and nomological networks corresponding to various concepts. We were able to locate three studies that have reported correlations among their variables within moderate and extremist groups. However, this circumstantial evidence on the presence of such differences yielded inconsistent results, with some studies offering corroborative evidence (see Eysenck 1954: Table 26; Rocatto & Ricolfi 2005: Tables 5 and 7) whereas other results were nonsignificant (Eysenck 1954: Table 28; Steiner & Fahrenberg 2000: Table 6).

## The present studies

The present studies investigate differences in mean levels and nomological networks between moderates and extremists, as well as between various extremist groups. The measures used in the present study have previously been shown to relate to political orientation and political party preferences. Hence, whether members of extremist groups and moderates score differently on political psychological variables and whether they are fundamentally distinct in a qualitative sense are investigated. The rationale behind the present research was to demonstrate these potential differences according to the multiple levels strategy of Van Leeuwen et al. (2007).

Study 1 is an initial test of the first three levels of Van Leeuwen et al.'s (2007) model using data from the **European Social Survey (ESS)**. Study 2 is an in-depth test of all levels proposed by Van Leeuwen et al. (2007) using data gathered in groups of known moderates, communists, anarchists and right-wing extremists.

In both of our studies, important individual-differences variables were included as dependent variables. In particular, we administered measures of human values, attitudes about immigration and social attitudes. With respect to human values, Schwartz (1992) developed a comprehensive theory about the content and the structure of the value domain, which has received support in over forty countries. Schwartz defines a 'value' as a trans-situational goal that varies in importance as a guiding principle in one's life. According to Schwartz, value types can be regarded as combinations of two higher-order dimensions: Openness to Change versus Conservation (Stimulation and Self-direction versus Tradition, Conformity and Security) and Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence (Power and Achievement versus Universalism and Benevolence). Previous studies have shown a relationship between political ideology and these values, revealing higher scores of Conservation and Self-enhancement on the right side of the political spectrum (e.g., Duriez & Van Hiel 2002; Heaven et al. 2006).

We also included measures of attitudes about immigration. In the Western European context, it has been argued that anti-immigration issues dominate the concerns of extreme right-wing movements (Ignazi 1992). It has also been shown that negative attitudes about immigration and immigrants are related to extreme right-wing voting.

Finally, in Study 2, we administered a measure probing into two ideological dimensions. There is a growing consensus in the literature that citizens' representation of ideology comprises two relatively orthogonal underlying dimensions (see Duckitt 2001). One of these dimensions has typically been labeled with cultural or social conservatism and traditionalism at one pole versus



openness, autonomy, liberalism and personal freedom at the other pole. The other dimension has been labeled with conservative economic beliefs, power, belief in hierarchy and inequality at one pole versus egalitarianism, humanitarianism and concern with social welfare at the other.

## Study 1

Based on the ESS data (Jowell et al. 2009), we compared groups of party activists on the basis of their self-placements on a left–right scale (ranging from 0 = left to 10 = right). Measures of human values and anti-immigration attitudes were administered as well. In addition to their importance as political psychological variables, the decision to analyse these measures is based on other reasons. First, many variables included in the ESS do not constitute a psychological scale, but instead only include a limited number of items or even only a single item. However, level 2 analyses address scale reliability and therefore call for multi-item scales. Second, the human values inventory and the anti-immigration items were administered in each of the four ESS waves. Given that we focused on political party activists, the repeated inclusion of these items allowed us to increase the number of participants.

### *Method*

#### *Participants and procedure*

The ESS is a cross-sectional biannual survey covering more than thirty countries. In each country, a representative sample of the adult (15 years and older) population was collected by individual face-to-face interviews. For the present purposes, we analysed data from the first four waves (collected in 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008), and we selected participants who indicated membership in a political party. Moreover, we selected activists from Western European countries given the vast differences between Western and Eastern Europe in terms of the psychological basis of ideology (Duriez et al. 2005). This resulted in a total sample of  $N = 7,314$  with 4,352 males and 2,955 females. The sexes were equally distributed in the various ideological groups,  $\chi^2(df = 10) = 9.38, n.s.$  The mean year of birth was 1951, and the mean age is thus in the early 50s. The extreme left-wing group (scoring 0 on the left–right scale), the moderate group (scoring 5) and the extreme right-wing group (scoring 10) hardly differed on the age variable (mean year of birth: 1950.8, 1950.7 and 1951.1, respectively). The mean level of years of formal education was 12.4; the extreme left-wing, moderate and extreme right-wing groups hardly differed on the education variables (means 11.8, 11.9 and 10.9, respectively).

## *Measures*

### *Political orientation*

Participants completed a self-placement left–right political orientation scale, with possible responses ranging from 0 (anchored by ‘left’) to 10 (anchored by ‘right’).

### *Human values*

Participants also completed the Schwartz Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ, Schwartz et al. 2001). This inventory consists of 21 items that are answered on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (‘Very much like me’) to 6 (‘Not like me at all’). Sample items are: ‘It is important to him/her to live in secure surroundings. He/she avoids anything that might endanger his/her safety’ and ‘Tradition is important to him/her. He/she tries to follow the customs handed down by his/her religion or his/her family.’ The higher order values of Conservation, Openness, Self-enhancement and Self-transcendence were computed by aggregating the scores on the relevant questions, but similar to Schwartz and Huismans (1995), systematic response sets were corrected for by subtracting the grand mean of each of the ratings.

### *Anti-immigration attitudes*

Participants completed a three-item anti-immigration scale. Items were: ‘To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most of [country]’s people to come and live here?’, ‘How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most of [country]’s people?’ and ‘How about people from the poorer countries outside Europe?’ Possible responses ranged between 1 (‘Allow many to come and live here’) and 4 (‘Allow none’). The items were recoded so that higher scores reflect more negative attitudes towards immigrants.

## *Results*

Analyses were conducted following the guidelines of Van Leeuwen et al. (2007). We were able to investigate the first three levels. Before conducting these analyses, however, we first determined for the entire study sample whether there were items that failed to contribute to the scales’ internal consistencies. No such items were identified. Moreover, the higher order values of Conservation ( $\alpha = 0.74$ ,  $N = 6$  items), Openness ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ,  $N = 6$  items), Self-enhancement ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ,  $N = 4$  items) and Self-transcendence ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ,  $N = 5$  items) and the Anti-Immigration Attitudes scale ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ,  $N = 3$  items) showed sufficient internal consistency.

### *Level 1: Mean-level differences*

First, we analysed mean-level differences among the 11 ideological groups based on their scores on the 11-point left–right self-placement scale. Univariate analyses of variance revealed significant differences with respect to the values of Openness,  $F(10,6818) = 5.68$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Conservation,  $F(10,6818) = 27.90$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Self-enhancement,  $F(10,6817) = 5.71$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; and Self-transcendence,  $F(10,6818) = 43.83$ ,  $p < 0.001$  as well as for immigration attitudes  $F(10,7212) = 52.83$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (see Table 1). The pattern of results was in the expected direction, revealing the lowest scores on Conservation, Self-enhancement and Anti-Immigration Attitudes among the left-wing groups, while the right-wing groups scored highest, with the moderates scoring in between and showing significant differences from both extremist groups. A reversed pattern of results was obtained for Openness and Self-transcendence, with the highest scores among the left-wing extremists, the lowest among the right-wing extremists, and the moderate groups scoring in between, showing significant differences from both extremist groups.

Analyses also revealed that Conservation,  $F(10,6818) = 9.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Self-transcendence,  $F(10,6817) = 4.09$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; and Anti-Immigration Attitudes,  $F(10,7212) = 9.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , were unequally distributed across the various ideological groups. Contrary to the stereotype that extremists are all alike, no significant differences with respect to the distributions of Openness,  $F(10,6818) = 1.58$ ,  $p = 0.11$ , and Self-enhancement,  $F(10,6817) = 1.07$ ,  $p = 0.38$ , were obtained. Moreover, close inspection of the standard deviations of Self-transcendence and Anti-Immigration Attitudes revealed that the variances in the moderate group (scoring 5 on the left–right scale) were even smaller than those in the extreme left-wing (scoring 0 and 1 on the left–right scale) and extreme right-wing groups (scoring 9 and 10 on the left–right scale). Moreover, the levels of heterogeneity obtained in the extreme left-wing group for Conservation, Self-transcendence, and Anti-Immigration Attitudes were higher than for any other ideological group. In sum, the present results show that the extremist groups are not more homogeneous than the moderate groups.

### *Level 2: Psychometric analyses*

Next, we addressed the issue of differences in psychometric properties within the ideological groups. Table 1 reports the internal consistencies of the target variables, revealing sufficient internal consistencies for all measures in each of the ideological groups.

We subsequently compared the factor-analytic structure of the human values questionnaire, extracting two dimensions from the ten value facet scales. In each of the ideological groups, we obtained the envisaged factor structure, with high loadings for self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, security,

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and Cronbach  $\alpha$ 's of the scales in the various ideological groups (Study 1)

Left-Right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Openness	-0.11 <sup>def</sup> (0.65)	-0.06 <sup>ef</sup> (0.64)	-0.03 <sup>f</sup> (0.65)	-0.13 <sup>cd</sup> (0.58)	-0.15 <sup>abcd</sup> (0.61)	-0.21 <sup>abc</sup> (0.58)	-0.17 <sup>abcd</sup> (0.57)	-0.14 <sup>bcd</sup> (0.56)	-0.18 <sup>abcd</sup> (0.59)	-0.23 <sup>ab</sup> (0.59)	-0.23 <sup>a</sup> (0.61)
Conservation	0.75	0.77	0.77	0.75	0.74	0.75	0.76	0.73	0.72	0.76	0.75
	-0.03 <sup>b</sup> (0.75)	-0.23 <sup>a</sup> (0.80)	-0.19 <sup>a</sup> (0.73)	-0.09 <sup>b</sup> (0.67)	-0.05 <sup>b</sup> (0.65)	0.14 <sup>cd</sup> (0.61)	0.08 <sup>c</sup> (0.64)	0.09 <sup>c</sup> (0.62)	0.15 <sup>cd</sup> (0.59)	0.22 <sup>de</sup> (0.60)	0.25 <sup>e</sup> (0.59)
Enhanc	0.78	0.82	0.76	0.75	0.73	0.69	0.72	0.71	0.72	0.72	0.72
	-0.87 <sup>a</sup> (0.75)	-0.72 <sup>bc</sup> (0.74)	-0.76 <sup>b</sup> (0.72)	-0.71 <sup>bc</sup> (0.69)	-0.68 <sup>bc</sup> (0.73)	-0.75 <sup>b</sup> (0.75)	-0.69 <sup>bc</sup> (0.76)	-0.63 <sup>c</sup> (0.74)	-0.62 <sup>c</sup> (0.75)	-0.63 <sup>c</sup> (0.78)	-0.62 <sup>c</sup> (0.75)
Transcend	0.73	0.77	0.74	0.72	0.76	0.75	0.76	0.76	0.75	0.75	0.74
	0.86 <sup>ef</sup> (0.57)	0.92 <sup>f</sup> (0.59)	0.87 <sup>ef</sup> (0.54)	0.83 <sup>de</sup> (0.52)	0.79 <sup>d</sup> (0.54)	0.68 <sup>c</sup> (0.50)	0.67 <sup>c</sup> (0.51)	0.57 <sup>b</sup> (0.48)	0.54 <sup>ab</sup> (0.51)	0.51 <sup>ab</sup> (0.54)	0.47 <sup>a</sup> (0.55)
Immigration	0.71	0.73	0.70	0.74	0.72	0.73	0.72	0.68	0.71	0.71	0.75
	2.21 <sup>b</sup> (0.92)	1.97 <sup>a</sup> (0.83)	2.05 <sup>a</sup> (0.76)	2.07 <sup>a</sup> (0.75)	2.20 <sup>b</sup> (0.71)	2.41 <sup>c</sup> (0.72)	2.33 <sup>c</sup> (0.68)	2.34 <sup>c</sup> (0.72)	2.52 <sup>d</sup> (0.69)	2.59 <sup>d</sup> (0.75)	2.75 <sup>e</sup> (0.75)
	0.90	0.91	0.89	0.91	0.88	0.85	0.86	0.85	0.82	0.82	0.73
N	395	251	519	721	598	1,623	658	842	847	368	492

Notes: Left-Right = score on left-right self-placement scale; Enhanc = Self-enhancement; Transcend = Self-transcendence; Immigration = Anti-Immigration Attitudes. First line figures are means and standard deviations between brackets; second line figures are Cronbach  $\alpha$ 's. Different superscripts refer to significant differences.

conformity and tradition on the first dimension (Conventionalism versus Openness) and high loadings for achievement, power, benevolence and universalism on the second dimension (Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence). All factor congruency scores ( $N = 55$ ) among the eleven ideological groups were higher than 0.95 for the Conventionalism versus Openness dimension and higher than 0.90 for the Self-enhancement versus Self-transcendence dimension.

In sum, the present analyses yield few differences with respect to the reliability and structure of the dependent measures. In other words, it appears that the human values and Anti-Immigration Attitudes items probe into one and the same concept in all ideological groups.

### *Level 3: Relationships among variables*

We compared the magnitudes and directions of the relationships between the values and Anti-Immigration Attitudes after transformation with the Fisher  $r$  to  $z$  formula. Given the presence of five variables, a total of ten relationships were tested – all of which revealed significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) (see Table 2).

Comparison of the ideological groups revealed a general trend towards lower correlations between human values and Anti-Immigrant Attitudes from the left-wing to the right-wing side of the political spectrum. Conversely, the magnitude of the correlations declined from the right-wing to the left-wing side for the relationships between Self-transcendence and Openness and between Self-enhancement and Conservation, whereas the correlations changed signs from one side of the political spectrum to the other for the relationships between Self-transcendence and Conservation and between Self-enhancement and Openness. Finally, the relationships between Self-transcendence and Self-enhancement and between Conservation and Openness showed some instability, but the pattern of these instabilities was less clear cut. In conclusion, the present level 3 analyses show significant between-group differences in the magnitudes of relationships among the variables.

### *Summary*

The present analyses are summarised in Table 3. Admittedly, we do not have a formal procedure at our disposal to decide what number of significant differences is needed to surpass the criterion for being judged as truly distinctive. As can be seen in Table 3, we took a rather liberal approach by assigning a number of ‘+’ signs according to the levels of differences: a single ‘+’ sign indicates

Table 2. Correlations with Anti-Immigration Attitudes for the different value types (Study 1)

Left-Right	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Significance of differences
<i>Correlations with Anti-Immigration Attitudes</i>												
Openness	-0.31 <sup>***a</sup>	-0.34 <sup>***a</sup>	-0.29 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.19 <sup>***b</sup>	-0.18 <sup>***b</sup>	-0.07 <sup>c</sup>	-0.14 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.12 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.10 <sup>*c</sup>	-0.14 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.12 <sup>***bc</sup>	*
Conservation	0.41 <sup>***bc</sup>	0.42 <sup>***bc</sup>	0.42 <sup>***c</sup>	0.32 <sup>***b</sup>	0.30 <sup>***b</sup>	0.14 <sup>***a</sup>	0.25 <sup>***b</sup>	0.21 <sup>***ab</sup>	0.14 <sup>***a</sup>	0.20 <sup>***ab</sup>	0.12 <sup>*a</sup>	*
Enhancement	0.17 <sup>**b</sup>	0.04 <sup>ab</sup>	0.04 <sup>a</sup>	-0.03 <sup>a</sup>	0.06 <sup>ab</sup>	0.02 <sup>a</sup>	-0.00 <sup>a</sup>	-0.01 <sup>a</sup>	0.03 <sup>a</sup>	0.04 <sup>ab</sup>	0.03 <sup>a</sup>	*
Transcendence	-0.34 <sup>***a</sup>	-0.28 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.31 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.22 <sup>***b</sup>	-0.26 <sup>***b</sup>	-0.13 <sup>***cd</sup>	-0.18 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.14 <sup>***bcd</sup>	-0.09 <sup>*cd</sup>	-0.13 <sup>***bcd</sup>	-0.04 <sup>d</sup>	*
<i>Correlations with Transcendence</i>												
Openness	-0.06 <sup>d</sup>	0.01 <sup>d</sup>	-0.12 <sup>*cd</sup>	-0.24 <sup>***c</sup>	-0.20 <sup>***c</sup>	-0.29 <sup>*c</sup>	-0.27 <sup>***c</sup>	-0.28 <sup>***c</sup>	-0.31 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.40 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.49 <sup>***a</sup>	*
Conservation	-0.21 <sup>***a</sup>	-0.31 <sup>***a</sup>	-0.18 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.11 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.13 <sup>***b</sup>	0.09 <sup>*c</sup>	0.03 <sup>c</sup>	0.07 <sup>c</sup>	0.08 <sup>*c</sup>	0.21 <sup>***d</sup>	0.22 <sup>***d</sup>	*
Enhancement	-0.58 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.53 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.51 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.49 <sup>***c</sup>	-0.50 <sup>***c</sup>	-0.61 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.54 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.58 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.59 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.66 <sup>***a</sup>	-0.56 <sup>***ab</sup>	*
<i>Correlations with Enhancement</i>												
Openness	-0.06 <sup>ab</sup>	-0.02 <sup>ab</sup>	0.02 <sup>ab</sup>	0.04 <sup>b</sup>	-0.10 <sup>*a</sup>	0.01 <sup>b</sup>	0.02 <sup>b</sup>	0.03 <sup>b</sup>	-0.06 <sup>a</sup>	0.11 <sup>*b</sup>	0.12 <sup>*b</sup>	*
Conservation	-0.25 <sup>*c</sup>	-0.27 <sup>***c</sup>	-0.33 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.40 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.31 <sup>***c</sup>	-0.41 <sup>***b</sup>	-0.46 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.46 <sup>***a</sup>	-0.38 <sup>***b</sup>	-0.46 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.51 <sup>***a</sup>	*
<i>Correlations with Conservation</i>												
Openness	-0.80 <sup>***a</sup>	-0.79 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.78 <sup>***ab</sup>	-0.74 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.72 <sup>***c</sup>	-0.76 <sup>***abc</sup>	-0.73 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.75 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.73 <sup>***bc</sup>	-0.77 <sup>***abc</sup>	-0.73 <sup>***bc</sup>	*

Notes: Left-Right = score on left-right self-placement scale; Enhancement = Self-enhancement; Transcendence = Self-transcendence. Different superscripts refer to significant differences.

Table 3. Summary of levels 1 to 3 analyses: Comparisons of moderate group, extreme left-wing and extreme right-wing groups (Study 1)

	Moderates as a comparison group		Left-wing extremists as a comparison group (scoring 0–1 on left–right self-placement scale)
	Left-wing extremists	Right-wing extremists	Right-wing extremists
Level 1	++	++	+++
Level 2			
Level 3	++	++	+++
Σ 2–3	++	++	+++

Notes: + indicates mild differences; ++ indicates an intermediate level of differences; +++ indicates a high level of differences. Σ 2–3: sum of differences of level 2 and 3 analyses. The moderate group is composed of activists scoring 4–6 on the left–right self-placement scale, whereas left-wing and right-wing extremists have scores of 0 or 1, and 9 and 10, respectively.

limited differences, whereas a ‘+ +’ sign indicates intermediate levels of difference and a ‘+ + +’ sign indicates strong differences.

As can be inferred from this Table, there are substantial mean-level differences between moderates and extremists on both the left-wing and right-wing sides and even greater differences between left-wing and right-wing extremists.

As one could expect, increasing levels of Conservation, Self-enhancement, and Anti-Immigration Attitudes were obtained in right-wing ideological groups, whereas higher Openness and Self-transcendence levels were found in the left-wing ideological groups. However, in contrast to popular stereotypes about extremists, extreme left-wing and right-wing groups showed a substantial amount of variance in the dependent variables, and it was the moderate groups who showed a homogeneity effect. In other words, members of the extreme groups did not resemble each other more than members of moderate groups, or stated alternatively, there is a substantial amount of diversity in the membership of extreme groups.

The present level 2 analyses revealed that the values and Anti-Immigration Attitudes scales were sufficiently reliable in all ideological groups, showing similar underlying structures. In other words, the items constituting the psychological constructs were found to reflect a common core idea that is equally well understood in all ideological groups. Conversely, the level 3 analyses showed significant variation in the strengths of the relationships among the dependent variables, thus attesting to substantial differences in the

representations and meanings of these variables. In sum, there is some indication of differences in the nomological networks of activists of different ideological groups.

### *Discussion*

Some limitations of the present study should be mentioned, however. First, we do not know exactly what specific ideologies are represented in the groups composed on the basis of the left–right self-placement scale. In particular, the self-placement scale is not a measure of ideology, but instead measures a general political orientation. Some people may attach high importance to social-cultural issues when placing themselves on the left–right scale, whereas other might consider economic-hierarchical issues (see Duckitt 2001). Moreover, people endorsing, for example, the extreme left-wing position on the self-placement scale may identify themselves as communists, but they could also consider themselves anarchists or anti-globalists, or alternatively, they could be members of the left-wing faction of a traditional party or even protestors of any kind of ideology. Although the ESS asks its respondents to report which party they voted for in the most recent election, many small movements were coded as ‘other parties’, precluding the identification of the exact ideologies to which these respondents adhere. Of course, our finding of a substantial amount of heterogeneity among extremists (especially on the left-wing side) might indicate the necessity to probe into activists’ ideologies (e.g., communism versus anarchism) rather than to assess a general left–right orientation.

Second, the use of extreme scores to identify ideological groups might lead to a methodological problem. Extreme ideology might be confounded with extreme responding tendencies; participants with extreme scores on left–right self-placement might complete other measures with equally extreme scores. Indeed, there has been a debate in political psychology regarding whether authoritarianism scales constitute a valid measure of the construct or whether they merely reflect response tendencies (i.e., acquiescence response set). Although it is now generally accepted that response tendencies only explain a minor part of the relationship (Van Hiel et al. 2007a), it is more accurate to conceptualise ideology in terms of partisanship to specific political movements.

Another limitation of Study 1 is that the ESS data did not allow level 4 tests to be performed. In particular, we did not have data available to test process models in which various variables influence one another in producing particular outcomes. Nevertheless, our finding of pronounced differences in the nomological networks of interrelationships of variables illustrates the



necessity of conducting more elaborate models of interrelationships like those reflected in the level 4 analyses. Regrettably, the ESS dataset does not permit the testing of such models because it does not include measurements of various political psychological variables in a single design. Indeed, although it might be feasible to construct a measure of surface manifestations of social attitudes like authoritarianism on the basis of preferences for particular political issues (e.g., 'Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own lives as they wish' and 'How much do you personally trust the police?'), it is impossible to probe into the underlying orientation or social attitudes on the basis of the ESS database.

## Study 2

In Study 2, we included samples of moderates, communists, anarchists and right-wing extremists. Moreover, in addition to measures of human values and prejudice, we also included social attitudes measures. In particular, we included measures of Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA, Altemeyer 1981) and Cultural Conservatism, which represent the socio-cultural domain, as well as Social Dominance Orientation (SDO, Pratto et al. 1994) and Economic Conservatism, representing the economic-hierarchical domain (Duckitt, 2001). Moreover, given the inclusion of communists and anarchists, a measure of Left-Wing Authoritarianism (LWA, Van Hiel et al. 2006) was also administered.

Previous studies have proposed an integrative model in which social attitudes and values are combined into a single theoretical framework (Cohrs et al. 2005; Heaven et al., 2006). In particular, these models take the form of a mediation model in which social attitudes (like RWA and SDO) 'transmit' the effects of values on prejudice (e.g., Heaven et al. 2006). This mediation model is also tested in the present study.

## Method

### *Participants and procedure*

The present samples have also been reported on by Van Hiel et al. (2006: Study 2) in their exploration of left-wing authoritarianism. The samples were collected in Belgian Flanders and consisted of members of various political movements: Communists ( $N = 20$ ); anarchists ( $N = 21$ ); right-wing extremists ( $N = 11$ ); and moderates ( $N = 17$ ). Political science students were asked to contact individually people they knew to be members of particular political organisations. A total of 87 questionnaire booklets were distributed to these

individuals, of which 69 (79.3 per cent) were returned. Participants were asked to complete the booklet individually, put it in an envelope and return it to the person who gave it to them. The accompanying letter to the participants introduced the study as an investigation of 'personality, beliefs and political viewpoints'. It explicitly stated that we were interested in their personal opinions. Although participants were told that they were asked to collaborate because they were interested in politics, they were unaware of the fact that they were selected because they endorsed a specific ideological movement. Participants were given the phone number of the authors if they wanted to learn more about the study (but nobody contacted us). Anonymity was explicitly guaranteed. We describe the ideological groups in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

The communists were affiliated to the Stalinist 'Partij Van De Arbeid' (PVDA;  $N = 14$ ), although some of them were members of the Communist Party ( $N = 6$ ). Data were collected from sympathisers of 'Doctors for the People' and among party members in Zelzate (one of the few villages in Flanders in which PVDA is represented in the local council). The sample consisted of ten males and ten females with a mean age of 40.9 years ( $SD = 16.2$ ), 19 of whom held college or university degrees. The PVDA has its roots in Stalinism and might thus be called a classic communist party (instead of a neo-Marxist movement). Some statements on the website of the PVDA (<http://www.pvda.be>, Dutch language only) illustrate this. Under the heading 'The historical experience of communism', it reads: 'Mao's revolutionary movement has opened the doors to the socialist movement in the third world.' Under the heading 'Against whom does the PVDA fight?', it is argued that 'the PVDA fights against the world of high finance, banks, holdings and multinationals . . . which cause exploitation and misery and the rise of fascism'. Under the heading 'What does the PVDA want?', it reads: '[T]he PVDA wants the destruction of the capitalist system and the foundation of a socialist state which bears on the working class.' The party receives only minor support from the electorate (less than 1 per cent).

The anarchists were active in the anarchist movement in Leuven and defined themselves as such. The anarchist movement in Flanders is a collection of loosely organised organisations and individuals. This movement does, however, have its own information channels. The cities of Ghent and Leuven are known as places where a reasonable number of anarchists live, and approximately 100 of them in each of these cities constitute the core members of the organisation. The questionnaires were distributed among these core members. The sample consisted of 18 males and three females with a mean age of 26.4 years ( $SD = 3.3$ ), 19 of whom held college or university degrees. Because most participants in the anarchist sample read the anarchist magazine

*De Nar*, this magazine's website might be informative (<http://users.online.be/~pr002099/index2.htm>, Dutch language only). It is explained on this website that the aim of *De Nar* is to provide information for and stimulate discussions among those who – from an anti-authoritarian viewpoint – attach importance to participatory democracy, solidarity and direct action. *De Nar* supports a world in which there is no room for either political or economic repression. On several pages, it is explained that anarchists loathe authority and the capitalist system (and, in fact, 'the System' in general).

Right-wing extremists were supporters of the 'Vlaams Blok' ( $N = 11$ ). These participants were recruited on a one-by-one basis by our students, and these data were collected in diverse communities in Flanders. The sample consisted of ten males and one female with a mean age of 38.4 years ( $SD = 12.6$ ), nine of whom held college or university degrees. Vlaams Blok is a typical example of the so-called 'new' extreme-right party family in Europe (Ignazi 1992) and is very similar to other extreme right-wing European parties, such as the Centrum Partij in the Netherlands, Le Pen's Front National in France and the Republikaner in Germany. The party gained 16 per cent of the vote during the national elections in June 1999 – a year before the data were collected. Three issues dominate the political agenda of Vlaams Blok. First, the party advocates the independence of Flanders (and hence the demolition of the Belgian state). Second, it advocates strict law-and-order politics and calls for a harsh fight against criminality. Finally, it wants to put strict limits on immigration whereby those who are already present in the country would be obliged to assimilate into the dominant culture. Especially because of the latter issue, the party has been accused of incitement to hatred and discrimination.

Members of all other 'traditional' parties (the Christian Democrats ( $N = 6$ ), Social Democrats ( $N = 4$ ), Nationalists ( $N = 5$ ) and Liberal Democrats ( $N = 2$ )) are referred to as 'moderates'. These participants were recruited on a one-by-one basis by our students, and these data were collected in diverse communities in Flanders. The political platform of the Social Democratic Party (representing about 15 per cent of the electorate in the 1999 election) is concerned primarily with the redistribution of income and represents the left-wing side of the (moderate) political spectrum. The Christian Democratic Party (with 22 per cent of the electorate) and the Nationalist Democratic Party (with 9 per cent of the electorate) represent the political centre. The Christian Democrats stress the importance of family values and Catholic ethics, whereas the Nationalist Democratic Party strives to attain more autonomy for Flanders. Finally, the Liberal Democrats (23 per cent) support free-market trade and have a reputation of progressivism for ethical issues. The sample consisted of 13 males and four females with a mean age of 52.6 years ( $SD = 12.0$ ), 9 of whom held college or university degrees.

## *Measures*

### *Social attitudes*

Participants completed a RWA scale (Altemeyer 1981; Meeus 1991; 11 items). A sample item of this scale is: 'Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.' The SDO scale (Pratto et al. 1994; Van Hiel & Duriez 2002; 14 items) was administered as well. A sample item is: 'Some groups of people are simply not the equals of others.' Cultural and Economic Conservatism scales (De Witte 1990; both 12 items) were also completed. The Cultural Conservatism scale addresses issues such as upbringing, work ethic, the position of women in society, abortion, euthanasia and premarital sex. A sample item is: 'People who do not want to work are good for nothing.' The Economic Conservatism scale addresses issues like the desirability of trade unions, government interference in economics and income differences. A sample item is: 'Taxes on large incomes should increase.' Finally, participants completed the 8-item LWA scale (Van Hiel et al. 2006). A sample item is: 'A revolutionary movement is justified in using violence because the Establishment will never give up its power peacefully.'

### *Human values*

The Dutch translation of Schwartz's value survey consists of 54 values (Schwartz 1992). Each value was rated in terms of its importance as a guideline in one's life on a 9-point scale ranging from 'opposed to my principles' (-1) through 'not important' (0) to 'of supreme importance' (+7).

### *Ethnic prejudice*

Participants completed a 9-item blatant Ethnic Prejudice scale (Billiet & De Witte 1991; Duriez & Van Hiel 2002). Sample items are: 'In general, immigrants are not to be trusted' and 'We have to keep our race pure and fight mixture with other races.'

## *Results*

The analyses were conducted according to Van Leeuwen et al. (2007). First, however, the existence of items that failed to contribute to the scales' internal consistencies was checked using the entire study sample. On the basis of these analyses, a single item each was omitted for RWA, SDO, Cultural and Economic Conservatism, and LWA. From the Schwartz inventory, no fewer than 21 items had to be discarded from the initial item set. The resulting Cronbach's alphas were satisfactory for RWA,  $\alpha = 0.93$  (10 items); Cultural Conservatism (11 items),  $\alpha = 0.91$ ; SDO,  $\alpha = 0.89$  (13 items); Economic Conservatism,

$\alpha = 0.94$  (11 items); LWA,  $\alpha = 0.82$  (11 items); Conservation,  $\alpha = 0.75$  (11 items); Self-transcendence,  $\alpha = 0.71$  (12 items); and Ethnic Prejudice,  $\alpha = 0.95$  (12 items). The value scales of Openness,  $\alpha = 0.64$  (5 items), and Self-enhancement,  $\alpha = 0.59$  (5 items), yielded less than optimal internal consistencies.

### *Level 1: Mean-level differences*

First, we analysed mean-level differences among the four ideological groups (moderates, anarchists, left-wing extremists and right-wing extremists). Univariate analyses of variance revealed significant differences with respect to the ideological measures of RWA, SDO, Cultural and Economic Conservatism, and LWA, as well as Openness to Change, Conservation and Ethnic Prejudice (see Table 4). The pattern of results was in the expected direction, revealing the highest scores on RWA, SDO, Cultural and Economic Conservatism, and Ethnic Prejudice among right-wing extremists as compared to communists and anarchists, with the moderates scoring in between (but often not significantly different from the right-wing extremists). LWA levels were highest among communists, followed by anarchists, moderates and right-wing extremists (see Van Hiel et al. 2006). With respect to the values dimension of Openness, the moderates obtained especially low scores, whereas Conservation was less valued among communists and anarchists.

Comparison of the moderate sample with the extreme right-wing sample revealed significant differences for Economic Conservatism, Openness and Ethnic Prejudice, whereas significant differences between the moderates and the two extreme left-wing groups were obtained for all variables (except Self-enhancement and Self-transcendence, which yielded no significant mean differences whatsoever). Comparison of the two far-left groups revealed only two significant differences (for Cultural Conservatism and LWA), whereas both of these groups showed eight significant differences from the right-wing extremists (see Table 4).

The analyses also revealed that some of these variables were unequally distributed across the various ideological groups. Unlike the conventional idea that 'extremists are all alike', the present results indicate that differences in the distributions of the four variables are nonsignificant. Moreover, inspection of the standard deviations of the six variables with unequal distributions revealed that two variables attained their highest standard deviations in the moderate group. The communists and anarchists showed the lowest amount of variance for one and three variables, respectively, while the extreme right-wing group did not show lower variability for any variable.

In conclusion, the mean-level analyses revealed significant differences between the moderate group and the extremist groups (particularly the

Table 4. Means and standard deviations of the scales (Study 2)

	Moderates	Communists	Anarchists	Right-wing extremists	F(M)	F(SD)
RWA	3.25 <sup>b</sup> (0.80)	1.68 <sup>a</sup> (0.63)	1.35 <sup>a</sup> (0.31)	3.39 <sup>b</sup> (0.41)	55.73***	2.79*
Cultural	3.15 <sup>c</sup> (0.74)	1.96 <sup>b</sup> (0.76)	1.43 <sup>a</sup> (0.40)	3.45 <sup>c</sup> (0.65)	35.73***	1.55
SDO	2.30 <sup>b</sup> (0.62)	1.36 <sup>a</sup> (0.31)	1.70 <sup>a</sup> (0.61)	2.69 <sup>b</sup> (0.79)	15.47***	3.81*
Economic	2.59 <sup>b</sup> (0.72)	1.31 <sup>a</sup> (0.52)	1.48 <sup>a</sup> (0.32)	3.48 <sup>c</sup> (0.76)	45.80***	4.56**
LWA	2.13 <sup>a</sup> (0.49)	3.51 <sup>c</sup> (1.10)	2.81 <sup>b</sup> (0.58)	1.84 <sup>a</sup> (0.50)	16.17***	9.95***
Openness	-0.86 <sup>a</sup> (0.94)	0.43 <sup>b</sup> (0.79)	0.64 <sup>b</sup> (0.87)	0.13 <sup>b</sup> (0.56)	11.64***	1.94
Conservation	0.14 <sup>b</sup> (0.86)	-0.72 <sup>a</sup> (0.84)	-0.120 <sup>a</sup> (0.88)	0.39 <sup>b</sup> (0.64)	12.90***	0.58
Enhancement	-0.08 <sup>a</sup> (0.96)	-0.80 <sup>a</sup> (1.05)	-0.44 <sup>a</sup> (2.06)	-0.99 <sup>a</sup> (1.01)	1.21	2.99*
Transcendence	0.48 <sup>a</sup> (0.62)	0.58 <sup>a</sup> (0.61)	0.42 <sup>a</sup> (0.69)	0.66 <sup>a</sup> (0.67)	0.42	0.16
Ethnic Prejudice	2.26 <sup>b</sup> (0.86)	1.35 <sup>a</sup> (0.62)	1.38 <sup>a</sup> (0.32)	3.83 <sup>c</sup> (0.69)	45.41***	5.13**

Notes: RWA = Right-Wing Authoritarianism; Cultural = Cultural conservatism; SDO = Social Dominance Orientation; Economic = Economic conservatism; LWA = Left-Wing Authoritarianism; Enhancement = Self-enhancement; Transcendence = Self-transcendence. Different superscripts refer to significant differences. \*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05.

extreme left-wing groups), as well as between the extreme left-wing groups and the right-wing extremists. In accordance with Study 1, there was a substantial amount of heterogeneity among the adherents to extreme ideologies compared to the moderate group. In order to further verify the presence of differences, we assessed the next three levels of Van Leeuwen et al.'s (2007) multiple level model.

*Level 2: Psychometric analyses*

As can be seen in Table 5, we obtained low internal consistencies for the Openness and Self-enhancement values scales, which also yielded suboptimal results at the level of the total sample. Pertaining to the moderate group, all scales yielded a satisfactory internal consistency (all  $\alpha$ s > 0.80), except LWA. In the extremist samples, more suboptimal internal consistencies were obtained. Particularly, the extreme right-wing sample performed poorly, with the majority of scales yielding less than optimal internal consistency.

On the basis of the present qualitative check of the scales' internal consistencies, the question of whether there are differences in scales' reliability between the various groups may be answered affirmatively. In the moderate group, most scales performed well, whereas especially in the extreme right-wing sample, suboptimal internal consistencies were obtained. Moreover, the structural analyses of the social attitudes scales in the extreme right-wing

Table 5. Internal consistencies of the scales (Study 2)

	Moderates	Communists	Anarchists	Right-wing extremists
RWA	0.87	0.76	0.61 (0.67)	0.55 (0.67)
Cultural	0.81	0.83	0.69	0.78
SDO	0.82	0.55	0.82	0.90
Economic	0.82	0.87	0.67	0.92
LWA	0.63	0.89	0.65 (0.75)	0.51 (0.60)
Openness	0.56	0.56	0.32 (0.59)	0.22 (0.56)
Conservation	0.84	0.58 (0.66)	0.68	0.57
Enhancement	0.25 (0.34)	0.48 (0.62)	0.76	0.03
Transcendence	0.81	0.83	0.69	0.56
Ethnic Prejudice	0.91	0.89	0.53	0.85

Notes: RWA = Right-Wing Authoritarianism; Cultural = Cultural conservatism; SDO = Social Dominance Orientation; Economic = Economic conservatism; LWA = Left-Wing Authoritarianism; Enhancement = Self-enhancement; Transcendence = Self-transcendence. Cronbach  $\alpha$ 's of optimised scales (after deletion of one negatively correlating item) between brackets. These optimised scales were used in levels 3 and 4 analyses.

sample did not conform to expectations. In conclusion, the level 2 analyses suggest differences between moderates and extremists as well as among the various extreme groups.

### *Level 3: Relationships among variables*

We compared the magnitudes and directions of the relationships among the variables after transformation with the Fisher  $r$  to  $z$  formula. However, because the presence of some low internal consistencies detected in the previous analyses may bias the present analyses, we checked within each sample whether there were items that contributed negatively to the scale. We decided to drop at most one 'bad item' per scale because we wanted to assure a high level of similarity of the measures across samples. Table 6 reports the internal consistencies of scales that lost one item (the other scales were left unaltered).

Given the presence of ten variables, a total of 45 relationships were tested (see Table 6). Significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) emerged for 24 relationships, whereas 21 relationships did not show significant between-sample differences. Moreover, we checked whether the internal consistencies of the scales may have had spill-over effects on the between-group variability of the magnitudes of these relationships. A correlation can be based on: (1) two internally consistent scales (we used the lenient criterion of  $\alpha > 0.65$ ), (2) one internally consistent scale and one inconsistent scale, or (3) two internally inconsistent scales. Analysis (based on 180 relationships, or 45 correlations in each of the four ideological groups) revealed that the relationships showing significant between-group variation did not differ from the relationships without significant variation with respect to the internal consistencies of the scales,  $\chi^2$  ( $df = 2$ ,  $N = 180$ ) = 0.70, *n.s.* In particular, significantly different relationships were based on 49 correlations between consistent scales, 40 correlations between one consistent and one inconsistent scale, and seven correlations between two inconsistent scales. The relationships that did not yield significant differences were based on 40 correlations between consistent scales, 35 correlations between one consistent and one inconsistent scale, and nine correlations between two inconsistent scales.

Comparisons of specific combinations of ideological groups revealed that the correlations obtained for moderates did not differ much from those obtained for communists (four significant differences) and anarchists (five significant differences), whereas more significantly different relationships were obtained between moderates and the sample of right-wing extremists (ten significant differences). These results indicate significant differences between moderates and extremists, but the various extremist groups showed an even more diverse pattern of correlations. In particular, the communists and the anarchists showed a highly divergent pattern of correlations (eleven significant



Table 6. Correlations among the scales (Study 2)

	Moderates	Communists	Anarchists	Right-wing extremists	Significance of differences
<i>Correlations with Ethnic Prejudice</i>					
RWA	0.57 <sup>a**</sup>	0.77 <sup>a***</sup>	0.11 <sup>b</sup>	0.26 <sup>ab</sup>	*
Cultural	0.70 <sup>a***</sup>	0.65 <sup>a**</sup>	0.05 <sup>b</sup>	0.39 <sup>ab</sup>	*
SDO	0.55 <sup>a*</sup>	0.59 <sup>a**</sup>	0.50 <sup>a**</sup>	0.84 <sup>(a***)</sup>	
Economic	0.08 <sup>b</sup>	0.87 <sup>a***</sup>	0.32 <sup>b</sup>	-0.18 <sup>b</sup>	*
LWA	0.66 <sup>a***</sup>	-0.54 <sup>b*</sup>	0.22 <sup>a</sup>	0.29 <sup>a</sup>	*
Openness	-0.56 <sup>a*</sup>	0.06 <sup>a</sup>	-0.09 <sup>a</sup>	0.16 <sup>a</sup>	
Conservation	0.60 <sup>a**</sup>	0.37 <sup>ab</sup>	0.14 <sup>ab</sup>	-0.32 <sup>b</sup>	*
Enhancement	-0.16 <sup>ab</sup>	-0.60 <sup>a*</sup>	-0.05 <sup>ab</sup>	0.36 <sup>b</sup>	*
Transcendence	0.16 <sup>a</sup>	-0.17 <sup>a</sup>	-0.27 <sup>a</sup>	-0.53 <sup>af</sup>	
<i>Correlations with Self-enhancement</i>					
RWA	-0.32 <sup>a</sup>	-0.52 <sup>a**</sup>	-0.37 <sup>a</sup>	0.61 <sup>b*</sup>	*
Cultural	-0.23 <sup>a</sup>	-0.49 <sup>a*</sup>	-0.28 <sup>a</sup>	0.21 <sup>a</sup>	
SDO	-0.28 <sup>a</sup>	0.07 <sup>ab</sup>	0.02 <sup>ab</sup>	0.60 <sup>b†</sup>	*
Economic	-0.33 <sup>ab</sup>	-0.31 <sup>ab</sup>	0.28 <sup>a</sup>	-0.65 <sup>b*</sup>	*
LWA	-0.01 <sup>a</sup>	0.56 <sup>a*</sup>	0.15 <sup>a</sup>	0.61 <sup>a*</sup>	
Openness	-0.02 <sup>ab</sup>	0.20 <sup>a</sup>	-0.47 <sup>b*</sup>	0.42 <sup>a</sup>	*
Conservation	-0.51 <sup>a**</sup>	-0.52 <sup>a*</sup>	-0.19 <sup>a</sup>	-0.69 <sup>a**</sup>	
Transcendence	-0.49 <sup>a**</sup>	-0.21 <sup>a</sup>	-0.50 <sup>a**</sup>	-0.43 <sup>a</sup>	

Correlations with Self-transcendence

RWA	0.14 <sup>a</sup>	-0.19 <sup>a</sup>	0.13 <sup>a</sup>	-0.24 <sup>a</sup>
Cultural	0.10 <sup>a</sup>	-0.34 <sup>a</sup>	0.06 <sup>a</sup>	0.15 <sup>a</sup>
SDO	0.24 <sup>a</sup>	-0.39 <sup>a</sup>	-0.16 <sup>a</sup>	-0.49 <sup>a</sup>
Economic	0.35 <sup>a</sup>	-0.13 <sup>a</sup>	-0.11 <sup>a</sup>	-0.07 <sup>a</sup>
LWA	0.33 <sup>a</sup>	-0.20 <sup>a</sup>	-0.21 <sup>a</sup>	-0.19 <sup>a</sup>
Openness	-0.09 <sup>a</sup>	0.06 <sup>a</sup>	0.08 <sup>a</sup>	-0.60 <sup>a</sup>
Conservation	0.24 <sup>a</sup>	-0.24 <sup>a</sup>	-0.29 <sup>a</sup>	-0.02 <sup>a</sup>

Correlations with Conservation

RWA	0.77 <sup>ab***</sup>	0.57 <sup>ab**</sup>	0.07 <sup>b</sup>	-0.56 <sup>bt</sup>	*
Cultural	0.75 <sup>ab***</sup>	0.67 <sup>ab**</sup>	-0.02 <sup>b</sup>	-0.07 <sup>b</sup>	*
SDO	0.38 <sup>a</sup>	0.19 <sup>ab</sup>	-0.05 <sup>ab</sup>	-0.46 <sup>b</sup>	*
Economic	-0.06 <sup>a</sup>	0.32 <sup>ab</sup>	0.05 <sup>ab</sup>	0.69 <sup>b*</sup>	*
LWA	0.45 <sup>af</sup>	-0.03 <sup>ab</sup>	-0.19 <sup>ab</sup>	-0.56 <sup>bt</sup>	*
Openness	-0.21 <sup>ab*</sup>	-0.76 <sup>b***</sup>	-0.20 <sup>a</sup>	0.16 <sup>a</sup>	*

Correlations with Openness

RWA	-0.02 <sup>a</sup>	-0.36 <sup>a</sup>	0.00 <sup>a</sup>	0.08 <sup>a</sup>	*
Cultural	-0.17 <sup>ab</sup>	-0.48 <sup>ab*</sup>	0.14 <sup>b</sup>	0.07 <sup>ab</sup>	
SDO	-0.41 <sup>a</sup>	0.14 <sup>a</sup>	-0.01 <sup>a</sup>	0.14 <sup>a</sup>	
Economic	0.22 <sup>a</sup>	0.08 <sup>a</sup>	-0.25 <sup>a</sup>	0.02 <sup>a</sup>	
LWA	-0.59 <sup>ab*</sup>	-0.29 <sup>ab</sup>	0.12 <sup>b</sup>	0.03 <sup>ab</sup>	*

Table 6. Continued.

	Moderates	Communists	Anarchists	Right-wing extremists	Significance of differences
<i>Correlations with LWA</i>					
RWA	0.32 <sup>a</sup>	-0.27 <sup>a</sup>	-0.21 <sup>a</sup>	0.47 <sup>a</sup>	*
Cultural	0.49 <sup>a*</sup>	-0.29 <sup>b</sup>	-0.15 <sup>ab</sup>	0.34 <sup>ab</sup>	*
SDO	0.48 <sup>a*</sup>	-0.23 <sup>b</sup>	0.19 <sup>ab</sup>	0.30 <sup>ab</sup>	*
Economic	0.10 <sup>a</sup>	-0.51 <sup>ab*</sup>	-0.06 <sup>a</sup>	-0.84 <sup>b***</sup>	*
<i>Correlations with Economic Conservatism</i>					
RWA	0.21 <sup>ab</sup>	0.65 <sup>***</sup>	-0.15 <sup>b</sup>	-0.56 <sup>b†</sup>	*
Cultural	0.10 <sup>ab</sup>	0.51 <sup>a*</sup>	-0.11 <sup>b</sup>	-0.52 <sup>b</sup>	*
SDO	0.51 <sup>a*</sup>	0.67 <sup>***</sup>	0.76 <sup>***</sup>	-0.32 <sup>b</sup>	*
<i>Correlations with SDO</i>					
RWA	0.51 <sup>a*</sup>	0.41 <sup>a†</sup>	-0.12 <sup>a</sup>	0.59 <sup>a†</sup>	
Cultural	0.47 <sup>a†</sup>	0.33 <sup>a</sup>	-0.19 <sup>a</sup>	0.42 <sup>a</sup>	
<i>Correlations with Cultural Conservatism</i>					
RWA	0.85 <sup>u***</sup>	0.79 <sup>***</sup>	0.50 <sup>a*</sup>	0.33 <sup>a</sup>	

Notes: RWA = Right-Wing Authoritarianism; Cultural = Cultural conservatism; SDO = Social Dominance Orientation; Economic = Economic conservatism; LWA = Left-Wing Authoritarianism; Enhancement = Self-enhancement; Transcendence = Self-transcendence. \*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05. Different superscripts refer to significant differences.

differences). Moreover, whereas communists and right-wing extremists also showed a highly divergent pattern of relationships (ten significant differences), the anarchists and the right-wing extremists did not show many differences (five significant differences). In conclusion, the present level 3 analyses show significant between-group differences in the magnitudes of relationships among the variables.

#### *Level 4: Mediation analyses*

At level 4 we checked whether social attitudes (RWA and SDO) mediated the relationship between social values and Ethnic Prejudice (see Cohrs et al. 2005; Heaven et al. 2006). As can be inferred from Table 7, these analyses revealed very different results for the various samples. In the moderate and communist samples, the necessary preconditions for testing mediation were fulfilled (see Baron & Kenny 1986). In particular, an effect of values was obtained as well as an effect of social attitudes on Ethnic Prejudice. However, as can also be seen in Table 7, in the moderate sample the effect of values dropped to

*Table 7.* Mediation effects of RWA and SDO on the relationship between values and Ethnic Prejudice (Study 2)

	Moderates	Communists	Anarchists	Right-wing extremists
<i>Analysis 1 (values only)</i>				
Openness	-0.44*	0.54	-0.31*	-0.07
Conservation	0.57*	0.52	-0.16	-0.50
Enhancement	0.14	-0.43	-0.49*	-0.26
Transcendence	0.06	0.17	-0.54*	-0.70
<i>Analysis 2 (social attitudes only)</i>				
RWA	0.39	0.63***	0.17	-0.35
SDO	0.35	0.33*	0.52*	0.99***
<i>Analysis 3 (social attitudes included in block 1, values included in block 2)</i>				
Openness	-0.45 <sup>†</sup>	0.35	-0.20	-0.19
Conservation	0.23	0.11	-0.04	-0.44
Enhancement	0.12	-0.31*	-0.30	-0.53
Transcendence	0.04	-0.01	-0.36	-0.25
$\Delta F$ Analysis 1	3.96*	3.41*	0.83	1.13
$\Delta F$ Analysis 2	5.06*	16.87***	3.40 <sup>†</sup>	14.62**
$\Delta F$ Analysis 3	1.67	2.87 <sup>†</sup>	0.46	0.54

Notes: RWA = Right-Wing Authoritarianism; SDO = Social Dominance Orientation; Enhancement = Self-enhancement; Transcendence = Self-transcendence. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ .

nonsignificance after inclusion of the social attitudes, indicating that RWA and SDO mediated the effect of values on ethnic prejudice. In the communist sample, the effect of values on Ethnic Prejudice was also deflated by including RWA and SDO in the first block of the regression analysis, although a near-significant effect remained. Finally, in the anarchist and extreme right-wing sample, there was no effect of values on Ethnic Prejudice to be mediated, and the necessary conditions for testing a mediation model were not met in these two samples (see Baron & Kenny 1986).

In sum, the present analysis revealed in the moderate sample – in line with previous studies (Cohrs et al. 2005; Heaven et al. 2006) – that the effect of values on prejudice is mediated by the social attitudes captured by the RWA and SDO. This pattern of results also emerged in a somewhat weaker form in the communist sample. However, there was no effect to be mediated in the anarchist and extreme right-wing samples. In line with the results obtained in the level 2 and 3 analyses, it can thus be concluded that these results attest to differences among the present samples.

### *Summary*

As can be seen in Table 8, some interesting and even paradoxical findings emerged. On the basis of the level 1 analyses, substantial mean-level differences between moderates and left-wing extremists (communists and anarchists) can be inferred, whereas the differences between moderates and right-wing extremists were observed at a much lower level. Conversely, the levels 2, 3 and 4 analyses yielded the fewest differences between moderates and communists, whereas the anarchists and right-wing extremists emerged as strongly different groups. These results thus reveal an inconsistency between level 1 – the only level considered in most previous studies – and the three remaining levels.

It is important to note here that the moderate sample yielded a pattern of results that corroborates previous research – that is, the psychological scales generally proved to be internally consistent. Moreover, the correlations between the various variables are in the expected direction (e.g., both RWA and SDO are powerful predictors of prejudice; see Van Hiel & Mervielde 2005). Finally, in line with previous reports (Cohrs et al. 2005; Heaven et al. 2006), personal values mediated the relationship between social attitudes and prejudice. This sample thus seems to constitute a solid basis for comparison with the extremist groups.

### *Discussion*

The present higher-level analyses showed that the right-wing extremists in particular deviate from the moderates, whereas these differences were not

Table 8. Summary of levels 1 to 4 analyses: Between-group differences with the moderate group as a baseline and among the extremist groups (Study 2)

	Moderates as a comparison group			Communists as a comparison group		Anarchists as a comparison group	
	Communists	Anarchists	Right-wing extremists	Anarchists	Right-wing extremists	Right-wing extremists	Right-wing extremists
Level 1	+++	+++	+	+	++	++	++
Level 2	+	++	+++	++	+++	+++	++
Level 3	+	+	+++	+++	+++	+++	+
Level 4	+	+++	+++	++	++	++	+
Σ 2-4	+++	+++++	+++++	+++++	+++++	+++++	+++

Notes: + indicates mild differences; ++ indicates an intermediate level of differences; +++ indicates a high level of differences. Σ 2-4: sum of differences of levels 2 to 4 analyses.

apparent for the communists. This result corroborates Rocatto and Ricolfi (2005) and the re-interpretation of McCloskey & Chong's (1985) data by Jost et al. (2003) and Stone and Smith (1993). **In sum, it can thus be concluded that moderates and extremists are distinct groups and that the present political psychological variables have different meanings in the various ideologies.** Moreover, comparison of the extremist groups reveals a rather sharp distinction between the communists, on the one hand, and anarchists and right-wing extremists, on the other.

## General discussion and conclusions

In the present research, we tried to answer three important questions. First, are people who join particular political groups very much alike with respect to important political psychological variables, or stated alternatively, do activists of particular ideologies show high levels of homogeneity? This question pertains to within-group differences. Second, are members of various political ideologies truly different? This question pertains to intergroup differences, and we particularly wanted to ascertain the presence or absence of eventual differences in the nomological networks of various ideologies. Third, we wanted to investigate differences among adherents of various extremist groups – that is, between extreme left-wing and extreme right-wing adherents and between communists, anarchists and right-wing extremists. To date, the issue of eventual differences in meanings and nomological networks according to political ideology has not yet been investigated within political psychology. However, other domains, like forensic and clinical psychology, suggest that to understand extremism, exact answers to the present research questions are essential.

The data analysis strategy adopted in the present study is based on a four-level model developed by Van Leeuwen et al. (2007). The first level tests differences between the means of the various samples on the study's scales. In line with previous studies (Bhushan 1969; Knutson 1974; Sherwood 1966; Steiner & Fahrenberg 2000), the present level 1 analyses revealed mean-level differences among the various ideological groups, showing highly significant differences in social attitudes, values and ethnic prejudice scores. In both of our studies, we obtained many significant differences between the extreme left-wing and right-wing groups.

Three main results were obtained. First, the results of both our studies revealed that extremists did not show particularly low levels of variability in the political-psychological traits presently studied. **In particular, the ESS data revealed substantial heterogeneity at the extremes of the self-placement left**

and right endpoints of the political spectrum (especially on the left-wing side), whereas the moderate groups showed the largest amount of homogeneity on no less than three of the five variables studied. In Study 2, we again did not find greater homogeneity among activists of extreme ideologies. These results thus oppose popular thinking about extremism in the sense that members of particular extremist groups are often considered to be 'all alike'. In particular, unlike the categorical and stereotypical image of extremists, the present approach based on the actual measurement of traits at the level of the individual adherents reveals that, just like moderates, extremists differ substantially from each other.

Second, the analyses at the third level of Van Leeuwen et al.'s (2007) model concerning differences in the patterns of correlations among the various scales showed decisive between-group variation in both studies. Moreover, in Study 2, the fourth level analysis of the mediation effects revealed inconsistencies among the various samples. The analyses on the third and fourth levels thus show little consistency in the patterns of relationships of the dependent variables, and it is suggested that these variables have different meanings in each of these samples. These differences suggest that there might be different antecedents that predispose people to become a moderate or an extremist. Moreover, a host of relevant political psychological variables, like political attitudes and knowledge, partisanship and media effects, are likely to have different effects in the various ideological groups. In sum, differences in meanings and nomological networks indicate different processes underlying political behaviour in extremists versus moderates.

Third, the analyses revealed significant differences between the moderate group and the extremist groups, with the largest differences obtained among the extremist groups. In Study 1, the extreme left-wing and extreme right-wing groups showed the greatest differences, and the moderates were located in between. In Study 2, the most pronounced differences emerged between the communists and the extreme right-wing group. The present results thus do not corroborate the idea that adherents to extreme ideologies on the left-wing and right-wing sides resemble each other (e.g., Eysenck 1954, 1980–1981; Ray 1983; Rokeach 1960; Sidanius 1988) but instead support the alternative perspective that different extreme ideologies attract different people (e.g., Adorno et al. 1950; Jost et al. 2003; Stone 1980; Stone & Smith 1993). In other words, extremists should be distinguished on the basis of the ideology to which they adhere, and there is no universal extremist type that feels at home in any extreme ideology.

Finally, it can be concluded that the between-group mean-level differences cannot be confidently interpreted because the variables under study do not



have similar meanings in the various samples (see Figure 1). From this point of view, it is quite ironic that the limited number of previous investigations of true extremists were focused exclusively on mean-level differences (for an exception, see Rocatto & Ricolfi 2005), neglecting the presence of differences in the meanings and nomological networks of the studied variables. However, it is also important to note that the level 2 analyses revealed some inconsistency across the studies. In Study 1, the items constituting the psychological constructs reflected a common core idea in all ideological groups, whereas Study 2 indicated that in some groups, the items did not form a coherent scale.

In the remainder of this article, we elaborate upon two issues. First, the present results imply that findings typical for moderates cannot be straightforwardly extrapolated to extremists. Along similar lines, the present results also attest to the importance of testing theories about extremism in extremist samples. Second, we discuss some strengths and limitations of the present studies.

### *The study of extremism*

Findings from samples of political moderates do not provide a solid basis for theories about extremism. In particular, results obtained with moderates cannot be straightforwardly extrapolated to true extremists, and one should use caution in evaluating previous accounts of extremism that are typically based on data obtained in moderate samples. Examples of influential political psychological theories about extremism based on evidence on relations among variables in non-extremist samples include the Value Pluralism Model (Tetlock 1983) and Context Theory (Sidanius 1988), but also more recent theories like the Catastrophe Model of attitudes (Liu & Latané 1998).

Stone and Smith (1993) have already convincingly argued for the necessity of actually measuring the traits in persons attracted to extremist groups. However, according to these authors, a surprisingly small database on extremism has become available over the years. The destructive capacity of extremist regimes and the development of new extreme movements (especially on the right-wing side; see Ignazi 1992; Van Hiel et al. 2007b) stand in stark contrast to the sparse research interest of political psychologists in true extremists. Moreover, the study of extremism (conducted in extremist groups) represents an interesting avenue for research as problematic behaviour such as terrorism (Post 2005) has roots within branches of extremism. Indeed, it is quite noticeable that although the search term 'terrorism' yields 5,900 hits in the Thomson social sciences database (search performed 1 June 2010), only a handful of articles and book chapters have investigated terrorists themselves (e.g., Jäger et al. 1981; Knutson 1980; Post 2005; Rasch 1979).

Hence, given the severe consequences of extremism for society, the study of extreme ideologies is an interesting domain in its own right. In order to understand better why some people are attracted to particular extremist groups, political psychologists must collect data on (former) members of these movements. Given the inherent difficulties of obtaining such data, the importance of studies of historical and documentary material and of interviews with group members (e.g., Ezekiel 1995, 2002) cannot be overstated, even though these studies do not allow the systematic comparison of adherents to different parties on psychological variables like authoritarianism and personal values. Moreover, the research agenda of political psychologists should acknowledge that 'extremism' is an excessively broad and generative term. It is unlikely that every extreme ideology serves the same needs or has similar developmental antecedents (see Post 2005).

### *Strengths and limitations*

A major strength of the present investigation is that we succeeded in establishing our main findings in two studies that represented distinct research contexts: a large-scale survey conducted in various European countries and a field study conducted among small, distinctive extremist groups. Each of these studies has different strengths and limitations. Indeed, a potential shortcoming of the large-scale survey is its use of single-item scales with a focus on opinions about focal political issues at the expense of multi-item scales that probe the underlying attitudes. Moreover, participants were allocated to groups on the basis of their scores on a left–right self-placement scale, and each of these groups might have included a variety of ideologies as well as people without ideologies, like protest voters and extremists who do not join either movement. These limitations were not an issue in our second study conducted in samples of activists. However, Study 1 had the definite advantage of including a large number of participants, whereas Study 2 only included a modest number of participants. Political science students may have selected 'moderate' members of extremist organisations, because they felt more comfortable approaching them than 'hardcore' members, which might have led to a selection effect. Ideally, to be able to reach firm conclusions, a large sample of activists of different, well-defined extreme ideologies would have to complete the various psychological measures. Of course, such a sample is difficult to obtain, and extremists (especially on the left-wing side) have been found to be reluctant to participate in scientific studies (Rosen 1951).

Another important strength of the present studies is the use of a new paradigm to tackle classic research questions, which might be informative for future studies. Indeed, our results based on Van Leeuwen et al.'s (2007)

method alert us of the necessity to study activists of different ideologies rather than inferring their characteristics from studies of moderate samples. Moreover, this method reminds us of the importance of understanding how political psychological variables are represented within these groups rather than focusing solely on mean differences. Future studies are therefore recommended to investigate the representation of political psychological variables in various ideological groups, and alternative methods, like the implicit representation of attitudes (e.g., Greenwald et al. 1998), might represent an interesting way to proceed.

Finally, a limitation of the present method is that we do not have a procedure at our disposal to decide what exact number of significant differences is needed to surpass the criterion for being judged as truly distinctive. For example, in Study 2 it was found in the level 3 analyses of the magnitudes of the interrelationships among variables that there were four significant differences between moderates and communists, whereas five and ten differences from moderates were obtained for the sample of anarchists and right-wing extremists, respectively. It could rightfully be argued that a single significant difference is enough to be labeled 'different', but it would be no less logical to claim that a greater number of significant differences are needed.

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