The adolescence represents a special phase of life with regard to political socialization due to multiple developmental processes. While adolescents are very open to exploring the world, they are also still politically inexperienced. Despite their affinity for the media, it can be difficult for adolescents to distinguish serious news sources from dubious fake news, as well as conspiracy narratives. In conspiracy theories, certain individuals/groups are identified as solely responsible for important social processes. Those narratives can thereby reduce the complexity of social or political events to monistic explanations. Believers in conspiracy narratives share many similarities with political extremists since both have a strong need to make sense of social realities via black-and-white thinking and are keen to make a clear distinction between one’s in-group and the outgroup.

The purpose of this study is to examine whether a conspiracy mentality is associated with a right-wing extremist ideology and discriminatory behaviours. Whilst controlling for further variables, the present study uses data from n = 2,824 students of different educational backgrounds and class levels (7th and 9th grade) from Germany to investigate this relationship. It is also analysed if the levels of conspiracy mentality, right-wing ideology and discriminatory behaviour and their relations evolve with age. Results indicate that the higher the conspiracy mentality, the more adolescents share a right-wing extremist ideology. While this is observed in both the 7th and 9th grade, the link between a conspiracy mentality and discriminatory behaviour is only evident in 9th grade. Furthermore, analyses of interaction effects show that in the 9th grade young people who hold an extreme right-wing ideology are more likely to engage in discriminatory behaviour regardless of the degree of conspiracy mentality. Nevertheless, this correlation becomes stronger the more pronounced the conspiracy mentality is.