

Terrorism, adversity and identity

A qualitative study of detained terrorism suspects in comparison to other detainees

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Preface

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of our study

In the last two decades, interest in terrorism and extremism has increased tremendously, in particular after the events of 9/11, the rise of Al Qaeda and I.S. Several countries in Europe were recently confronted with large scale attacks. This is only part of a worldwide variety in attacks from different backgrounds and conflicts. Jihadist extremism and terrorism is at the fore of the public debate and attention, but there have also been many attacks from other religious and political backgrounds, for example right-wing extremist attacks on mosques, synagogues and migrants.

Due to the increased public and political concern for terrorism since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a growing research interest into this theme (e.g., De Graaf, 2017, Sageman 2008; Horgan, 2012). This has improved our knowledge and insights on the subject. However, many studies on terrorism are based on similar, limited sources that are often re-used. As a result the theoretical debate on terrorism is not always at par with the availability of reliable empirical research material (Borum, 2011). Although various insights about the underlying mechanisms of needs and motivations for involvement in terrorism have been discovered (Horgan, 2012), much is still unclear. What we lack in particular is an understanding of the factors that increase the likelihood of resorting to violent extremism in people who have the same backgrounds and encounter similar experiences as people who do not become involved in terrorism.

Under the umbrella of PROTON, an international collaboration that is funded by the European Science Foundation, researchers from various countries and disciplinary backgrounds have been working together to find the determinants of involvement in terrorism (as well as organized crime). This collaboration is particularly focused on collecting empirical data on the psychological, social and economic drivers of terrorism and organized crime. Part of this project was a Dutch multi-method study on the role of socio-economic and psychological factors and processes that are related to involvement in terrorism. In this study, researchers from the NSCR brought together quantitative as well as a qualitative data on the characteristics and life histories of suspects of terrorist offenses in the Netherlands as well as quantitative and qualitative data on a control group of suspects from traditional criminal offenses.

In the quantitative study, an anonymized list of all Dutch suspects of terrorist offenses since 2004 was made available by the Prosecution Office and combined with data from Dutch

Statistics (CBS). These quantitative data included demographic, socio-economic and criminal history information for terrorism suspects, as well as for a comparison group of criminal suspects. The qualitative study aimed to collect more in-depth accounts of the motives, experiences and life histories of persons involved in terrorist activities in the Netherlands. To achieve this, prisons with special units for suspects and convicts of terrorist offenses (in Dutch: Terrorisme Afdeling, shortened as T.A.) were visited and in-depth interviews were held with a few detainees from terrorist units, as well as detainees charged with traditional crimes, complemented with interviews with informants that had personal experience with current and former detainees that were incarcerated on the basis of the Terrorist Crime Act. During these interviews, an events calendar instrument was used, to inventory specific changes in the lives of detainees prior to their detention. Also secondary analyses were conducted on available biographic material on two well-known jihadist terrorists in the Netherlands.

This report is an extensive presentation of the results of the *qualitative* study. It is intended as an elaboration of the relation between socio-economic deprivation, adversity and terrorism that has been reported in the literature and that was confirmed in our quantitative study (see Ljujic et al., forthcoming, Thijs et al., 2018). Although deprivation and adversity seem to be key factors in the lives of terrorists, only a small percentage of those who are deprived and encounter adversity in their lives will resort to ideological and militant radicalization. In the current study we aim to understand better why some people have become susceptible to a militant extremist narrative, to the extent that they are willing to commit violent acts against citizens or join or support fighters in ethno-religious wars. We want to find out which additional factors and processes make some economically deprived and socially excluded people to become terrorists or extremists, in contrast to others. Similarly, we want to learn more about the role of religion and ideology in this process, because we also know that the majority of orthodox religious people are peaceful.

We further hope to shed more light on what is specific for detainees suspected of or convicted for terrorist offenses by comparing them with detainees that are suspects of general criminal offenses. We know that many terrorist offenders have a criminal past, but at the same time most criminal offenders do not develop an ideologically founded hatred towards society, nor do they join extremist networks. We want to find out what separates 'terrorist/ extremist' offenders from these other groups. What in these people's perception of life, in their socio-economic situation, or in their social micro-environment has provided some with triggers towards extremism - or perhaps, what has provided all the others with resilience against such ideologies of violence? In order to compare the radicalized individuals with others who are

similar in many respects but who do not adhere to extremist views, we also investigated a control group of suspects and convicted criminals from regular detention units.

1.2 Research questions

The overall research question of this study is formulated as follows:

What are the differences and similarities between detainees at a terrorist unit and detainees at a regular detention center, with regard to their situation and experiences prior to detention, their personal and ideological development, and their social environment?

This study of terrorist unit detainees does not differentiate among ideologies or organizations, or ways in which people were recruited. The focus will be on the individual, regardless of whether he or she operates alone or as a part of an organized network, and regardless of whether he or she was accused of activities in the Netherlands or abroad.

Based on a literature review and theoretical elaboration of existing perspectives on terrorism and radicalization (addressed in the next chapter), we formulated four more detailed research questions:

1. What are the differences in **socio-economic and mental conditions** between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?
2. What are the differences in the **individual experienced setbacks** in terms of deprived socialization, trauma, and (perceived) discrimination between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?
3. What are the differences in **ideology, political or religious belief system** and concern with geopolitical developments, between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?
4. What are the differences in **social environment in adolescence and early adulthood**, with regard to peer group, criminal affiliations, social media use and prison context between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. In chapter 2, we provide an overview of the context, theory and literature underlying our study. We define our subject and sketch our theoretical position. In chapter 3, we address the methods of our qualitative study. We provide detailed information on the sample and recruitment procedure, and on our data collection

methods and instruments. In chapter 4, we present the findings of our interviews with detainees and informants. In this chapter we address the sub questions of our study in detail. We provide insights in the differences and similarities between the terrorist detainees and control group and illustrate our impressions and conclusions with examples and quotations gathered during our data collection. In chapter 5, we present the results of a secondary analysis of open sources about the life histories of two well-known Dutch terrorists, with special attention to the four research questions. Chapter 6 is our concluding chapter. Here, we summarize the main findings and conclusions from our study, reflect on them in light of previous literature and theories about terrorism, and address the implications of our study for future research and for policies and practices with regard to terrorist offenders.

2. Previous literature and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the literature that shaped our research questions and approach. We first sketch the political and historical context of this study: an account of what the subject of our study, terrorism, entails, and how terrorist attacks have developed over the years, internationally as well as specifically in the Netherlands. Then we address current theoretical approaches and formulate our own theoretical position. We end with a short overview of Dutch research literature on radicalization, extremism and terrorism and the four central themes of our study.

2.2 The political context of terrorism

The current situation

Since 2014, the majority of terrorist attacks were inspired by ISIS or, as it is referred to in Islamic countries, Daesh (Global Terrorism Index, 2017). Self-proclaimed 'jihadists' (strivers of justice) carried out numerous lethal attacks across the globe, leaving hundreds of civilians killed and injured.

The majority of these attacks occurred in Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Nigeria and Afghanistan, and their victims were mostly Muslim citizens (Global Terrorism Index, 2017). It is in these countries that the full force of terrorism is felt on a daily basis, due to Isis, Al Qaida, the Muslim Brotherhood and other violent organizations that seek to build a new theocratic society based on their perception of Islam. Citizens in these countries have endured various ethno-religious power struggles in the aftermath of postcolonial governmental failure, corruption, oil interests and dictatorship (Sageman, 2009).

The propaganda of terrorist jihadi organizations has been an appealing narrative for young economically fragile Europeans of (mostly) Muslim backgrounds. Around 250 people from the Netherlands – mostly male, under the age of 25 and of ethnic minority descent- have travelled to Syria and conflict laden areas to join the religious violent extremists in battle or support for their Islamic State (Bergema and Van San, 2017). On an international scale, numbers of violent extremists in Europe are said to amount to 50.000 radical individuals, according to anti-terrorism coordinator Gilles de Kerkhove (Belgian newspaper 'De Morgen', September 2017).

At the same time, right wing extremists exploit the growing islamophobia that usually increases after terrorist attacks. This has created a rise in right wing extremist violence worldwide, and some have warned that fascism is becoming politically acceptable again (Albright, 2018). In the Netherlands, two thirds of the mosques have received threats or were vandalized by hate graffiti, smashed windows, dead pigs on their doorsteps, or even arson. This suggests that 'the Muslims' are held accountable as a religious group for the terrorist attacks performed by militant extremists (Van der Valk, 2010). Right wing extremists suggest, through social media and militant public marches, that it is time to defend "our way of life" violently against the rise of Islam, against foreigners in general, or against the anti-nationalist forces of the EU. But also militant left wing extremists are still – be it less so than in the past – active, sometimes combining anti-fascism with 'ecoterrorism' out of concern for nature and environment.

The concept of terrorism

When we speak of terrorism, we should bear in mind that terrorism is not a neutral term and its definition is highly contested (De Graaf, 2017; Horgan, 2012). The word terrorism is always used by a state or by a collaboration of states to describe illegal non-state violence used by a group in order to influence politics. Its user demands of us that we take sides and condemn it. There are nation states that currently use the word 'terrorism' as a means to legally pursue their democratic opponents, as can be seen for example in Turkey.

This already signals that the political or ideological aim of so called terrorists is not always illegitimate or immoral. On the contrary, 'terrorism' may be used to fight a dictator, or to overturn a situation of human rights violations. Ethnic groups can resolve to violence in order to establish equal rights for their own group, or to draw attention to their suffering, as was the case with Nelson Mandela's ANC, with Sinn Fein's IRA, the Spanish ETA, the PKK in Turkey, or the Moluccan terrorists in the Netherlands in the 1970s. The framing of a group as terrorists or freedom fighters thus depends on one's political perspective and it may be even be part of propaganda.

The difference between freedom fighters and terrorists is defined by Horgan (2012). He argues that relativism of terrorism is dangerous, because it fails to take into account human rights and the principles of legal warfare. In Horgan's view, terrorism is not just any non-state violence aimed against the nation state. It is violence against common citizens, violation of human rights, and denial of war justice, as an expression of "the means justifies all". Thus, terrorists believe themselves to be allowed to maim, torture, or kill any member of the

opposing group, regardless if they are citizens or soldiers, politicians, independent journalists, or artists. Killing can be an expression of a different perception of law, as was the case with the Charlie Hebdo killings and the murder of Theo van Gogh, but even then, the killing takes place without a trial and without the possibility of defense against the allegations. In other terrorist attacks, it is often the aim to kill as many as possible, as it generates more horror, and thus more media coverage.

The more the narrative of threat from extremist groups bears resemblance to the social reality of people, the more likely people will believe it and decide to join. This means that unstable states and countries where democracy and equality is threatened, are facilitating the social acceptance of an extremist, conspiracy narrative (Sageman, 2009). Equally, when states successfully neutralize the injustice stories of terrorists through equal rights policies, improvement of social conditions or changed political framing, the terrorist movement may fall apart (Demant and De Graaf, 2010).

In all extremist narratives we find a proclaimed superiority of the ingroup, and perceived threat from the outgroup. Imagined communities based on ethnicity, religion and nationality have been known as powerful identity markers (Baumann, 1999). Terrorist groups justify attacking non-group members in society in order to defend one's group or ideology. The positive ingroup stereotype and negative outgroup stereotype (Tajfel and Turner, 1984) becomes absolute and create a strong readiness to defend the group's interest.

Sometimes, a mutual aggravation of opposing groups of extremists may occur. For example, the involvement of home-grown terrorists in high casualty attacks in France, Great Britain, Spain and Belgium increased ethnic polarization and, in some cases, outright hostility along religious lines. In The Netherlands, the assassination of Theo van Gogh was followed by a rise of Dutch right wing extremist violent acts, on one side, and incidents of Muslim radicalization and emergence of jihadists networks, on the other (Khadouri, 2012).

The sense of fear for terrorism in society may be at odds with the actual risks, however. The annual report of 2015 states that the EU has suffered 4 deaths as a result of terrorist attacks, in 2016 there were 265 citizens killed in terrorist attacks, and in 2017 the number of fatalities was 65 (Global Terrorism Index, 2017). In comparison, traffic incidents caused 152,000 deaths in 2017 in the EU (Eurostat, 2017), and preventable cardiovascular diseases caused 3,9 million deaths (European heart network, 2017). From a psychological perspective, terrorist attacks that aim at regular citizens, commuters, tourists or concert visitors are more likely to create a sense of 'it could have been me' and posttraumatic stress (Antonius, 2015).

Therefore, any non-state violent attack on citizens is impressive, as it threatens social, political and economic stability – unlike traffic accidents or diseases.

This fear and instability caused by terrorism is even more acute in several countries outside the EU. The immense tragedy and cost of human lives in Syria, Iraq and other Middle-Eastern and African countries paint a grim picture. Terrorism, as well as state violence born from political and religious strive for power has wrecked the lives of millions of innocent men, women and children, from Muslim, Christian and other faiths. Women have been kidnapped, children have been enslaved, world heritage cities have been destroyed beyond recognition. On estimation, 511,000 people have been killed since the start of the Syrian war (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 2018). Millions of people have since sought refuge in safer countries, in countries nearby in town-sized settlements and tents. Thousands of them drowned or were shot on their way to freedom. Between 2015 and 2017, the total number of drowned refugees amounted to 12,837 people (idem). In EU countries, these victims of war and terrorism are often referred to as 'the migration crisis', suggesting that the EU is the one at risk in this crisis, rather than the people who were sent adrift, or the countries they were forced to leave.

We see it as our task as terrorism researchers to study all forms of ideologically inspired violence from citizens towards citizens, regardless of its ideology and religious background. This means that we include in our study not only terrorism inspired by jihadi extremism but also by right-wing or left-wing extremist sources.

2.3 Historical context: the case of The Netherlands

The Netherlands are relatively calm and quiet compared to other Western European countries. Despite the apprehension of two terrorist networks of approximately 15 persons, (Hofstad Group, 2004, and Context Group, 2016), the Netherlands have not experienced massive jihadi terrorist attacks as those in France, Great Britain and Belgium. The country also escaped from the right-wing extremist military parades and exposés of violence that were seen in Germany, the US and Eastern European countries. And it has seen little of the disruptive violent protests with an eco-terrorist and separatist background that were seen in France and Spain.

However, there have been two ideologically inspired murders that shocked the nation: the murder of Pim Fortuyn in 2002 by a left wing eco terrorist, and the murder of Theo Van Gogh in 2004 by a jihadi terrorist. Less in the fore of media attention were the attacks of schools, mosques and asylum seeker centers throughout the years, by an unknown number of right

wing extremists– of which some are detained at the terrorist unit (Van der Valk, 2014). Until now there have been no casualties, although death threats towards mosques have been common, as well as death threats towards politicians, such as Geert Wilders, who lives under constant security surveillance. A recent violent attack on a Jewish restaurant (2017) was more widely mediatized.

In order to understand the development (and the lack of) current extremist populations, we describe the history of the Netherlands with regards to terrorism, extremism, religious rights and discrimination.

An important event in Dutch national history is the killing of Willem Van Oranje in 1584, by the 'terrorist' Balthasar Gerard. Gerard was an assassin operating on behalf of a decree by the Spanish King, who had put a reward on Willem's head for treason. It can be seen as the first terrorist act in The Netherlands, which is at the base of the nation's history.

Willem of Orange had become a Prince, establishing not only the Dutch republic, but also freedom of religion. Over time, Dutch society became organized in various 'pillars', based on political background and religion. Due to this Dutch history, there has historically been a careful balancing of powers between Catholicism and Protestantism, liberalism and socialism (Buijs, 2009). The freedom of religion and the neutrality of the State are interpreted in such a way, that religious individuals and groups enjoy quite a lot of freedom and could have their own institutions. Therefore, the current religious freedom of Muslims is relatively large compared to countries such as France, which serves a secularist agenda, and Germany and Great Britain, where implicitly Christianity is the official state religion. In The Netherlands there is no ban on the hijab in public professions, there is no ban on the burqini, the establishment of mosques meets relatively little protest (Maussen, 2004), some Moroccan and Turkish politicians, authors, actors and sportsmen enjoy public support, and there are a number of Muslim schools that receive full government funding.

Another important determinant of the culture and politics of the Netherlands was World War 2. Terrorist attacks in the Netherlands were fairly common during the Nazi occupation, and they were performed by the Dutch resistance, which mainly consisted of Jews, and ideologically driven communists and Christians. The Dutch population registration in Amsterdam for example, was attacked with explosives in 1943, destroying the documents of over 70.000 Dutch Jews (source: Amsterdam Resistance museum). During this attack nobody was killed, according to plan. Other acts of resistance included assassinations of German officers, distributing illegal newspapers and creating false passports. Generally, those who

violently or non-violently resisted the German occupants were either executed, or detained in concentration camps. After the liberation and the end of World War 2, when the definition of 'terrorists' shifted from the Dutch resistance to those who collaborated with the German occupants, the Dutch concentration camp of Vught was used to detain collaborators. Currently, one section of this compound is a war museum, and the largest section is now used as a regular detention center, in which a unit exists for detainees accused of crimes with a terrorist intent.¹

The Second World War left the Netherlands traumatized, struggling with the loss of citizens due to famine and bombing. It also suffered the loss of cities and infrastructure, the loss of many ideologically driven individuals, as well as the loss of almost the entire Jewish and Roma population, and homosexuals, who all had been victims of genocide. This also meant that after World War 2, antisemitism became associated with Nazism, and public understanding of social processes underlying the rise of fascism grew. Twenty years after the war, even nationalism had become associated with Nazism.

Even though racism and antisemitism continued to exist after World War 2, the association with Nazi Germany has been extremely negative, to the extent that Nazism and Fascism serve as national examples of the ultimate evil. The anti-discrimination ideology became a strong moral discourse especially after religious morals became less prevalent in society due to a process of secularization.

However, the ethnic homogeneity of the population was slowly taken for granted as 'normal', when people forgot that Jewish and Roma minorities used to belong in The Netherlands and that the country had been ethnically cleansed by the Nazis. The Dutch 'natural' population was reconstructed as white and Christian. This created tensions when non-Christian, non-white migrants arrived in the 1960s and 1970s.

Another important element to understand extremism in The Netherlands, is its history as a colonial power. Slave trading and the long term colonial occupation of the West Indies, were part and parcel of the Dutch economy and identity for 400 years. The Netherlands were, in 1863, among the last Western countries to abolish slavery and the last Western country to give up their colony (Indonesia, 1947). Some overseas islands in the Dutch Antilles still legally bound to the Netherlands. Both historical processes – slavery and colonialism - made The

¹ Part of this study was conducted at the Vught compound, and in some instances the initial data analysis was performed in the war museum's restaurant, giving the research an odd historical resonance.

Netherlands a country with inherently racist elements in its culture. One highly debated example is the celebration of Saint Nicholas, who is accompanied by several Black Petes: blackface characters, with a mixed heritage of medieval boogiemens and black child-slaves. Despite the fact that (blatant, overt) racism is socially unacceptable, people generally do not perceive a racist element in this tradition and it is felt as 'having nothing to do with racism'.

Ethnic-postcolonial terrorism

After the Dutch colonies of Indonesia and Moluccan Islands were liberated from Japanese occupation, the Netherlands attempted to restore colonial occupation through violence and war towards the freedom fighters, but this failed in 1948. Consequently, a large proportion of Dutch and native population from these countries migrated towards the Netherlands.

The first extremist group to commit terrorist attacks in the Netherlands was of South Moluccan descent. After 1950, as Indonesia had become independent, 12,500 Moluccan families of KNIL soldiers, who had served in the Dutch army in Indonesia, had come to the Netherlands, and were temporarily housed in camps. This Moluccan community had been granted the independent Moluccan Islands if the Dutch would dominate the Indonesian archipelago. After the war of independence was won by Indonesia, the political situation for former Moluccan KNIL soldiers was dangerous and they could not return. Under the rule of Sukarno, the Islands remained Indonesian. The Moluccan community was hoping to be repatriated to the Spice Islands one day and considered their stay in the Netherlands as temporary.

When the governments of Indonesia and the Netherlands appeared to normalize diplomacy, Moluccan community expected to see the issue resolved (Demand and De Graaf, 2010). Instead, Dutch politicians stated they should 'give up their dream'. This started a protest movement, in which a smaller group radicalized within 10 years. Between 1966 and 1978, several protests, attacks and hijackings took place, among which a primary school hijacking during several days, and a train hijacking. The terrorists killed several hostages. In total, the cost of lives amounted to 11 people, and over a hundred people - mostly school children - were traumatized from hostage situations. Remarkably, the Dutch government did not issue special measurements, nor was there a moral panic in society as a result from these terror attacks. This differed from the German reaction in those days on the Rote Armee Fraktion (Demand and De Graaf, 2010). In the second train hijacking, a massive force of military entered the train after a week, and killed the hijackers as well as two hostages. Research in 2017 suggested that the hijackers were deliberately killed on the spot.

Racist murder

The second time after the second World War that the Netherlands encountered ideologically inspired violence, was in 1983 with the murder of Kerwin Duijnmeijer, a 15 year old teenager from the Dutch Antilles, who was killed because of his skin color. He was stabbed with a knife in his abdomen by an individual killer, a 16-year old neo-nazi skinhead. This happened after large groups of Antillian workers had migrated to the Netherlands, because the island had lost its initial economic strength (Centre for the History of Migrants CGM, Oct 2009). The killer suffered from severe developmental problems, possibly related to his Jewish father who was severely traumatized during the war. After his detention, he became active for the right wing Centrum Partij, the first openly anti-migrant political party in the Netherlands.

The Kerwin Duinmeijer murder was met with public outrage. In the years after the murder, many streets were named after Kerwin. A pop song called Zwart-Wit (black/white) was written about the murder, condemning racism.

Left wing terrorism: RARA and antifascists

Midway the 1980s, there was a shortage of affordable houses for rent in the low segment of the market. This lack of houses led to squatting by a left-wing, extremist squatting movement, in which anti-capitalist, antiracist sentiments came together. In 1980, this movement disturbed the coronation of queen Beatrix with smoke bombs, while supporting banners saying: 'no houses, no coronation.' Between 1984 and 1993, a violent extremist movement called RARA (radical antiracist activists- but in Dutch translatable as 'guess who') emerged from the squatting movement. Its major goal was the withdrawal of Dutch companies such as Shell and Macro from South Africa. The terrorist organization used bombings and arson as their means of coercion. The house of secretary of Justice was bombed to express the movement's disagreement with the Dutch asylum policy.

Between 1970 and 1990, the Netherlands got new migrant communities consisting of guest workers, inhabitants of former colonies and oversea areas, brides and families of guest workers, as well as asylum seekers, who grew more numerous after the Dutch and European borders were closed for work migrants from outside the EU in the 1990s. Along with increasing difficulties to integrate new arrivals, cultural differences became apparent leading to mutual alienation, with strong tendencies of the Dutch population to avoid living together with migrants in the same streets or schools ('white flight'), leading to segregated areas and schools (Jungbluth, 2005). Although the majority of migrants found a place in Dutch society, there was an emergence of negative attitudes, discrimination and the tendency for blaming

the victim. A right wing political party, Centrum Democrats, emerged from the more extremist "Center Party", with its relatively unintelligible leader Janmaat. He was widely ridiculed for his television speeches next to a vase of flowers, starting each speech with the rather outdated 'dear fellow countrymen'. In 1986, an antifascist group of protesters placed a bomb at the hotel where Janmaat and his wife were attending a reconciliation meeting between the more radical Centrum Party and their own Centrum Democrats. At the antifascist bombing, the hotel burned to the ground and the wife of Janmaat suffered permanent physical disability. The members of Centrum Party were associated with the skinhead/ Lonsdale movement, and later with the gabber (hardcore house) music movement.

The numbers of racist and explicit ethnic or religious discrimination have been relatively low before 2001, as a result of a general unacceptability of blatant racism. (Wrench and Solomos, 1993; Entzinger in: Joppke, 2014). In line with this, the Netherlands became one of the largest proponents of the anti-Apartheid movement, supporting boycotts against South African products. Nevertheless, institutional discrimination and invisible, everyday racism has been a powerful restraint on the emancipation and self-realization of migrants and black citizens (Essed, 1984).

How difficult the job market is for Dutch people of Moroccan descent, can be illustrated by a study on job market discrimination of former detainees (Dirkzwager et al., 2015). In this study, fake job application letters were sent to various jobs, indicating either no criminal record, a history of violent offense, a history of a financial crime and a history of sexual vice. Two types of names were used, a Dutch name (described in the chart as autochtoon) and a Moroccan name (allochtoon). The research showed that in all cases, the Dutch person was preferred over the Moroccan person, as the likelihood of being invited for a job was three to four times as high for Dutch names. Only 10 % of non-criminal non-Dutch fake applicants got an invitation, while this was the case for more than 30% of the Dutch applicants. Overall, ethnic minorities are even less likely to get an invitation for a job interview than all Dutch people with a criminal record.

Recent data suggest a dramatic increase in discrimination in The Netherlands. According to a 2017 study of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, 42% of Muslims in The Netherlands indicate that they were discriminated against due to their ethnicity. It was the near-highest percentage in the sample. The average of reported discrimination in the EU was 27% (EAFR, 2017).

Post 9-11 extremism

The attacks of September 11 created more intercultural tensions in The Netherlands as well as worldwide. Already there had been a political debate about the failure of integration, referring to higher percentages of migrant youth dropping out of school, and entering criminal life styles (Scheffer, 1999). With the increasingly liberalized morals in sexuality and (formally established) equal rights between men and women in The Netherlands, tensions were already present with regard to more conservative lifestyles that were practiced in the Muslim communities. The terrorist attacks of 11th September, and their different responses, now showed there was a religious political agenda which could ignite violence in all Western countries with Muslim communities.

These issues were made a political urgency by the openly homosexual Pim Fortuyn, who said – after Samuel Huntington – that the Netherlands could expect a clash of civilizations and that Muslims were representatives of a “retarded culture”. Regular political parties confronted his views but were baffled with Fortuyn’s eloquence, his evaluation scan of Dutch politics as ‘policy makers who lost connection with society’s real needs’, and his swiftly growing popularity. In left wing political parties and more radical organizations, Fortuyn was regarded as a representative of new fascism, and his rise to fame was met with deep concern for democracy and the rights of minorities. Volkert van der G., a left wing animal activist, decided he had to kill Fortuyn in order to protect society. This was not only due to Fortuyn’s anti-Muslim attitudes, but also because of his positive attitude towards the Dutch fur industry, and his desire to facilitate legal possibilities for fur farming. Van der G. was later formally diagnosed to suffer from an obsessive-compulsive disorder, and was ‘publicly diagnosed’ as suffering from Asperger’s syndrome, even though the latter was never confirmed (De Volkskrant, 28th June 2003).

The murder of Pim Fortuyn in 2002 effectively silenced all his political opponents. Anyone who criticized Fortuyn after his violent death became associated with murder. His political opponents were accused of having set the scene for the murder, in ‘demonizing Fortuyn’. This development facilitated a strong rise of populist movements in the Netherlands, although few of them appeared to have any political consistency, and many fell apart due to personal disagreements. The strongest effect however was the incorporation of Fortuyn’s ideas and strong language into mainstream politics. Criticism of Islam, of the multicultural society, and a desire to curb migration even for political refugees were no longer a political taboo.

The collaboration between politically active female ex Muslim Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and film maker and national provocateur Theo van Gogh resulted in the violent death of the latter by jihadist Mohammed B. in 2004. He was shot while cycling to work, and a threatening letter to Ayaan Hishi Ali and the Dutch population was left behind stacked with a knife on his body. In the eyes of Mohammed B., Van Gogh was 'an enemy of the Islam' who had to die. In a book about the murder, Buruma (2006) states that B. felt rejected by society as a full member, especially after his volunteer work was no longer accepted. His radicalization may have been driven also by his mother's death and his dropout of education.² A journalist described his neighborhood as lacking social infrastructure, with strong ethno-cultural differences, where formal organizations fail to go beyond their bureaucratic tendencies and where isolated parents and teachers struggle to keep adolescents in school (Kleijwegt, 2005).

After the murder of Theo Van Gogh, 30 mosques were set fire to and numerous Islamic institutions were attacked and received threats (Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010). An Islamic primary school burned down to the ground by a group of 16-year-olds. According to van der Valk (2010), Dutch mosques have been attacked or vandalized 117 times in the period of 2005-2010. Out of 84 mosques, 56 had experienced the smashing of windows (nearly 70%), hate graffiti (40%), (attempts) for arson (37%), the placement of a dead pig (12,5%), death threats (10%) and physical assault (5%). In the years between 2002 and 2008, the total number of attacks on Islamic institutions gradually declines, but the percentage of Muslim-directed violence increases (Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010).

Meanwhile the presence of so-called "hate-imams", who were proclaiming the killing of homosexuals, or refusing to shake hands with women as proponents of Salafism, ignited strong feelings of distrust towards Muslims among politicians and large portions of the Dutch electorate (Buijs, 2009).

In this political climate, the PVV of Geert Wilders established itself as the most stringent anti-Islam party, proposing the closing of Mosques and forbidding the Qur'an. His political agenda violates anti-discrimination laws and thus exclude him from political power so far, as no party wants to form a coalition. Geert Wilders publicly dissociates himself from any right wing extremist following. However, Anders Breivik, the right wing extremist killer who engaged in a mass shooting during a meeting of young socialists in Norway in 2011, claimed that he was partly inspired by Geert Wilders. Because the PVV has no political power, there have been no

² A more complete account of the life of Mohammed B. is included as a biography later on in this report.

laws to curb religious rights of Muslims, although the asylum policy has been strongly affected by growing anti-migrant sentiments.

The currently active right wing extremist organizations in The Netherlands are: Pegida, NVU (Netherlands Patriot Union), Identity Resistance, Soldiers of Odin, Brass Knuckle Brotherhood, DTG (protesters against municipalities), DSDS (Dutch Self Defense Army), and Erkenbrand. Reports suggest there has been a recent decline in right wing extremist membership from approximately 600 to 300 people (AIVD, 2010).

However, right wing extremism may not be very much alive as real life organizations, they thrive as internet phenomena. (Van der Krogt, 2009; Van Donselaar, 2009). Internet groups have names as Holland Hardcore, and the Dutch branch of Stormfront (which was initiated by a Ku Klux Klan leader in the USA). Research reveals there are 22 active digital forums in 2009 with right wing extremist content (nazism or classical right wing extremism). In total, these forums have more than 10,000 registered users and there have been over 300,000 messages shared. Nearly half of the content displays criminal, violent and illegal speech, but website settings obscure the identity of its members and make criminal investigation difficult. 20 to 30% of the forums are connected to real life organizations such as Blood and Honour. When one of the message threads was found to be preparatory for an attempt of arson on Jewish and Muslim organizations in Almere, a group of underage extremists was arrested. In another case, police were able to identify members of Stormfront and searched their houses for weapons based on one message thread.

The left wing extremists activity is mostly related to the asylum policy, and to protesting against (and provoking) right wing extremists during their demonstrations (National coordinator for counterterrorism and safety, 2016). It consist of anarchists and anti-fascists, who throw fireworks during protests, protest against 'racist police violence' and support an alleged anarchist bank robber for 'redistribution of wealth'. A threatening act of vandalism (red paint) of the house of the director of the repatriation service occurred in 2015.

While tensions between national groups are made politically salient and many ethnic minorities suffer from discrimination, fortunately The Netherlands have so far managed to escape the fate of large scale bombings or car attacks and sudden loss of citizen lives. One car attack in 2011 (directed at the royal family, but claiming 8 citizens' lives and injuring 10) and one shooting incident in 2014 (killing 17 citizens) both turned out to be unrelated to political, ideological or religious radicalization. Both were a result of mental health issues by the attacker.

The numbers of jihadi travelers towards Syria and Iraq, however, are consistent with other country's per capita recruits (approximately 250 people, Bergema and Van San, 2017) and are a main reason for the Dutch Security Service AIVD to label the terrorism threat in the Netherlands as 'substantial' since 2012 (Bergema and Van San, 2017). The Hofstad and Context cases, as well as the murder of Theo van Gogh, urged the Dutch Ministry of Justice to establish a special terrorist unit in two prisons from 2004 onwards, providing extra safety checks and separating the detainees from other prisoners in order to avoid recruitment. Travellers to Syria usually are detained at the terrorist unit after return (Veldhuis, 2016).

2.4 Theoretical background of this study

Existing approaches

In scientific research on terrorism, radicalization and the development of violent extremist networks, various perspectives from social psychology and criminology are used and various theoretical perspectives and models have been developed over the years. We give a short overview of some of them, before elaborating on our own approach.

One important perspective, integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) build on the social-psychological notion of perceived threat. This approach focusses on different kinds of perceived threats to physical security, economic wellbeing and cultural values as a facilitator for negative out-group attitudes. Members of radical or extremist groups are thought to be characterized by uncritical acceptance of in-group's rules and values; and willingness to (violently) 'defend' the group's cause 'in threatening situations' (Vallerand & Lafrenière, 2012). Several authors suggest that a mutual perception of threat creates a process of dehumanization and promotes violence towards out-groups (Van Prooijen et al., 2014; Zick, et al., 2008).

Several models propose phase-specific pathways or 'staircase models' to terrorism (Moghaddam, 2005; Horgan, 2008). McCauley & Moskalkenko (2008), view radicalization as a process in which individuals or groups gradually develop violence-permissive attitudes. Moghaddam (2005) formulated a 'staircase model' in which individuals can make three potential steps: sensitivity to radical ideas; membership of radical groups and involvement into radical action. Doosje and colleagues (2016) outlined the macro, intermediate and micro factors that influence an individual "staircase to terrorism," and determine which individuals go through all steps and which remain in the first or the second.

Some authors proposed to distinguish various types of radicals. For example, Feddes et al. separate 'identity seekers' from 'justice seekers', 'meaning seekers' and 'action seekers'

(Feddes, Nicholson and Doosje, 2015). Others discern 'suicide killers' from 'adventure seekers', 'idealists' and 'relentless jihadists' (Bakker, 2017; Maher, 2016). Bjørgo (2011) distinguishes three groups: charismatic ideological leaders, group-oriented followers, and socially frustrated adolescents, who channel their anger into violent extremism. The latter group suffers from a problematic family background caused by parental divorce, sexual abuse, or physical abuse and is less fuelled by ideological involvement.

Another important theoretical approach is the idea that 'significance loss' is crucial to understand the role of adversities as a 'trigger' in the life course of terrorist suspects. Kruglanski describes it as a 'motivational power' behind different phases in the radicalization (Kruglanski, 2012, 2014). Significance loss captures a variety of subjective reactions to objective (or perceived) reality of disadvantage and relative deprivation and may play an important role throughout different phases of (political) socialization to terrorism, i.e. radical ideas, radical group membership and radical action (Moghaddam, 2005; Doosje, et al., 2016).

More generally, radicalization into violent extremism is regarded as a result of complex processes (McCauley & Moskalkenko, 2008; for opposite views, see Sedgwick, 2010), in which a wide array of (unfavourable) socio-political, cultural and personal factors facilitate a deep sense of relative deprivation and other subjective reactions. These factors include grievance, resentment, and violence-permissive attitudes towards the source of perceived threat and related targets (Kruglanski, 2014; Doosje, et al., 2013; McCauley & Moskalkenko, 2008; King & Taylor, 2011). Monahan (2017) suggest five general factors that contribute to the likelihood of a person becoming susceptible to an extremist view: ideology, affiliations, grievances, moral reasoning and identities. Additionally, facilitating pull-factors may come into play, in particular social media are assumed to have played a key role in recruiting foreign fighters and spreading the message of ISIS (Klausen, 2015).

Finally, several authors pointed towards the observed connection between criminality and terrorism, referring to it as the crime-terror nexus (see for an overview Ljujic, 2017). Two processes are assumed that may explain this nexus. First, there may be processes in which terrorist networks turn to criminal organizations: for example for achieving weapons, fake documents, and money. Second, there may be processes in which criminals become terrorists or part of terrorist groups. In jihadi organizations, criminals are actively recruited to become terrorists, as a way to be redeemed by God from previous criminal acts and sins (Basra and Neumann, 2016).

Basic theoretical approach of this study

In this study, we build on the staircase model of Moghaddam, Kruglanski’s notion of ‘significance loss’ and various findings and insights from previous research on terrorism and radicalisation.

As mentioned previously, Moghaddam suggested a staircase of radicalization with three potential phases that can be reached: a latent phase in which individuals have become sensitive to radical ideas; and intermediate phase when individuals are member of radical groups; and an operational phase in which individuals become involved in radical action that may include terrorist offenses. Not everyone will move from one phase to another, in fact only a small minority will progress to the operational phase. Doosje et al. (2016) elaborated the factors that influence the probability to progress through the different stages. Based on international research literature, they outlined the macro, intermediate and micro factors that influence an individual’s position and progress on the “staircase to terrorism”. One of the influences is the larger society that fails to address problems of social exclusion and discrimination, or fosters racial or religious hatred, thus creating a foundation for feelings of resentment (see also the report by Engel, 2017). The meso and micro-factors are all linked to our four central research themes and focus on deprivation factors, social influences and life events. Ljubic et al. (2017) summarized and elaborated this approach into a ‘top to bottom threat model of radicalization to terrorism’. This model is presented in figure 1.

Figure 1. Top to bottom threat model of radicalization to terrorism (based on Doosje, Moghaddam, Kruglanski, de Wolf, Mann & Feddes, 2016).

		Latent phase sensitivity: ↓	Intermediate: membership ↓	Operational: Involvement ↓
Macro	→	Zeitgeist		
Meso	→	Fraternal relative deprivation	Segregation	
Micro	→	Socialization (parents, peers)	Discrimination; Meeting a radical person; work/school-related problems	Sudden and detrimental change in personal circumstances, i.e. significance loss

This model shows that socio-economic deprivation, at the individual as well as the group level, can be regarded as important factor in the radicalization process, next to other characteristics

and experiences in various other areas of life. These factors are included in the interviews that are conducted for the current study.

Next to the objective circumstances and events that are highlighted in the model above, we believe that other crucial elements are the individual-psychological level of dealing with adversity, and the process of becoming emotionally involved in radical beliefs. Perceived deprivation, notably experiences of discrimination and exclusion, can lead to a need to address feelings of significance loss. Sageman (2008) posits that life dissatisfaction and feelings of exclusion are at the base of radicalization, as they fuel a sense of moral outrage about society's unfair organization. He describes a non-linear, emergent process of involvement with extremism, where, in recurring episodes, a person experiences moral outrage, encounters an extremist frame to interpret the world, feels that his or her personal experiences resonate with this frame, and engages in social networks that mobilize him or her into radical action (Sageman, 2008). This process is closely in line with the staircase-model as described above.

Kruglanski's notion of 'significance loss' was posed in his model of motivational needs and significance quest (e.g., Kruglanski, 2017). This model elaborates why and how feelings of adversity and personal loss can lead to involvement in radicalisation and terrorism. According to this model, there are several needs to be met in healthy and normal persons: the need for love, safety, and achievement, among others. The needs that a person has balance each other out: if safety were the only need, one would never leave the house, but since there are other needs that have to be fulfilled, the house is left behind while looking for achievement (work) or love (relationship). Thus, a moderation of needs happens through motivational balance. The combined fulfillment of needs lead to (self-) respect. When they are met, they are congruent with one's Just World Theory - the perception of a fair and just world - and attributions of personal achievement ("My life is well because I worked hard", for example). These attributions are rarely challenged for those with privileges and a positive self-image.

In people who develop extremist views, personal setbacks have threatened positive attributions and the Just World Theory. Such can be seen in obsessive love, obsession for safety, obsessive achievement in workaholics, and obsession with religion or morality. Violent extremism is one such obsessive preoccupation, Kruglanski (2017) argues. The function of extremist ideology then becomes: highlighting the need (i.e. saying: you are threatened, you are humiliated, you are under attack) and explaining the means (violence). As a consequence, the other needs become neglected and only one dominant need prevails. This possible 'moral

outrage' and the need for a significance quest, fueled by dissatisfaction, are also included in our interview questions.

It is interesting to note that not only people from established extremist groups, but also seemingly "non-ideological" school shooters are known to express existential doubts (Pfeifer & Ganzevoort, 2016). The common held belief that these individuals are subject of bullying and have psychological problems, is incorrect. In their pamphlets, they often refer to a general sense of meaninglessness, and identity confusion. After they reject religion or ideology as a source of meaning, they develop personally held beliefs about the human condition, which often contain superstitions and conspiracy thoughts. Additionally they experience a sense of intense threat from the larger society and/or from supernatural causes, which they believe they can counter with their deed. In their self-created myth, they are fighting the ultimate evil and will become martyrs, gaining immortality. Here, a clear link with the meaning making of suicidal terrorists is visible. It seems that a narrative of threat and ultimate sacrifice in order to achieve significance can be created individually as well as socially, even though the latter is more powerful, as it is shared and confirmed between members, and can be used to convince and recruit new followers with similar existential doubts (De Graaf, 2017).

The role of ideology and religion

In our view, a necessary ingredient of violent extremism and/or terrorism is the belief that the structure of society is fundamentally wrong, and that all means – including violence- are acceptable to overthrow it. The enemy entails not just a state or certain political groups, but all people who constitute society are considered complicit. As a result of propaganda and (mutual) dehumanization, individuals attracted to terrorist groups become susceptible to ideologies to harm society. When regular political influence is considered as impossible, and the survival of the group at stake, violence becomes acceptable and even necessary. This "militant extremist narrative" seems to be similar between all terrorist groups.

In many ideologies, a war on society is advocated, often at the expense of personal goals. With regard to this, Kruglanski suggested a psychological process called counterfinality (Kruglanski et al, 2014). Counterfinality means that one is willing to sacrifice one's personal life goals, or even one's life, in order to achieve the group's ultimate goal of survival and prosperity. Common life goals (such as job security or family life) are experienced as unattainable and, as a form of protection, become obscured by an ultimate goal offered as an alternative life fulfillment. This alternative goal becomes the explanatory narrative, the "violent extremist narrative" created by extremist groups.

In jihadist extremism, the ideology is largely inspired by religious fundamentalism. In 22 violent attacks in Europe that were planned or executed by violent islamists of Al Qaeda, or ISIS, their motivation could be described as either 'against the military actions of Western countries in Afghanistan and Iraq' or 'against insults of Islam' (The Hague Centre for Strategic studies, 2012: 72). However, the relationship between the *general* doctrine of Islam and violent extremist jihadism is contested (Borum, 2011; Wagemaker, 2017). Some argue that fundamentalist and violent interpretations of Islam represent the core of the religion, others claim that radicalization is completely unrelated to religion (see for example Barack Obama's statement that "IS is not Islamic", in: Wagemaker, 2017). Between these extreme positions, Wagemaker argues that the influence of religious ideology is one factor between many others in radicalization processes. Hood et al. (2005) posit that "not all terrorists are fundamentalists, and few fundamentalists are terrorists" (Hood et al, 2005; 195).

We believe that the role of religious fundamentalism in jihadist extremism is still unsettled. We therefore devote special attention to this issue in our interview questions to find out if detainees in terrorist units express narratives that are typical of religious fundamentalist thought.

We also believe that it is important to distinguish between religious orthodoxy, fundamentalism and religious militant extremism, as these three are unfortunately often confused. Orthodoxy is the practice of religion through adherence to religious dogma (guiding rules for daily life based on religious scriptures), usually associated with dress, food and sexual practice, and moral interpersonal behavior. In general, orthodox individuals will try to accommodate these guiding rules with everyday modern life and find a balance that is to them internally coherent, and satisfying, in order for them to remain a member of the general society. For example, some Shia Muslim youth who found it unacceptable to shake hands with a member of the opposite gender, decided to do so anyway because it was considered polite (Schlattmann, 2016).

Fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon, and has developed in several religions as a 19th century countermovement to modernity (Kepel, 1994). In contrary to the modernity project of science, in which experiment and doubt are the source of increasing knowledge, fundamentalists argue the source of truth is the religious text. It warns that God is strict, intolerant of human flaws, and that God will punish those who live against the laws that God has stated in the scriptures (Hood, Hill and Williamson, 2005). Fundamentalism differs from general orthodoxy in that it is obsessed with finding moral rules about detailed aspects of everyday modern life in the scriptures, such as: should we watch TV, should women drive

cars, should we vaccinate, should we use contraceptives, should we teach evolution, etc. The rules must be strictly followed as well as advocated through conversion, education and political influence. This often leads to clashes with modern life, in which the fundamentalist will in general not attempt to find accommodation – as orthodox people do - but will display resistance against modern customs. In many cases, the fundamentalists will invent new traditions that are considered to be part of a very ancient tradition, but in fact represent a new invention, such as specific dress codes for women in Reformed schools (the prohibition of trousers) that bear no relation to the dress codes in Biblical times, when trousers did not exist.

In fundamentalist Islam, the narratives created within Salafism, a Saudi-originating form of fundamentalism, is most prominent in interpreting the international jihad as legitimate war in order to subordinate non-believers. However, Salafism consists of three varieties: purist, political and jihadi, in which the first two are non-violent and the first is even apolitical (Buijs, 2009; De Graaf, 2010; Wagemakers, 2017). The latter, jihadism, is an expression of religious militant extremism.

Religious militant extremism (religious terrorism) is the practice of fundamentalist religion through the belief that God has ordained His followers to establish His religious fundamental rule of law on earth, by means of forced conversion, violence and war against the opponents of God's will as expressed in and understood from the scriptures. Four aspects common of fundamentalism can create a discursive opening for violence against non-group members: moral superiority and possession of the ultimate truth; collectivistic shift and ingroup positive bias; superstitious beliefs and non-critical thinking; and authoritarianism and obedience to a strong leader.

An important difference between fundamentalism and religiously inspired militant extremist violence is that where purist and political fundamentalists may believe that modernity threatens the group, and thus decide to shun from secular society, the militant extremists rather believe that, given the threat, it is their religious obligation to take up arms, and act violently "in the name of God" against modern civilization, as if the right to the final religious judgement has been put into their own hands. They derive this conclusion (as all fundamentalists do) from their religious texts, where rules and justifications for warfare are clearly stated and are interpreted as applicable to the current situation (Kepel, 1994).

The role of networks, social media and peer groups

Another important aspect that we focus on is the role of the network and peer group, and the individual affiliation with extremist and terrorist groups. In our approach, low socio economic position and adversity, when experienced as being different from, and rejected by mainstream society, may install a sense of moral disengagement from the rest of society (Schuurman & Horgan, 2016, p. 60). Adversities and perceived discrimination may imply that in-group loyalty and comradeship are fueled with shared social grievance (Doosje, et al., in press) and resentment towards broader society and/or particular out-groups (Van der Valk, 2016; Doosje, et al., 2013). This comradeship reduces uncertainty, and alleviates anxiety and significance loss (Kruglanski, et al., 2009). The willingness to use violence increases due to being exposed to radicalized messages, group-felt anger, alienation and disenfranchisement (McCauley and Moskaleiko, 2008; Holt, Freilich, and Chermak 2016).

The social process of engagement with a terrorist network can be compared to subcultures, as they “share common connections to deviant subcultures that form in reaction to or as a rejection of larger social norms to provide an alternative set of values and behaviors” (Holt, Freilich and Chermak, 2016). Both deviant subcultures and violent extremist groups develop their own set of “values, norms, traditions and rituals, that are at odds with the dominant culture” (Young 2010; Holt et al 2016). Nowadays, the internet plays a vital role as it is ‘embedded in in other social spaces’ (Miller and Slater 2000; Holt, Freilich and Chermak, 2016).

The anonymity of the Internet and its technological possibilities to address large groups of people, facilitate the sharing of deviant ideologies and violent plans (Blevins and Holt, 2009). The network can be very active in preparing and orchestrating attacks, and such activities make the movement even more effective due to offline training and division of tasks. In international research, the majority (59%) of attackers of ISIS related terrorist attacks in the EU show involvement of at least one person who has received military training abroad (The Hague Centre for Strategic studies, 2012).

The network, and belonging to a group, can become a goal in itself. “In some cases, the desire to be with friends turns out to be more important over time than the desire to achieve any particular goal” (Holt, Freilich and Chermah, 2016). Stern (2003) also finds: “Others are attracted to the glamour of belonging to a military group”.

It is important to keep in mind that belonging to a radical network and participating in extremist social media does not equate to the use of violence. An estimate of 99% of people

who are continually exposed to violent messages or actively participate in extremist debate, do not engage in violence themselves (Leuprecht et al 2010; Borum 2011; Holt et al 2016).

Another network that is relevant for our study is the prison (Zahn, in LaFree, 2017). There is some evidence that prisons are fuelling radicalization, and this is a common concern in prison policies. Due to this fear for further radicalization and influencing other inmates, convicted terrorists are often placed in a separate, more strict regime. This may have undesired side-effects however. Veldhuis (2015) investigated a separate prison regime a few years ago and found that prisoners often feel humiliated by the strict regime and develop more hatred towards society. She argues that detention of terrorists should focus on re-integration into society instead of separation.

Our study is not concerned with how terrorist de-radicalize, but how they became involved in terrorism in the first place. In our view, there are two ways in which radicalization could be related to prisons. In the first place, prisons may function as a place for networking for recruiters, who spread their message to inmates and recruit new members. But secondly, prisons may also be used as part of the injustice narrative that recruiters use to prove that society is rigged and group members must join forces to face the threat.

In our study, we will address prisons as a place of networking, i.e. did we find any examples of prison recruitment in the radicalization stories of or about inmates at the terrorism unit? We will also explore whether prisons, notably the Terrorism Unit, are used in the extremists' narratives of injustice.

2.5 Previous relevant research in The Netherlands

There has been a considerable amount of research into violent extremism, religious fundamentalism and terrorism in the Netherlands. We do not want to provide an exhaustive overview, but present some main findings of Dutch research in reference to our main research themes. It is important to note two observations about these studies. First, the methods vary strongly. Some research is quantitative, describing socio-economic population characteristics, while other research is qualitative, describing accounts, motivations and ideologies of offenders. Second, the operationalization of 'radicalization', terrorism or extremism varies. Some studies in the Netherlands have focused on people that merely express a non-conformist perspective on politics, religion and/or democracy, and thus not all of the research populations are violent – although some can be described as condoning violence or inciting violence. Those who promote violence in an online debate may not be inclined to commit it in

reality. Some studies have focused on people who were known to have travelled abroad to participate in the war in Syria or Iraq, or to live in an ISIS controlled area, but it is unclear what they have done there, and whether all these individuals would be prepared to commit violent attacks in Europe.

The following research populations can be discerned in Dutch research (the first seven have increasing levels of radicalization and probable violent tendencies, the last two are deradicalized persons):

1. (Parents of) radicalized individuals: extremist Islam, right wing and left wing (qualitative)
2. Online participants in extremist (jihadi) dialogue (qualitative)
3. Religious fundamentalists (Salafi), both ideologically violent and non-violent (qualitative)
4. Female online advocates of jihad
5. Syria-travellers/ jihadi warriors (quantitative and qualitative)
6. Qualifications of the terrorist unit (qualitative)
7. Former detainees of the terrorist unit (quantitative and qualitative)
8. Deradicalized individuals of Jihadi and Moluccan violent extremist groups
9. Right wing extremists: deradicalization

There are also studies that do not address a research population of persons, but rather investigate political developments or violent extremist incidents. The rise of populism and the formation of right wing extremist groups for example have been monitored and analyzed in various reports, notably those by the AIVD (the Dutch intelligence), and the Anne Frank foundation. The latter has published yearly reports on extremism and violent ideologies, starting in 1997. From 2011 onwards, these reports are published by the Verwey-Jonker Institute.

Size of extremism, socio-demographics, and previous crime involvement

Earlier, Veldman and Staun (2009) described the size of violent extremism in relation to the total of the Muslim population. They stated: "Research in the Netherlands, for example, revealed that of the estimated 857,000 Muslims who are currently living in the Netherlands (approximately five percent of the total population; CBS, 2007) between 20,000 and 30,000 Muslims are believed to feel attracted to Salafi ideologies. Moreover, according to the Dutch Minister of Integration approximately 2,500 are potentially susceptible to violent radicalization

(Kloor, 2007). All in all, not even 0.3 percent of the total Muslim population in the Netherlands should be considered potentially dangerous”.

In researching extremist organizations it is more difficult to find out how large the amount of supporters or activists really is. For example, the AIVD concludes that right wing extremists groups in The Netherlands are very small in formal membership (and indeed many of these seem unable to bring about more than 50 protesters in street marches). Reports suggest there has been a decline in right wing extremist membership from approximately 600 to 300 people (AIVD report, 2010).

However, the amount of hateful messages with right-wing extremist content is very large, for example on news websites such as *GeenStijl*, *De Dagelijkse Standaard*, as well as *Telegraaf*. It is not hard to find a reply of an ordinary newsreader who displays right wing extremist ideology, such as anonymous “Harry” who writes: “The only solution is to get rid of all this Islamic aggressive animal creed. No understanding! I dream of a big shredder where we can just throw them all in, so we can live in peace and quiet again. Hopefully we can finally get rid of the traitors as well.” (*Daily Standard*, 4th of august, 2015). The collaboration of right wing extremist groups with regular local citizen protest movements reveal that the line between right wing extremists and right wing citizens can indeed become very blurry.

The extremist group *Identitair Verzet* (Identity Resistance), seeking media attention with the occupation of Islamic schools, mosques and designated asylum seeker shelters, seems to consist of approximately twenty members, however on Facebook they have 15,000 supporters or ‘likes’. In Arnhem, the NVU (Netherlands Patriot Union) even takes a coordinating role in organizing a citizen protest group against the arrival of an asylum center. According to website research, there are approximately 22 right wing extremist website with a total of 10,000 active members (Van der Krogt, 2009).

With regard to socio-demographic characteristic, many studies explain that a common demographic is lacking for radicalized individuals. Yet, the majority of jihadists was found to be from the lower social strata, having failed to acquire adequate vocational education, finding themselves unemployed or working in unskilled jobs (De Bie et al, 2015; Bergema and Van San, 2017).

Weggemans et al. (2014) reveal that typical Dutch foreign fighters (who joined Islamic State in Syria and Iraq) are younger than 25, and in another sample of 217 foreign fighters, the mean was 24.4, of which the larger proportion was between 18 and 25 years old (Bergema and Van San, 2017). Similar age results have been described for members of right wing organizations (Van der Valk and Wagenaar, 2010). For convicted terrorists, the former

detainees at the terrorist unit were on average twenty-one years old at the time of their criminal prosecution (Van Leyenhorst and Andreas, 2017). Given the young age of radical individuals (the radicalization process occurs mostly before the age of 20), one part of the explanation may lie in adolescence, as this demographic characteristic is associated with a more general need to resist society, express non-conformism, and resist parental and other adult guidance (Van der Valk and Wagenaar, 2010).

In the sample of jihadi foreign fighters, the percentage of females was 25,8% (Bergema and Van San, 2017). Of the 26 cases in a sample of former suspects and convicts, 4 were female (Van Leyenhorst and Andreas, 2017). Interestingly, they were most likely to have their charges dropped.

The nationality of the jihadi fighters in the sample of Bergema and Van San, provide interesting numbers. The 124 persons who travelled from The Netherlands towards the battlefield have their origins in 22 different countries, of which 7 not-predominantly Muslim countries (such as The Netherlands, Italy, Portugal). The highest absolute numbers are from Morocco, The Netherlands and Turkey. However, compared to the size of the population in The Netherlands, the highest percentage of jihadists is found in Bosnian, Russian and Albanian communities. In relative size to community, the Moroccan community ranks 7th, Turkey ranks below the United States, and Dutch jihadi percentages rank lowest of all.

Nearly 60% of jihadists is married upon departure. Given the young age (the majority is between 18 and 21 years old) this contrasts strikingly with the average age of marriage in the Netherlands, even when comparing to Dutch Muslims.

Unemployment rates are relatively high among the jihadi fighters. In one sample, 22 out of 48 did not have employment. The majority came from lower levels of society, often having dropped out of secondary or tertiary education (Bergema and Van San, 2017).

In the quantitative part of our own PROTON study, more detailed results were found (Ljujic et al., forthcoming; Thijs et al., 2018). The majority was not employed (56%) and had a low level of education (62%) that would not be sufficient to give a good prospect of becoming employed. About 29% were suspected of criminal offenses previously to their apprehension for a terrorist offense.

In another sample of 26 former suspects and convicts, 42% had convictions for other crimes prior to their conviction for a terrorist offence, of which a large proportion (73%) with violent intent. The alleged terrorist offences of this sample of 26 former detainees in the terrorist unit

were 31% foreign fighter, 27% intent to join, 31% recruit support and 11% logistic support. Of this sample, 62% were convicted of their crime (Van Leyenhorst and Andreas, 2017).

Individual experiences of socialization, adversity and trauma

In a Dutch review of the terrorism literature, several 'significance loss' triggers for radicalization were found, such as the death of a loved one, failure at work or in education, and contacts with the legal force (Feddes, Nickolson and Doosje, 2015). These events may provide a 'cognitive opening' for an alternative life goal.

Not the particular religious upbringing in itself, but more often a general lack of parental investment in their child's pedagogical development seems to be associated with a possible radicalization. Several Dutch studies investigated socialization of radicalized individuals. It seems the majority of (jihadi) radicalized youth did not have a strict religious upbringing (Buijs et al, 2006; Sloopman and Tillie, 2006; Sieckelink and De Winter (eds., 2016). Despite the fact that some young people spent hours on the internet, most parents seemed unaware of their child's ideological development. When confronted with their child's increasingly radical ideals, regardless the ideology, the majority of parents decided not to engage in debate, nor confront their children with opposing views or historical evidence to the contrary. They maintained passive and were seemingly unable to address the issue (Van San, Sieckelink and De Winter, 2013).

Although sometimes schools noticed that certain adolescents had adopted radical views, here we also find, in general, a reluctance or inability to address the developing extremist ideology. One young student even was able to present his views about the (nonexistence) of the Holocaust to the classroom. His speech was positively received by both teachers and co-students, and no attempts were made to make him change his mind (Van San, Sieckelink and De Winter, 2013).

The presence of perceived group threat, perceived injustice, as well as personal uncertainty prior to radicalization (as a test of the theoretical ideas of Kruglanski and others) was investigated in a survey among 131 young Dutch Muslim adolescents (Doosje, Loseman and Van den Bos, 2013). In this study, the construct of a radical belief system consisted of four elements: (1) outgroup authorities are perceived as illegitimate; (2) ingroup superiority; (3) perceived distance to outgroup members; (4) feeling disconnected from society. The survey results indicated that higher evaluations of personal emotional uncertainty, as well as perceived procedural injustice, and group threat were all predictors of higher agreements with

a radical belief system. Similarly, collective as well as individual evaluations of relative deprivation increased agreement with radical beliefs.

In a study about conversion of Dutch non-Muslim women into fundamentalist Salafism, it is found that a more intense personal crisis leads to more extremist viewpoints. Comparing persons who adopted quietist, political or jihadi-Salafi views, all three groups displayed lack of significance, personal trauma and loss in the social dimension, social exclusion and lack of recognition, as well as longing for transcendence. The higher one's sense of exclusivism (belonging to a religious group that has access to the absolute truth), the more positive self-images were found. In the violent extremist, jihadi-Salafi group, there was more reference to social exclusion and the desire to be special. Although it was unclear if they had really experienced more social exclusion, it appeared they were more vulnerable to this experience (Geelhoed, 2012).

A combined quantitative and qualitative study among former detainees at the terrorist unit, provided further insight into the role of adversity and trauma in the motivational process (Van Leyenhorst and Andreas, 2017). The investigators found four typical narratives that detainees offer to explain their choices to join a terrorist organization, of which three include experiences of adversity or trauma. The first one centers around deprivation and discrimination as the push factor that makes all Muslims, including him/her, gather and join forces. A second narrative features a traumatic and difficult childhood as a source of a need for belonging. The third narrative presents mourning and a need to understand family traditions as the start of an online search for meaning. The fourth narrative does not include adversity and describes a desire for personal and religious growth as the starting point. In all narratives, the searching individual in existential need encounters a group (real or online) which presents *being a good Muslim* as equivalent with joining the battle in Syria and becoming a jihadist for ISIS or al Qaeda (Van Leyenhorst and Andreas, 2017).

Radicalization into right wing extremist groups seems to be associated with a similar combination of feelings of exclusion and failure, disagreement with current societal developments, and a need for social bonding and friendship. The sense of threat and urgency to act, stems from (news about) violence by migrants, and sometimes personal experiences with anti-social or criminal behavior from migrants, which gets generalized to all migrants (Van der Valk and Wagenaar, 2010).

Ideology and religion

The internet has provided terrorist groups with unprecedented means to advertise and globalize their battle. Van San (2015) investigated conversations of radical young Muslims on Facebook and interviewed some of them. She found that in the Salafi-jihadi narrative, a war is going on against Islam and all Muslims are being humiliated daily, so they must rise up. Social networks sites, Youtube, glossies and photo galleries display child victims as well as glorious martyrs (Van San, 2015), evoking a sense of moral outrage, as theorized by Marc Sageman. Justifications for joining jihad are therefore mostly emotional in nature.

The most important memes that could be derived from internet conversations between radical young Muslims were: (1) the war against Islam and various proof of it, (2) humiliation and calls for revenge, (3) anger and dehumanization of the enemy (4) admiration of brave martyrs who give their life for the battle (Van San, 2015). In such collectively evoked emotional distress, providing reasons for not joining the battle is almost inevitable. It seems that three excuses are commonly made: "I am not suitable for battle and instead I will recruit and spread the message"; "I am not ready to go as Allah wants me to become a mother/ father first"; "I will wait for Allah to show me when my time has come". Especially the second excuse bears witness of Kruglanski's theory of the balancing of needs. Another possibility is that the words and viewpoints of the youth expressed online are more extreme than they actually adhere to (idem).

The content of religious texts, such as the Quran, can be a source for narratives of rigid ingroup-outgroup boundaries. The ingroup is said to be pure, good, and right, the outgroup consists of only evil-doers. In the Qur'an, there are many references to "the righteous versus the disbelievers". Even among Muslims themselves, the Qur'an states, there may be people who are hypocrites or disbelievers. According to the Quran, the task of Muslims is to recognize those with false beliefs.

Interestingly, in Dutch Salafi-jihadi terrorist groups, religious inspiration is often absent from jihadists' accounts. In an interview with two Dutch jihadi fighters that was conducted online by journalist Janny Groen in 2013, references to moral obligations for good Muslims were rare. The word Allah was mentioned only 11 times in the 13 page document of the interview (Janny Groen, De Volkskrant, 15th June 2013). It was the word "brother" that was mentioned the most, alongside with (references to) the word "battlefield". Besides these, several other dominant themes were recurring in the interviews. They were military superiority, colonialism, injustice, self-defense, unity and brotherhood, political developments, democracy (and criticism of), and the weakness of the opponent. Contrary to what may be expected, the jihadi

fighters made little effort to link the political and military developments to theological concepts such as ‘the will of God’. Political explanations prevailed, alongside human rights connotations.

The narratives of right wing extremists display a variety of themes which all accumulate to a sense of threat from ‘foreign’ influences, whether these are Jewish, Muslim, black, or ‘European’ (Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010). Additionally, a tendency to authoritarianism is typical for the movement, as well as conspiracy theories about international politics and media (Krouwel et al., 2017). The political themes currently advocated by right wing extremists are: countering the ‘Jewish international conspiracy’, countering ‘Islamization’, denial of religious rights to Muslims, preventing the arrival of migrants including asylum seekers and refugees, elimination of equal rights in terms of race, gender and sexual preference, and preservation of ‘traditions’ such as the Black Pete character in the Saint Nicholas celebrations, as well as the inclusion of ‘race’ theories in the social science curriculum. Depending on the organization, right wing extremists and/or neo Nazis may express different views on Israel and its legitimacy, the position of Hitler as good or bad leader, as well as homosexuality (Van der Valk and Wagenaar, 2010). Contrary to regular conservative or mainstream right wing political movements, their general denial of human rights and their racist approach to nationality sets these movements apart.

Left wing extremist organizations – although rare and probably the least ‘organized’ in the sample – typically advocate anti-fascism, protests against the Dutch asylum policy, anarchism, animal rights and eco-activism, as well as squatting and free drugs policies. In anti-fascism, the narrative is one of ‘protecting democracy’ but the means are often by eliciting violence in counterdemonstrations (National Coordinator of Counter Terrorism, 2016; Van Ham et al., 2018). The focus in the asylum issue lies on detention centers, the declining of social support for undocumented migrants, and the expulsion of rejected asylum seekers (see for an overview of the discourse of the non-violent protest movement: Versteegt and Maussen, 2012).

Eco-terrorism is not well researched in The Netherlands, and is not limited to the political left-wing. In Dutch politics, animal rights have become more salient with the arrival of the Party For Animals. Although some news articles seem to indicate that the ALF (animal liberation front) as well as individuals commit acts of vandalism toward keepers of animals (notably the fur industry) and agricultural sites, and these acts may lead to prosecution and detention, they have so far not legally been labelled as terrorism (Trouw, 26th April 2003). In the 2017 political debate about wild horses that are starving to death in the nature reserve of

Oostvaardersplassen, some anonymous citizens have expressed death threats to politicians and nature workers that were involved (NOS, March 2018).

A Dutch study among 16 young exponents of three types of extremism (jihadists, right wing extremists and animal rights extremists) suggest that they gather their (often biased) ideological ideas mainly from the internet. Instead of relying on traditional media, they believe that these sources must be doubted and cannot be trusted. The joining of extremist websites where real 'freedom of speech' exists, limits their online communication to likeminded others, who share extremist views and distrust the conspiring regular media. The internet, limited to extremist websites, becomes the primary source of information and thus plays a decisive role in the development of their ideology (Van San, Sieckelink and De Winter, 2013).

Peer group affiliations, networks, social media, and prisons

The low membership numbers of (right wing and left wing) extremist organizations should, in our view, be viewed in a context of high individualism, which is typical of the Netherlands. Membership of political parties, working unions, churches, sports clubs and voluntary organizations have all seen a change of membership involvement in the past 40 years (Bekkers, and Graaf, de, 2002). The lack of commitment to right wing organizations does not mean there is a low amount of people supporting right wing extremist ideology. On the contrary, the increase in ethnic discrimination, the popularity of politicians that express anti-immigrant or anti-Muslim statements, the amount of online death threats and anonymously expressed extremist views, along with protests and vandalism towards Islamic institutions and migrant organizations suggest that individual right wing extremists may be the largest group of extremists in the Netherlands (Trouw, 5th April 2018). The danger of increasing polarization, and of right wing extremist lone wolves, is also addressed by the National coordinator for Counter Terrorism and Security in his 2016 report (NCTV, 2017).

The majority of Jihadi travelers (65.5%) in a Dutch study were friends with fellow fighters before travelling to Syria. These friends may have become friends in the course of their radicalization trajectory (Bergema and Van San, 2017).

A study on how jihadist networks operate (De Bie, 2016) shows that they have three main activities: preparation for travelling, executing criminal activities, and the spreading of the jihadi-Salafi ideology. Where the first two activities are shrouded in secrecy, the third is performed out in the open, in streets and in informal, religious house gatherings (dawa's). Three main waves are visible in which the organization targeted new types of recruits and also changed its hierarchy and modus of operation. The first wave (2001-2003) was

international and hierarchical. The two later waves (2005-2006 and 2008-2013) were based on home grown radicals and had a more equal social arrangement. Increasingly, irregular migrants are deliberately targeted because of their deprived and insecure situation (De Bie, 2016).

Previously, we noted that prisons can also function as networks for radicalization. International research found that the following conditions facilitate this process: lack of order and stability, access to propaganda, lack of anti-radicalization policies, and a relatively high educational level of detainees (Zahn, in: LaFree, 2017). According to one Dutch study, the recruitment levels in Dutch prisons are relatively low (Veldhuis, 2016). However, ex detainees at the Dutch terrorist units have revealed that some aspects of their detention that may be related to radicalization. The regime of the terrorist unit was experienced as humiliating and discriminating, and therefore confirmed their worldview of 'them against us'. On the other hand conversations with professionals in the prison, notably the religious experts, lead them to doubt their formal ideological opinions and as a result often changes in viewpoints occurred (Weggemans and De Graaf, 2015).

Prisons can also create injustice narratives outside of prison. There has been some public protest against the policy of, and the existence of, special Terrorism Units at the prisons of Vught and Rotterdam. They seem to be initiated by small Salafi subgroups. A journalist commented that the protesters first demand that the media no longer ignore the voice of Muslims, but when he wants to interview them, they all decline and say they will not talk with the media. He remarked that if other, non-Salafi groups would be involved, it would better serve the inmates of the terrorist units (Schut, 2015).

In 2017, a report by Amnesty International was issued addressing many of the complaints of the protesters, such as countless physical exams ('visitations') for which detainees had to strip nude in front of several wardens, and limitations on visiting hours and conditions. Amnesty International concluded that the Dutch terrorist unit's policies are violating human rights as well as international regulations on detaining prisoners. One detainee explained: "I saw my daughter when she was six or seven months old. I wanted to see her without the glass. There were two guards, a video, a two-way mirror, and audio recording. She crawled to me and I was told I can't touch her. I had to tell [my wife] to take her back. So, at the end of the visit I ran my hand over her head and I was punished with having one month of visits only with glass. It happened again, and I got the same punishment for two months this time. After that, I did the same thing again at the end of the visit. I hugged her [this time] since I knew I would be punished more: three months with glass and one week in isolation."(Amnesty

International, 2017, p.43). In response, the director of the prison admitted finding the measures too severe, but indicated she was taking orders from the Government.

2.6 Concluding remarks and hypotheses

We can derive several main themes from our overview of the historical and political context of terrorism in the Netherlands, from the various radicalization theories (Kruglanski, Sageman, Moghaddam and Monahan) that stand at the base of our theoretical approach and from previous Dutch research on terrorism, extremism and radicalization. Shortly, we argue there are, generally speaking, three factors in radicalization processes that may succeed one another but may also develop simultaneously and reinforce each other:

First, more or less 'root causes': *strains on personal development* caused by socio-economic deprivation, mental limitations and/or pedagogical neglect, leaving an individual fragile in his or her capacity to successfully achieve his or her potential.

Second, there are 'triggers', like failed education, failed relationships, failed careers, failed personal trajectories, or a personal loss which causes *destabilization of one's positive self-image or world views* and threatens feelings of significance, creating existential doubts and resulting in a significance quest.

Third, there can be a facilitator or catalyst, when the *need for significance is solved* by means of adhering to a violent extremist group of like-minded people, that present a *narrative* which offers possibilities for heroism and redemption. According to Kruglanski, the threshold between adhering to extremist ideas and resorting to violence, is crossed when the destabilization of positive self-image is severe enough to persuade someone that regular life goals are unattainable or not worthwhile anymore.

From these insights, we can derive that there are four dominant precursors for affiliation to violent extremist networks, in which regular criminals may or may not have similar life conditions in their trajectory to crime. The first is the *general socio-economic situation of deprivation* in job security, education level, housing conditions, debts, and relationship status. The second is the *perceived deprivation* (a subjective measure) caused by feelings of discrimination, experiences of trauma and loss, lack of parental guidance and support, or personal predispositions that may impair one's ability to cope with setbacks. The third is the *ideological and religious belief system* (narrative) about society in general, and about one's own group in particular, that fosters conspiracy theories about general media and non-group

members. The fourth is the *network* in which a person encounters like-minded individuals and peers, leading towards acceptance of ingroup norms, which are at odds with those of society. These four precursors are much in line with the four research questions that guide our empirical study and which we have formulated in chapter 1. These are focused on socio-economic and mental conditions, individual experienced setbacks, ideological and political or religious belief systems, and the social environment in adolescence and early adulthood.

Hypothesis 1: more adversity and exclusion?

With regard to socio-economic conditions, we can expect (that radicalization is partly the result of perceived discrimination and experiences of social exclusion. In our view, these structural setbacks will be central to the life narrative of terrorist offenders, and may have led to feelings of significance loss (Kruglanski) and a need for significance quest (Monahan). Therefore, compared to other offenders, we expect that these structural setbacks are more relevant for terrorists. This will be expressed in their ideologies, affiliations, grievances, moral emotions and identities. This lead the following expectation:

Hypothesis 1: In the terrorist unit, respondents will be characterized more consistently by a life history of perceived discrimination and experienced social exclusion. Due to a process of significance quest, they will also more intensely express their ideologies, grievances, affiliations, moral emotions and identities, compared to the regular detainees.

Hypothesis 2: more traumatic events?

With regard to individual setbacks, the volume of research indicates that radicalization is often preceded by various triggers, traumatic experiences and a strong decline in significance and wellbeing, approximately one year prior to radical activities. Therefore, we want to find out if there been a traumatic or other 'trigger' event in the lives of our respondents at the terrorist unit more often than in the lives of those at regular detention centers. Our hypothesis in this regard is:

Hypothesis 2. The respondents in the terrorist unit will have experienced more (intense) traumatic events one year prior to their alleged offense, than respondents in the control group.

Hypothesis 3: more fundamentalism and extremist ideology?

With regard to ideology and religious beliefs, we have seen that a fundamentalist or extremist discourse may provide people with a sense of belonging and certainty, as well as moral superiority. In the narrative of religious extremism, the fundamentalist discourse is combined with that of violent extremism and that of conspiracy theory discourse. We want to find out to what extent religious fundamentalism, or religiosity per se, is present in the Muslim respondents at the terrorist unit. We will therefore look at the way the respondents construct their religious beliefs and certainties, and whether they are consistent with regular measures of fundamentalism. We will also investigate whether we find elements of militant extremist discourse, that calls for violence as a need to protect the group. Further, we will look for conspiracy theory discourse: to what extent do we find that militant extremists and terrorists display an alternative belief about social reality that entails a general distrust in the professional media, and belief in a conspiracy against their group? At forehand, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 3: the Muslim detainees in the terrorist unit will express more signs of a fundamentalist religious discourse, including references to a Sacred Text as a basis for moral conduct and an in depth knowledge of these texts, compared to regular detainees. More generally, detainees at terrorist units will express more often militant extremist discourses that legitimizes violence, and a conspiracy theory discourse.

Hypothesis 4: similar criminal pathways?

With regard to the social environment we will devote special attention to the crime-terror link. According to research, socialization into a criminal network may serve as a starting point for radicalization. In particular recruitment in detention and the possible contacts between criminal networks and terrorist networks are suggested as a way in which extremist narratives are spread and new terrorist offenders are recruited. Therefore, we wanted to find out to what a criminal background and/or a semi-criminal peer group, as well as prison environments, serve as catalysts for radicalization. Based on the literature, we expect to see:

Hypothesis 4: There are similarities between terrorists and regular detainees in their criminal affiliations and connections to peer groups. The prison context will be a regularly mentioned starting point of radicalization and contacts with terrorist networks.

3. Method

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we describe the method of our study: the study design and data collection, the instruments and analytical procedure. We first describe how we recruited our respondents. We explain how we tried to persuade inmates from terrorist units as well as inmates from a control group, how we encountered various difficulties that made us decide to expand our study with other sources of information, including informants and secondary sources of information. We then explain how we transformed our theoretical focus into measurements, using semi-structured questionnaires and life history calendars. We conclude with a short section that explains how we analyzed our data.

3.2 Respondent recruitment

At the beginning of our project, we submitted our plans to the ethical board of the Faculty of Law from the VU university in Amsterdam, the CERCO (Commissie Ethiek Rechtsgeleerd em Criminologisch Onderzoek). The committee did not see objections to the study. After that, we contacted the department of detention centers (DJI, Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen) of the Ministry of Justice with a request to interview detainees in prisons. We obtained permission in to contact two Dutch prisons in June 2017 that hold detained terrorism suspects and convicts. The Ministry allowed us to execute a research on the life history of terrorist convicts, on several conditions, including strict anonymity of interviewed prisoners and a focus of the study on the situation before imprisonments (in other words, life histories of the respondents, not their perception of the prison situation).

Initial search for respondents

Between June 2017 and October 2017, we conducted our study in the two prisons in The Netherlands that have a so-called terrorist unit (terrorisme-afdeling, shortened "T.A."). These prisons are located in Rotterdam (it is called De Schie) and in Vught, a small town in the province of Brabant. The latter prison was originally built by the as a Nazi concentration camp by (mainly Jewish) detainees. A section of the original compound now functions as a partly open-air war museum. In the terrorist departments in the prisons of Rotterdam and Vught, suspects and convicts of terrorist acts are being detained.

After we had introduced our research to the heads of these departments, we distributed invitations via letters to the detainees. In these invitations, we described the aim of the

research (obtaining knowledge about the lives of detainees – and at the terrorist unit, we said ‘the lives of those who are incarcerated under the terrorist act’). We stressed the guaranteed anonymity. Meanwhile we also contacted the prisons where suspects were held on remand. Here we were able to find eight participants that served as a control group for our study.

The recruitment of respondents from the terrorist departments proved to be difficult. There were only twelve detainees at the Rotterdam unit and fourteen at the unit in Vught. In Rotterdam, the letters of invitation for the research were distributed by a member of the prison ward team who was not present at our introduction. After he checked their willingness, none of the detainees wanted to participate. Therefore, we decided to approach the population at Vught differently. Two of the authors, Inge Versteegt and Fatima el Bouk (both female researchers, one of which a veiled Muslim), entered the different departments together with a warden and asked the prisoners in person whether they wanted to participate or not. The prisoners also received an invitation letter in which the purpose of the study was explained and their anonymity was guaranteed.

In the second prison where we attempted to recruit respondents, we were taken on a tour through various subdivisions of the terrorist unit – which had smaller departments based on security intensity. Some detainees were inside their cells, and we could ask them personally. Others were in small groups, sitting and watching television. As we approached them, one said that all scientific research is twisted, and he would not participate.

Some detainees were outside, taking some exercise, behind a fence, where it was difficult to talk to them. Because we did not know in advance what would be behind each door, whom we would see, and in which situation he or she would be, we met all the inmates unexpectedly, and they also met us without notification. That meant it was difficult for us to approach the respondents in a fashion that was not experienced by them as threatening or as an invasion of privacy. The majority of the inmates responded to our request with cynicism and hostility. Some would tell others not to participate, because they did not trust ‘the system’. Two inmates had refused to accept or read the letter of invitation, and one even got angry when we approached him.

As it turned out, initially only one inmate of the terrorism unit was willing to engage in an interview. Later, as our presence at the unit was perhaps becoming normal, three more decided to participate. Their (alleged) crimes could be described as supporting a violent act

related to right wing extremism, or possible affiliations and/or support to terrorist organizations that operate in ISIS controlled areas. All detainees we interviewed said that they did not consider themselves as supporting any violent extremist, or terrorist organization. None of the respondents who were willing to participate, adhered to extremist or terrorist ideologies in their own view.

It is unclear why we were unable to recruit detainees that openly expressed support for violent extremism, considering that they were all suspects of, or convicted for, terrorist acts. We had been informed by the prison staff that there are detainees who express support for violent extremism or terrorist organizations. It seemed that these openly radical individuals all had refused to participate, and that we only talked with those who had changed their minds or were more loosely connected to terrorism, both organizationally and ideologically.

Alternative multiple source strategy

We decided to use a different approach in order to answer our research question, which was after all designed to find differences and similarities between those who adhere to violent extremism, and those who do not. Instead of focusing solely on inmates of the terrorist unit, we decided to collect information from multiple sources, including interviews with informants and secondary sources. By using the contacts we had already established inside the prisons, we contacted professionals who worked with the terrorist detainees in the special departments on a daily basis. We interviewed these informants and asked them about the socio-economic backgrounds and other characteristics of the entire inmate population at the terrorist departments. In addition, we approached a few lawyers through the Dutch lawyer organization and asked them similar questions. In total, we interviewed 18 persons, of which 10 individually and 8 in two focus groups. By dividing our original questionnaire in smaller parts, each professional could bring in his or her piece of the puzzle.

In the following chart we represent the informants we approached:



We were able to find eighteen informants among these professionals, who were willing to share their in-depth knowledge about the detainees of the terrorist unit with us in ways that guaranteed both their own anonymity, and the anonymity of the cases they discussed. Unfortunately, the prisons' imams working at the terrorist unit were unwilling to participate. They felt they could not be anonymous because of their unique position. Therefore, some questions about religious development remains largely unanswered, but some other professionals were able to provide indications of the salience and nature of life views and religion for the inmates at the terrorism units.

Additionally, we performed secondary data analyses on two biographies of terrorists in the Dutch context, using material gathered by others. We analyzed the radicalization process of one of the first Dutch detainees of terrorism, Yehya K., who wrote an autobiography. We also reconstructed the life course of Mohamed B., the murderer of Theo van Gogh, from one biography and other sources. A summary of these two biographies are included as a separate research chapter.

Our additional sources for the analysis thus consist of:

- Informants (among which: wardens, case managers, lawyers, psychologists, spiritual caretakers, and probation officers).
- The autobiography by Yehya K.
- The biographic materials about Mohamed B.

Final sample

In the end, the total number of respondents in this study was 30 persons. We approached 26 inmates at the terrorist departments, and were able to recruit 4 respondents among them. In the same prisons we approached 50 control group respondents, and were able to recruit 8 of them. We approached around 30-40 potential informants, the response here was: 18. This means that in total, we had 30 respondents for our study.

In qualitative research, the reliability and validity of the data depends less upon large numbers of respondents, and more upon data saturation (Baarda, 2013). This means that data collection continues until saturation is achieved, and no new answers are provided by the respondents. Sometimes, this may occur after 6 to 12 interviews with people who share relevant characteristics (see e.g., Guest et al., 2006; Mason, 2010).

In this study, we were able to find enough respondents for the control group of inmates to have reached data saturation: we felt we did not get substantially different life histories from the last couple of respondents. But because so many detainees at the terrorist units declined participation to the research, and there were so few detainees in this group, we clearly did not reach saturation in this group. Therefore, it was important to expand the research with other sources, in particular informants. The sample size of this group was substantive enough to reach saturation: no substantial new information was gathered in the end of the interview period with this group.

3.3 Questionnaire design: tools and themes

Based on the theoretical insights from researchers such as Kruglanski, Moghaddam, Doosje et al, Monahan, and our own theoretical position and model, we constructed a list of themes for the interviews. We used a semi-structured questionnaire to inventorize the background, socialization and developments of the radicalized detainees, as well as their ideology and experiences with socio-economic and personal setbacks and adversities.

Additionally, we used a calendar instrument, adapted from a version that was developed in a previous study on the lives of incarcerated women (Joosen & Slotboom, 2015). This calendar was based on so-called life history calendars that have been used in longitudinal research to collect retrospective data (e.g., Caspi et al., 1996; Blokland & Nieuwbeerta, 2005). With these calendars, respondents could indicate their socio-economic situation and events in their personal life for each month during the last year prior to their offense. With this instrument, we hoped to distinguish signs of deterioration in their life situation, and signs of deprivation, and personal trauma that could indicate significance loss, following Moghaddam and Kruglanski.

We arranged the order of the questions carefully to prevent priming the respondents with theoretically important notions. We asked general questions about their socio-economic situation first. Later in the interview, we asked specific questions about identity, religion, and discrimination. If issues such as identity, religion and discrimination would be especially significant for the respondent, they could mention them spontaneously in the earlier parts of the interview.

The questionnaire was semi-structured, because we wanted to leave room for the narratives of the respondents and at the same time ensure that all questions would be answered, so we could compare the two groups. Another reason to use a semi-structured questionnaire was that we expected some of the respondents to have difficulty expressing themselves verbally (Baarda and De Goede, 1996).

In our contacts with respondents we took notice of the advice offered by Horgan (2017). In his article "Interviewing the Terrorists", he stated that qualitative interviews with terrorist offenders are likely to be successful when the interviewer is honest about his or her intentions, is not associated with the institution, and is able to express kindness and understanding.

Just like all qualitative interviews, Horgan assures, an interview with a terrorist (suspect) relies on the ability of the interviewer to create a positive 'rapport', a good atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding. Because terrorists may be unwilling to fully disclose of their criminal or terrorist acts, it is more fruitful to focus on the accounts, reasoning and meaning-making of the respondents, than getting stuck in trying to find 'reality' and/or what 'actually' happened.

Before interviewing the detainees and the informants, we provided detailed information about our research and provided them with the option to withdraw after all. All respondents were given an informed consent sheet, that they had to sign or agree with verbally (on tape) before taking the interview. The consent sheet included items indicating that the respondent understood the subject of the study and were given the opportunity to ask question, that participation is voluntary and that they agree with taking part, that they can stop at any moment, that personal information is anonymous, but that information about future crimes may be reported.

The questionnaire was structured by the various themes we were interested in. In the first set of questions, respondents were asked to provide basic descriptions of their age, their detention, and whether or not they viewed their incarceration as justified. These questions were mainly used to create a good atmosphere.

The second set of questions was focused on socio-economic markers. Here we used the calendar, and included questions such as: in the past year, did you move house? How did you experience your living conditions? Did you have a partner? We also included questions about education and employment, as well as criminal records and substance abuse.

The third set of questions related to socialization and family. Here we wanted to know how respondents reflected on their childhood and socialization. We asked for example 'would you raise your own children similar to how you were raised?' and we asked whether they had any siblings, and how the family relationships had been.

A fourth set of questions, named 'religion', included inquiries into religious socialization (did your parents introduce you to a particular faith?), and current religious views (such as: could you describe a favorite part of your Holy Scripture?). It also included questions about morality and the acceptability of violence. Here we aimed to find out whether the respondents could be categorized as 'fundamentalists' according to the definition offered by Hood et al. and whether they would express a militant extremist discourse.

In a fifth set, 'identity', respondents were asked to which groups they felt they belonged. Their connection to 'being Dutch' and being part of Dutch society was explored. They were also asked to describe themselves as individuals, in order to find out which categories of self-description were important to them.

The sixth set investigated of questions the importance and constitution of their peer groups, explored through questions as; do you like being alone or with friends? What kinds of people are in your group of friends? Did you experience a change in your group of friends? Then, there were some questions about the importance of online communication, and the use of social media.

In the final set of questions, respondents were asked about personal setbacks and adversities, and experiences with discrimination and injustice. Here we asked for example 'do you feel that your group is being discriminated against?' and if yes, 'do you feel a responsibility to do something about it?'

For the informants, these questionnaires were adapted, so the respondents could reflect on their knowledge about the life history and characteristics of the inmates. For each group of informants, a different set of questions was designed that fitted their professional knowledge. In this questionnaire they could reflect on the group of terrorist detainees as a whole and if possible compare this group to other detainees. Informants were also asked to complete a calendar for one specific former detainee on which they had good information. They were asked to take one detainee in mind and complete the calendar for them.

3.4 Analytical procedure

Our data, after collection, consisted of three different types of documents: first, we had hand-written notes that were made during the interviews, second, of most interviews we had a sound recording, and third, we had calendars in which respondents had indicated the life changing events had taken place in their own life (for detainees) or in the life of one designated anonymous case (for informants). For recollection purposes, the hand-written notes were transferred into a digital summary the same day or a few days after the interviews. If detainees had refused an audio recording (as was the case with three detainees from the terrorist unit) the transcript of the interview was provided to them for a check.

We started our analysis with the calendar, comparing life events of terrorist detainees with those of regular detainees. In this process we were able to discern the first differences and similarities between the groups. During this initial inventory, we discovered that the calendar of one informant's case matched the description of one terrorist detainee. Upon further analysis of this particular case, we concluded this informant had described the same detainee

who was already part of our sample. Consequently, the informant's case study was removed from the analysis and we only used this detainee's own descriptions.

In the analysis of the interviews, we used the summaries, transcripts, as well as original notes as a basis to derive main themes. Themes could be based upon the theory (such as trauma and adversity) or they could spontaneously arise from the data, in a more grounded-theory approach. We followed the main structure of the questionnaire to present the data in a document, and were able to find subthemes within every main theme. For example, 'discrimination' (derived from the questionnaire), turned out to consist of 'job discrimination', ethnic profiling' and 'discrimination in prison' as well as a general category.

We then constructed a list of all main themes and subthemes, adding more subthemes as they came up. All themes were coded with a number and a letter, and these codes were placed in the original notes alongside every piece of text that could be assigned to a code. We then plotted all the interviews in the list, checking if we could evenly distribute them, thus preventing a lopsided attention for one interview compared to another. We continued the analysis until we had a minimum of two quotes per interview, as well as one code per subtheme. Although the option of using AtlasTi was there, the lack of time for a proper transcription of the recordings limited our use of this program and therefore a manual analysis was conducted.

Finally, in retrieving the original quotes, the audio-recordings were used to transcribe quotations as literally as possible, but omitting those references that could lead the reader back to a person. The interviews' quotes became the basis of the Findings chapter of this report.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we present the findings of our empirical research based on semi-structured interviews with four detainees in the terrorist unit, eighteen informants who had personal and professional contact with terrorist unit detainees, and a control group of eight regular detainees.

Although the small amount of respondents in our empirical research may not allow for generalization, from the detailed accounts of respondents we were able to deepen our understanding of processes that may lead to radicalization and affiliation with terrorist networks. We present our findings organized according to our research questions. This grouping is not necessarily representative for the order in which questions were asked.

The quotes and numbers from the 'terrorist group' in this chapter refer to: interviews with detainees at the terrorism units in Rotterdam and Vught, whose quotes are coded with "A", and informant-interviews with professionals who worked with the detainees in these terrorist units, whose codes are quotes coded with C, for individuals and D, for focus groups. The informants would give both examples of anonymous cases, as well as provide general descriptions of the group.

The quotes and numbers for the control group rely on interviews with detainees at a regular detention center. Just like the detainees in the terrorism units, the majority of them was waiting for their trial. Their quotes are coded with "B".

In general, all quotes are referenced to their interview code. In some cases, where the content of the quotes could theoretically impair anonymity, the respondent is simply referred to as "R" (respondent).

4.2 Socio-economic and mental conditions

In this first section, we describe the findings with reference to our first research question: what are the differences in **socio-economic and mental conditions** between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?

The two groups that we interviewed (regular prisoners and detainees of a terrorist unit) were asked to talk particularly about their socio-economic backgrounds one year prior to their crime. Here we present the various demographics for both groups.

In the terrorist unit, the age of our interviewees (and the anonymous cases that our informants described) was between 18 and 42, with an mean of 28.3 and a standard deviance of 8.5. The control group had a mean age of 32.2 and a standard deviance of 9.35. This means that the terrorist unit group appears to be somewhat younger and less dispersed in age.

Housing

In our sample of interviews, four of the detainees in terrorist units were living on their own prior to their crime, and two were living independently with a partner. Two were living with their parents. In general, they found their housing situation satisfactory.

One of the detainees (A1) of the terrorist unit:

"How did you find your housing situation?"

"Super, great".

You were happy living with your parents?

"Yes, very much. I have always been able to talk with my parents about anything and address my problems with them. "

One of our informants describes the general picture of the terrorist unit group in terms of housing:

C4. "Most of them lived with their parents or with a partner. Out of 80 persons, only two of them were previously detained and had been radicalized there, so that's not much."

A similar picture of relatively stable housing conditions was painted in a focus group interview (D1) with informants:

"In all those years in the terrorist unit, we had only five persons who were homeless."

The control group shows a more variable pattern, in which living with parents was the most mentioned answer. The main difference between the groups is that the control group had less stable housing situations. One was living with his parents, but temporarily moved out of the house a few times in the year, to live with a friend. One was living independently, and had moved back into his parents' house due to economic setbacks.

Two respondents of the control group said they were in prison the year prior to their crime, and one was homeless. These respondents were unhappy about their housing conditions, even though they also displayed acceptance and sometimes even enjoyment. For example, one respondent enjoyed enough income out of criminal activities to provide for himself - despite his mentioning of a rich aunt.

Respondent B3:

"I lived in hotels for a few months. My property owner had thrown me out, another tenant had accused me of noise, but he just wanted to have me kicked out. Actually, I loved sleeping in hotels. Every day I thought, I have to find a place to live, but staying at a hotel is so comfortable. You get your piece of chocolate on your pillow and your bed is made. So I postponed it. Even though it was very expensive. My aunt paid for it, she could afford it."

Education

The dominant picture is that both groups had some difficulties in their education. In general, the educational level of the terrorist detainees is quite low, even lower than that of the control group.

Six people in the terrorism unit had finished secondary school, and then quit.

The respondents usually ended their education after, or midway secondary school (Dutch educational system: VMBO, or sometimes HAVO). They quit school mostly around 15 or 16 years old, or they finished school but did not continue further education.

Detainee at the terrorist unit: (A13)

"I quit my education. It did not appeal to me anymore. I preferred to work."

Only one person had continued towards formal professional education. The desire to find work and make money, and the lack of parental guidance appeared to be the main reason that (further) education was discontinued.

An informant (C4) stated:

"For example, one detainee went to the lower technical school (LTS). The adjacent vocational training in mechanical industries was not finished, but later in life he managed to acquire the diploma. Right after secondary school, the respondent continued working at a job where he started as an intern."

For some of the detainees in the terrorist unit, however, it seems as if the educational *possibilities* were slightly better. For example, some have started at a higher level of education such as VWO, (preparing for academic education) but dropped out nevertheless. Some informants told us about several former detainees in the terrorist unit who had been students at an HBO (higher vocational education).

In the control group, the majority had finished secondary education and also received vocational education on a basic level (Dutch educational system: MBO, one HBO). Five respondents from the control group did a vocational education after secondary education. That means in our small sample, the educational level of the control group was higher (but because of the small numbers, we cannot draw definitive conclusions about this difference).

The control group also reported some examples of tragedy and setbacks with regard to education. For example, two persons in the control group dropped out of school before secondary school, at the age of 12. At this age, children are still obliged to go to school in The Netherlands. A formal system of school checks and the school inspection should have prevented these dropouts. The accounts show that the system does not always work. Nobody admitted this child into a secondary school, and apparently, nobody noticed. This respondent was reluctant to give specific information regarding his childhood. Given that he stated he had no parents, it is possible that he was homeless as a child. He may have been an irregular migrant under age:

Control group, detainee (B5):

"I did not do any education after primary school. I was not registered (there). I was dealing drugs on the street. My friends from the square were with me all the time."

I: How did it happen that your parents did not enroll you in a secondary school?

R: "I have no parents".

I: Was there anybody, any organization who noticed that you were not in school, or that was providing you with help or support?

R: No, nobody. (Later) "I rather not talk about it"

From our interviews it appeared that the terrorist unit had performed slightly worse in education than the control group. However, several informants indicated that the educational level among some detainees at the terrorist unit was relatively high. This difference in outcome could be the result from a bias in our selection. The informants signaled that

especially 'the leaders' had received higher education than other detainees. However, these so-called 'leaders' all declined participation in our research and we only spoke to detainees who were likely to be 'followers', and/ or 'criminal facilitators'.

Informant C2 remarks:

"The leaders can be very highly educated. They are natural leaders and some of them have personality disorders, like narcissism. The followers have a lower education, and they can be very fragile."

Similarly, informant C13 notes:

They (the whole group, IV) are rather well educated; they are not doing so badly. There are many people in a similar situation, who do not radicalize. (Later): In their educational situation, they are not the needy. Very often, they have a better than average intelligence and they have read many books, too. Yet they believe these misinterpretations of Islam. "

Discontinuation of education in both groups seems to be a result of parent's relative lack of involvement, decisions by the school (expulsion), or a decision they have made themselves. For the terrorism unit detainees, leaving school can be a result of the radicalization process. In the following case, described by an informant, the two (or group of) detainees were in the middle of HBO (higher vocational education) when they suddenly decided to travel to Syria together:

C4: "We have had a couple who were simply doing an HBO education, while living with their parents - which is quite normal of course, when studying and at the age of twenty. They were doing football, they had regular friends...And all of a sudden, they said, we are going to Syria. Whereas, the day before they had been at the educational institute."

Employment and job security

Former employment via jobs and independent companies was common among the interviewed detainees at the terrorism unit, while there was more unemployment in the control group (4 cases). Jobs varied from simple technical jobs at a low wage, to management jobs.

Detainee at the terrorist unit (A13):

"Yes, I had a full time job. It was in the commercial sector. I earned a lot of money and it was a responsible job too. It did not match my education, but it was fun. Sometimes I earned over 3000 euros net."

The general impression is that the people we interviewed at the terrorist units had better jobs, but in several cases, they lost their job a few years prior to their crime. This was the case for three of our respondents. One respondent had only a criminal income. The informants supported our findings that the people at the terrorist unit might have had a variety of jobs, but also a variety of setbacks.

Informant C4

I: Did they have jobs?

R: Definitely.

I: More than at the regular prison?

R: Oh yes, much more.

Despite the fact that the terrorism unit seemed to hold more detainees who enjoyed a regular income prior to their detention, from individual stories we derived traumatic experiences with job loss. Two of our respondents explained how they had become obsolete in a company that they had worked in for a longer period of time.

From a (non-verbatim) report of a detainee (A14) at the terrorist unit:

At the moment of the crime, the respondent was unemployed. He had been fired after a large reorganization in a company where he had worked over 10 years, and where he had enjoyed working. After losing his job, he unsuccessfully applied for jobs. He stated the poor job market made it difficult to find employment.

The respondents at the terrorist unit also talked about their life after prison and in these plans, there were small differences with the control group. The majority of people at the control group expressed simple, not specified desires like: *"I will start looking for a wife, and start a family."*(B5)

Some at the terrorist unit were equally vague, such as: (A1) *"I want to get a job, a house and a wife."* However, there were other instances where it seemed that the detainees at the terrorist unit were more specific in planning their life after prison.

Detainee at the terrorist unit, A13:

"I want to work at an organization where I can improve the terrorist unit."

Detainee at the terrorist unit, A14:

"I was thinking about opening a small restaurant."

Possibly, their ability to make specific plans and organize their lives has made them able to partake in complex activities such as travelling to Syria.

Income and debts

The terrorist unit detainees, as reported by informants or themselves, are predominantly self-supporting. When they still lived at home or when they were studying they were financially supported by a student loan and their parents. A few females – according to the informants - were financially supported by their husbands.

One respondent (A1) explained he had some debts. They resulted from speed driving. He tried to find help when the tickets were so high that he could not afford to pay for them. His feelings of rejection after the municipality failed to help him becomes clear from this excerpt:

18.16

I: Did you have debts?

R: Yes I did.

I: what kind of debts?

R: "Traffic ticketies". When I was younger, I would postpone paying them. Then you postpone and forget about it. I am now working on getting this solved.

I: So okay you had debts in those days. Can you indicate how much it was?

R: Yes, it would amount to 2000, 3000 euros at least. I went to the...what is it called... the city bank, they can help you, sort of. But my debts were not high enough for them to help me. So if you are rejected like that, it makes you think: you know, whatever!

I: You had hoped they would help you.

R: Yes and I didn't understand much, these payments and such, but then you ask for help and they just go: your debts are not high enough. Get lost and fend for yourself.

I: Oh no. And that was the municipality? So you wanted help, but you did not get it. What was it like for you to hear that they would not help you?

R: Well, yes, that makes you feel, basically, very bad. You are looking for help and you don't get any. You have to take care of things but you don't know how, but when you ask for help, you are denied help. And then you think: so what to do now?

I: did you manage to solve the issue?

R: I tried to pay as much as I could. But then you have your limited working hours, a few days, a few weeks and uncertainty. You have to pay 150 euros for health care, but you earned only 100 euros. So that gets to be spent on food or clothes. And then it's easier to say, I will postpone it."

In contrast, the control group more often reported receiving social benefits, as well as having debts, and receiving income through criminal activities. Hence, keeping in mind that these numbers are small, we find no indication that the income situation was extremely stressful for the terrorism unit inmates prior to their offence compared to the control group.

Substance abuse and addiction

All respondents reported having used marihuana (referred to as the common Dutch expression 'soft drugs'). The previous amounts of marihuana that were used, seems to be *slightly higher* among the detainees in the terrorist unit. Three out of four reported daily use, and in large quantities.

Detainee at the terrorism unit:

A1. "I used soft drugs. Only soft drugs.

I: "How much?"

R: "Every day I would smoke a couple, just to relax."

Detainee at the terrorism unit:

A13. "I would spend more than 15 euros per day smoking marihuana".

Some respondents who were Muslims (both in the control group and in the terrorist unit) indicated that they have reduced or quit their use of alcohol and drugs in their pursuit of a better (moral or religious) life.

A13. "Drug abuse, it makes you lazy. (...) I started doing drugs when I was 15, 16. But later, when I was trying to discover who I was, I wanted to know: why do I live, what do I want, how should I live? That was also when I quit my addictions to drugs and alcohol. When I quit my addictions, then I also got a job, I got married. It is the best thing that happened to me. I recommend it to everyone. Not just Muslims. When I got sober, it was like everything blossomed up."

Several of the respondents had been involved in drugs dealing, or as it was sometimes called, 'the green delivery'. Drug dealers were *less likely* to use large quantities of drugs.

The respondents all tried to indicate that their use of substances – especially alcohol- was "normal" and not problematic. The common expression was that alcohol was used "only at parties, only in the weekend, and/or only with friends" in order to represent the socially acceptable use of this drug. The real amount of alcohol used was thus difficult to measure, as this was clearly a social desirability question.

Only the control group reported other addictions such as cocaine, and gambling. These did not occur in the terrorist unit's replies.

Mental health problems, personality disorders and behavioral issues

The incidence of mental disorders at the terrorist unit was not based on respondents' accounts, but on estimates provided by our informants. The general impression is that mental disorders are slightly less prevalent among detainees at the terrorist unit.

D1 Focus group interview:

I: "Mental disorders... do you find them here more, or less than at the regular units?"

R: "Oh, much less."

Another informant confirmed this:

C4: "The people with real psychological disorders are less than 5% at this unit. There are more issues in the personality dynamics. There is identity weakness: they ask questions such as, who am I, what is important to me."

Especially severe disorders such as borderline, psychosis, and schizophrenia, were believed to be less prevalent. However, some informants mentioned specific mental disorders that were *more* associated with the terrorist unit.

C13. "Actually in science there are two competing schools. One groups says: the extremists are basically normal, but some bad things happened to them. And there is a group that says: no, they have mental issues. I tend to believe the latter. Within our group, we see psychiatric problems such as autism, ADHD, and posttraumatic stress disorder. And we have the impression that there is more than we are measuring right now."

One informant said there was a difference in mental illnesses and disorders between leaders and followers:

C2. "There are leaders and followers. Besides the difference in IQ, these people are also different in their personalities. The leaders are natural leaders, they are highly educated and could also have been leaders in some other organization. They tend to have these personality disorders like narcissism, bipolar disorder, or anti-social disorders. The followers have a low education and are easily influenced. They are very vulnerable, can have depressions and a low self-image".

4.3 Deprivation, adversity, discrimination and trauma

In this section we will present the findings that address our second research question: what are the differences in the **individual experienced setbacks** in terms of deprived socialization, trauma, and (perceived) discrimination between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?

Parents

The majority of respondents in the control group *and* in the terrorist unit group were very positive about their parents. They say their parents had been very supportive, had done their best or were even "perfect." One respondent from the control group indicated he grew up in an institution, but that had been a very positive experience. Only one person in the control group said he had no parents. Detainee from the terrorist unit (A14):

I: How do you look back on your upbringing?

R: Good, I would not want it any other way.

I: What was good about your upbringing?

R: We were raised to respect others.

Terrorist unit, A13:

"Yes, I have had a good upbringing. What happened to me was not in the hands of the caretakers. It was much more the environment.

I: "Bad neighborhood?"

R: "Bad friends, mostly."

Despite these positive accounts of respondents, our informants paint a more negative picture about the family environment of the detainees in the terrorist unit.

From a focus interview (D1):

"In at least 90 % [other person corrects this number] or definitely 80 %... we see broken families, a criminal past, drug issues, no relationship with the father. In such a situation it may happen that you start seeing yourself as a loser. And then suddenly, someone shows up.... They did not finish their school, they never finished anything. Very often, youth care has been involved. We have had someone here, he kept searching. He had been an animal activist, he had been with the Lord, and now he ended up in radical Islam. It was just never right, and he kept looking for something else. Looking for recognition, looking for brotherhood. To belong somewhere, because they failed, that's how they feel it."

Later: "They lack a true basis for normal social behavior. They are emotionally underdeveloped [...]. Sometimes, their father is dead. Or they grew up without contact with their father."

"It is all traceable to the fact that...at home it was not a party"

"But in many cases we don't know. The relationship with parents is stained by the radicalization."

Because the respondents were so positive about their upbringing, we asked if they would themselves raise their children in the same way. Here we found some implicit criticism, such as *"I would never have so many children. You can't keep an eye on them"* (by one of the terrorist unit detainees) and *"My father was very old fashioned, so he had a tough hand"* – a euphemism for physical abuse, in one person of the control group.

Another attempt was made to let respondents elaborate on 'what was good about their upbringing', and if they could name one specific example of a choice their parents had made,

that was good for them. These questions were difficult for the respondents to answer, and usually elicited general statements like: *'They taught us to respect other people'* (respondent from the terrorist unit).

One informant said that the respondents of Muslim backgrounds will always speak positively about their mother, because criticism of the mother is a cultural taboo:

I: What about the upbringing of these people?

C4. " They are regular migrant families with the problems that are common: bad neighborhood, low social status. At home they are raised very strictly but outside everything is different."

I: "Yet not all of these children ended up at the terrorist unit. Where, do you think, lies the difference?"

R: "Yes, there was more instability in the situation at home, that is my impression."

I: "Can we speak of attachment disorders?"

R: "Absolutely. Whereas the image of mother, within the culture, remains intact. There is a big discrepancy there. Parents must be talked about with a lot of respect. Mother is almost a saint. 'Paradise is at the feet of the mother', that is how it is written in the Qur'an. But this particular mother often neglected things, or refrained from doing things, or was unable to do them."

The desire to keep in touch with their parents was another thing that was different for the terrorist unit group, when compared to regular detainees. Several informants indicated this difference:

C4. "According to their faith, the contact with parents is very important. So you see they are willing to forgive their parents, and keep in touch with them. That is quite different from the regular group. There they simply go: my father is a bastard, my mother was a whore, I never want to see them again. They just close themselves off for that."

I: "The Moroccans too?"

R: "Yes. But not the ones in this unit. They always want to keep in touch."

Some informants describe the cultural distance between the larger Dutch culture and the minority culture at home as a source of stress and identity strains for the young men. In

particular different perceptions of their own status in the household and in society, is believed to cause these strains. The high expectations that are created in the household become blotched in social reality. Two informants indicate that pedagogical neglect, such as spoiling and lack of boundaries, may have attributed to certain problems in personality development.

C1. "Too many of them were growing up in their own subculture. And the contrast of course...inside their home, in their family, they were the big man, outside they were this foreign guy who dropped out of school and has a criminal record."

C4. "In these groups we often see a traditional pattern: the father has work, the mother stays at home. I have had a couple of little princes. Whatever they wanted, they got it from their parents. Others had very poor and deprived families, lived in poor neighborhoods, and their parents could not provide them with much."

Another informant indicated that basic trust issues were formed in the early childhood of the detainees at the terrorist unit and also in other detention regimes.

C11. "Yes, they all are coming from problematic social contexts, lower social, low education, if they have had any at all...and also we see many complicated issues in their upbringing, a low basic trust."

I: What do you mean by that?

R: Well, if you don't receive any unconditional love in your childhood, if you have no father, or no mother...that is what they say right, ...with Freud? If the father represents conditional love, and the mother the unconditional...and you don't get that...you can lose track, and that is true for many people in detention."

A similar explanation was offered by informant C1:

C1. "It is often very clearly related to a situation of disadvantage and social exclusion. There are also people who had a normal position in society, and they have...I don't know exactly how they got so extremist...but for some it is related to life events. They have had a burn-out, or they suddenly realize how much they had fallen short in their own childhood. Not necessarily in material way, but in terms of attention and affection. Most of the time, actually."

I: Do you recognize this professionally, or is this something you have read?

R: "No, I have recognized it. Also in regular criminals, how this can affect people. And I didn't read it anywhere yet."

We find several accounts of divorce of parents in the terrorist unit group. Three of them are also divorced themselves, an event that can aggravate earlier grief. For female detainees at the terrorist department, the informants indicated that many issues were related to their instable families.

C2 "At the age of 16, she was handed over to the child protection service. She became pregnant at a very early age. Her last partner went full into Jihad."

Other informants indicate that some parents had provided the detainees with a stable family. There was no indication, in these cases, that family issues had contributed to trauma. In these cases, the reasons for a persons' susceptibility to an extremist narrative must be sought elsewhere.

School

Two observations can be made from the interviews. The first is that discrimination or deprivation of children from minority backgrounds seemed to be rare for both groups (in contrast with studies reporting institutional and personal discrimination of minority pupils, like those of Arts and Nabha, 2001; Jungbluth 2005; Versteegt, 2010). Possibly however, a similar process of idealization of the childhood is taking place as with the praise expressed for parents. Only one person mentioned racism at his secondary school:

B10 "At my primary school, there were some children of various cultures. I think they handled that well. But I was a child with some problems, I was very hyperactive, that was more an issue. Later at the secondary school, I met some teachers who were racist."

The majority of the respondents in both groups said that their schools handled the diversity of pupils well, but one respondent (in the terrorist unit) said he had felt left out as a Muslim in a Christian school. He also claimed that the school tried to indoctrinate him religiously:

A13 "At the Christian primary school. With Easter, they start talking about Jesus. With Christmas, the same. They acted like Jehovah's Witnesses, trying to recruit me, to convince me. Look, you see, that is where it started!" (he laughs)

The second finding is that, despite the obligation of all schools to teach children basic knowledge about religions, the majority of our respondents indicated that they learned *nothing* about Islam or any other religion (besides Christianity) at school. At some public

schools, even basic facts about Christianity was not taught. We did not find in our groups that this lack of instruction was *directly* contributing to radicalization.

The only person who said he learned about Islam in school, was a member of the control group:

Regular detainee, B9:

I: "Did you learn about Islam in other places?"

R: Yes, in school for example, it was a Catholic school, but they also told things about Islam."

Another member of the control group was educated in an Islamic primary school and learned many things about Islam, as well as about other religions. Apart from these accounts, religion in general is mentioned as something schools rarely address, and if they do it is limited to Christianity.

Regular detainee, B10: "When I was at my first school, the public school, they talked about the birth of Jesus at Christmas. But never about the Qur'an. At the second school, for special needs, they told nothing about religion. Not even about the Bible. I was the only one at that school who knew what Christmas was about. And I was a Muslim!"

Trauma, personal loss and coping mechanisms

C1 "I always wonder if they have experienced more losses, I don't think so. But they are triggered by these events to question life. I don't think they are stuck in grief, but they respond to these events with questions. They are simply more philosophical in their personality."

In both groups, many respondents talked about traumatic experiences. "My friend died when he was just 17 years old, from an accident.", someone at the terrorist unit said. From our impression, traumatic experiences that dealt with sudden death or loss of family members and friends, occurred in similar amounts for both groups. However, the divorce of parents was more common in the terrorist unit group. This was supported by the accounts of informants.

In particular, there were many violent deaths and other incidents in the social context of those who had criminal careers, and this amounted to a lot of trauma. For example: (B5) "I was shot by the police and nearly died", and B2: "My brother was shot to death".

As many of the respondents are younger than 30, the death of a loved one is experienced as an odd experience in life, which should be very rare.

B4. "At one time, every year someone died. I was hoping that there would be one year without someone dying, but when that nearly happened, someone died during Christmas."

In the control group, several respondents mentioned coping mechanisms and valuable lessons that were learned from these losses.

B2. "I nearly died because of a suicide attempt. It showed me I have to think of others. (later). A friend of mine died of cancer at the age of 29. But I found out, in life, you just have to make the best of it. It can be over any time" (...). "You have to be able to deal with difficult situations. You have to see through the darkness, towards the light. I have learned some tricks that work. I use the five G's (a cognitive behavioral therapy skill meant to separately address events, feelings, behavior and consequences). Also, I am looking for structure in my life."

B4: "You have to be happy with what you have. And if you want something, you will have to work for it."

Such examples of 'coping' narratives were not found in the stories from the terrorism unit respondents. In general, the terrorist unit group expressed more anger towards setbacks, and less acceptance. However, it is difficult to determine whether the lack of explicitly mentioned coping mechanisms in the terrorist unit group is a result from their different personality, or from their more challenging detention regime, which could ignite a temporarily throwback of coping mechanisms due to stress.

Discrimination

We found three types of discrimination in the accounts of our respondents. The first was ethnic profiling by the police, the second was job market discrimination, and the third was discrimination in prison. In both groups, some but not all members of ethnic minorities mentioned experiences of discrimination. Further, we found no differences in the amount of reported incidents of discrimination between the terrorist unit group and the control group. As will become clear later, the difference is not in the amount of experienced discrimination but more in the perception and interpretation of it.

C4: (...) They feel a lot of resentment. Especially towards the government. We had someone here who had had a severe accident. (...) It impaired his life, and he did not receive a compensation from the insurance company. His life was ruined and he blamed everything on Dutch society and the insurance company. Others feel that their parents had to work too hard for too little money."

Ethnic profiling by police

Almost all members of ethnic minorities in both the control group and the terrorist unit group, indicated they had experienced the police ethnically profiling them, subjecting them to extra checks, or other discriminatory policies. Some said this behavior was typical of all the police, others said it was only the case for some members of the police.

One person in the control group said:

"When I was thirteen years old, the police once came up to us. We were sitting at the park with some other kids, eating some sunflower seeds. The police warned us they would be watching us, and we would not be getting away with anything. He said, you guys, we are like cats and a mouse. The mouse may get away once, but the cat will catch him. Imagine, we were just kids. I had never done anything criminal in my life. And this was my first ever encounter with the police."

The terrorist unit seems to share similar stories with the employees of the prison:

C4. "The detainee told a story about how the police stopped him after a bicycle was stolen in his street, only because he was "looking in a suspicious way."

Job market discrimination

Another type of discrimination is experienced by detainees who have finished a higher education and continue to get rejections for jobs, possibly due to ethnic stereotyping and discrimination. Two informants argued that this experience of discrimination on the job market, despite having a good education, might be a very common and direct cause of radicalization.

C4 "There was a boy who did an HBO education (higher vocational education, finished with a bachelor or master diploma). He was looking for a job and he deliberately sent two versions of an application letter. One with a fake Dutch name, another one signed with his own. He was invited for the job based on the fake letter, but his own

application got rejected. When he responded and explained he had written the letter with the Dutch name, the company did not want him to come to the job interview."

C10 "One person had very high education and he literally said: so they keep rejecting me because of my ethnic background, I probably don't belong. Let me find a place where I do belong and where they do respect me."

Discrimination in prison

Several detainees explained that they encountered situations in prisons where white detainees were treated better than black detainees, where there seemed no reason for this difference. Complaints about discrimination in prison were less in the control group than in the terrorism unit group.

B5 "I notice there is a different treatment in prison sometimes. For example. I cannot shower. They tell me. But someone else, he is white, he can go. I did not do anything wrong. Why can he have a shower, and I can't? I am not someone who will easily say that I am treated in a racist way. But it is simply the case. It happened before. I was waiting to get my clothes. Things went wrong and I could not get any clothes and had to wait for a couple of days. But for someone else in a same situation, an exception was made, he could receive his clothes earlier. For me they made no such arrangement. Sometimes I think it is deliberate."

Although we did not ask specifically about it, detainees at the terrorism unit complained a lot about the strict regime. Because of this, they felt discriminated, compared to the other detainees. Some of them believed they were deliberately teased or humiliated by the staff.

Attitude towards discrimination

We noticed that the respondents in the terrorism unit, especially those who have been radicalized, (are said to) have a different attitude towards discrimination. They take it very personally and seem to lack the psychological mechanisms to cope with setbacks.

Respondent at the terrorism unit:

A22: "If I had to describe them (his fellow inmates at the terrorist unit): they are sensitive guys. They cannot deal with injustice. I can let go of things. They cannot."

Informant C1: "There are enough tools in society to be successful. They may lack resilience."

Informant C4: "They never felt able to cope with injustice. But due to the IS ideology, they suddenly feel stronger. They may have tried to influence politics, which did not work. They searched like-minded individuals, who said: we are finished talking."

In the focus group, the detainees at the terrorist group were described as constantly seeing discrimination in every bad event.

I: "Do they talk about discrimination?"

R1: Oh yes. That is the main storyline.

I: The main storyline?

R1/ R2: Yes, they will say they are victims, and the government hates them.

R2 But we are of course their first address. And they view the head of department as the big discriminator, the big Nazi.

I: Oh really?

R2: Yes, we often refer to our head of the department and they expect problems to be solved immediately, and if they are not, they complain officially.

I: Do you feel that they are more than the other group using stories of discrimination and deprivation?

R (several): "Oh yes. All the time"

I: Do you mean that's how they view the government's policies?

R1: "Anything. They return from the court, and things did not work out positively, then everybody is plotting against them. Here, at prison, everyone is plotting against them.

R3: Or, if they have visitors and their visitor has made a mistake. For example, the visitor has forgotten to bring a passport, or a document. And so that person cannot enter, and you try to explain it to them, your visitor made a mistake. But they will say: even if it would have been correct, you still would not have allowed my visitor to come in."

In our control group we found more accounts of acceptance, and coping mechanisms to restore a Just World perspective. The control group also accepts that they themselves have a responsibility in making the most of their lives, regardless of social injustice.

B1: "I have not gotten many opportunities in life, but those I had, I did not always grab them."

B8: "Yes, I have felt discriminated against sometimes, but not at other times. I don't really worry about what people say. The only thing what counts is what God thinks of me. And everyone makes mistakes."

Persons of ethnic minority groups who did not mention many instances of discrimination usually expressed a compassionate perspective look at humans, arguing that everyone, including oneself, can have prejudices and act accordingly. They also argued that several other groups can be victim of discrimination, not just their own, and they argued that their own group can have prejudices, too.

B8. "Making mistakes is human. Sometimes people don't know what to do. That is why I am glad I have the Bible"

B10. "I have lost faith in the police. The police is constantly ethnically profiling. It's the system. They just stop all the Moroccans, check their motorcycles. But it's not just the Moroccans that get this treatment. You have the travelers, the Antilleans."

B9: "I may get badly treated here in the Netherlands, but in Morocco, other people are discriminated against."

This more nuanced discourse was found in the accounts of regular inmates who also expressed a deep religious belonging (Christian and Muslim).

Relative deprivation and the terrorist unit: accounts and feelings of innocence

A complicated issue in our comparison of the two groups with respect to their social conditions prior to detention, was the fact that their *current* social conditions were also quite different. One group was suspect under the terrorist law, and was detained under very strict rules. The other group was suspect of various regular crimes and was being held under normal detention conditions. We found differences between the two groups in their perception of the detention, especially in their accounts of whether their detention was justified or not. We wanted to find out if this different perception was related to a difference between the two groups, or because of a difference between the two types of detention, but this was often difficult to separate.

C4. "I: Do they share incidences of discrimination and deprivation with you?"

R: Oh that is very strongly the case for this group. Regular detainees also claim they are innocent and they complain a lot, but this group really feels wrongly detained, they

see themselves as political prisoners. They see themselves as world heroes, they often compare themselves to Nelson Mandela, who was detained at a terrorist unit first, and now he is worshipped.

Does this also apply to the right wing extremists?

No, they are not very ideologically involved. (...) Outside of prison there may be real right wing extremists, but we don't find the ones here very extreme, or a good example of what right wing extremism entails.

All four of our respondents at the Terrorist Units believed they should not be in the Terrorist Unit. They claimed that the system was wicked and the government put them there to make some statement. All detainees denied radicalization, even though one admitted former radicalization.

Detainee at the terrorism unit (A22):

"They just want to fill their cells. So they can show to the United Nations: look, here in the Netherlands, we are also fighting terror. So they can go on TV with their terrorism experts. It's just one big theatre show. Stories of bullshit are told on TV. You should not believe everything the media tell you."

Three out of four downright stated they were innocent.

Respondent from the Terrorist Unit (A13)

"Yes, this is the Terrorist Unit. Because we are the so-called terrorists. Well let me speak for myself. I am not a terrorist."

Respondent from the Terrorist Unit (A22)

"This is not the Netherlands that I know. I am not a terrorist. Nine out of ten people who are being held here, is plain nonsense"

Respondent from the Terrorist Unit (A1):

"How do you feel about your detention?"

"It is really heavy. Really heavy."

Why?

"Because I am innocent."

While the detainees in the terrorist unit were all innocent according to themselves, this was different in the control group. In comparison, the majority of the detainees at the regular unit admitted to be (at least partially) guilty of the charges, or they would remain rather vague on their crime.

Respondent B8:

Q: Do you feel it is justified that you are held in detention?

"Yes, it is. I am here for a number of thefts. I really regret them."

One detainee insisted he was charged with a crime he did not commit, but his explanations were difficult to understand. Later on he indicated that he would not be set free.

Respondent B4 of the control group:

I: "Do you feel that is fair you are being held here?"

R: "Fair...fair....hmmm..., not really, no."

I: "Why is it not fair?"

R: Yes in my case, I have heard that someone went to the police to talk with them, and with a number of boys, doing business and so on."

I: "And that did not sound right to you."

R: "No."

I "Do you feel you will be set free after the trial?"

R: "Not immediately, no."

I: "Yet you don't think it is fair that you are here. Could you explain why you feel like that?"

R: "Yes they have a few (inaudible) conversations for me, that I would be selling drugs, but eh. Those kind of things."

There was only one exception in the control group of someone with a firm denial. This respondent was charged with a sexual offence and claimed to be innocent.

Our informants confirmed the general claim of innocence at the Terrorist Units. It applied both to detainees in the 'jihadist' and in the right wing extremist unit. Some informants also argued that the current terrorism laws generate too many false positives: people who become suspect of terrorist activities such as planning to travel to an ISIS dominate area, when this is actually not true.

Some informants felt that there were more false positives in the Terrorism unit than elsewhere, due to the very broad legislation. They offered examples of people who faced charges of terrorism and were detained at the terrorism Unit but were discharged later. Other informants indicated that it was difficult to prove someone guilty of terrorism. Therefore, most detainees are waiting for an appeal result.

4.4 Religion, morality, ideology and violence

Here we address the third research question: what are the differences in **ideology, political or religious belief system** and concern with geopolitical developments, between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?

Religion

For the group of detainees that are (mostly) famous for their allegiance to a religiously inspired violent extremist group, we particularly wanted to know more about their religious characteristics and compare them to the regular detainees. We investigated their religious commitment knowledge of the Scriptures, image of God, and religious socialization

There is a general feeling in the informant group that a large proportion of detainees lack general knowledge of Islam, or do not adhere to orthodox rules. Many accounts of the informants hinted in this direction:

Informant C11:

"I thought for a long time that Islam was the problem. But most of these boys never saw the inside of a Mosque."

A female informant states:

"So far, nobody refused to shake my hand."

Informant C2 describes a detainee at the terrorist unit:

"He does not even know one prayer."

This finding supports the notion that members of an extremist group may have not joined the radical group for religious reasons alone. In particular those who were described by our informants as the adventurers, the deceived, and the criminal opportunists may not have been interested in Islam at all. Their aim may have been excitement, heroism, social belonging, or profit.

Other stories indicate that the style of religious reasoning of the terrorist unit inmates is not very typical of orthodox or fundamentalist ideology:

C11: "Take Mohammed B. for example. In his farewell letter, he did not even mention the afterlife. He was only preoccupied with what people here on earth would think of him."

When asking about (orthodox or fundamentalist's) typical religious determinism – the tendency to refrain from talking with certainty about future events - it seems absent in the detainees of the terrorist unit:

"Do they mention God or Allah when you are making plans with them for their future, such as: God will decide if this will happen?"

C12. "No. Never."

On the other hand, the following story shows how a lack of knowledge about Islam is a starting point for a young man to start searching, and end up in an extremist group who encourage him to travel to Syria.

Terrorist unit, detainee A13:

"I had quit using alcohol, I was making my life better. I wanted to be a good Muslim. I was looking for something new, actually I was... looking for my identity. Then I talked with a couple of men, friends of mine, about Syria and they said, that is where you should go. If you want to be significant as a Muslim. There is no war at all. There are just Muslims who need your help. So I wanted to go there, see what I could do, make a new start.

I: How did you envision your future there?

R: Future? I did not see a future for myself there. I just wanted to take a break. But what I saw there, it did not match my ideals."

In order to find out more about the religious and ideological aspects of the detainees at the terrorist unit, we asked them (and the control group) about their religious upbringing, their

ideology and some general questions about their religion, such as a favorite quote from the Qur'an or the Bible. We also asked all respondents how they felt about the use of violence.

Religious socialization

The respondents in the terrorist unit group all gave the impression that they had learned little about Islam from their parents. For some, their endeavor to learn about Islam started only with the encounter of members of an extremist group.

A13. I: "Did you get introduced by your parents to a certain faith?"

R: "Not really. Yes, you see that your parents are praying. And sometimes you are taken to the mosque. During Ramadan, you can fast with them. But my parents told me nothing about their faith."

Others remained not very interested throughout their (criminal) life, as they had other interests. They learned little about the Qur'an. Some started reading the Qur'an as a result of their detention at the Terrorist Unit.

A22. "I never prayed. I started praying in here."

A14. "The Qur'an? I don't know much about it. I don't know it by heart. And it's the question whether I understand it."

In the control group we found that several detainees had experienced an explicit religious upbringing. To two of them, their religion provided them with spiritual support in prison. The Muslims in this group could quote more from the Qur'an and provide several moral guidelines derived from Islam. Most of them were about being kind to other people.

B5. "What did your parents teach you about Islam?"

"That you have to forgive, that you have to think of other people's needs, that you should not be greedy, and that you must be aware that someone else is always suffering worse than you are."

"That you have to offer food or shelter to someone who is on the street and homeless, and that you should always help others. Those are examples of the right way. Anything bad to another person, like gossip, if you would not like that yourself, you should not do that to someone else."

The control group expressed more indications of a supportive God image, and one compared God to a parent. The word "forgiveness" was mentioned more than once. This word did not appear at all, in the accounts of the terrorist unit group.

B9: "What does God/ Allah mean to you?"

"He means the same as my parents. If something bothers me, I address Him for help, and in some way or another... things will always turn for the better. You can't see Him, but you can ask for forgiveness and that also gives comfort."

B5. "If you sincerely ask for forgiveness and you stick to it, and you are good to others around you, life will work for you."

This person, detained at the terrorism unit, explains how his deradicalization has changed his religious perception of the Qur'an.

Q: "What does the Qur'an mean to you?"

A: It gives me rest. When I read it now, it gives me rest.

Q: Was it different in the past?"

A: I was not really able to read it. It used to be...you hear stuff, you assume what someone says is right. Now I know: you have to open up and ask the right questions. It is very different, when I read it now.

Q: What is different?"

A: That the text is very profound. You have to open yourself up for it. You cannot just read it superficially and understand it. It [has] a very broad [meaning]. It also descended [religious phrasing: from Heaven, IV] in a specific time, too. That is why we cannot immediately understand it. You have to find help in someone who has studied it, who can explain what it means. Not a couple of boys from the street who start explaining the Qur'an just like that. [referring to the men who told him he should go to an ISIS-controlled area, IV]"

Ideology

We have found several indications that some of the detainees of the terrorist unit are triggered by social injustice and want to do something about it. For example, two of the respondents

from the terrorist unit, that we talked to, indicated that they had done volunteer work. For one person of the control group, this was also the case.

With regard to social injustice, a respondent from the terrorist unit indicated that his school did not teach very honestly about the many faults in society, such as poverty. He claimed the schools were providing politically correct information:

I: "Have you learned things later in life that you wish you had learned before?"

A1: "Yes, about the political situation in our country. They make it sound better than it is. In schools, they tell you, that you should study this and that, and you will get a job. But that is a lie. There is poverty and unemployment."

One informant explains that in his view, social injustice is a main catalyst for radicalization.

C1: "They feel that the system in which they live, does not work out fairly for everyone, so they want to resist it."

The significance of ideology and a search for significance was also present in this account from a detainee at the terrorist unit, who said he had radicalized and after that, deradicalized:

A13: "I wanted to develop myself. As a human being, simply, that you grow as a person. Ever since I was young, I had to sort out these things myself. (...) Then through social media and Youtube and other sources, you see a lot of injustice in these regions. You start believing that you can be of some significance to that problem. Being a Muslim, that you can mean something. And also friends, your peers, regard this as something good that you could do".

Many informants from the terrorist unit spoke of the preoccupation of detainees with injustice and global, political power arrangements.

I: "Do they refer to discrimination in the Netherlands or worldwide?"

C4. "Worldwide. Towards Muslims. They always mention Palestine. Nowadays, they mention the Bangladeshi Muslims."

C1. "No. Well, yes. (Sighs). What I said, they are just very proud. But they also believe in their countries of origin people have made a mess because they sided with the enemy, with the ex-colonists. And that the Americans are always there in the Middle East, to divide the oil."

Violence

Some informants from the terrorist unit expressed the tendency of detainees to discuss religious matters in a rather obsessive way. They gave examples where jihadists claimed that the use of violence was permitted in Islam or in Jihad. The informants and sometimes the detainees themselves embarked upon firm debates with the extremist jihadists about the use of violence, and tried to change their mind, sometimes even using quotes from the Qur'an.

From a focus group interview:

D1: "I found out they are illiterate, when it comes to faith. The other day one of them talked with me about a line in the Qur'an about taking up the sword. He wanted to prove that violence in Islam is allowed. I said, no, you are wrong, there is a sentence before and after that, you should read that. (...)They need some education, when it comes to faith."

From informant C4:

I: "Is this related to their religious ideology?"

R: "That is what they say. They say so. But...it is not necessarily the case. We have an expert here who advises us, and he, as well as me, we both think that these people are religiously illiterate. Really few of them...and those people are rare...have an idea about the content of the ideology they claim to adhere to. Most of them are unaware. But that leaves room for intervention, I believe. Not in the beginning of course, but after a while, I can bring up things like: what is really the war jurisdiction in Islam? Are you allowed to use a gun actually?"

According to another informant, the violence that the detainees agree with, stems directly from certain quotes in the Qur'an.

C1. "This is what they themselves say. They simply say: this is what we read in the Qur'an. That violence is part of the deal. And I think we have to take their accounts seriously, not just look at what the experts say about their life conditions, but also look at what they themselves indicate as their source. And then we can wonder why this is so important to them. Their faith, and this interpretation."

Contrary to what could be expected (perhaps due to the follower/ adventurer/ criminal bias in our sample) we ourselves did not encounter any respondent at the terrorism unit who was in favor of using violence. On the contrary, the use of violence was firmly criticized even more than in the control group.

Here we compare several answers to the question: "When do you think violence is allowed?"

Control group: B10 "You may defend yourself against danger; but all the rest is prohibited."

Detainees in the terrorist unit:

A1. "Never. Violence is not an option."

A22. "Violence is something that is not good. At best we should not allow it at all. If your own safety is threatened, you have to defend yourself, but it is your last option".

A14. "Where two are fighting, you have no winners. Violence does not solve anything. It only leads to more violence."

This has left us with the question whether all these respondents were providing us with socially acceptable answers, or whether we simply talked with the wrong people. From our informants, we concluded that many detainees at the terrorist unit claim to disagree with violence, or with violent extremism and terrorist groups. The informants however doubt the sincerity of many inmates with regard to this.

C3. "Their goal is to have a house, a quiet life...mainly a quiet life."

I: "Do they have ideals like IS, or the defense of their own religion?"

R: "If there is a violent attack, they see it on TV. They seem shocked, and disagree with it. They want us to believe that they don't agree with it."

I: "How do they respond, what words do they use?"

R: "Look at those guys! They are just young boys! How can they do that! And now they think we are like that! That is horrible, isn't it, (name the name of informant)". They look genuinely horrified. I get the idea that it is sincere. But I can only look at their faces, not into their heads."

I: "Are they aware that this group they supported, in Syria, is the same group that says: go ahead and do this in Europe?"

R: "They all say they did not support this group."

However, the latter did not apply to all inmates. Especially those categorized as recruiters and/or leaders were more prone to expressing their allegiance to ISIS, write slogans on desks, openly express admiration for Mohammed B. (for example in writing letters of admiration),

or chant religious slogans together. One informant stated that for some of the detainees, their religion was so important to them, they would never deny their faith or their ideology:

C10: "Most regular criminals want only one thing: freedom. They want to be charged as not guilty and would do anything to achieve that. But in this group, people can be very accepting of what is happening. They feel whatever the Dutch judge decides, it does not matter. For them the judgement of God is more important. They will therefore never deviate from their principles. They would never deny their faith or their beliefs, they would not fake, or tell lies about their ideology, not even if that would mean acquittance."

One detainee at the terrorist unit suggested another explanation. According to him, many of the inmates who adhered to ISIS in Syria claimed that they did not believe that ISIS was behind the violent attacks in Europe or elsewhere, but that this was media propaganda:

R: "Yes, anything you read in the news, it is not true according to them. Also the decapitations that ISIS does, they say it is western propaganda. It never happened, they say."

I: "They say that? They don't support the decapitations?"

R: "No, and they say people are not being set fire to by ISIS. It was just a man who was killed at the front line. Then I just stop talking with them, I can't make them think differently."

Among the detainees in the right wing extremist department, one respondent stated the following:

I: "Do you feel a connection with the ideas of neo Nazis or right wing extremists?"

R: "No, absolutely not."

I: "What do you think is wrong, about this ideology?"

R: "Because they feel superior, and I don't agree with that. We are all equal. It is wrong to think like that."

I: "What is it like for you to be associated with that?"

R: "Horrible."

The variety of responses that were given when ideology, religion and the acceptance of violence was addressed, showed us that the connection between ideology/ religion and the adherence to violent, terrorist acts and organizations is very complex, and cannot serve as the single explanation. Not all detainees have clear ideological views. Many detainees did not have an orthodox religious upbringing. Even the acceptance of violence or extremism is not clear cut among those who are categorized legally as terrorists. Especially 'followers' seem to be talking in socially acceptable terms – possibly not only for strategical reasons, but for a genuine desire to be socially accepted.

4.5 Identity and belonging: social context and peer group

In this final section of the findings, we present the results that are related to our fourth sub question: what are the differences in **social environment in adolescence and early adulthood**, with regard to peer group, criminal affiliations, social media use and prison context between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?

Self-descriptions

In our questionnaire, we included questions about self and (group) identity, in order to compare the two groups in terms of identity construction and the social needs of identification. The self-descriptions of all respondents were short but in general, positive. Some expressed their social attitude, others included their skills and talents.

From the control group:

B2 "I am a cuddly bear who looks like a grizzly bear. I am an artist, and a craftsman."

B4 "I am a really good guy who is always willing to help someone".

B5. " I am frank. Honest, fair. I am willing to debate with people. When I am wrong, I am willing to admit that".

B8. "I am quiet, social, caring. I am always there for my family and my neighbor (religious connotation)".

The answers from the detainees at the terrorist unit were in general quite similar. The words 'friendly, open, and caring' were mentioned slightly more than in the control group. Thus, they expressed more pro-social qualities, but fewer talents and skills, and less perceptions from outside:

A1: "I am a friendly person who is open to anyone".

A14 "Sweet, kind, friendly, well brought up, caring".

A22: I am an open person, I am caring, I like to help people and I am generous."

One person had problems in adequately describing himself. Here we seem to observe an example of identity instability or diffusion:

R: "Who I am? I don't know. You tell me, you have talked with me, you know me now. You can be the judge of that."

I: I barely know you, we talked for less than an hour. How would you describe yourself, what kind of person are you?

R: "I don't know! Normal? I really don't know. I can't describe myself very well."

I: "What kind of traits, or qualifications would you give yourself?"

R: "No idea. These are very difficult questions".

In the descriptions of the "leaders" by our informants, we found they were described as very self-determined and macho, (C2) and proud (C1).

Group-categorizations

In both the control group and in the terrorist unit group, we found a reluctance of respondents to self-categorize themselves as belonging to a certain ethnic group. Instead, they stressed that they did not think along those lines, and that their peer groups were also of mixed ethnicities.

B1: "I don't think in groups or categories like that. Everyone is different."

There was variety in how Dutch Moroccans ethnically categorized themselves. One person in the control group said he felt more at home in The Netherlands, but it was common for the Moroccan-Dutch respondents in the control group to associate themselves more with Moroccans. They also expressed criticism of some disloyal Moroccans.

B1: "Moroccans are the biggest racists. Definitely. One Moroccan will always defend another Moroccan. But some are involved in politics. Like imagine, I am speaking Arabic with you. Once a Dutch person arrives, they will switch to Dutch. I hate that."

This was contrary to the Dutch Moroccan participants in the terrorism unit, who seemed to indicate that they felt "more Dutch than Moroccan".

A14 I: "Do you feel at home in the Netherlands?"

R: "Yes. I haven't been to Morocco in over twenty years, so that should mean something".

(Later) "I have nothing with Moroccans. I would rather call myself Dutch."

Although we cannot draw definite conclusion based on our a very small sample, this result suggest that possibly young people who *want* to belong to the (ethnically) Dutch community and who feel left out, may be more susceptible for an extremist narrative than young people who do not want to belong the ethnically Dutch group. It could also indicate that when the imposed ethnic identity does not fit one's self-categorization, religious identity may become more salient.

With regard to group-categorization based on religion, the detainees were less ambivalent. Most respondents that were raised with Islam, said they were Muslim. One person at the terrorist unit, said he was not really a Muslim. For many of the Muslim respondents, it seemed that being a Muslim was more something one aspired to be, than something one already was. This was related to perceptions of orthodoxy (the belief that in order to be Muslim, certain rules and behavioral guidelines must be followed) and orthopraxy (the daily adherence to orthodox practices). Muslim as an identity is thus problematic for those with orthodox beliefs, because it presupposes moral behavior that is necessary to belong to a group, that one feels one is naturally part of. Some made a difference between being a Muslim (personal identity) and being a good Muslim (aspirational identity).

Control group, B1: "I am not a good Muslim".

I: "What is a good Muslim?"

R: "You have to pray five times a day. You shouldn't judge people too quickly. You have to have a clean life. You shouldn't act criminally."

As some informants stressed, the desire to be part of a group, to have an identity and to belong, as well as the desire to be a good Muslim, is one of the largest appeals of the violent extremist narrative.

I: "What did they tell you about their process of change of perspective?"

C1. "Well they developed the feeling that you can only be a good Muslim when you live in the Islamic State created by ISIS. And they have been put under pressure to go and live there."

C10. "In the end, they just want to be a good Muslim. And go to heaven."

The following excerpt shows how a changed perception of how to be a good Muslim had also changed a young man's adherence to radical Islam.

I: "Did you experience a change in your way of thinking?"

R: "Yes I did. Now I am just very happy, as a Muslim. I pray, I fast, and I am kind to people. More than that is not necessary. That is what makes you a good Muslim. I know that now. First I thought, when those guys said it: you have to do a lot of things, you have many obligations. But I am more satisfied now. You don't have to have the longest beard or clothes. You don't have to be perfect. You just have to do your best."

Attributed identities

The informants also mentioned several categorizations within the detainees of the terrorist unit. Although these are not identities in the sense that detainees describe themselves as such, the accounts of the informants may contribute to a better understanding of the identity of the detainees.

One very common distinction that was made by the informants, already mentioned before, was that of leaders versus followers. Some of the informants referred to a choice in terrorist organizations to recruit rather gullible 'foot soldiers' with less capacity to make correct moral decisions and think critically. They said that the rather simple-minded terrorist detainees had been victims of political manipulation, or brainwashing. The terrorist or extremist groups are using people of lower intelligence to execute their violent attacks, but the people behind the ideology rarely engage in criminal behavior themselves, and thus manage to stay out of prison.

Interview C11, part 2, 04.30:

"R: The persons who threw the bomb are not the ones who are politically [...] engaged. What is my impression, my strong conviction, is that there are evil geniuses, hate-imams, political leaders, who draw the socially instable, the mentally instable, towards them."

Interview C1, 3:27:

R: "The foot soldiers, those are the ones who are recruited and are being sent out to fight at the front, in Syria. With them, there is not very active ideology behind it. They don't have much theoretical knowledge. There are a lot of them of course."

A more detailed categorization was made by respondent C13. This informant distinguished ideologists (for example those who have organized prayer gatherings so-called dawa's), recruiters, followers, the mentally unstable, and the adventurers. Another distinction that was made, (by one informant) was between people who want to travel to Syria to live in Islamic State, and those who want to attack Western targets or citizens. This informant criticized the assumption that all travelers to Syria are potential terrorists:

C1. I think if you say: I want to live in an Islamic state and I want to live there among Muslims and women will live separately from men, and the men will combat all the western and foreign forces that are present there...you know I can understand that, to some extent. Even though a lot of bad things happen there as well, towards other groups that live there who have a different religion. It is a horrible project, of course, Islamic State. But I try to imagine that they wanted to go there. I think for a number of them, despite the fact that they knew that the leaders were doing bad things - they just took it for what it was.

I: If I understand you correctly, you see a difference between people who want to travel to Syria to live in Islamic State. And those who want to attempt a terrorist attack in Europe.

R: Yes, I think that is completely different.

I: Yet they are convicted under the same law. Do you think that is incorrect?

R: In some cases, yes. (...) Especially with all those people who only attempted to travel there. You have to be careful how you push people in a certain corner and make their lives horrible. It could be counterproductive. You confirm their ideas about society.

I: How do you think we should treat people who wanted to travel to Syria?

R: I understand it is very complicated. But in some cases they should simply be seen as ordinary people with a religious ideology.

This statement about some of the detainees not being dangerous, was also confirmed by this informant:

C4: "There are three kinds of people here. The first group is innocent. The second group is guilty and dangerous. The third group is guilty, but not dangerous."

A similar description of travelers to Syria was given by one of the detainees at the terrorist unit:

R: "There is a lot of injustice in the world. They take it personally. They see that there is a war in Syria and nothing happens. They say, I have to do something. But I have not spoken with anyone who says: there should be a violent attack in The Netherlands. Here is their family, they don't want to put their family in danger. This is their country too. Their sisters work here, their cousins go to school here. They just want to go to Syria."

One informant said even fighters against IS were detained at the terrorist unit. This shows that the civil war in Syria, and the broadened definition of terrorism, is causing complicated definitions of terrorism, that may interfere with legal notions of guilt. In some cases, travelers to Syria could be compared to those 600 to 800 Dutch nationals (mostly communists) who went to Spain in the 1930s to fight the fascists, and lost their Dutch citizenship as a result (Overmeer, 2016).

D2: "There are some among them who have travelled to Syria, but they were trying to help the population of Syria, against IS. And they are also detained here as if they are terrorists. Because once you have travelled there, you are considered a terrorist."

Differences between Muslim extremists and right wing extremists

We found some indications that the informants regarded the detainees associated with right wing extremism as different in their threat to society compared to those associated with jihadi extremism. The right wing extremist terrorist act, and the individuals involved, were spoken of in derogative terms. The attack on the Mosque is viewed as '*a rather dumb*' (C2) but not very significant act, for which these men are punished harshly. The detainees are described by several informants as '*child-like*' (D1, D2) and not very dangerous. Their violent act is perceived as not very threatening, not very successful, and done impulsively under the influence of alcohol. The connection with right wing extremist organizations, large numbers of threats and violent attacks on Muslim schools and mosques is not made by our informants.

D2: "They feel very sorry for themselves. They are like a bunch of children."

Contrarily, the detainees that are associated with violent extremist Islam are considered to be more potentially dangerous to society as a whole, and to the prison social structure. Even though when discussing individual cases, the informants state that many detainees may be innocent and do not pose a direct threat, when describing the group as a whole, the associations are that of extreme violence.

D2 "Some of them would like to kill us because it gives them extra status."

C3: "They are really dangerous, they are willing to kill citizens. We have seen that."

To one of our informants, several global and local incidents explain why it was understandable that people wanted to set fire to a mosque. This right wing extremist attack is, according to the respondent, a response to a further non-specified group of foreigners who pose some sort of threat, where ISIS, foreigners, asylum seekers, Muslims, and the like are all lumped into one. It is unclear whether this respondent agrees with this framing or not. Whatever the case, we can see the framing of anti-foreigner populism about 'foreigners as a threat' becoming apparent in the accounts of some prison professionals.

C11: "The Mosque attack came after the sexual molestations that occurred in Germany. And of course with the arrival of an asylum seeker center. The government put these huge centers in small villages. With their chicken brains, these boys added one thing to another. The deed of these boys is the result of political policy failures."

These accounts may be biased because all informants were white and non-Muslim. This could lead to an 'ultimate attribution error': deviant in-group behavior is regarded as an exception, and deviant outgroup behavior is seen as typical for the outgroup. The right wing extremists

are then considered as 'these particular individuals who committed this particular crime', whereas the detainees that are associated with Islamist extremism, are seen as representatives of ISIS who can be held accountable to all of ISIS and Al Qaida's terrorist acts worldwide.

C11: "It's quite a difference whether you fly two airplanes into a skyscraper and kill three thousand people, or you throw two fire crackers at a mosque and only a tree sets fire."

Despite the tendency of informants to down-scale the threat of the right wing extremists, we found no objective reason for such a difference. According to our informants, the detainees at the right wing extremist unit still had social connections to members of their right wing extremist group. One of the detainees allegedly had expressed a desire to kill one of the (black) wardens after his release. Yet, they were referred to as 'babies' by some informants.

Gender identity

In our informant group, several informants stressed how the jihadi Salafi narrative is appealing for some young women. Young women of Muslim backgrounds, or newly converts may fall passionately in love with a jihadi extremist, in a way that a lover boy would lure them. Sometimes women recruit women and stress the honor in becoming a jihadi bride.

C14. Don't underestimate the role of women. They can recruit, they play an emancipatory role, also for young women. Just imagine: one moment you are working in the Lidl (supermarket), and suddenly you are a mother, a teacher, and a caretaker of warriors. "

For men, the possibility to form 'pacts' and 'brotherhoods' were often mentioned by informants as an important appeal of the extremist organizations.

D1: "I can imagine that this brotherhood really means a lot to them. When you feel you have always been treated like an outcast actually...and suddenly there is someone who...uses these 'loverboy'- like methods...With all those hugs, too..."

I: "Hugs?"

R: "They keep embracing each other on every occasion".

I: "Can you tell me something about their self- image, or their self-confidence?"

C3. "They act very self-assured. But that is also a cultural pose. They find each other in their machismo, they act like they are a pact."

Criminal identity

In half of our cases (combined respondents and cases described by informants), the detainees at the terrorism unit are first offenders. They have had no history of criminality or detention. The other half was previously charged with drug-related offences, theft and violence. The control group has had more, and various, criminal offences.

Two types of accounts were found in the terrorism unit with regard to criminality. The first type was the account where a petty criminal, usually a youth delinquent, became an adult and wanted to better his life. In a search for meaning and inspiration, he searched more information about the (vaguely known) religion of his family, Islam. In trying to become a good person and a good Muslim, and leave his criminal and sinful past behind him, he encountered radicalized individuals either on the internet or in real life. An example:

A13. "I had just turned into a partitioning Muslim, with a backpack full of sins. I quit alcohol and drugs. I had a regular job. I wanted to learn more about my religion. I just ran into the wrong group."

The other account refers to fulltime criminals who are being approached by a terrorist organization for trade or other criminal deals.

C4. "There are simple criminals at the terrorist unit, we call them criminal opportunists. They have been selling Kalashnikovs to terrorist groups. They usually claim not to be Muslim, or they even hate the Muslims, because they are the reason that they are here. But they simply said, I could sell 50 machine guns to this group, or a hundred to the other, so I chose the group that wanted a hundred. That is a simple, criminal style of reasoning."

One respondent pointed out the structure that can be provided in a criminal network or organization. For one detainee at the terrorist unit, this much needed structure was later found in an extremist network.

C10: "This person was involved in a network of young organized criminals. He had been a gang member and in this gang, there was structure, and leadership. He was told what to do. After he was detained, this structure was also prevalent in the youth detention center. After his release from prison, he was lacking structure in his life. He indicated he was looking for a role to play. He was also looking for belonging. The extremist network that he joined, provided him with these."

Peer group

In the personal accounts, we found that both groups talked about having friends and at first, we found nothing particular about it.

A13 "I had normal contacts, there were only two persons who were involved in this" (radicalism).

Some control group detainees expressed more distrust of their friends and associates, due to disappointments.

B1. "You can't really trust anyone. Not even your friends."

B5. "There were some people that I considered my friends, when they were in trouble, I helped them, out of love. But when I needed them, they were completely unavailable."

According to our informants, there was a strong difference between the regular detainees and the ones at the terrorist unit. The social connections of the terrorist group seem to be more intense and personal, especially after they have become involved with radicals. Perhaps this is because the radicals present themselves as trustworthy.

A13. "I had seen a lot of evil in the past. People that cheat, people who try to trick you behind your back. Those were criminals. This group was quite different."

This informant explains how the extremists use social bonding as their means to attract new people.

C4. "There is a difference. These people really have brothers. Normal detainees have friends that buy drugs from them. These people have a brotherhood, which really feels very intense to them. They can – I didn't know this was possible- even get married without ever seeing that person. Some of them have a real large group of friends, with whom they do a dawa (a religious meeting). Others are only active online and they meet people there."

"They feel discarded by society. They want to prove themselves, and they want to join some group, that represents something important, that provokes, that offers safety and affection. They just want to belong somewhere. And because their desire to belong is so big, they cannot let go of that when they enter prison."

The feeling of being socially accepted and be part of a community that helps each other, is the biggest threat, according to this deradicalized detainee:

A13 "Now you end up in a group of people whom you regard as your brothers. They help you, for example, they are painting your house. That is the pitfall. You feel at home, you feel appreciated. You would never think that such a pious person would scam you."

The different outcome of the prosecution of terrorists for leaders and followers was also mentioned by this informant:

C12: "I believe it is naiveté, just stupidity that leads to this. Because of the fact that you are so naïve, and you want to belong to a group, now you will have to pay. And someone else, the one had encouraged you, he doesn't have to pay at all."

Another theme that was mentioned by two informants (C1 and C12) was the double life that many radicalized young people develop. They seem to have normal social contacts, but in secret, they meet with their new network, sometimes online or in real life. Their family is often unaware of this double life, and is in shock when they find out. Family members have to deal with accusations of the police that they did not notice. Sometimes, they simply did not want to see.

The Internet

In general, the control group was quite eager to show that they were not occupied with such a boring, time-consuming thing like Facebook or other social media. They preferred meeting their friends in real life and doing serious business. Some shared pictures via Instagram, and made appointments via Whatsapp. For example B1:

I: Have you engaged in the internet, or have you used social media?

R: No. Noooo. (expresses insult). Facebook, nonsense. I meet my friends in real life. I have no time for such things.

In general, the terrorist unit group seemed to be slightly more involved with the internet. Some stressed the same lack of interest for social media as the control group, some showed more online activity.

R: "Yes I was meeting my friends on Facebook and Twitter too.

I: "Why did you choose to use these social media?"

R: "Because everybody does! It is fun, and you can talk with people whenever you like."

Innocent as this respondent sounds, in his particular court case we found there was mentioning of radical messages and violent plans exchanged via social media.

According to the informants, online radicalization had occurred in some cases, but they believed *direct contact* had attributed most to the development of radical ideas. This scenario seemed true for most of our respondents in the terrorist unit, who mentioned that the internet mainly served as a channel through which the 'facts' that they had encountered, were checked.

Sometimes the real life contacts were intensified through internet communication.

R: "It was more in that period of time that...Yes...you see it a lot in the media. In The Netherlands. You see it on the internet. You see that things are happening there and you feel, as a human, that you are responsible to do something. To help. And you connect that to...as a Muslims, that you have to be there for your fellow Muslims. And then it comes, then they play your feelings, in de media, that it appeals to you."

I: (Later). OK. What did you encounter in social media? Was that Facebook?

R: No, not Facebook. More Youtube. And other media too, regular media. That you feel, as a person, that you can mean something. Do you understand?

I: Yes".

In the account of an informant (C12), the internet itself is not a neutral place to look for religious guidance:

"Mostly radicalization takes place via certain persons and through the internet. A research has revealed that if you do a Google search for "how to be a good Muslim", you will end up with 80% of this crap. I know that Google is trying to take counter measures against what shows up in their search results."

A similar observation was made by informant C10:

"They have received a lot of contradictory information. They just choose one road. If that is the road of violent jihad, it is difficult."

5. Secondary case studies

5.1 Introduction

We conducted a secondary analysis on open source information about two former terrorists in the Netherlands, Yehya K. (who planned terrorist attacks) and Mohammed B. (who was the murderer of Theo van Gogh). We used open sources to retrieve information that is relevant to our research questions. In the case of Yehya K., we used an autobiography that he has written himself, for Mohammed B., we used a book about the murder of Van Gogh and several journalist articles.

These secondary case studies are meant to complement and further validate the findings from our interviews with detainees and informants at the terrorist units. They offer a useful addition to the information retrieved from the few detainees we could interview ourselves.

5.2 Case 1: Yehya K.

In 2004, the Dutch born schoolboy of Moroccan descent Yehya K. started planning a terrorist attack to blow up the Israeli embassy and/or the office of the Dutch National Security Institute. This happened a few months after the murder of Theo van Gogh by Mohammed B. Yehya K. also made online threats against Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Geert Wilders. While still in secondary school and 17 year old, he was arrested and convicted under youth law for conspiring a violent attack with terrorist intent. Being the first offender to be tried under the new Terrorist act, he has written an autobiography in 2011, looking back on his radicalization and his four years detention at the youth department (Kaddouri, 2011). Here we provide an overview of his radicalization process and socialization. Together with our previously described findings in our interviews, this case offers more insight into radicalization and the way it is perceived by someone who has experienced it personally. We have organized his personal story into themes that are also common in our own research.

Traumatic events

Yehya K. provides a story of migration trauma and identity struggles. Every year in the summer, his father packed a van full of children and furniture, travelling to Morocco, nearby the Algerian border. The children were brought along as if they were a similar commodity. "In the back of the van, my father created a sleeping spot on a shelf that rested on our luggage: a washing machine, clothes, and everything we took for our Moroccan family."(p.11)

There Yehya resides with his family for two months, only to return back to school in the Netherlands after the summer. He mentions an extreme sense of homesickness every year, both missing his family members (his only living grandmother) as well as the landscape. "Travelling back was a journey of homesickness and sadness. I didn't want to miss my family, and the beautiful landscape with cactuses and fruit trees, the other life over there. Especially since my eighth and ninth year of age, it was increasingly difficult to say goodbye to my beloved Morocco." (p.11). Later, he connects his feelings of alienation to his rebellion: "I am a stranger in this country, and also a stranger in my country of birth, and that is a feeling most people will not understand. It caused children's tears in my younger years, and anger in my adolescence." (p.36).

One of his first memories is that of his circumcision at age five. Yehya recalls that his little cousin, who was circumcised at the same day, was crying for hours afterwards. (p. 10)

A perhaps more severe trauma occurs during the civil war in Algeria, when his cousin of age 16 was killed during a terrorist attack (p.10). Unfortunately, in his Moroccan family it is not allowed to talk about politics, so he has trouble finding out how his family relates to this, or other terrorist attacks such as one in Casablanca. "There was nothing to talk about, I had to shut up. Before they had heard my position on it, my Moroccan family members imposed silence upon me. Here we don't talk about politics, not about subjects so sensitive as the Casablanca attacks." (p.24). Instead, a humble and passive acceptance of all God-given suffering is required, which conflicts with Yehyas openhearted 'Dutch' approach (p.25) and his youthful desire to change things (p.30).

Adversity and socialization

Starting at primary school Yehya speaks no Dutch, but he learns quickly, especially his tables of multiplication. His father expresses high expectations from his education, whereas his mother is less demanding.

In Yehya's life, the socialization seems to be a combination of permissiveness and harshness. He is beaten at the Quran school. Father insists on having his son beaten by school teachers too: "You can smack him, if he doesn't listen". (14). However, in his own account Yehya recalls his parents' upbringing as permissive, despite some religious rules. He was allowed to play outside late, and was allowed to watch violent movies such as Rambo at age seven or eight (p.15).

In his religious socialization, he is taught that life is a test by God, and that all good acts lead to heaven and all bad things lead to hell. His questions and doubts about religion remain unanswered by his young imam and are met with anger by his father, who fears his son will get lost on the path of the devil (p.16).

As his mother has suffered a miscarriage, a very strict (Dutch) babysitter temporarily takes care of the family. She locks him up in the basement for punishment as he refuses to eat Brussels' sprouts, a bitter food often rejected by children. Her strict rules conflict with the permissive attitude of his parents.

Self-inflicted deprivation resulting from impulsive behavior

At his secondary school, Yehya is often punished (p.21) and he sometimes responds with violence and threats. One teacher calls him a "damned Moroccan". In retrospect, he describes his behavior during a visit to a swimming pool as a spoiled Moroccan prince who thinks he owns the entire pool (p. 22). Yehya further mentions the use of high amounts of alcohol, even during his radicalization (p.36)

It was the intention of Yehya to escape poverty by means of education and hard work. At his secondary school, a VWO (preparatory academic education), Yehya was a smart student and he was elected to represent his school in an international tournament for political debate about global issues. His theme was – ironically - terrorism prevention. Possibly, he could win a grant. Later his theme was agriculture, which he thought was boring. Due to alcohol consumption in the evening prior to the debate, he was too tired and hungover to make a good impression on the jury (p.26).

Signs of mental issues

Yehya visits a doctor after he fell on his head in a traffic accident. He mentions panic attacks and heart rhythm issues, and a sense of anger. His doctor calls it general panic attacks, and tells him to come back if it does not go away. A few weeks later he visits the doctor again, as his symptoms have deteriorated: he becomes disoriented sometimes, and feels cold. Although the doctor asks him to come back in two days, he does not. (p. 34).

A mental disorder that is initially diagnosed in his early detention period (narcissism and antisocial disorder, obsession with violence and sexuality) in 2005, becomes refuted after a second psychiatrist finds no signs of any disorder in 2007 (appendix 3, page iii).

Discrimination, exclusion, racism

At age 7, Yehya and his younger sister encountered a group of older boys, who pushed and shoved them, telling them to "piss of to your own country, we are happy that your country lost." (in the aftermath of a football match in which Morocco lost). (p.11)

At the Sunday Quran school he felt miserable, deprived and feeling left out from the Dutch children who could play outside while he had to spend his day between walls. (15)

As he becomes more involved with politics and Islam, Yehya expresses his opinions at a regular basis, but this is initially ignored at school, until he writes an anti-Israel essay. His religious education teacher confronts him: "What's wrong with you Yehya, why did you write this? This hurts me, do you realize that? How did you call Jesus? A liar, a con, a false image of real Isa from the Quran? You insult Christ in a Christian school. You say the Bible is a book full of fake stories. You know nothing about the writing of the Bible or the Quran. What you say about Israel and the Jews, is pure antisemitism. " His punishment was that he had to write and copy pages from the phonebook, and was forced to apologize for his opinions, or be expelled from school. He was told to 'respect the Christian norms and values of the school.'" (p.32)

Political and ideological influences

His radicalization was inspired by a combination of geopolitical and (related) national events, television news, the debates on Moroccan Forums, and the reaction of his high school teachers to his increasingly extremist political views. His main concern as a teenager is the treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli government, which lead him to believe there is a worldwide war against Islam.

A first trigger in his radicalization identified by him was the 9/11 attack, when he was 15. This made him aware that some Muslims wanted to attack the United States and that he was associated with the attackers based on his religious background (p.18). Additionally, the late Pim Fortuyn is mentioned as a source of radicalization, as he confirmed how opposed Dutch are to Muslims: "It felt as if there was no more place for me in The Netherlands. How should I live in a country where they hate me?" (p.21). It coincided with more radical sermons by the imam in his Mosque: "He prayed for the destruction of the United States and Israel. He asked for guidance by God for men who fought in jihad against the Americans" (p.20).

A second trigger were the Madrid attacks, which made him believe that attacks could be successful as a political instrument. "The prime minister loses the next elections and his

successor quickly removes all troops from Iraq.”(p.30). A third trigger was the assassination of the Hamas leader Yassin in a wheelchair, which made him aware that the enemies of ‘Muslims/ Palestinians’ were using immoral war tactics (p.31). He believed that violence was the only option. This was confirmed by radical ideas he found on various internet forums. On websites like Marokko.nl and Islaam.nl he found many hateful comments, including those written by Mohammed B (the later killer of Theo Van Gogh) (p.36).

A fourth trigger was the polarization in the national political debate, in which Muslims were increasingly represented as non-Dutch, dangerous, backward and foreign, and Islam was criticized, especially by Pim Fortuyn, Theo van Gogh, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Geert Wilders (p.38).

Network

Together with other peers he increasingly becomes inspired by internet sources from Al Qaida and other radical groups. “Online I read sources from radical guys. Their message was always the same: there are comparisons with the destruction of Chechenia, the occupation of Iraq, and the war in Afghanistan. All these outbursts of violence are considered to be one big attack of infidels towards Islam.” (p.27)

One of his close friends is a boy of Italian descent who became a criminal in his teens and converted to Islam in prison, and quickly radicalizes after the death of his father (p.27). Together, they discuss international politics and the war against Islam by the west. In their construction of Islam, they do not attend any mosque, nor adhere to orthodox rules, like wearing conservative clothes. They express political extremism, rather than religious fundamentalism. “I wanted the Caliphate, the sharia, but I found it hard to adhere to the rules of faith. I did not enjoy going to a Mosque, I did not feel a need to wear a djellaba.” (idem).

Instead of a search for religious consolation and guidance for personal life, the need for community and belonging, even family and a home seems to be more compelling. “My new identity was very special. I was part of something big. An enormous community that would arise. The ummah, who is one. Brothers and sisters from Morocco to Palestine (...). There were clear enemies who were the source of all problems: the Jews, the infidels, the Americans and the fake Muslim hypocrites.” (p.28).

He mentions the solution that the Caliphate would bring: “(...) it would provide safety for Muslims, like Israel for the Jews. (...) And a new home for all radical Muslim youth who don’t feel at home in Europe anymore, because they are discriminated against.” (p.28)

While radicalizing politically towards violent jihadi Islam, a personal development into religious fundamentalism does not occur. He does not attend the mosque, nor practices abstinence from alcohol, nor practices prayer or changes his clothing habits. About his lack of religious or dogmatic adherence, he explains: "I was not very loyal to my new identity. (...) I was used to leading a double life anyway, between Dutch and Moroccan. As a Moroccan boy usually it's good enough to just pretend and don't let people know what is going on." He noticed that the 9/11 terrorists were also lacking dogmatic adherence, and he writes: "It is said that they did all that as a cover up, not to be noticed. But I think that they, just like me, combined their new identity with their old habits. And felt rather good about it. Some terrorists assume that committing a suicide attack is the fastest way to be forgiven for all sins." (p.29).

In his radicalization, violence towards Dutch citizens increasingly becomes an aim, something on which not all his friends agree. As he makes plans to build a bomb together with two of them, and has started to experiment with it, he is arrested in his school, convicted and consequently detained (p.48-80).

Deradicalization

In prison, Yehya slowly changes his mind about his political views. He mentions several sources and influences for this. The first was all the time he had to think about his perspective on personal philosophies on life, and everyone's personal search. "In my cell, I thought about the life on earth and all generations before us. Why did they live, why did we live? What could we learn from them? (...) None of us can stay here on this earth (...). The thought of our unified fate turned me mild towards the world. Don't we all try to make the best of it? We all just are doing our best." (p.117)

The second influence was the violence between Fatah and Hamas, the sunni and shi'a Palestinian groups, which crumbled his ideas about one unified resistance (p.178).

The third influence on his changed perspective was the increased amount of contacts with non-radicals. "I started playing soccer again and remembered how much I had enjoyed it. (...) I had not changed the group. The group had changed me." (p.224). Also his acquired diploma gave him hope for a different future (p. 155). He also stressed the need to meet new people, confront oneself with opposing ideas and get away from a radical network that keeps confirming the same narrative.

A fourth influence was that the prison imams challenged his religious views: "In the beginning I tried to convince him that violent jihad is positive according to Islam. (...) The imam (in the

prison) had more knowledge than I did and he could counter every one of my reasons. My knowledge of Islam turned out to be very limited indeed, as well as my knowledge of Arabic. And my ideas were mostly political positions. That made me doubt myself. Maybe the imam was right. Maybe I had gone too far. Maybe I had been talked into wrong ideas about Islam.”(p.68)

Both this imam’s understanding attitude, his listening capacities, as well as his knowledge of Islam, created more moderate views about Islam, and a desistance from violence and terrorism in Yehya.

Yehya wrote his book in order to prevent others from radicalizing, and hoping to change social processes that lead to radicalization. In a pamphlet for freedom, he addresses Dutch citizens, as he states that his feelings of not-belonging and of being excluded from society were at the core of his radicalization, and were a result from the Dutch attitude towards Dutch Moroccans (p. 182).

In his book, he also adds a final statement, from which we take this excerpt: “Exclusion is misery. Inclusion, that’s what this is about. Belonging is what helps guys, both inside and outside the walls of prison. The medicine against terrorism, the medicine against criminality. (...) I am glad to be alive, It would have been a pity if I had wasted my life for this so called greater good. Let those hate mongering imams and recruiters blow up themselves. I am free. Free of that rotten ideology that the jihad recruiters are spreading in all possible ways. (...) They were once some kind of idols for me. Now I spit on them. I hate you, I hate you for a battle that is not mine. It is not my resistance. Stay there and don’t turn your jihad into an export product.” (p.224).

Yehya K. is now a graduate of Erasmus University in Economy, and is working as a senior consultant for an international corporation.

5.3 Case 2: Mohammed B.

On November 2, 2004, the Netherlands was shocked by the murder of Theo van Gogh, a famous Dutch film maker. On a Tuesday morning in Amsterdam while cycling to work, he was shot by Mohammed B., the 26-year-old son of first generation Moroccan immigrants. In his eyes, Van Gogh was ‘an enemy of the Islam’ who had to die. Together with Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Van Gogh had made a critical short film about the oppression of women in the Islam. It was the peace and tranquility in which he committed the murder that shocked the Dutch people.

When a woman shouted that he could not do that, he had replied: "Yes I can, now you know what you are waiting for" (Court of Amsterdam, 2005).

The court considered the murder as an offence with a terrorist intention, in other words: the intention to frighten the nation and to undermine the fundamental political, constitutional, economic and social structure of the Netherlands. The circumstances of the murder has led the court to conclude this offence had a terrorist intent: the murder was committed in a busy street, during rush hour, on a famous Dutch person, and in a horrible way. Furthermore, a threatening letter was left behind stacked with a knife on the body of the victim, not only directed at Ayaan Hirsi Ali, but at the complete Dutch population (Court of Amsterdam, 2005).

In this narrative review of the case of Mohammed B. we provide an overview of his life course and of potential circumstances and triggers that may be related to his radicalization. This review is based on several sources: a book about the murder of Van Gogh and its larger meaning as part of 'the dilemma of our time', homegrown terrorism, and several articles of journalists who investigated the life course and environment of Mohammed (Chorus, 2004; Olgun, Alberts, Derix, and Chorus, 2005).

Youth and socialization

Mohammed was raised in a family of seven children. His father, originating from the Rif Mountains, worked long hours and did many household tasks as well. He did not have much time for his children, so the upbringing was mainly a task of their mother (Olgun et al., 2005). His mother barely spoke Dutch. Mohammed was his mother's favorite child, as he was the eldest son. When Mohammed was seven, the family moved to a bigger apartment in 'Overtoomse Veld', in Amsterdam West. This was a relatively poor neighborhood with a somewhat bad reputation.

Sometimes he played soccer in his neighborhood, but was not very good in it because of his bodyweight, told a good youth friend. The friends went to Quran lessons together, which they disliked. The lessons were in Arabic, whereas the boys had only learned Berber at home. He stayed inside most of the time, remembered a girl next door and friend of his sisters. She also stated that Mohammed was a shy boy, especially in contact with girls (Olgun et. al., 2005).

After the murder of Van Gogh in 2004, stories appeared in the press that Mohammed was integrated successfully in the Dutch society. He was said to be popular and active in the community, and called a "positivo" and "clever kid". On the other hand, there were also more

negative memories about him. He did not look into your eyes, was timid and aloof, according to one of his high school teachers (Buruma, 2007, p. 197). Mohammed did not often attend social activities, like participating in the school paper or theatre. According to his teachers, he was ambitious at high school, he wanted to make a career, move up the ladder. He spend a lot of time on studying and got good grades, however he could not transfer to a higher education level but stayed at the 'HAVO', a level below preparatory academic education. His history teacher declared that for reaching this higher level, not only studying hard was necessary, but also having more analytical skills, for which the teacher thought that Mohammed was not capable enough. When Mohammed entered the school in 1999, 40 percent of the students had an immigrant background. During the five years he attended the school, it turned into a so-called 'black school', while the group of teachers had a Dutch native background (Olgun et. al., 2005).

When Mohammed was 16 years old, he delivered newspapers with a friend of him. This friend was impressed by Mohammed's knowledge about all kinds of subjects, like the galaxy, sports, or physics. It was this time when he gained interest in politics and especially the conflict between Israel and Palestine. According to Mohammed, Dutch media approached the situation too much from the perspective of Israel, so he decided to get his information from Belgian media. A topic Mohammed did not want to talk about was his family, he seemed negative about it, but there is no information why this would be the case (Olgun et. al., 2005).

After secondary school: experiences of adversity and discrimination

After he left secondary school with a HAVO diploma, he entered tertiary education for the educational program of accounting. During his study, he enjoyed going out in nightclubs in Amsterdam and Purmerend, drinking alcohol and smoking marihuana. Mohammed really loved beer, declared one of his friends. When he was high, Mohammed was great fun and told the greatest stories, his friends declared (Olgun et. al., 2005). When he was 19 years old, he clashed with some policemen in a coffee shop in Amsterdam.

A year later, Mohammed applied for a security job at Schiphol Airport a year later. Because of the negative police report, they did not accept him for the job. This was very disappointing for Mohammed, and he was worried about the consequences of his police report (Buruma, 2007).

In a dance bar in Amsterdam North, he met his first and only girlfriend, a half-Dutch half-Tunisian girl wearing short skirts, a modern girl according to his friends. The relationship did

not last for long, around three months (Buruma, 2007, p.200). More generally, Mohammed could take a rejection from a girl very personal. When he had the idea he was being discriminated, he could be furious, declared a friend. The two of them chased girls during a holiday at Gran Canaria when they were 21, sometimes with success. When no success, he would blame it on racism. At those nights he had to watch out it did not end up in fights, because of Mohammed's anger. Mohammed was verbally outspoken, this friend said, and had several times tantrums (Olgun et. al., 2005; Buruma, 2007).

In this period, Mohammed also had a conflict with his father. As in many immigrant families from rural backgrounds, there were issues with the lack authority of family members, family honor and sexual freedom of daughters. This culminated when the five-year-younger sister Wardia of Mohammed met a boyfriend in the spring of 2000 when Mohammed was 22. The boyfriend, Abdu, belonged to a gang that got into trouble with the police now and then. Mohammed ordered her boyfriend to leave Wardia alone (Olgun et. al., 2005). He also aimed his anger at his father, who should not allow Wardia having a boyfriend before marriage, and should have a stronger control on her. His father answered that he could not do anything, Wardia did not listen to him (Buruma, 2007, p.205). From then, Mohammed tried to take over control: he commanded Wardia to stay inside and refused to let Abdu in. Wardia alarmed a police officer from the neighborhood, and two police officers visited the apartment of the B. family. Normally, Mohammed remained calm in contact with 'officials', but this time he reacted emotionally and worked up, according to a witness. Only after 45 minutes the argument was calmed down and the police officers left (Olgun et. al., 2005). Shortly after, Mohammed left the house and settled in an apartment he already rented. For one and a half year, he did not have contact with his father.

A year later, he encountered Abdu in a park. A fight broke out between the two of them, and Mohammed took away a knife from Abdu, reported a friend later (Olgun et. al., 2005). Mohammed attacked an intervening police officer with this knife, and was arrested and sentenced for twelve weeks in jail for this accident.

When Mohammed was barely free after being imprisoned, his mother died of breast cancer. It seemed he did not care that much about her death. He was not present at her funeral in Morocco, only his father and eldest sister attended (Buruma, 2007, p.). However, later it appeared that the death of his mother did have affected him. It has been a turning point for him, Mohammed wrote in his farewell letter (Buijs, Demant & Hamdy, 2006; Court of Amsterdam, 2005).

When Mohammed was 23, he signed up at 'Eigenwijks', a community center in his neighborhood. He was very active in this center and organized all kind of activities, such as debates. He wanted to be a pillar for his community, help others by, for instance, giving them computer lessons (Buruma, 2007).

However, it was a big disappointment for him when the municipality did not support his ideas for a new youth club. Friends declared that Mohammed did not receive the sympathy he had deserved, when his plans for the youth club were rejected (Chorus, 2014; Buruma, 2007, p208). He blamed it on his ethnic background and stated "We Muslims are not taken seriously".

While the problems at the community center continued, he had other setbacks. His study did not go well, "he had other things on his mind", a friend said (Olgun et. al., 2005). Mohammed changed several times from field of study, to information technology and social work, but did not succeed in any of them. At the age of 24, in 2002, he dropped out without any degree.

Radicalization

In the autumn of 2002, the 24-year-old Mohammed met a preacher who called himself Abu Khaled. The preacher was an escaped 'Muslim brother' from Syria, and supported a strict interpretation of the Islam in which he highlighted the differences between infidels and the 'true Muslims'. With his roommate Nouredine, Mohammed attended a lecture of Abu Khaled. Probably he did not understand all of it, because his lack of Arabic knowledge. After the lecture, Mohammed invited him to give lectures at his apartment (Olgun et. al., 2005). Between twenty and thirty boys from the neighborhood attended these living room meetings (Chorus, 2014).

In the beginning of 2003, when Mohammed was 24, he started rejecting Western norms and values (Peters, 2005). During a small argument at the community center, he said to a female volunteer she was not right, because she was a woman. He also advocated a ban on alcohol and separated meetings for men and women. In his neighborhood, boys became afraid of him, because he was preaching about the Islam all the time, and telling smoking and drinking was bad (Olgun et. al., 2005).

During summer, he watched many films of decapitation in the Middle East at home (Peters, 2005). When he left the community center, he had no job and only received welfare support, so he had time enough for his 'search for the truth'. Mohammed also changed his appearance. He wore a long white jellaba and got a beard. He became more and more interested in the

Islam. Mohammed could not speak Arabic, but he read the Quran from English translations. His knowledge of the Islam did not seem very good, although he tried to suggest he did (Olgun et. al., 2005).

With a pseudonym, Mohammed put several translated articles online in October 2003. In these texts he rejected the democratic system and apologized that he supported it once. Only a few days after he posted these articles, the police broke open the door of Mohammed's apartment, in a search for his roommate Nouredine. They did not find him, but at the same time five friends of Mohammed were arrested on suspicion of planning an assault. The Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service named this group of boys the 'Hofstad Group' but did not directly suspect Mohammed for being member of it. The same day, Mohammed and a friend came to the police station in Schiedam to bring food for the arrested friends. A police officer noted that Mohammed behaved recalcitrant and very aggressive towards the police staff (Olgun et. Al., 2005).

It was spring 2004, Mohammed was 26 years old, when he did the call for a jihad, a 'holy war' with a certain purpose. Mohammed's aim was to find the 'truth'. A few months later, he started calling for concrete violence towards people who insult the Prophet (Olgun et. al., 2005). The last months Mohammed visited his father more frequently. People say that a Muslim who is going to die, wants forgiveness from his close family and beloved ones (Olgun et. al., 2005).

In the evening of November 1, 2004, two friends visited Mohammed. It was a quiet night during the Ramadan. They had a late dinner and were reviving old memories, from the times they drank and smoke. After midnight, the boys and roommate Ahmed decided to go for a little walk around the Sloterpas in Amsterdam West. Ahmed declared that Mohammed did not want to talk a lot. He pointed at the sky, saying it was so pretty and peaceful. After arriving at home, Ahmed and Mohammed immediately went to bed. Only a few hours later, at 6.30 am, they got up, prayed and ate something. When Ahmed woke up in the late morning, Mohammed was gone. He did not know what Mohammed had done (Olgun et. al., 2005).

Information from the trial

On the last day of the trial, Mohammed described his motives. He could not call Theo van Gogh a hypocrite, Theo said things from conviction. The story that he felt insulted as Moroccan or because Theo had called him a 'goat fucker', was not true. He acted out of faith. Mohammed

even declared that he would have done exactly the same if it had been his father or little brother (Buruma, 2007).

The court defined Mohammed as a 'conviction perpetrator', who adhered a radical interpretation of the Islam and that in his eyes Theo van Gogh was a so-called 'enemy of the Islam' who had to die. The court assessed that Mohammed wanted to use the policemen as his executioners, he wanted to die as a martyr of his faith (Court of Amsterdam, 2005).

Mohammed did not acknowledge the court, which made it difficult to litigate for his lawyer. He had also refused to cooperate in psychological investigations to determine behavioral disturbances. The behavioral scientists stated there was no reason to assume Mohammed had a disturbance or disease, the judge agreed with them. Thereby, according to the court, Mohammed had committed the murder with the intention of intimidating the people and undermining the political and constitutional structures of the Netherlands (Court of Amsterdam, 2005).

Later, a new trial came for the case of the Hofstad Group. and this time Mohammed was sentenced for being the leader of the Hofstad Group.

Conclusion

In Mohammed's life, several processes and triggers can be linked to the different phases of radicalization that are distinguished in the literature. As Slooman and Tillie (2006) explained, both individual and context factors had an influence on his process of radicalization. Mohammed could be an aggressive person, for instance, and encountered the police several times. Contextual factors were his youth, the neighborhood he grew up in, and the city of Amsterdam with its freedoms but also the possibility of feeling discriminated.

Feddes, Nickolson and Doosje (2015) have distinguished between triggers in someone's personal life and in one's social status. In the personal life, confrontation with death is considered to be of major importance. For Mohammed, this trigger factor was present after his mother died of breast cancer. In addition, problems at home can be an important trigger, for Mohammed the disagreements and periods of no contact with his father. Regarding social status, loss of (perspective on) work and education are important triggers, which occurred when Mohammed left tertiary education without graduation after five years of studying, in the context of his ambitions during his youth. Also collision with authority figures is considered as an important trigger, which occurred regularly in the life of Mohammed in his neighborhood.

Parts of Mohammed's life course can be linked to Moghaddam's staircase model to terrorism (2005), which holds the metaphor of a staircase in a building where the terrorist act is the final step. Whether individuals remain on a particular floor depends on the spaces and doors a person perceives to be open to her or him. Climbing the stairs coincides with seeing fewer choices, until the last possible decision of destruction of others, oneself or both. This narrowing staircase contains a ground floor and five upper floors, with psychological processes leading to certain behavior on each of the floors. The ground floor, 'psychological interpretation of material conditions', predominantly consists of perceptions of relative deprivation, the phenomenon that a person feels to be at an unfair disadvantage compared to others. When Mohammed was rejected by girls or was not accepted at a job, he blamed it on racism. The first floor, 'perceived options to fight unfair treatment', can be seen in his attempts to stand up for his rights in the case of the community center for instance.

Overall, Mohammed experienced significance loss on several aspects, which is considered as an important factor of radicalization (Kruglanski et. al., 2014). He dropped out school, did not receive the sympathy and support for his ideas for the youth club, and did not have good connections with his family. His solution was an escape in the role of martyr.

6. Conclusions

This concluding chapter consists of five parts. In the first part, we return to our research questions and provide initial answers based on our interviews with informants and detainees. We also compare these conclusions with the two biographies that are addressed in the preceding chapter. In the second part, we review our hypotheses and formulate our conclusions about them. In the third part, we reflect on our findings by comparing them to previous literature and theory as addressed in chapter 2. In the fourth part, we address the main limitations of our study, which leads to some research recommendations that are addressed in part five. Finally, in the sixth part, we present a number of tentative policy recommendations, based on our research findings.

6.1 Answers to our research questions

Our overarching research question was formulated as follows;

What are the differences and similarities between detainees at a terrorist unit and detainees at a regular detention center, with regards to their situation and experiences prior to detention, their socialization, their personal and ideological development, and their social environment?

This broad question was further specified in four sub-questions, focusing on (1) socio-economic and mental conditions, (2) trauma, deprivation, socialization and discrimination, (3) ideology and religion, and (4) social networks.

1. What are the differences in **socio-economic and mental conditions** between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?

The life and mental conditions of both groups (detainees in the terrorist unit and in the detention house) seems fairly comparable at first glance. The education of both groups is relatively low, slightly lower among the terrorist unit detainees based on our small sample. Many of the incarcerated did not finish their education. However, among the terrorism unit detainees a few detainees have achieved a somewhat *higher* level of education than that of the regular detainees. It is possible that this higher education level also created higher expectations with regards to employment. Possibly, discrimination in the workforce is more depressing in such cases.

In terms of substance abuse, there seems to be less use of heroin and cocaine among the terrorist suspects than among regular detainees, but a lot more use of marijuana in the period prior to radicalization. Possibly these large quantities of marijuana enhanced susceptibility to paranoia and conspiracy theories in some radicalized individuals. Alcohol consumption was similar in both groups, and quite high, with the exception of some young Muslims who sustained from using alcohol as part of their religious quest.

There are a few cases of terrorist unit detainees who were diagnosed as mentally ill. But the terrorist unit detainees do seem to be more vulnerable than regular detainees, both socially and mentally. They are said to have a low self-image, and to be in search of bonding and identity. In many aspects they are less 'tough' than regular criminals. A number of them are said to have limited mental capacities. Yet, the prisoners in the Terrorist department seem to suffer less from mental disorders than the prisoners in the regular department.

According to some informants and detainees there are two distinct groups at the terrorist unit: leaders (a minority) and followers (the majority). The followers are more often suffering from mental problems such as bipolar disorders and depression. We noticed from various accounts that they also express signs of attachment disorders, which may help to explain their worshipping attitudes towards leaders and their religious obsessions. The leaders, on the contrary, are seen as intelligent, highly educated and in possession of natural leadership qualities. Among them are some with other mental issues, such as narcissism and antisocial personality disorders.

The two biographies we presented in the preceding chapter show a relatively high level of secondary education. Yehya K. already radicalized in secondary school, Mohammed B. later, after he dropped out from tertiary education and was rejected for a security job because he had a police report. Yehya had problems with panic attacks and was diagnosed with antisocial / narcissism disorders by one but not by another psychiatrist; for Mohammed there are no diagnoses and he did not co-operate with a psychiatric investigation after his apprehension.

2. What are the differences in the **individual experienced setbacks** in terms of deprived socialization, trauma, and (perceived) discrimination between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?

We found no fundamental differences in experiences of discrimination, between the terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees. In both groups, members of minorities have experienced deprivation, discrimination and/or ethnic profiling. However, the detainees at the terrorist unit seem to take these experiences more personally. They do not view them as a challenge, a fact of life or human deficit, but as an injustice that they have fallen victim to, more than other people. Both rightwing extremists as well as jihadists are using this victim perspective, which is related to a distrust in society and the law. There is a tendency to blame society and see discrimination and injustice everywhere, inside the prison as well. The latter could also be related to the strict regime at the terrorist unit.

Possibly the whole terrorism group displays more attachment problems, as the answers from our informants suggest. The mothers of the terrorist unit detainees are often regarded by them as sacred, but in reality, parents have mostly neglected their children due to problems of personal, cultural or socio-economic nature. Unemployment, cultural detachment, and lack of pedagogical skills in their social surroundings left these children in a fragile state. The detainees desperately seek the approval and continued contact with their families, whereas regular detainees usually detach themselves from their family.

Striking is also the detainees' denial of a problematic family background, where the professionals do see their parents as negligent. The interviews with the informants suggest that many detainees at the terrorist unit had experienced problematic childhoods: the divorce rates of parents was much higher than in the regular group, and in many cases, there seemed to be a lack of emotional involvement from parents. Parents were described as emotionally or physically unavailable during early childhood. These family problems are not acknowledged by the detainees because, according to the informants, they wish to protect their parents. When the detainees speak about their parents, the mother is often idealized.

Experiences of discrimination and several incidences of bad luck and injustice have left the terrorist department detainees with a sense of hatred for society. There is a perceived lack of recognition by society. They often express disappointment in formal institutions after personal setbacks, as they had high expectations with regards to the government's duty to offer them

help and assistance. This disappointment could be stemming from personal trauma with regards to their early life conditions.

In the two biographies we discussed, we also see some instances of personal setbacks and traumatic experiences, a problematic socialization and strong perceptions of discrimination and exclusion. Yehya K. had a socialization at home but also at school that was characterized by permissiveness as well as harshness and punishments. He had traumatic experiences with circumcision and the death of a cousin, and suffered emotionally from migrating back and forth from Morocco. Later in his life, he felt increasingly excluded from Dutch society. For Mohammed B., we do not have indications for traumatic experiences in childhood, but later in his life he had a conflict with his father and suffered from the death of his mother. He did not get a job he wanted, was rejected by a girl, and his plans for a youth club was not supported by the municipality. He took these events personally and blamed it on ethnic discrimination.

3. What are the differences in **ideology, political or religious belief system** and concern with geopolitical developments, between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?

Among both groups, we find that the young men who have been brought up in Muslim families express orthodoxy (but not always orthopraxy) as a general religious enculturation style. None of the Muslim respondents expressed liberal values in their faith (such as, the text should be read symbolically as mere guidelines for a humanist and spiritual life, or: God wants us to act human, not follow certain ancient rules). In general, all Muslims in our sample believe that the sacred text offers clear guidelines that should be adhered to today, and they feel it as their personal shortcoming if they fail to do what the text prescribes, such as praying five times a day, and refraining from alcohol, or (in their sisters life) wearing a hijab. In other words they could all be described as conservative – but not necessarily fundamentalist, and rarely practicing these beliefs themselves.

However, there is an important difference between Muslims in both groups of detainees. The terrorism detainees seem to have had *less* religious instruction in their childhood, both about other religions as well as their own. The regular Muslim detainees are able to express knowledge about Quran verses they adhere to, and express the forgiving and kind nature of God/ Allah, and the connection between religious life and social life (for example through pro-

social behavior). The people at the terrorist department – notably those who had been radicalized - stress only tasks and chores as the core of their religious upbringing (like doing prayers). They also did not always attend a Mosque. None of them had been to an Islamic school. Instead, in their family a relatively vaguely articulated orthodoxy prevailed without a supportive, forgiving, personal God image. In a sense, the image of God resembles that of the caregivers: just like their parents, their God is hard to reach, and difficult to please, and the search for religious significance mirrors that of their search for social meaning and their need for belonging. In particular the young women who had converted to Islam were said to be vulnerable, and were obsessively looking for guidance and meaning.

There is thus no indication from our research that radicalization into jihadi extremism is caused by a strict, orthodox religious upbringing. On the contrary, we have found indications that, in general, the terrorist unit detainees have fabricated their own religion from the internet and through contacts with friends, whereas their parents had provided them with little knowledge about Islam. Contrarily, among the regular detainees (the control group) we found a few who had been socialized into orthodox Islam. Their religion provided them with comfort. More than those at the terrorist unit, they spoke about forgiveness and the religious duty to help other people regardless of faith. Detainees who were Muslim but who were not radical, stated that the core of Islam was peaceful. They knew more quotes from the Qur'an and were very eager to prove the injustice of extremism with these quotes.

The terrorist unit detainees also express a concern for political developments, whereas regular detainees are usually only concerned about themselves. They are young, searching individuals with a very intense need for belonging, brotherhood, social connections and meaning. Informants indicate that these detainees tend to be easily influenced, but that they can also be distrustful and paranoid.

There seems to be a weakness in identity in the terrorist unit detainees, which means that they express doubts about who they are and what their role in society could be. They are involved with life's questions and often show signs of an existential crisis, in which they feel threatened. This feeling of existential threat possibly bears a relationship with neglect from their early childhood. They express a desire to belong somewhere, which is both seen in their sense of being rejected by the larger society, as well as a strong bonding among detainees – which includes hugging.

Many detainees at the terrorist unit regard themselves as innocent. This is either because they do not consider their crime as terrorism, or they feel they have been incarcerated as a result of their (alleged) ideology or their ethnic background, and not for preparing/ committing a violent attack or facilitating a violent extremist organization. They consider their detention as a misunderstanding and proof of a rigged system. These views are supported by stories about innocent detainees that had been detained and were released. Moreover, some detainees believe in different stories about the organization that they were affiliated to. They distrust the media, and attach more credibility to statements from the organization about the need for self-defense and about injustice towards their group. None of the respondents in the terrorist unit, whom we spoke with, expressed approval of violence directed at citizens.

The stories of Yehya K. and Mohammed B. are in line with this pattern. Both were raised with an emphasis on rules, pedagogical mixed messages, and no opportunity to ask questions. Yehya had attended a Mosque and a Qur'an school, in which he already encountered some hate speech, but he constructed his own violent version of Islam with a friend and from the Internet. Mohammed derived it from a preacher he met and whom he invited to give lectures at his home. Religion was important for both to get a new identity and a sense of belonging, but Yehya did not fully live by the rules and Mohammed did not know Islam really good although he pretended that he did. Both were interested in politics before they radicalized, Yehya was concerned with the Palestinian case and Mohammed B. was very active in contributing to his neighborhood community.

4. What are differences in **social environment in adolescence and early adulthood**, with regard to peer group, criminal affiliations, social media use and prison context between terrorist unit detainees and regular detainees?

We found many similarities in social environment during adolescence. Both the pathways towards criminality and pathways towards affiliations with extremist groups apparently include similar social experiences, supporting the notion of the crime-terror nexus. The terrorist unit group displayed tight social connections among each other, and seem to have more associations with friends than regular detainees, and seem also less distrusting of their friends. This may reflect their need for belonging.

Most, although not all of them, have been incarcerated before for usually petty crimes. There is a clear connection with previous crime; as half of our respondents in the terrorist units have had issues with the legal force before. However, organized crime seems less prevalent among

those who adhere to a radical ideology. A few detainees at the terrorist unit have been merely criminal connections that facilitated terrorist offenses (access to weapons, drugs or illegally gained finances). These persons, however, did not seem to be ideologically involved in terrorism. Others have been youth offenders before, and with an ideological search seemed to find ways to deflect from criminality and find a meaningful life as a practicing Muslim.

Social media use was regarded as “boring” by some terrorist detainees. The internet however does serve as an important source for radicalization, and was mentioned more often by the terrorist detainees as a place for social contacts.

Involvement with an extremist organization was initiated through social contacts that were experienced as very positive and welcoming. Friends, family members, social media or other contacts were mentioned. The people that provided the contact specifically addressed the need to belong, to get involved, to be active and to realize ideals, such as being a good citizen, protecting citizens, or being a good Muslim, and protecting fellow Muslims. The narrative of an imagined community under threat seemed to legitimize various illegal acts (see also Yuval-Davis, 1993). Youtube videos confirmed their conspiracy theories and the need for action. Looking back, one former jihadist refers to himself as ‘naive’ that he believed these stories.

Both biographies are in line with these findings. Yehya K. as well as Mohammed B. radicalized together with a group of friends and were introduced to radical thoughts by others. For both, the internet and movies on Youtube were important sources of information. For Yehya K., the sense of belonging that religion gave him was very important, he felt ‘part of something big’. Both believed that Islam was under threat. Mohammed B. had been incarcerated for an attack on a police officer with a knife, but Yehya had no contacts with the police before his radicalization.

6.2 Hypotheses revisited

Hypothesis 1: *In the terrorist unit, respondents will be characterized more consistently by a life history of perceived discrimination and experienced social exclusion. Due to a process of significance quest, they will also more intensely express their ideologies, grievances, affiliations, moral emotions and identities, compared to the regular detainees.*

Conclusion: partially confirmed. Even though setbacks are common for both groups and the socio-economic situation is bleak, the perceived deprivation is more intense in the group of detainees in the terrorist unit. Ideology was present, but usually in the form of asking moral

questions and a strong quest for ideology. In terms of identity, the detainees in the terrorist unit were notably more insecure about themselves.

Hypothesis 2: *The respondents in the terrorist unit will have experienced more (intense) traumatic events one year prior to their alleged crime, than respondents in the control group.*

Conclusion: partially rejected. There is not necessarily more trauma in the terrorist unit group, but more impact of traumatic events and less adequate coping mechanisms. This is possibly related to a problematic identity development as a result of instable families, and sometimes attachment issues or mental instability. The trauma in the terrorist group is more often related to relationship issues such as divorce (of themselves or their parents). In the control group, there was more trauma resulting from lethal violence, related to the criminal network.

Hypothesis 3: *The Muslim detainees in the terrorist unit will express more signs of a fundamentalist religious discourse, including references to a Sacred Text as a basis for moral conduct and an in depth knowledge of these texts, compared to regular detainees. More generally, detainees at terrorist units will express more often militant extremist discourses that legitimizes violence, and a conspiracy theory discourse.*

Conclusion: rejected. We found none of our respondents in the terrorist unit group expressing any signs of religious fundamentalism or militant extremism, even though the theoretical and other sources suggested that radicalized individuals do not lie about their ideology. All respondents denied violence was an acceptable means for ideological objectives. Some informants were able to provide examples of religiously supported violence in other detainees ('leaders' and/or recruiters). However, the knowledge of the scripture in these detainees was very limited according to the informants, which was confirmed in our own interviews. Most respondents in the terrorist unit expressed examples of conspiracy theories, where 'the State' or 'the System' was out to get them. This perception was usually expressed related to the specific detention regime of the terrorist unit. Therefore it was difficult to qualify this as a general narrative that they adhered to before incarceration.

Hypothesis 4: *Similarities between terrorists and regular detainees in their criminal affiliations and semi-criminal peer groups, and the prison context is a regularly mentioned source of radicalization.*

Result: partially confirmed. Not all detainees at the terrorist unit have previous criminal affiliations, but for those who do, their criminal network and terrorist networks shows considerable overlap. Especially in the facilitating business of weapon trade, money laundering and drug trafficking, the connection between criminal and terrorist networks was visible in our data. On the other hand, half of the incarcerated inmates at the terrorist group were first offenders. However, we found another source of possible radicalization and that was the terrorist unit itself. For radicalization in prison to occur, several prerequisites must be met: a discriminatory system of justice, mistreatment by the staff, and the presence of other radicalized individuals who are spreading the extremist narrative. Because the terrorist unit has its own strict regime, there is a possibility that it confirms notions of systematical injustice delivered to one group. The ethnic homogeneity of the terrorism unit could further enhance the spreading of such ideas. We identified a number of detainees, as well as informants, who regarded the terrorist unit itself as an example of group-directed state injustice and a possible source of radicalization. The specific social conditions in the prison however – notably the separation of leaders and followers, as well as possibilities for contact with non-radicals, including mental health coaches and spiritual advisors - were described as possibly counter-radicalizing.

6.3 Theoretical reflection

Our conclusions and findings can now be compared to the theoretical perspective we addressed in chapter 2.

Overlooking our findings and conclusions, represented in paragraphs about socio-economic aspects, identity, socialization, ideology and relative deprivation, we see that at first glance our results are largely in harmony with what many theories would predict. In the life histories of the inmates at the terrorist units in The Netherlands, and in the secondary analysis of two biographies, we saw elements of significance loss (Kruglanski) and significance quest (Monahan). Clearly, these were related to relative deprivation on the macro, meso and micro level (Moghaddam) and the resonance of an ideological narrative with personal experiences, as well as the need for social bonding (Sageman).

Similar groups, different trajectories?

However, elements of deprivation were also visible in the lives of the regular detainees. We have found no striking difference in socioeconomic markers like education, jobs, and housing. In some cases, the situation for regular detainees was even worse. Also, we have seen many similarities between the terrorist unit and the control group with respect to experienced discrimination, trauma, and personal setbacks. This left us wondering why these events created more significance issues, and stronger feelings of relative deprivation in some people. In other words, if both groups are quite similar in their experiences, why was the ideological narrative of extremism and the need for brotherhood so important for the terrorist unit group of detainees? We found three possible and interrelated qualities of the terrorism group, that may explain this.

Family life instability and early trauma

Firstly, we have found indications that the early family life of the extremist group was less stable – although this account is based more on our informants than on our respondents, as the numbers are so small they cannot generate statistically significant results. Divorce of parents and dysfunctional, broken families are very common among the detainees of the terrorist unit. According to some of our informants, this occurred in more than 80% of the cases. In many families, parents were (said to be) unable to provide stability and unconditional love. A lack of cultural embeddedness, as well as financial insecurity, often impaired the parent's recourses for a healthy pedagogical environment. Other factors that were mentioned included culturally transferred patterns of strict or abusive parenting, 'spoiling' and pedagogical-moral neglect. Such socially impoverished settings may create trauma in young children – especially when their family stands out negatively in a larger cultural community, and when criticism of parents is a cultural taboo.

Many of our informants said that the terrorist unit detainees, more than the control group, expressed certain behavioral characteristics such as identity instability and a strong need for social bonding. This could indicate they have problematic attachment styles. The (mental or physical) unavailability of a primary caretaker can generate attachment disorders in children. As young adults, these disorders leave them susceptible to identity instability, an impaired judgement in making social contacts, and an anxiety-driven need to find social bonds, both in friendships and in relationships.

Anxiety and obsessive attachment patterns

The narrative of 'brotherhood' in extremist organizations literally provides a lost individual with a stable family that can be relied on. Attachment disorders generally leave young people easily influenced, because their strong need for social acceptance by a peer-group makes them adapt to their social norms, even if they are at odds with those of the larger society. Persons who suffer attachment disorders often seek identification figures to admire. They may display a variety of obsessive compulsive behavior such as religious obsessions, moral obsessions and celebrity worship syndrome (CWS). Even though not all behavior of extremists is seen in this light by our informants, anecdotic evidence from our research leaves room for this interpretation. Examples of celebrity worship syndrome (towards Mohammed B. for example), and religious obsessions that were expressed in drawings, letters, and songs, inspired some of our informants to make comparisons with 'loverboy' cases. The tendency of the terrorist unit inmates to hug each other, and form strong social pacts, may be seen as indications that social bonding in these individuals displays pathological and obsessive elements, that could stem from childhood trauma. It would explain why they were, more than the control group, vulnerable to a narrative that provides them with an identity, a sense of belonging, and moral guidelines from authority figures they can love as their surrogate family.

Drug-induced paranoia and mental health problems

Next to severe problems with family bonding in early childhood, there may be a connection between using large quantities of marihuana and the development of extremist ideas. The possibility of developing distrust and paranoia as a result of continuing marihuana use can also lead to an increased sense of threat and the belief in conspiracy theories. Previous research found that people with attachment disorders are more likely to develop drug addictions (Höfler et al, 1996).

Psychosocial and mental health factors may also have contributed to the development of extremist thought, even though our informants did not agree on this topic. We have seen that ADHD, post-traumatic stress, autism and attachment issues are considered risk factors for radicalization. PTST and attachment disorders make people vulnerable to social failure and deprivation, but they also make people more likely to cave in to group pressure. The ability for social reasoning, understanding someone else's feelings and/ or position is necessary to mitigate the attraction of a violent extremist discourse, but people with autism spectrum disorders often lack these abilities. The lack of impulse control that is associated both with ADHD and autism may not only attribute to more experiences of failure in society, but also to

a readiness to act upon a moral outrage. A proneness to violence, possibly related to psychopathology and narcissism was mentioned especially for the leaders.

Coping strategies, perceived injustice and cognitive dissonance

A third factor that set apart the terrorism unit from the regular detainees, were the coping strategies and narratives they used to deal with adversities. We found that regular detainees more often relied on so-called Just World Narratives and religious coping strategies to deal with experiences of personal or social injustice. The regular detainees were less distrusting of the prison's staff and held compassionate views of their fellow human beings and their mistakes. Conversely, the extremists were described as psychologically vulnerable and less able to cope with setbacks. Again the connection with attachment problems may provide an explanation. For people with attachment problems, the loss of a loved one or the declination of a job offer, calls to mind the earlier trauma of emotional rejection and is therefore more difficult to handle.

In line with the differences in coping styles, there also seems to be a difference too in the readiness of detainees to accept their sentence. Our results indicate that the social (in)acceptability of the crime (in this case: terrorism) may affect the ability of suspects to admit their guilt to others or to themselves. This is consistent with psychological research about cognitive dissonance. The feeling that one has made a terrible mistake threatens the positive self-image, often resulting in blaming the circumstances, blaming others, and/ or blatant denial.

The fact that many respondents at the terrorism unit are in denial, can be seen as positive. It shows that at least our four respondents did not want to be *seen as a* terrorist. One other reason why the claim of innocence persists in the terrorism unit could be that the discourse of lawyers of "unjust claims" is withholding the detainees from acknowledging their guilt and accepting their sentence. This is also related to the difficulty of establishing a legal case, and the many appeal cases that result from it.

The tendency of the terrorist unit detainees to evaluate all events in the context of victimhood was a recurring theme in the accounts of our informants. In particular, events that had a negative outcome for them were interpreted by the terrorist unit group as deliberate mistreatment and discrimination, even if they probably were not. Adding to this, the inmates at the terrorist unit tended to worry about social injustice, morality, world problems, and their own destiny. Unlike others in their age group and in prison, they were not occupied just with themselves, but also driven to understand the world in terms of (absolute) right and wrong.

For this group, it is not a lack of social involvement that is worrying, but an extreme passion to solve issues of injustice in a very simplistic and counterproductive way. Their acceptance of a violent extremist narrative that could provide justice to themselves and their 'brothers' seemed to be filling in a gap for these people, where others had been able to develop more socially accepted, psychologically healthy, and more mature coping strategies.

Macro and meso influences: injustice and social tensions

In our study, the individual level was analyzed. Although we have indications that individual setbacks and trauma may enhance the likelihood of radicalization into an extremist network, we want to avoid the impression that endorsing violent extremism is an individual flaw that bears no relationship to society. At a macro level, the amount of terrorism in a country is related to societal factors like political stability, and the application of human rights in treating religious and ethnic minorities.

In the Netherlands, parts of the Moluccan ethnic group have been active as terrorists in the 1970s, but they have collapsed after the group members developed closer ties to the Dutch society and became accepted. The current situation in The Netherlands may be that the country provides some extremists with a sense of righteousness. The rise of populism is of course no justification for violence, but it does create narratives of threat and strong ingroup-outgroup distinctions between citizens. It enables right wing extremists to recruit among regular voters. On the other hand, the harsh public debate about Islam, and the discrimination it seems to condone, may inspire young, Dutch born Muslims to seek their belonging outside of Dutch society. This also became clear from the two biographies we analyzed in chapter 5. After the murder of Theo van Gogh, killed for his provocations against Islam, an understandable backlash against religious tolerance happened in the public debate, as if to show 'we do not bow to violence'. Moreover, for some this event served as 'proof' that all of Islam was dangerous. Dehumanization of Muslims became part of the political debate, and led to statements such as "kopvodden" – a derogative term for women with a headscarf, and "cunt-Moroccans". In the aftermath of the murder, arson and vandalism towards Muslim institutions such as schools and mosques increased (Van der Valk, 2016).

Therefore, the appeal of extremism is not only a result of individual life factors, but also of the (experienced, and feared) tensions between social groups that occur due to national and international political developments.

Religious socialization and internet radicalization

The prevalence of Dutch Moroccans in our group, as well as other people from disadvantaged groups, also illustrates that the macro level has a lot of influence on who become deprived, who lives in a stable family, who feels identity threats, and who experiences significance loss. We found that religion (Islam) is, to some extent, also contributing to the development of terrorism, but in a different way than often thought. We notice that the internal discourse of Islam of "one universal truth" in which hypocrites must be discarded from the true believers, combined with the powerful representation of the Salafi - Jihadi discourse on the internet, is causing some young Muslims and religious seekers to believe that this representation of Islam is correct, as it resonates with the vague notions of Islam their parents have provided them with, notably that of 'being a good Muslim'.

The advocates of extremist jihadi organizations and social movements are deliberately using this search for 'being a good Muslim'. The search for religious guidelines is transformed, via a simplistic representation of global politics, into a narrative of a 'war against Islam'. The political and historical knowledge of the detainees, that would be necessary to engage critically with this simplistic narrative, is rather limited. Instead of relying on a political framework, the use of (context-ridden) Qur'an quotes thus serve as the test for credibility in the eyes of these young people, who sometimes know little of Qur'an other than that it is the unquestionable word of Allah. To them, if a narrative is backed by the Qur'an, and if it alludes to Muslims, it has to be right.

The tragedy of young Muslims growing up with only a vague rendering of their parent's faith, as well as the representation of Islam in the public debate as a problematic ethnic identity, may also contribute to significance and identity strains. While the majority of young Muslims seem to be able to sort out their lives despite these pressures, for some the search for more understanding easily leads to websites and individuals that spread a Salafi- Jihadi narrative. The peaceful counter-narrative of Islam - be it liberal, mystical, orthodox, Sufi, Sunni, Shi'a, or even Salafi-quietist - lacks online representation.

The violent extremist narrative does not just impact those who grew up as Muslim. Young people on a significance quest, wishing to convert to Islam are at risk of being misinformed; as they are overrepresented in the jihadi group (20-30% converts in Salafi Jihadism, whereas in the general Muslim populations in the West, converts do not exceed 5%). Converts in general tend to prefer tight orthodox communities over liberal individualism, as they may be looking for certainty, as well as brother- or sisterhood. Again attachment issues may lie at the heart of this issue, because converts are more likely to be from broken families, in search

of identity and community. Their lack of previous socialization into, or knowledge about, mainstream Islam, is making them vulnerable for a (violent) extremist narrative.

Populist narratives, right wing extremism and educational failure

Similarly, in the accounts of and about the right wing extremist detainees in our sample, we have found they had a sensitivity to the narrative of 'the foreign threat to the Dutch identity and society' and a desire to help protect society from these dangers. From our literature research, it is obvious that the so called populist agenda that has taken over many political parties, is generating a discourse where foreigners and notably Islam are considered a threat to the nation.

The spreading of fake news, conspiracy theories, undemocratic state propaganda from Arabic news channels, and internet bubbles causes a difficult challenge for schools with regard to teaching critical thinking, and freedom of speech. Moreover, schools may fail to accurately describe the internal variety of Islam, its morals and its history, as well as struggle to offer clear insights in national and international history or the workings of democracy. Only a few of our respondents indicated that they learned anything about Islam in their school, even though this subject is compulsory in all primary schools since 1985, as part of the *Kennisbasis Geestelijke Stromingen (basic knowledge of spiritual groups)*. The few respondents who expressed a more profound knowledge of Islam, through religious socialization at home, in their school or in a Mosque, were notably better equipped to debunk religious extremist's theological claims.

The societal damage of discrimination

We have several indications that extremists, notably the leaders, may have suffered from relative deprivation on the job market or in society, due to ethnic or other types of discrimination. Their average level of education was higher than that of the regular detainees, but their acquired economic situation did not always match their educational level. The difference between expectations and real outcomes may have contributed to a more severe loss of significance in this group, leaving them with cognitive dissonance about the stark contrast between their intellectual abilities and their experienced opportunities in society. In their case, these experiences made them susceptible to an extremist ideology.

Three types of discrimination can be discerned as particularly dangerous in terms of fostering radicalization: job market discrimination, ethnic profiling by the police, and discrimination in prison and legal contexts. Article 137g already provides possibilities to fine and incarcerate

offenders, but it results in very few convictions (less than 100 persons per year on average, Van der Valk & Wagenaar, 2010), even in cases where research has revealed large instances of discrimination, such as in job recruitment. This is partly because victims do not always report discrimination to the police. The talented people who fail because of discriminatory practices and group-based exclusion represent not just a cost to society – the current study illustrates how in some cases they may even become hostile towards society and use their disregarded intellect to plan violent attacks.

Prosocial norms and lack of violent inclination

We found that our respondents from the terrorist unit also expressed prosocial norms and did not appear to support violence towards citizens. Their involvement with terrorist organizations seemed superficial and more a result of their social network than of ideology. If any, their ideology was expressed in ways of moral concern, moral outrage, and a dedication to do good. In their narrative, we found common notions such as fighting injustice, protecting the weak, and preserving traditions, cultures and values. We also found that they wanted to be seen as contributing citizens, and adapted their stories to fit such a description. This means that many of these individuals do not differ radically from society in their ideology – even though through our informants we were able to understand more about the ‘real’ violent radicals in the terrorist unit. From the stories that were shared by our informants, we derived that not all detainees are a threat to society and that in some cases innocent people may have been arrested and detained at the terrorist units. Part of the ‘terrorists’ who are detained at the terrorist unit may not be as dangerous or as violent as they are depicted in politics and media. In a sense, we may distinguish a third category of victims of terrorism and radicalization next to victims of attacks and civil war, and the families of radicalized individuals: naïve and misguided young people who get associated with terrorism, and end up being detained under heavy protection while such measures may not be warranted for this category.

Recapturing: deprivation and social needs

The findings of this research add to the enormous pile of terrorist research, by clarifying the differences between regular detainees and those at a terrorist unit in various aspects of their life, and we have been able to discern a few. In many cases however, the relationship between life factors and extremism seems to be a matter of chance, and a series of bad luck, as well as meeting the wrong persons at the wrong time. Many life history stories were quite similar for the two groups. Socio-economic deprivation, criminality, drug abuse and family problems were clearly visible in both the lives of the regular detainees and the extremists. However,

for the terrorist detainees, there seemed to be a (strong) need for significance and belonging that made them vulnerable to extremist propaganda and terrorist networks. As we indicated, attachment issues may have been a contributing factor to this need, as are mental disorders that impair social reasoning and impulse control in the group of detainees at the terrorist unit.

6.4 Limitations of the study

We need to mention three important limitations of this study. The first limitation is our small selection of respondents. After attempts to find voluntary respondents among the terrorist unit detainees failed, we had to collect data from eighteen informants in addition to the four interviews with real terrorist unit detainees. Of course, this limited our amount of 'real' accounts, as now the interpretations of our informants were added as a layer of meaning. On the other hand, their in-depth knowledge of the lives of over 80 terrorist unit detainees broadened our view and made our data more reliable when it came to descriptions about their life conditions, life history, and their attitudes.

The second limitation is that our sample of interviewees is not very well representative of the complete population of terrorist detainees. The majority of detainees at the terrorist unit refused to participate, sometimes because they openly expressed their distrust and dislike of institutions that are embedded in the Dutch society. As a result, our four agreeing participants were less likely to be fully radicalized, and showed signs of only a loose connection with extremist organizations. All of them felt wrongfully accused and some of them explained in detail why. Perhaps they felt that agreeing with an interview would help their legal case. However - we already addressed this issue in our Findings section - through information about their legal case, we could connect all of our respondents in some way to an extremist organization. The dismissal of extremist ideology by our own respondents thus proved to be somewhat atypical, but this was balanced by the descriptions of fully radicalized individuals by our informants.

The third limitation is the nature of our qualitative data. The numbers about housing, economic conditions and the like cannot be used for statistical generalization, even though our informants were sometimes able to provide us with more, and quite detailed, descriptions and estimations based on their work with over 80 detainees. As this is a qualitative study, we did not aim for statistical generalization but primarily wanted to describe and analyze the life histories of detainees and the interpretations they use themselves to give meaning to their experiences. We were able to find some general patterns that offered in depth insights that add to previous quantitative research. Our data hint at early childhood trauma that creates a

susceptibility to find belonging in deviant social networks. This susceptibility seems to be aggravated by deprivation, and experiences of discrimination, social exclusion and loss. Future research, with larger numbers of respondents, would be needed to see to which extent these findings are generalizable.

We also want to mention that our research question was limited to the life histories and earlier experiences of terrorist detainees. To get access to our detained respondents, we agreed with the Ministry of Justice that we would not ask questions about, or do research into, the prison conditions of the terrorist detainees. However, an important difference between the two groups we studied could be that they are exposed to different conditions. Detainees at the terrorist units are subject to strict regimes, with many limitations on social contacts, and special policy measurements to prevent weapons from entering the unit, some of which were experienced by the detainees as dehumanizing. This difference in prison regime may have influenced the psychological conditions of our respondents, and the answers they provided. Future research into the effects of these prison conditions on the perceptions and behavior of these detainees after leaving the prison seems to be warranted.

6.5 Research recommendations

1. Further research on attachment issues and perceived injustice

Our research findings suggest that it is not the amount of actual socio-economic deprivation and discrimination that makes a difference between regular criminals and those who join extremist organizations, but the impact and perception of these adversities. The prevalence of broken families and neglect in early childhood, combined with their identity instability and search for bonding, could indicate that some detainees have developed impairments in their socialization. Precisely, the vulnerability that stems from broken families, divorce, and emotional neglect, which is associated with various attachment disorders, could be crucial in explaining their susceptibility to 'brotherhoods' and narratives of injustice. The severe impact of problematic divorce and other forms of emotional neglect in early childhood on personality development has been thoroughly confirmed in earlier research. Its relation to radicalization, especially when combined with mental health issues like autism, attention deficit disorder, PTSS, and narcissism, deserves further investigation.

2. Research on the lack of knowledge and critical thinking

We found that not an orthodox upbringing, but rather lack of knowledge about Islam combined with identity insecurity, was associated with susceptibility to radicalization into violent

extremist jihadism in Muslim detainees. We found that this lack of knowledge was originating both from family socialization, as well as formal education. In order to find out more about possible protective influences that could originate from education and socialization, we recommend to build on previous research on these issues (e.g., Pels and de Ruyter, 2012) For example, a comparison could be made between schools that offer little and schools that offer extensive education about Islam, as well as between schools that differ in education on democracy and citizenship.

3. Innocence and terrorist charges

Further research is also needed to answer the question whether there is a large group of innocent detainees at the terrorist units. We recommend that the percentages of the court decisions that end with release are examined, and interviews with lawyers, former detainees and other stakeholders are compared with these data.

Terrorist units may have more innocent inhabitants than the regular detention center. Some of our informants suggested that there is a tendency to incarcerate more quickly when there are suspicions of terrorism. It could also be the case that there is a larger tendency of the inmates in the terrorist unit to create untruthful (or socially acceptable, cognitively dissonant) accounts. A third possibility is that there is a combination of the two: the percentage of innocent people who are being arrested on terrorist charges, is larger than that of innocent people who are arrested on regular criminal charges, **and** detainees charged with terrorist crimes are more likely to deny the charges regardless if they are correct. It may also be the case that in some cases, Moroccans and other Muslims are more likely to be incorrectly accused of terrorist (supporting) activities than other ethnic groups. In our study, we heard stories of detainees who were accused of supporting terrorism, partly linked to their ethnic background or their religious denomination. Previous research suggests that Dutch, (and female) suspects of terrorism are more likely to be found not guilty (Van Leyenhorst and Andreas, 2017). We recommend future researchers to investigate whether any bias or 'ethnic profiling' at the expense of ethnic Moroccans and/or Muslims is present in the prosecution of terrorists.

4. Absence of right-wing extremism and left wing/eco- extremism

The relatively small group of right wing extremists in the terrorism unit does not correspond to the large number of violent attacks on mosques and asylum seeker centers in the Netherlands, as well as the large numbers of Islamic institutions that have received threats

and have been subject to vandalism or arson (Van der Valk, 2016). The AIVD, the Dutch secret service, states in a report that there are few right wing extremists. However, these definitions and numbers seem to be contested by the Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid (NCTV).

Possibly, attackers of mosques and asylum seeker centers are less easily caught. This however seems to be only part of the explanation. The more adequate explanation seems that when they are convicted, they do not end up in a terrorism unit, because they are not considered terrorists by the judge. Eco-terrorism, which seems to be happening on some scale in the Netherlands, does not have the focus of police or law enforcement, perhaps because they cause 'only' economical damage or may not be considered "real terrorism". For example, when two thousand young apple trees were cut at a farm in 2017, (possibly by an eco-terrorist organization such as ELF), it was not even mentioned on national TV. Future research should try to establish the political and legal choice-making in the labelling of terrorist acts, and the actual occurrence of incidents that could be labelled as jihadi, right wing or left wing extremist compared to (the percentage of) prosecution of, these criminal acts as terrorist.

5. Improving research on terrorist suspects

This study had several methodological limitations that can be improved upon in future research. First of all, recruitment of respondents can be improved by using a more individual approach. In our study, we had to follow a group-based approach by going into several departments when the detainees were enjoying a moment of free time together and as a consequence had to be addressed as a group. This made it more difficult for the respondents to agree with an interview. It also meant that guards and inmates themselves know which inmates are were participating called for interviews and which inmates are not. A way to prevent this is to make individual appointments with each desired respondent, for example, just to give the invitation. This requires a lot of time and organization from both the institution as well as the researchers, which was not possible in the current study. It may still be difficult to organize this without wardens knowing which detainees are part of the research. However, wardens could be explained that respondents are taking part anonymously, and that their participation should not be exposed to fellow inmates.

Apart from prisons, we found that attorneys may be helpful in finding interviewees. Also municipalities and police readily have their specialists that may have connections to

radicalized people, and also Mosques may serve to be helpful. These canals may be used to recruit terrorist suspects and ex-detainees in future research as an addition to prison-based research.

Once respondents agree to participate in the study, it is important to ensure their trust and confidence in the interviewer. Young people that feel attracted to extremism usually embraced an internal logic that is very distrusting of society as a whole and it is very likely that researchers of a university or other institution will initially be viewed as part of this unjust system. Talking with researchers may be considered by them as 'snitching' – betrayal of one's own group or ideology. At the same time however, radicalized people may feel a strong motivation to change the status quo in society and to feel 'significant'. Therefore, in approaching these highly distrusting people, it can be useful to stress one's need to find 'the truth' and to express openness to their story. We had little time available for our study, but future research might improve in gaining trust by planning a good amount of time between the initial contact and data collection.

6.6 Policy recommendations

1. Protect children from unsafe pedagogical / developmental environments and address mental health problems among vulnerable young people

Both emotional neglect and feelings of societal disconnection are clearly visible in the life histories of the terrorist suspects and convicts, and this seems to be one of the most important differences between them and the regular detainees. Therefore, relationship counselling and parenting support for vulnerable families may protect young children from developing disorders that make them susceptible to the group processes that create terrorist networks. Besides attachment problems, migration trauma may have accounted for some of the mental issues, as well as experiences with ritual circumcision.

Some mental disorders among young people may increase vulnerability to radicalization. This is especially true when it impairs (social) decision making, increases the need for significance and undermines self-esteem. Common mental health problems in our sample were: autism spectrum disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, attention deficit disorder and narcissism.

Youth workers and organizations that provide support for families in deprived neighborhoods are thus important tools in preventing terrorism, and deserve policy recognition as well as sufficient funding. Mental health issues should be addressed as soon as they surface and/or

be prevented if possible. Special attention may be directed at people who have developed PTSS from war situations. PTSS is common in refugees and in war veterans and this makes both groups susceptible for radicalization towards jihadism or right wing or left wing extremism.

2. Increase educational potential for inclusive, democratic thinking

This situation of ideological (political and religious) vulnerability among deprived young people, endangers society, and calls for intervention. Since many extremists indicate that they have not finished their secondary education, it seems paramount that educational measures to prevent susceptibility to extremist narratives starts at an early age. The introduction to democratic notions such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion and equality for the law are not extra-curricular hobbies, but basic pedagogical tools to make society function. If parents cannot provide them, schools should, by offering debate sessions, philosophy and practicing the understanding other people's positions.

Given the current pressures on education, however, it seems unfair to simply put this on the plate of the school. The government should guarantee schools a structure (both financially and organizationally) in which the practice of citizenship skills is not only possible, but part of school culture. Teaching all children basic knowledge about Islam is part of the formal curriculum, but it needs a more structured implementation. Schools also need to prevent internal schisms that make their Muslim and other religious minorities feel like outsiders (see also Versteegt, 2010). This may be a challenge, particularly for Christian schools, that accept all children regardless of their parents backgrounds, but sometimes appeared to have contributed to radicalization in our cases. How to include all children in a school with an semi-exclusive religious identity is a pedagogical puzzle that needs to be solved, in order to protect children from feelings of social exclusion in a place that instead should offer them security.

3. Attack discrimination to increase social and political stability

The prevention of discrimination of disadvantaged groups is important, because it can achieve a situation in which the extremist narrative simply does not make sense and becomes powerless. Three types of discrimination can be discerned as specifically dangerous in terms of fostering radicalization: job market discrimination, ethnic profiling by the police, and discrimination in prison and legal contexts. In all these areas anti-discriminatory measures are useful. For example job market measures like anonymous job applications and fines for companies that discriminate on an ethno-religious basis, may keep talented young people to

the contributing side of society instead of becoming an eloquent online advocate for extremism. In general, discrimination and unfair treatment of vulnerable groups needs to be acknowledged as a severe threat to social and political stability, and be addressed accordingly.

4. Address international human rights violations and economic challenges

In an age of migration and multicultural societies, and the availability of live war coverage, international geopolitical events resonate deeply in (migrant) communities. The way nation states respond, or fail to respond to atrocities, are an important influence on the appeal of international extremism. Extremist groups recruit members worldwide through the internet, successfully framing themselves as freedom fighters and representatives of a religious community. Democratic nation states should collaborate internationally to prevent war crimes and human rights violations, even if they are committed by befriended states. These violations should however not be framed as an inherent part of a nation, religion or ethnicity. Similarly, the age of migration and of economic crisis both cause challenges that need to be addressed. Policies should be directed at creating a national identity that is inclusive, enabling all citizens to feel a positive sense of national identity that leaves room for differences in religion, ethnicity and race.

5. Create limitations on hate speech, both real and online

The stories of radicalized individuals in this study show how influential political speech is for the creation of extremist thought, especially in the absence of governmental intervention. This lack of intervention due to freedom of expression or freedom of religion, we found, is interpreted as approval, and may fuel radicalization.

Violent extremist propaganda that is set out to commit war crimes, kill or threaten non-combatant citizens, or call upon non-combating citizens to take up arms, has no place in the public debate of liberal democracies, nor on the internet, nor in Mosques or 'citizen groups'. Moreover, the current broad interpretations of freedom of speech and (political/ religious) expression allows for ridicule and group-based insults which creates a sense of victimhood or superiority that precedes violent extremism. The social bonding that shared hate speech may offer as a side effect, may prove to be the glue that ties extremist groups together.

Within the boundaries of freedom of speech, the possibility of improved legal protection of minorities from severe insult and ridicule (that are often a predecessor or a euphemism to hate-speech) could be legally investigated, in order to prevent two types of radicalization.

First, radicalization against these groups, as hate speech encourages dehumanizing processes, for example towards Jews, Muslims, or refugees. Second, radicalization within these groups, out of feelings of resentment and humiliation, since our data implies that Fortuyn and Wilders have confirmed some of the Islamic radicals in their ideas of Western society as their enemy.

National and international cooperation between governments and internet multinationals is key to this endeavor. Given the large scale misuse of censorship by dictatorial regimes, and the impossibility of guaranteeing democratic leaders in the future, a careful balancing between Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Religion and other human (privacy) rights should underlie the implementation of these policies.

7. Dutch summary/Nederlandse samenvatting

In dit rapport vindt u de resultaten van een Nederlands, kwalitatief sociaalwetenschappelijk onderzoek naar terrorisme, dat werd uitgevoerd tussen april 2017 en januari 2018. Het onderzoek richt zich voornamelijk op de levensloop, en daarin de rol van tegenslagen ("adversities") en identiteitsontwikkeling van mensen die verdacht zijn van strafbare feiten met een terroristische intentie. Het doel van het onderzoek is in kaart te brengen welke factoren in de levensloop bijdragen aan betrokkenheid bij terrorisme en/of gewelddadig extremisme. Hiermee bedoelen we zowel islamitisch, rechts-radicaal als linksradicaal extremisme, zoals het plegen of voorbereiden van een aanslag, het oproepen tot geweld, alsmede uitreizen naar bijvoorbeeld Syrië en Irak ter ondersteuning van ISIS of vergelijkbare militante organisaties. Door middel van interviews met gedetineerden en professionals werkzaam met gedetineerden is onderzocht welke verschillen en overeenkomsten er zijn tussen gedetineerden die met terroristische organisaties in verband worden gebracht, en 'reguliere', niet ideologisch geradicaliseerde gedetineerden.

Dit onderzoek is uitgevoerd aan het NSCR (Nederlands Studiecentrum Criminaliteit en Rechtshandhaving) in samenwerking met de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Het maakt deel uit van een internationaal onderzoeksproject, getiteld PROTON, dat is gefinancierd door de European Science Foundation. In PROTON wordt onderzocht welke sociale, psychologische en economische factoren bijdragen aan terrorisme en georganiseerde misdaad. Het Nederlandse team heeft een kwantitatief en een kwalitatief onderzoek uitgevoerd naar verschillen tussen reguliere gedetineerden en verdachten van terroristische misdrijven.

Het *kwantitatieve* deel is met name gericht op het beschrijven van sociaaleconomische verschillen tussen beide groepen (terrorisme-verdachten en reguliere gedetineerden). Door het combineren van grote databestanden zoals die van het CBS en de kenmerken van alle terrorisme-verdachten sinds 2004 vanuit het Openbaar Ministerie, zijn de belangrijkste kenmerken van terrorisme-urverdachten en reguliere verdachten op sociaaleconomisch, demografisch en criminologisch gebied in kaart gebracht en met elkaar vergeleken (Ljujic e.a., in voorbereiding; zie ook Thijs e.a., 2018).

Deze rapportage is een uitgebreide weergave van de resultaten van het *kwalitatieve* onderzoek naar Nederlandse verdachten van terrorisme-misdrijven. Het is bedoeld als verdieping van de eerder aangetroffen relatie tussen sociaaleconomische achterstelling, tegenslagen en terrorisme, die ook in ons kwantitatieve onderzoek werd bevestigd.

Hoewel achterstelling en tegenslag een bepalende factor lijkt te zijn in het leven van terroristen en gewelddadige extremisten, raakt er maar een klein percentage van mensen die tegenslag en achterstelling ervaren in de greep van militante radicalisering. In deze studie trachten we in kaart te brengen waarom sommige mensen niet alleen vatbaar zijn voor een militant extremistisch narratief, maar zelfs bereid blijken om gewelddadige acties te ondernemen tegen burgers of namens een extremistische organisatie deel te nemen aan een etnisch-religieuze oorlog. We wilden achterhalen welke toegevoegde factoren en processen ervoor zorgen dat sommige economisch of sociaal achtergestelde mensen veranderen in terroristen en extremisten.

We hoopten aan het licht te brengen wat er specifiek is aan terrorisme-verdachten en veroordeelden, door hen te vergelijken met gedetineerden die verdachte zijn van algemene criminele delicten. We weten bijvoorbeeld dat veel verdachten van terrorisme een crimineel verleden hebben, maar tegelijkertijd ontwikkelen de meeste gewone daders van criminaliteit geen haat richting de samenleving en verbinden zij zich zelden aan terrorisme-netwerken. Tevens waren we benieuwd naar de invloed van religie en ideologie in dit verband, omdat - ook hier- de meerderheid van (orthodoxe) gelovigen vredelievend is.

We willen achterhalen welke kenmerken 'terrorisme' verdachten onderscheiden van andere groepen. Wat heeft hen aangezet tot extremisme: welke kijk op het leven, welke sociaaleconomische omstandigheden, welke sociale micro-omgeving is daarvoor nodig? Of wellicht: wat heeft alle anderen de weerstand tegen dergelijke ideologieën verschaft? Om de geradicaliseerde individuen te vergelijken met anderen die in vele opzichten hetzelfde zijn maar die geen extremistische ideeën koesteren, hebben we ter vergelijking een controlegroep gemaakt van verdachten uit een regulier Huis van bewaring.

7.1 Achtergrond en theorie van het onderzoek

Radicalisering en de bedreiging van terrorisme staan op dit moment sterk onder de aandacht van publiek, politiek en media. In de wetenschappelijke literatuur wordt terrorisme over het algemeen gezien als het eindresultaat van een complex proces van radicalisering, waarbij een breed scala aan sociale, politieke, culturele en persoonlijke factoren een rol spelen (Kruglanski, 2014; Doosje, et al., 2013; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; King & Taylor, 2011).

Voortbouwend op verschillende perspectieven uit de sociale psychologie en criminologie, gingen we uit van een theoretisch model (figuur 1) met betrekking tot de invloeden op radicalisering en terrorisme. We onderscheiden factoren op macro-, meso- en micro- niveau en onderscheiden drie fasen in het proces van radicalisering naar terrorisme (in lijn met het 'staircase-model of terrorism' van Moghaddam, 2005; zie ook Doosje et al., 2016).

De factoren op macro niveau zijn niet alleen 'drivers' voor het ontstaan van groeperingen met een radicale of terroristische ideologie, maar kunnen ook leiden tot gevoelens van dreiging (Moghaddam, 2005). Die dreiging kan fysiek, economisch of cultureel van aard zijn. Ook kunnen macro-factoren leiden tot een gevoel van solidariteit met andere groepen wereldwijd (Lohlker, 2012).

Op meso-niveau gaat het om de daadwerkelijke en ervaren achterstand van iemands groep ten opzichte van andere groepen in de samenleving, om ervaren onrechtvaardigheden ten opzicht van de eigen groep, of om een ervaren bedreiging van de culturele identiteit van de groep (Van der Valk, 2016; Doosje, et al., 2013). Wanneer de eigen groep verder marginaliseert en gesegregeerd raakt van de samenleving, bevordert dat het zoeken naar een andere sociale identiteit, en het stellen van alternatieve en onconventionele doelen (Lyons-Padilla, et al., 2015).

Op het micro- (individuele) niveau is iemands gevoeligheid voor radicale ideeën mede beïnvloed door algemene opvattingen in iemands directe omgeving, bij ouders, familieleden, en vrienden. Opvoeding en socialisatie geven vorm aan radicalisering, maar kunnen ook weerstand tegen radicale ideeën bevorderen. Eenmaal ontvankelijk, wordt daadwerkelijke aansluiting bij radicale of terroristische groeperingen bevorderd door ervaringen van / met discriminatie (onder meer op sociaaleconomisch terrein), en door ervaren problemen op school (falen op school), werk (laag inkomen, moeite om werk te vinden) en gezin of relaties (Kruglanski, et al., 2009). Vervolgens kunnen plotselinge en ingrijpende gebeurtenissen, zoals het verlies van een dierbaar persoon, of een sterke achteruitgang in de leefomstandigheden of sociaaleconomische situatie (bijvoorbeeld het verlies van een baan) leiden tot daadwerkelijke actie. Zulke gebeurtenissen kunnen een directe 'trigger' zijn van terroristische activiteiten omdat ze leiden tot een gevoel van 'significance loss' (Kruglanski, et al., 2009), die kan worden opgevuld door zelfopoffering of inzet voor een 'hoger doel' (cf. Doosje, et al., 2016).

Figuur 1: Macro, meso en micro factoren tijdens drie fasen in het radicaliseringsproces

	Latente fase Ontvankelijkheid voor radicale ideeën	Intermediërende fase Aansluiting radicale groep	Operationele fase Betrokkenheid bij actie
Macro niveau	"Zeitgeist", Internationale gebeurtenissen / oorlogen; Economische crises		
Meso niveau	Fraternal relatieve deprivatie (ervaren achterstelling op groepsniveau)	Segregatie en marginalisatie van de eigen groep	
Micro niveau	Opvoeding en socialisatie door familie en vrienden	Ervaren discriminatie; Ontmoeten van radicaal persoon; Problemen op gezin/werk/school	Overlijdensgeval in de omgeving; Plotselinge sociaaleconomische achteruitgang; Detentie

Om dit model te testen hebben we gekozen voor een vergelijking met een groep die veel overeenkomsten heeft. We verwachten dat de diverse elementen uit het model vaker en duidelijker aanwezig zullen zijn in de beschrijvingen van de eigen levensloop bij gedetineerden op de terrorisme-afdeling. We zijn vooral benieuwd bij welke onderdelen van dit model de beide levensloop-verhalen van elkaar verschillen.

7.2 Doelen van het onderzoek

Onze onderzoeksvraag luidt: wat zijn de verschillen en overeenkomsten tussen reguliere gedetineerden en T.A. gedetineerden op het gebied van:

1. Sociaaleconomische achtergronden en demografie
2. Socialisatie, achterstelling, discriminatie en trauma
3. Religie en ideologie
4. Netwerk/peergroup/criminele achtergronden/invloed van detentie

Het centrale doel van het voorgestelde onderzoeksproject is om inzicht te verkrijgen in de relatie tussen sociaaleconomische factoren, socialisatie- en identiteitsontwikkeling, ervaringen met tegenslag enerzijds, en betrokkenheid bij terroristische misdrijven anderzijds.

7.3 Methode

We hebben in totaal 30 personen geïnterviewd waarmee we de levensloop, sociaaleconomische achtergronden en diverse mechanismen van betrokkenheid konden achterhalen van mensen die gedetineerd zijn op verdenking van betrokkenheid van een misdrijf met terroristisch motief.

Onze studie hebben we uitgevoerd in de twee penitentiaire inrichtingen in Nederland die een zogenaamde Terrorisme- Afdeling (TA) hebben, namelijk De Schie in Rotterdam en de PI Vught. Er waren 4 gedetineerden van de TA bereid om uitgebreid te worden geïnterviewd. Daarnaast interviewden we 18 informanten die werkzaam waren in en om de TA, en die een uitgebreide kennis hadden van de huidige en voormalige groep gedetineerden die verdacht zijn van terroristische misdrijven. Hieronder bevonden zich cipiers (PIW-ers), mentoren, reclasseringsmedewerkers, advocaten, en andere medewerkers van de TA die o.a. sociale en psychologische steun verlenen. Om een vergelijking mogelijk te maken, namen we ook diepte-interviews af met 8 reguliere gedetineerden van het Huis van Bewaring.

We hebben een semigestructureerde vragenlijst gebruikt om de achtergronden, socialisatie en ontwikkelingsgeschiedenis van de gedetineerden te achterhalen, evenals hun ideologie en ervaringen met tegenslagen en persoonlijk leed. Tevens ontwikkelden we een kalender instrument, dat voortbouwde op een vragenlijst die eerder werd gebruikt om de levens van gedetineerde vrouwen in kaart te brengen (Joosen & Slotboom, 2015). Hiermee konden respondenten hun sociaaleconomische situatie en belangrijke gebeurtenissen aangeven die een jaar voor hun delict plaatsvonden. We hebben ook aan de informanten gevraagd om deze kalender voor één (anonieme) gedetineerde van de T.A. in te vullen over wie ze specifieke informatie kenden. Door middel van onze vragenlijst konden we de levensloop van de gedetineerden van de terroristenafdelingen van Nederland reconstrueren en vergelijken met die van reguliere gedetineerden.

Door middel van diverse open vragen zochten we naar de sociaaleconomische omstandigheden en de persoonlijke tegenslagen, we onderzochten hun psychosociale welbevinden en mentale gezondheid, en we vroegen naar hun ideologische en religieuze

opvattingen. We vroegen ook gedetailleerd naar hun familieachtergrond, kindertijd en socialisatie. Onze resultaten bevestigen voor een deel de kwantitatieve gegevens, maar ze brengen ook nuance aan en voegen enkele elementen toe die belangrijk zijn voor het begrijpen waarom en hoe mensen betrokken raken bij terrorisme.

Naast deze interviews analyseerden we ook de levenslopen van Yehya K., die eerder terroristische aanslagen voorbereidde, en Mohammed B., de moordenaar van Theo van Gogh. Op basis van eerdere literatuur, autobiografisch materiaal en andere openbare bronnen, reconstrueerden we de levensloop van beiden met speciale aandacht voor de centrale thema's van dit rapport.

7.4 Resultaten en conclusies

1. Sociaaleconomisch en psychologisch: beiden groepen hebben een slechte tot zeer slechte positie

De levensloop van beide groepen (gedetineerden op de TA en HvB) lijkt redelijk vergelijkbaar (vaak een moeilijke jeugd, en tegenslagen in opleiding, werk en privé). De TA verdachten/veroordeelden lijken minder vaak psychotisch, minder vaak verslaafd, minder gewelddadig, minder vaak dakloos geweest dan de groep die onderzocht is binnen het HvB.

Er is weinig melding van psychische stoornissen onder TA gedetineerden. Deze komen meer voor op andere afdelingen (al zien sommige informanten ook op de TA wel een verband met bepaalde stoornissen). Vergeleken met de reguliere afdelingen zijn er ook minder junks en daklozen. Wel lijken TA-gedetineerden meer dan reguliere gedetineerden sociaal en psychisch kwetsbaar te zijn, een laag zelfbeeld te hebben, en behoefte hebben te aan verbinding en duiding. Ze zijn in veel opzichten minder gehard dan reguliere criminelen en er zit ook een aantal licht verstandelijk beperkten tussen.

Volgens medewerkers en gedetineerden zijn er twee duidelijke groepen op de TA, d.w.z. onder de geradicaliseerde personen: leiders en volgers. De volgers, die zich aansluiten maar niet werven, zouden vaker psychische problemen hebben, zoals depressie, ADHD, PTSS en autisme. Soms hebben zij hechtingsstoornissen, die o.a. tot religieuze obsessies kunnen leiden of tot celebrity worship syndrome gericht op 'leiders'. De leiders hebben een hoog IQ, zijn hoogopgeleid, en 'natuurlijke leiders'. Hier zitten ook mensen tussen met antisociale

stoornissen of narcisme. Een paar gedetineerden zouden beter thuis zijn op de afdeling voor psychisch gestoorde gedetineerden.

De opleiding van TA- gedetineerden is over het geheel genomen vergelijkbaar met reguliere gedetineerden, maar er is meer variatie: sommigen, vooral 'leiders' zijn hoog opgeleid. Het is mogelijk dat door de hogere opleiding ook hogere verwachtingen zijn (geweest) ten aanzien van werk. Mogelijk is discriminatie op de arbeidsmarkt in dergelijke gevallen extra geestelijk belastend. De TA-gedetineerden bleken wel vaker recent een baan te hebben verloren in vergelijking met de reguliere gedetineerden.

Er lijkt minder harddrugs maar wel veel meer softdrugs (marihuana) te zijn gebruikt voorafgaand aan de radicalisering bij TA -gedetineerden; mogelijk veroorzaakte dit paranoia en gevoeligheid voor complottheorieën.

2. Tegenslagen: niet méér tegenslagen, wel kwetsbaarder

Veel direct betrokkenen bevestigen het beeld van een kwetsbare groep met een moeilijke jeugd en zware trauma's, maar vooral ook contactverlies met ouders voorafgaand aan de radicalisering. Een achtergrond van gebroken gezinnen en familieproblemen lijkt vaker voor te komen op de TA dan op andere afdelingen. Ook worden veel verlieservaringen genoemd (overlijden van of verbreken contact met familie of vrienden).

De gezinsproblematiek wordt door de betrokkenen zelf niet onderkend, mogelijk doordat men de ouders wil beschermen. Het spreken over de ouders, en vooral de moeder is sterk geïdealiseerd. Vanuit gesprekken met informanten ontdekten we dat de gezinnen relatief vaak problemen hadden, dat sturing ontbrak en dat vaders (emotioneel of fysiek) niet beschikbaar waren. Echter, sommige gedetineerden hadden een normaal gezin.

In beide groepen hebben gedetineerden uit achterstandsgroepen ervaring met achterstelling en discriminatie. Echter, de TA-gedetineerden lijken deze ervaringen persoonlijk op te vatten, niet als een uitdaging of een gegeven, of als menselijk tekort, maar als onrecht waar zijzelf, veel meer dan anderen, slachtoffer van zijn. Zowel rechtsextremisten als jihadististen hanteren dit slachtoffer-perspectief, gekoppeld aan wantrouwen jegens de rechtsstaat. Er is een neiging om de samenleving de schuld te geven en men blijft discriminatie en onrecht waarnemen, ook binnen de gevangenis. Dit laatste ligt mogelijk ook aan het strenge regime.

3. Religie en ideologie

Naast sociaaleconomische factoren en psychologische mechanismen, ontdekten we dat de rol van religie (Islam) in de ontwikkeling van terroristische betrokkenheid anders is dan vaak wordt gedacht. De meeste terrorisme-verdachten bleken van huis uit weinig te hebben geleerd over de Islam en ze hadden ook weinig kennis van de Koran. Zij bleken vatbaar voor het krachtige Salafi-Jihadistische vertoog dat via internet-propaganda wordt gepresenteerd als de enige waarheid, waarin de hypocrieten van de ware gelovigen worden onderscheiden. Dit narratief resoneert met de vage notie van Islam die ze van hun ouders hebben meegekregen, met name 'een goede Moslim zijn'. Hierdoor geloven ze dat deze weergave van Islam de juiste is.

Ook in het narratief van rechts-extremisten ontdekten we dat zij politiek weinig onderlegd zijn. Ze zijn gevoelig voor het schrikbeeld van 'de buitenlandse bedreiging van de Nederlandse identiteit en samenleving', dat aanhaakt bij hun wens om de samenleving te beschermen en te behouden, en daarmee een 'goede Nederlandse burger' te zijn.

Er is dus geen aanwijzing in ons onderzoek dat islamitische radicalisering wordt veroorzaakt door een strenge, orthodox-religieuze opvoeding. Integendeel, het lijkt erop dat een deel van de TA gedetineerden hun eigen religie in elkaar hebben geknutseld vanaf het internet en door contacten met vrienden, terwijl hun ouders juist erg weinig hadden met de Islam. Onder de respondenten van het HvB waren wel enkelen die een orthodoxe islamitische opvoeding hadden gehad. Zij putten hieruit troost en spraken vaker over vergeving, en de plicht om andere mensen te helpen. Gedetineerden die niet geradicaliseerd waren maar wel moslim, benoemden de kern van islam als vredelievend. Zij kenden meer Koranteksten, en konden hun afwijzing van extremisme met deze teksten onderbouwen.

De identiteit van gedetineerden van de TA vertoont zwakte, dat wil zeggen, zij twijfelen over wie ze zijn en wat hun rol in de maatschappij kan zijn. Ze zijn bezig met levensvragen en bevinden zich in een existentiële crisis, waarbij ze zich bedreigd voelen. Deze existentiële dreiging resoneert mogelijk met verlating of verwaarlozing uit hun vroege kindertijd. Er is een grote behoefte om "ergens bij te horen". Er heerst een gevoel van miskennis en onderlinge saamhorigheid. Ze hebben daarnaast belangstelling voor de ontwikkelingen in de wereldpolitiek, terwijl de reguliere verdachten vooral met zichzelf bezig zijn. Ook zijn deze mensen heel sterk bezig met het zoeken naar betekenis en waarden in hun leven, daarvoor

gebruiken ze het geloof, of de 'Nederlandse' identiteit en geschiedenis, maar hier weten ze weinig vanaf. Het zijn jonge zoekende mensen die een grote behoefte hebben aan erbij horen, broederschap, en sociaal contact. Ze zijn vaak beïnvloedbaar en wantrouwig.

Verder blijkt dat sommige TA gedetineerden geloven in andere verhalen over hun organisatie. Zij trekken de media in twijfel en hechten meer waarde aan uitleg uit de organisatie, over onrecht tegen hun groep. Geen van de respondenten van de TA die wij zelf spraken gaf aan dat zij geweld tegen burgers goedkeuren; echter de informanten gaven aan dat er wel gedetineerden zijn die ideologisch geweld wenselijk achten. Volgens enkele informanten zijn de gedetineerden wat betreft risico in drie groepen in te delen: (1) onschuldig, (2) schuldig maar ongevaarlijk, en (3) schuldig en gevaarlijk.

4. Netwerk: het vinden van verbondenheid en broederschap soms belangrijker dan de ideologie

De betrokkenheid bij een extremistische organisatie met een terroristisch oogmerk verliep doorgaans via sociale contacten, vrienden, internet of familieleden. Deze mensen spelen in op de behoefte aan verbondenheid, betrokkenheid en idealen, en de behoefte om een goed burger, of een goed moslim te zijn. Op het internet bieden de organisaties voeding aan complottheorieën.

De meeste TA gedetineerden beschouwen zichzelf als onschuldig; dit omdat zij hun vergrijp niet strafbaar vinden, of de Nederlandse rechtsstaat niet (meer) erkennen als gevolg van hun geloof in een complot of als gevolg van hun detentie. Zij vinden dat zij om hun (vermeende) ideologie of afkomst zijn vastgezet, en niet om hun betrokkenheid bij een aanslag of een gewelddadige terroristische organisatie.

Er is een duidelijke link met eerdere criminaliteit bij de TA gedetineerden. Ongeveer de helft lijkt betrokken geweest bij criminaliteit, echter, we zagen geen grote geweldsdelicten of georganiseerde misdaad. In een paar gevallen wordt loskomen uit criminaliteit in het extremistische netwerk gekoppeld aan een 'beter leven als bekeerling.' Er zijn echter ook gedetineerden die vanuit een crimineel winstoogmerk (wapenhandel of geldstromen) betrokken raakten bij een terroristische organisatie; zij zijn, zoals we nu kunnen zien, doorgaans niet ideologisch betrokken.

Concluderend kunnen we stellen dat er veel overeenkomsten bestaan in de levensloop van gedetineerden op de terrorisme-afdeling en gedetineerden op reguliere afdelingen. Beide

groepen hebben een kwetsbare sociaaleconomische positie en hebben te maken gehad met tegenslagen, zoals verlieservaringen en discriminatie. Echter, in tegenstelling tot reguliere gedetineerden ervaren de terrorisme-verdachten deze tegenslagen vaker als ernstig en als teken van sociale onrechtvaardigheid. We ontdekten dat dit samenhangt met drie andere karakteristieken van de groep terrorisme-verdachten: ten eerste, een doorgaans instabiel en gebroken gezinsleven in de kindertijd, ten tweede, een intense zoektocht naar betekenis, identiteit en de behoefte aan acceptatie, en ten derde gebrekkige manieren van omgaan met tegenslagen, waarbij deze niet werden aanvaard maar werden omgezet in een voortdurende bevestiging van het eigen slachtofferschap. Uiteindelijk kwamen deze verdachten anderen tegen die hen introduceerden in een netwerk met een extremistisch narratief; of ze werden aangetrokken tot de sterke, simplistische verhalen die ze op het internet vonden. Hun kwetsbaarheid voor ideologische indoctrinatie viel samen met hun sterke behoefte aan betekenisverlening en verbondenheid, en zou verklaard kunnen worden met diverse psychologische predisposities, zoals hechtingsproblematiek en stoornissen die inwerken op het vermogen tot sociaal redeneren en de impulscontrole.

Problemen in de kindertijd en ook trauma's zouden dus bij terrorisme-verdachten een versterkte kwetsbaarheid kunnen hebben veroorzaakt die hen aanzet om erkenning te zoeken in afwijkende sociale groepen. Deze kwetsbaarheid is verder toegenomen door achterstelling, en ervaringen met discriminatie, uitsluiting en verlies. Het narratief van extremistische netwerken richt zich specifiek op deze gevoelens van afwijzing en plaatst ze in een universeel perspectief van urgentie, verbondenheid en heldendom, en de belofte van persoonlijke groei. Deze processen waren het best zichtbaar voor verdachten met een jihadistische achtergrond, maar ze leken ook van toepassing op rechts-extremisten.

Kortom, de bevindingen bevestigen het "threat model", maar ze voegen er ook iets aan toe. Onze bevindingen suggereren dat bedreigingen die van relatief ver komen, zoals buitenlandse conflicten en sociaaleconomische verschillen in de populatie, bij extremisten sterke emotionele en cognitieve reacties kunnen uitlokken. Tegelijkertijd hebben we vastgesteld dat de dichtstbijzijnde, persoonlijke bedreigingen (zoals sociaal isolement, economische tegenslag, en schokkende ervaringen) cruciale triggers kunnen zijn in de ontwikkeling van radicalisering. Bovendien blijkt uit onze resultaten dat vroege ervaringen in de kindertijd, hechtingsproblemen, en andere psychische stoornissen kunnen bijdragen aan gevoelens van dreiging, en kunnen leiden tot een sterkere gevoeligheid voor de beloftes van verbondenheid en betekenis die in terroristische netwerken worden gedeeld.

Tot op zekere hoogte zijn de levensgeschiedenissen die hebben geleid tot betrokkenheid bij terroristische organisaties terug te voeren op een aaneenschakeling van pech, of ontmoetingen met de verkeerde mensen en/of internetsites. Maar ons onderzoek laat ook zien dat er op het pad naar terrorisme sociaaleconomische en psychologische factoren een rol spelen die door professionals, beleidsmakers en justitie kunnen worden aangepakt. In dit opzicht heeft Nederland de dubbele taak om zowel preventieve maatregelen uit te zetten die radicalisering tot gewelddadig extremisme moeten voorkomen, als het resocialiseren en rehabiliteren van veroordeelde terroristen.

7.5 Aanbevelingen

Aangezien de gedetineerden van de terrorisme-afdeling zich kenmerkten door de afwezigheid van beschermende sociaaleconomische, juridische en psychologische factoren (zoals veilige hechting, ervaringen van sociale rechtvaardigheid, en inzicht in de werking van samenleving, democratie en religies), richten onze aanbevelingen zich op het versterken van maatschappelijke instanties en interventies die deze ontbrekende factoren zouden kunnen compenseren. Maatregelen zouden zich kunnen richten op:

1. Zorg voor zwakke gezinnen; voldoende hulpverlening in probleemwijken organiseren

Zowel emotionele verwaarlozing als het gevoel buitengesloten te zijn van de samenleving zijn duidelijk zichtbaar in de levensbeschrijvingen van de verdachten en veroordeelden van een terroristisch misdrijf, en dit lijkt het voornaamste verschil te zijn tussen hen en de reguliere verdachten uit ons onderzoek. Echtscheiding van ouders en verlies van contact met de vader was een veel voorkomend kenmerk van deze groep. Daarom is het aanbieden van diverse vormen van gezinsondersteuning een onmisbare vorm van preventie om jonge kinderen te behoeden voor de psychische schade die hen kwetsbaar maakt voor de groepsprocessen die terroristische netwerken kenmerken. Naast hechtingsstoornissen zagen we verder dat migratietrauma's kunnen bijdragen aan enkele van deze psychische problemen, evenals negatieve ervaringen met rituele besnijdenis.

Het gebruik van grote hoeveelheden marihuana blijkt tevens de gevoeligheid voor een extremistisch narratief te kunnen vergroten, mogelijk doordat in een extremistisch netwerk de chemisch veroorzaakte achterdocht van politieke of religieuze betekenis wordt voorzien.

Sommige psychische problemen of stoornissen kunnen de kwetsbaarheid van jongeren voor radicalisering verder vergroten. Dit is in het bijzonder het geval voor kenmerken die de (sociale) beslisvaardigheid beïnvloeden en het zelfvertrouwen aantasten. Veel voorkomende psychische problemen onder verdachten van terroristische misdrijven die in dit onderzoek naar voren kwamen waren: autisme spectrum stoornis, posttraumatische stress stoornis, ADHD en narcisme.

Jongerenwerkers en organisaties voor gezinsondersteuning voor gezinnen in achtergestelde wijken zijn dus belangrijke hulpmiddelen in het voorkomen van terrorisme, en zij dienen in deze preventieve rol zowel erkenning als voldoende middelen te krijgen. Psychische en sociale problemen moeten worden onderkend zodra deze zich manifesteren, en zoveel mogelijk worden voorkomen. Er moet bijzondere aandacht zijn voor het geestelijk welbevinden van asielzoekers, vluchtelingen en oorlogsveteranen. Posttraumatische stress stoornis is veel voorkomend in deze groepen en dat maakt hen kwetsbaar voor radicalisering richting jihadisme, of rechts- of linksextremisme.

2. Kennis over religie, nationaliteit en het democratisch systeem verbeteren: leerlingen kritisch leren denken en begrip van gelijke rechten op school bevorderen

Uit ons onderzoek bleek dat het kennis- en begripsniveau van terrorisme-verdachten met betrekking tot democratie en religie achterbleef ten opzichte van de groep reguliere verdachten. Nederland is terughoudend met het aanbieden van verplichte lesstof ten aanzien van burgerschap, sociale vaardigheden of kennis over religie. Echter, de huidige situatie van het ideologische (democratisch en religieus) gebrek aan weerbaarheid onder sommige jongeren, bedreigt de samenleving en roept om interventie.

De introductie aan nieuwe burgers van begrippen als vrijheid van meningsuiting, vrijheid van godsdienst en gelijkheid voor de wet zijn geen liefhebberijen die naast het curriculum kunnen plaatsvinden, maar een basisvoorwaarde die de samenleving nodig heeft om veilig te kunnen functioneren. Als ouders deze niet kunnen aanbieden, dan zouden scholen dat moeten doen, door debatsessies te organiseren, te werken aan het begrip van democratische en politieke processen, en door jongeren leren zich in te leven in de positie van anderen en andersdenkenden door vergroting van kennis en begrip. Aangezien veel extremisten in dit onderzoek hun middelbare school niet hebben afgemaakt, is het belangrijk dat educatieve

maatregelen om de kwetsbaarheid voor een extremistisch narratief tegen te gaan, op een jonge leeftijd worden aangeboden.

Gezien de huidige druk op het onderwijs is het niet zinvol om deze taak eenvoudigweg op het bordje van de school neer te leggen. De overheid moet een structuur creëren - zowel organisatorisch als financieel - waarin het aanbieden van sociale en democratische vaardigheden niet alleen mogelijk is, maar een natuurlijk onderdeel uitmaakt van de nationale schoolcultuur. Het aanbieden van basiskennis over religies, zoals over de Islam, is formeel nu al een onderdeel van het curriculum, maar het ontbeert een structurele implementatie, zoals ook uit dit onderzoek is gebleken. Door dit gebrek aan basiskennis en -vaardigheden klinkt een extremistisch verhaal, of dit nu religieus, nationalistisch of politiek van aard is, al snel geloofwaardig.

Daarnaast moeten scholen waakzaam zijn voor interne schisma's waardoor moslimleerlingen en andere religieuze minderheden op school als buitenstaanders worden behandeld. Met name scholen met een formele christelijke identiteit, die alle kinderen toelaten onafhankelijk van hun religieuze achtergrond, blijken volgens dit onderzoek in enkele gevallen tot radicalisering te hebben bijgedragen. Hoe een school daadwerkelijk alle kinderen kan accepteren en tegelijkertijd een semi-exclusieve religieuze identiteit kan vormgeven, is een pedagogische puzzel die dringend om oplossingen vraagt.

3. Discriminatie in opleidingen, op de arbeidsmarkt en in juridische context strenger aanpakken omdat dat het een voedingsbodem is voor radicalisering

Het voorkomen van discriminatie van achtergestelde groepen is belangrijk, omdat daarmee de ervaring van achterstelling vermindert, en zo het narratief van extremisten ("iedereen is tegen ons") ongeloofwaardig en irrelevant wordt. Drie soorten discriminatie blijken gevaarlijk voor het aanwakkeren van radicalisering: discriminatie op de arbeidsmarkt, etnisch profileren door de politie, en discriminatie in de juridische context. Op al deze gebieden kan het aanpakken van discriminatie zinvol zijn voor de preventie van radicalisering. Maatregelen zoals anoniem solliciteren en het sneller strafrechtelijk vervolgen van bedrijven en uitzendbureaus die discriminerende wervingsprocedures hanteren, kunnen zorgen dat getalenteerde jonge mensen een zinvolle bijdrage aan de samenleving kunnen leveren in plaats van een verbitterde, welbespraakte online ronselaar van extremistische groeperingen te worden.

Over het geheel genomen dient discriminatie en onrechtvaardige behandeling van kwetsbare groepen erkend te worden als een ernstige bedreiging van sociale en politieke stabiliteit.

4. Internationale mensenrechten beschermen; economische zekerheden versterken

In een tijdperk van migratie en etnisch diverse samenlevingen, waarin het internet iedereen deelgenoot maakt van nieuws over onrecht en oorlog, hebben internationale geopolitieke gebeurtenissen een grote impact op lokale gemeenschappen. De manier waarop landen reageren op deze gebeurtenissen of zich afzijdig houden, is van invloed op de aantrekkingskracht van internationale extremistische groeperingen. Gewelddadige extremisten rekruteren leden overal ter wereld, waarbij ze zichzelf succesvol neerzetten als vrijheidsstrijders en/of vertegenwoordigers van een religie. Democratische landen moeten daarom oorlogsmisdaden en mensenrechtenschendingen door internationale samenwerking voorkomen en bestrijden, ook als deze worden begaan door bevriende naties. Misdaden tegen de menselijkheid zouden niet moeten worden geframed als behorend bij een nationale, religieuze of etnische praktijk. Tegelijkertijd verdient het gevoel van vervreemding dat rechtsextremisten voelen, bijzondere aandacht op twee vlakken. Ten eerste, de deprivatie die samenhangt met economische onzekerheid verdient debat over de mate waarin de economie voldoende kansen biedt aan iedereen. Daarnaast is er debat nodig over hoe er in de politiek en in de media gesproken zou moeten worden over nationaliteit en de nationale identiteit in verhouding tot migratie. We pleiten voor beleid waar wordt gewerkt aan het vormen van een nationale identiteit die inclusief is, waarbij alle leden van de samenleving zich een positieve nationale identiteit kunnen eigen maken, die op democratische wijze open staat voor verschillen in religie, etniciteit en huidskleur, zodat jihadistisch en rechts- of links-extremisme minder kans krijgt.

5. Haat zaaien en stigmatisering in de politieke en publieke arena problematiseren; propaganda via internet tegengaan

De verhalen van geradicaliseerde personen in dit onderzoek tonen aan hoe invloedrijk sommige opruiende politieke uitspraken kunnen zijn in het ontstaan van extremistisch gedachtengoed, met name wanneer de overheid niet ingrijpt. Dit gebrek aan interventie – vanwege vrijheid van meningsuiting, politieke vrijheid of godsdienstvrijheid – wordt soms als goedkeuring ervaren, zo ontdekten we, en kan zodoende radicalisering aanwakkeren. We pleiten daarom voor een zorgvuldige herziening van “sociaal gevaarlijke uitspraken” in het licht van deze vrijheden. Het onderscheid tussen de vrijheid van meningsuiting of religie

enerzijds, en opruiing of haat zaaien anderzijds, vereist in het huidige tijdsgewricht meer specifieke wettelijke grenzen en definities.

Gewelddadige extremistische propaganda die tot doel heeft tot oorlogsmisdaden op te roepen, aanzet tot het bedreigen of doden van weerloze burgers, of die burgers aanspoort zichzelf te bewapenen, heeft geen plaats in het publieke debat van een vrije democratie, noch op het internet, noch in een moskee of een "burgergroep". Hier ligt al een juridische grens. Echter, de huidige brede definitie van uitingsvrijheden staat wel toe dat minderheidsgroepen in het openbaar worden gestigmatiseerd en vernederd, hetgeen een gevoel van slachtofferschap of juist superioriteit kan oproepen dat aan radicalisering vooraf gaat. Het gezamenlijk delen van haatdragende uitingen binnen extremistische groepen jegens minderheden of jegens de staat geeft een gevoel van verbondenheid dat sommigen het recht lijkt te verschaffen om tot geweld over te gaan, met goedkeuring van zijn "broeders".

Terwijl de noodzaak tot vrije meningsuiting en het recht op godsdienstvrijheid onveranderd blijft, zou het juridisch onderzocht kunnen worden hoe leden van minderheidsgroepen beter beschermd kunnen worden tegen ernstige belediging en smaad (die vaak een voorbode of een eufemisme zijn voor haat zaaien en opruien). Hiermee kunnen twee soorten radicalisering worden voorkomen. Ten eerste, radicalisering tegen deze groepen, omdat haat zaaien dehumanisering in de hand werkt, bijvoorbeeld ten opzichte van joden, moslims, asielzoekers en vluchtelingen. Ten tweede, radicalisering binnen de bedreigde groepen zelf, vanuit gevoelens van vernedering en uitsluiting, aangezien onze data laten zien dat uitspraken van Fortuyn en Wilders, en hun vrijheid om deze uitspraken te kunnen doen, enkele islamitische radicalen hebben bevestigd in hun idee dat de westerse samenleving tegen hen is.

Nationale en internationale samenwerking tussen overheden en internetbedrijven is de sleutel tot het bewerkstelligen van dit ideaal. De implementatie van dit beleid vereist een zorgvuldige afweging tussen vrijheid van meningsuiting, vrijheid van religie en diverse andere (mensen) rechten rond privacy.

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