PUSHES AND PULLS OF RADICALISATION INTO VIOLENT ISLAMIST EXTREMISM AND PREVENTION MEASURES TARGETING THESE
COMPARING MEN AND WOMEN

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Recent years’ terrorist attacks in Europe and the flow of foreign fighters joining the terrorist organisation Daesh, has made the understanding of radicalisation evermore crucial. This thesis investigates if push and pull factors leading into violent Islamic extremism differentiate between men and women. Furthermore, it assesses how preventive measures from The United Kingdom, Sweden and Denmark targets push and pull factors and if these are sensitive to sex. To fulfil this objective an exploratory thematic analysis was used to synthesise secondary qualitative research surrounding push and pull factors. The push and pull factor analysis revealed three trends: there were limited variation in the overall categories describing the push and pull factors present for men and women; what caused push and pull factors to manifest differed according to sex; and, there were differences in how much men and women were affected by these factors. The assessment of prevention measures showed that none of the measures explicitly mentioned push and pull factors, yet they all had the potential of targeting these. Sex was included in some aspects of the measures, but was not a consideration in relation to the targeting of push and pull factors. The thesis ends with a discussion of what implications the found results have for practice and offers suggestions to how prevention measures can be improved.

Keywords: Daesh, men, prevention programmes, pull factors, push factors, radicalisation, violent Islamist extremism, women.
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INTRODUCTION

It has been 15 years since Al-Qaeda shock the world with the terrorist attacks on World Trade Centre which would come to mark the beginning of the era often referred to as ‘post 9/11’. Yet despite this terrorist attack being the deadliest in modern times it is no longer Al-Qaeda, but rather, the terrorist organisation Daesh that comes to mind when mentioning terrorism.

Daesh has since the declaration of the ‘the Islamic state’ gained a reputation for their brutal killings of civilians in Syria, production of propaganda videos displaying beheadings of hostages and in recent years, a string of terrorist attacks against the West. As if that alone was not enough to secure them the title as the biggest terrorist threat to Europe in present time, Daesh have also managed to inspire and attract an unprecedented number of young men and women to ‘the Islamic state’ in Syria (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). The magnitude of commitment which lies in the decision to join Daesh, should not be underestimated. By doing so the individual knowingly leaves behind freedom and safety in a peaceful country and ventures into territory from which few return. However, such a decision is for most people in the West outrageous and leaves the question of what on earth would compel these young people to choose this path?

This question has also caught the interest of researchers from a variety of scientific fields and thus, created an influx in research addressing the phenomenon of radicalisation and subsequently, why certain individuals are susceptible thereof. A widely-used explanation for this vulnerability is that of factors pushing the individual away from mainstream society and corresponding factors which pulls them towards violent Islamist extremism (Säkerhetspolisen, 2010).

Within the research of these push and pull factors, there seem to be a general understanding, that these factors are the same both for men and women. In a study on propaganda targeting women Tarras-Wahlberg (2016, p. 13) states, that push and pull factors are not dependent on sex. A conclusion she derives from examples of factors supplied by the Swedish Security Services (Säkerhetspolisen, 2010). The authors of the report “Drivers of Violent Extremism” adds to this connotation saying that gender issues do not seem to be significant, yet without supplying further evidence for the statement (Allan, Glazzard, Jesperson, Reddy-tunu, & Winterbotham, 2015). One report differs ever so slightly by stating that “many conditions conducive to terrorism impact both on the potential violent radicalisation of men and women. It is however critical to understand how these factors may be experienced differently along gender lines” (Knani, 2013, p. 3). It is based on these statements the present thesis finds its inspiration.

Aim

The aim of this thesis is to expand the knowledge base of why some individuals are susceptible to violent Islamist extremism and how to prevent these individuals from becoming radicalised. This will be done by exploring the possibility that there exist differences between men and women in the factors, which pushes individuals away from mainstream society and pulls them towards violent Islamist extremism. Furthermore, an assessment of how preventive measures targets push and pull factors will follow, with the purpose of discussing if and how these can be informed by knowledge of differences between the sexes.
Research questions:
How does push and pull factors connected to radicalisation into violent Islamist extremism differentiate between men and women?

How are preventive measures targeting push and pull factors and are these measures sensitive to sex?

How can knowledge of sex differences in push and pull factors help inform practice?

Importance of study
Recent years’ terrorist attacks in Europe and the flow of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq has made the understanding of radicalisation evermore crucial. This does not only mean that more research should be conducted, but also that existing knowledge must be looked upon critically. Consequently, even though the concepts of push and pull factors are widely agreed to be an essential part of the understanding of radicalisation, this does not exclude them from scrutiny. On the contrary, this notion emphasises the importance of investigating and challenge our understanding, including the assumption that push and pull factors do not differentiate depending on sex. As a comparison of push and pull factors present for each sex has not yet been performed, this thesis also serves the purpose of filling a gap. A better understanding of push and pull factors and the prevention measures targeting these is of importance, not only because of the threat terrorism poses to Western society, but also from the pragmatic point of allocating funds to prevention measures which, based on evidence, has the greatest effect.

Delimitation
The present thesis pertains to radicalisation leading into violent Islamist extremism, more specifically Daesh. This limitation is due to the theme having more literature available, as these individuals are more visible in the violent extremist milieu and differences in violent extremist organisations over time and across context. Furthermore, the distinction is made with the present field of study in mind, as individuals who are considered violent Islamist extremists supports, justifies and encourage violent acts, which is both illegal and poses a threat to democracy.

This thesis will only evaluate measures preventing radicalisation, as what leads an individual into radicalisation and towards acceptance of violence is not necessarily the same which causes one to disengage (Schmid, 2013, p. 29).

Key concepts
To address the phenomenon of radicalisation, it is important to have a shared understanding of concepts and definitions used in the present thesis.

Al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham (Daesh)
Likewise known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or the Islamic State (IS). ‘Daesh’ is used to accentuate that the group is neither representative of Islam nor a recognised state, therefore, using the groups preferred acronym IS risks reinforcing this connotation. Likewise, Daesh is the name most commonly used by Syrians on the ground fighting against the terrorist organisation. Hence,
using Daesh is leaning into the narrative of the victims, rather than the narrative of the terrorist organisation (Woolf & Porzucki, 2014).

**Foreign Terrorist Fighters**

Though the concept of ‘foreign fighters’ have become well-known, the term is not unambiguous as it can pertain to both individuals fighting for and against Daesh. Therefore, ‘foreign terrorist fighters’ are used in the present thesis to accentuate that these are individuals who leave their home countries to join and fight for a terrorist organisation abroad (van Ginkel et al., 2016).

**Gender**

Gender is defined as the social and cultural differences between men and women.

**Jihad**

A holy war fought in the name of Islam in order to protect the religion or spread it (Zamora, 2016).

**Push factor**

Push factors are conditions of the person or in their own life situation that pushes them away from mainstream society and causes them to be more susceptible to radicalisation (Tarras-wahlberg, 2016).

**Pull factors**

Pull factors draw the individual towards the acceptance of violent extremism with positive incentives (Tarras-wahlberg, 2016).

**Radicalisation**

A process whereby an individual increasingly comes to accept the use of violence or other illegal means, in order to achieve political, religious or ideological goals (Center for Terroranalyse, 2017, p. 10).

**Sex**

Sex is used to describe men and women at a basic biological level, not including the societal and cultural differences that may exist.

**Sharia**

An Islamic law based on the Quran, containing strict guidelines on how to correctly practice Islam, what good morals are, in addition to rules for business, divorce and punishment (Taylor, 2017).

**Terrorism**

The deliberate use of violence and threats against civilians to intimidate or coerce, especially for political, ideological or religious purposes (Doosje et al., 2016).

**Violent Islamist extremism**

The acceptance of the use of violence or other illegal means to achieve political, religious or ideological goals. ‘Islamist’ and not ‘Islamic’ is used to underscore that this form of violent extremism is not representative of Islam (Denoeux & Carter, 2009).
BACKGROUND

In the following section the history of violent extremism and Salafi Jihadism will be presented in order to put push and pull factors into perspective. Differences in sex will hereafter be explored, both in relation to propaganda created by Daesh and in relation to the socio-demographics of those who has travelled to join the organisation.

History of violent extremism
Acceptance of violence as a mean to achieve political, religious or ideological goals have existed for centuries and comes in a variety of forms from national-separatist organisations, left- and right-wing groups, to political religious groups (Law, 2013). One of the first written accounts of organised terrorism dates back to year 75 and surrounds the Jewish Zealot’s sect who opposed Roman authority (Chaliand & Blin, 2016). Through time Europe have experienced a wide array of terrorism springing from violent extremism such as the Protestant Anabaptists in Germany year 1534, the foiled ‘Gunpowder Plot’ in England year 1605 arranged by Catholics and the French revolution starting in 1789, a period which was dubbed the “Ragin of Terror” (Law, 2013). Violent extremism likewise made an impact on Europe during the 20th century, some of these being a string of attacks by the Irish Republican Army during the seventies and eighties and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation who targeted the 1972 summer Olympics in Munich (Law, 2013).

Yet the emergence of violent Islamist extremism in Europe is relatively new (Bakker, 2006, p. 2; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). The first example of a terrorist attack committed by a violent Islamist extremist group was in 1995, where an Algerian group detonated bombs in several French cities (Nesser, 2016). Yet, the treat from terrorist attacks were at the time predominately underestimated and overlooked by European countries who had not yet experienced any attacks (Bakker, 2006). A notion that has since been changed by 9/11 and recent years’ terrorist attacks, which has left violent Islamist extremism to be a prominent concern in Europe.

The role of religion
Whether groups like Daesh represent Islam is a heated debate. Nevertheless, it is significant for the context of push and pull factors to understand what Daesh stands for and subsequently, what they offer their members.

As with other religions the interpretation of Islam differs. Apart from the more well-known division of Sunni and Shia Muslim, there exist multiple branches both within and outside of these two distinctions, all of which has extremely varied characteristics (McCandless, 2014). Violent Islamist extremism is most often connected to Salafism which lies within the Sunni branch of Islam. All Salafist adhere to a very literal interpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah, which eliminates human subjectivity and therefore creates a singular truth. Thus, in a Salafist perspective Islamic pluralism is non-existent (Wiktowicz, 2006). They share the belief that the Muslim community should return to its original state of simplicity, as what was present at the time of the Prophet (Barrett, 2014). Despite this shared approach, interpretations of modern issues and how to advance their
goal of a united Muslim community, is highly subjective within the Salafi branch. As a result, three divisions has been created: the purists, the politicos and the jihadists (Wiktorowicz, 2006, p. 208). The purists adhere to non-violent methods to propagate their religious views and purify religion. They reject involvement in politics as they see it as a diversion from their religious views. Politicos likewise adhere to non-violent methods but sees political participation as an additional arena for propagation. Jihadists believe in a more militant way of propagating their views and thus, considers violence to be a legitimate mean to do so (Wiktorowicz, 2006). A study conducted in 2014 estimates the number of Salafi-Jihadist to be between 40 and 100 thousand (Jones, 2014, p. 27). In comparison, there were 1.8 billion people identifying as Muslim in 2015 (Hackett & Stonawski, 2017, p. 8). It is, therefore, safe to say that though Salafist-jihadist identifies with Islam, the vast majority of Muslims do not identify with Salafist-jihadism.

It is under the branch of jihadist-Salafism the terrorist organisation Daesh can be found. Based on the singular view of Salafism Daesh finds legitimacy for its use of violence as their interpretation of Islam demands an absolute rejection of any deviation. Eradication of anything or anyone falling outside of this frame is done for the greater good of the Muslim community and a means to further their cause of returning Islam to its pure form (Barrett, 2014). In other words, by adhering to this strict interpretation of Islam Daesh creates a ‘black and white’ worldview, which includes clear ‘us vs. them’ distinctions and rules for right or wrong. Consequently, this also supplies its followers with a future that is predictable and controllable (Kruglanski, 2014, para. 5). It is this setting that serves as the basis for Daesh’ attraction.

Coolseat (2006, p. 20) argues that what motivates individuals to participate in violent extremism is less influenced by religion and more so based on age-related personal motives created by a ‘no future’ subculture. Adding to this notion Roy (2016, para. 10) states, that foreign terrorist fighters can be limited and divided into two groups, one being second generation Muslims was born and raised in the West and the other being converts. Radicalisation is therefore not radicalisation of the Muslim population as such, “but rather reflect a generational revolt that affects a very precise category of youth” (Roy, 2016, para. 20). This interpretation of Islam becomes a medium whereby second generation youths are reclaiming identity and for converts, the only thing that currently offers radical rebellion (Roy, 2016, para. 21). Furthermore, the Swedish security services states that though ideology is important for the process of radicalisation, it does not function as the decisive factor for most individuals and the kind of violence-promoting ideology involved, thus, makes no difference in the big picture (Säkerhetspolisen, 2010, p. 33).

Propaganda
Since Daesh declared ‘the Islamic state’ in 2014, it has launched a propaganda campaign massive in reach, an accomplishment in part contributed to the possibilities created with the internet. Through this, they have sought and succeeded in drawing individuals from around the world to join their plight in building and expanding ‘the state’.

To obtain their goal, Daesh has deployed a variety of narratives aimed at targeting certain profiles, offering them precisely what they are missing in their current
lives, while at the same time blaming the West for their misery (Gartenstein-Ross, Barr, & Moreng, 2016). Individuals fitting this profile could be someone, who feels lonely or that they are somehow kept from reaching their full potential with the life they are currently living. Therefore, they are searching, that be for identity, a place to belong or a greater purpose in life. Well-crafted propaganda is then effective, as it promises to fill this void. One of the central narratives in Daesh repertoire is framing the state as an Islamic Utopia. A place where Muslims can practice their faith to the fullest under sharia law. Jihadist adventure and camaraderie is likewise a commonly used narrative (Gartenstein-Ross et al., 2016).

These narratives are displayed in high-quality well-edited videos and glossy magazines, all available online through a simple search on relevant keywords. In their magazine Dabiq, Daesh not only addresses men, but also have female authors write features specially targeting women. Thus, they set themselves apart from previous terrorist organisations by allowing women to be visible and portraying them as playing an active role in their community (Mah-Rukh Ali, 2015). The propaganda is however not limited videos and publications of online magazines produced by Daesh. A more informal approach is likewise used to appeal to potential recruits. Foreign terrorist fighters and their followers readily use social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr to spread images and stories depicting the plight of Daesh and calling on Muslims to join the movement. In the summer of 2014, an estimated 60,000 social media accounts were openly expressing positivity towards Daesh (Behn, 2014; Katz, 2015). Differences between the sexes are also noticeable in the material spread via this more informal way, as illustrated in the following social media post:

To the brothers: What are you waiting for? There are plenty of weapons here waiting for you to come and play with them. Plenty of food as a sheep gets slaughtered regularly depending on how many brothers are around, there are plenty of women here waiting to get married ;) waiting to bare the offspring of the army of Imam Mehdi by the will of Allah and there is honour for the Muslims here (Roussinos, 2013, para. 38).

To the sisters: What are you waiting for? Your husbands clothes need washing! (I’m joking) but seriously what are you waiting for? You may wear your veils without being harassed, no woman is harmed here and if she is there is a harsh penalty as the woman’s honour is not to be tampered with whatsoever, there are plenty of mujahideen desiring to get married who have some of the most loving and softest characters I have ever witnessed even though they are lions in the battlefield, there are orphans here waiting for mothers to love them the way their parents would have. Come to the land of honour. You are needed here (Roussinos, 2013, para. 39).

The promises in these narratives, as exemplified above, often goes unchallenged as Daesh has not only excluded journalist from entering their territories but are also rumoured to closely monitor and limit the spread of information from inside their ranks (Klausen, 2015; Mah-Rukh Ali, 2015).
Socio-demographics

Whether propaganda by itself is effective or not, Daesh has managed to inspire an exceptional number of individuals to join their terrorist group. An estimated 27,000 have migrated to Syria and Iraq since 2011 (Kirk, 2016, para. 1). Of these approximately 4000 have come from the European Union (van Ginkel et al., 2016, p. 4).

Differences between the sexes are likewise present when reviewing the socio-demographic characteristic of those individuals who have left for Syria and Iraq. First and foremost, it becomes clear that the vast majority of the individuals who have left for Syria or Iraq are men. Woman make up an approximately 17% of those who have left the European Union (van Ginkel et al., 2016, p. 4). A study of individuals who have left Germany to join Daesh shows that there is approximately three years between the men and the women who migrates to Syria or Iraq. Here women were on average 23.5 years old, whereas men are 26.5 years old. It is interestingly to note that men and women are estimated to have entered the radicalisation process at about the same age, meaning that women become radicalised over a considerably less time than men (Federal Criminal Police Office, 2016, p. 37). Similarly, remarkable is the number of converts who have left for Syria and Iraq. Here men make up 17%, whereas converts 33% of the women. It is hypothesised that the difference could be a result of woman having to convert to enter marriage with a Muslim man (Federal Criminal Police Office, 2016, p. 37).

Differences are also noticeable in the way men and women became radicalised. Men were very active in the Salafi-milieu, some of these even openly functioning as role models for the movement, distribution the Quran and participating in Islam seminars. Compared to their male counterparts, females were more likely to be influenced from close social relationships and were therefore more often radicalised in private (Federal Criminal Police Office, 2016, p. 37).

THORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following section will present an overview of the components of the radicalisation phenomenon and the debate surrounding the concept. The section will have its starting point in the dispute surrounding the concept of radicalisation and move on to possible explanations of how radicalisation relates to violence. Hereafter, a description of the radicalisation process will be presented to provide a better understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon. The section will end with an explanation of the push and pull factors making an individual susceptible to radicalisation, which will later serve as a frame for the analysis.

The radicalisation debate

Radicalisation is not a new phenomenon, but until the beginning of 2000, there was limited mention of radicalisation in research about terrorism and political violence (Neumann, 2013; Säkerhetspolisen, 2010). Despite the concept of radicalisation now being well used by researchers as well as the public, there is still no consensus on the definition of radicalisation, neither between researchers nor practitioners:
The United Kingdom Parliament, The Home Affairs Committee: “the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism” (The Home Affairs Committee, 2012, p. 4).

Swedish Security Service (Säpo): “Radicalisation can be both: ‘a process that leads to ideological or religious activism to introduce radical change to society’ and a ‘process that leads to an individual or group using, promoting or advocating violence for political aims’” (Schmid, 2013, p. 12)

Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET): “a dynamic process whereby an individual increasingly comes to accept the use of violence or other illegal means, in order to achieve political, religious or ideological goals” (Center for Terroranalyse, 2017, p. 10)(My translation).

In his paper, ‘The Trouble with Radicalization’, Neumann (2013, p. 875) argues, that the ambiguity arises in part from the lack of agreement about the end-state of radicalisation. Some define radicalisation purely as a cognitive phenomenon, where individuals adopt what is considered radically different ideas about society and governance. Other researchers argue that radicalisation should be defined by the actions stemming from these ideas, referred to as ‘behavioural radicalisation’. Borum (2011, p. 8) adds further to this argument, by stating that it is important to remember that radical beliefs are not a proxy or precursor for terrorism. Most radicals do not engage in terrorism, and some terrorist may not hold ideological beliefs deep enough to call them ‘radicals’ in that sense. A universal definition of radicalisation is further challenged by the fact that the word ‘radical’ lacks meaning on its own, as what is considered radical differ immensely depending on what is considered mainstream. Being a radical is therefore highly dependent on context (Neumann, 2013).

The gap between radicalisation and violent extremism
Researchers warn against the assumption that radicalisation is a precursor to terrorism, as there has yet to be established a causal link between the two (Dzhekova et al., 2016). Because of this ambiguity, multiple theories and studies have been created to explain why an individual move from radicalization in its non-violent form to the acceptance of violence.

Sociological theories lay emphasis on the external factors such as social and cultural conditions effect on individual and group behaviour to explain violent radicalisation. An example hereof is the Frustration-Aggression hypothesis, which theorises that an individual who is oppressed and therefore unable to reach his or her goals, can either respond with flight or fight. Terrorism in this theory can be tied with the fight response, resulting in an attack on the perceived source of oppression (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008, p. 4). Critics argue, that the theory fails to grasp why only a few individuals turn to terrorism when millions of people live under oppression. Similarly, research has shown that that terrorism is not limited to any specific country or class, which is evident in the wide array of social conditions and nationalities of terrorist (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008, p. 4).

Explanatory theories and approaches can also be found within the psychological field. Paranoia theory being one of these suggests that some individuals have a
damaged self-concept causing them to split good and bad traits into categories of ‘me’ and ‘not-me’, respectively. The ‘not me’ traits are then projected onto something or someone external. It is hypnotised that individuals suffering from this strongly idealise the group he or she belongs to while demonising outsiders. This idealisation and projection create paranoia about the survival of the in-group, legitimising violence as self-defence. Though this theory seems plausible in the light of violent extremists ideological belief system, it has not been systematically tested and validated, due to difficulties such as small sample sizes and lack of cooperation from the terrorist (Crossett & Spitaletta, 2010, p. 33; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008, pp. 6–7).

Criminological theories are likewise used to investigate why people embrace violent radicalisation. Perry and Hasisi (Perry & Hasisi, 2015) have used Rational Choice theory to compare terrorist bombers with criminals to see if there were similarities in their motivations. They argue that acts such as terrorism are not motivated by altruism, but rather it is an act based on a deliberation process where costs are compared with anticipated benefits of the action. Therefore, they conclude that it is possible to compare suicide bombers to criminals, as criminals too are motivated by self-gratifying benefits. However, this explanation is challenged by a study concluding that though criminals and radicalised individuals share characteristics such as being predominantly males and acceptant of violence, one group is motivated by profit, while the other is motivated by ideology (Curry, 2011, p. 102).

Though these theories and approaches broaden our understanding of the connection between radicalisation and violent extremism, they fail to capture the complexity of the phenomenon by not addressing all levels of analysis. Research has shown that the process of violent radicalisation is often an intricate interplay of factors present on both micro-, meso-, and macro-level (Dzhekova et al., 2016). The micro-level consists of factors within the person, such as feelings which might influence the process of radicalisation. At meso-level the individual is influenced social ties such as groups, friends and family. Last, the macro-level are larger societal factors, such as political, economic or cultural contexts which may influence the individual (Doosje et al., 2016).

The process of radicalisation
Despite the lack of consensus on the definition of radicalisation, it does, however, become apparent by looking at the previously mentioned definitions, that radicalisation is considered a process. This is likewise reflected in multiple models created to illustrate the radicalisation process, such as The Staircase to Terrorism (Moghaddam, 2005) and the Pyramid model (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008). At the same time, the number of available models also reflects the fact that there is not a single universally accepted model considered to explain the radicalisation process. Furthermore, models depicting the radicalisation process are often criticised as being too simplified as they are unable able to explain the speed of which an individual moves through the process or why some individuals abandon the process altogether (Ranstorp & Hyllengren, 2013, p. 81).

The process of radicalisation is most often initiated and maintained by an external influence, often stemming from friends or family members. With the advancements of modern technology, the internet’s role in the radicalisation process has also become a subject of interest. Neumann (2012, p. 9) posits that the
use of the internet to radicalise is the most dangerous innovation post 9/11. Some studies show that the internet helps overcome otherwise present barriers, as it is easing communication and collaboration between those who are already radicalised, but arguably also allows individuals to ‘self-radicalise’ without direct contact with a so-called recruiter (von Behr, Reding, Edwards, & Gribon, 2013, p. 18). Despite the internet being an effective tool as previously illustrated, it does however not equal that propaganda distributed online causes radicalisation, but it is widely accepted that it serves an accelerant role in the radicalisation process (Dzhekova et al., 2016; von Behr et al., 2013).

The radicalisation process towards violent extremism is complex, varied and multifaceted. How it ‘runs its course’ is dependent on internal and external factors that can change based on the socio-psychological traits of the individual, the context and the dynamic of the violent extremist group itself. In addition, the process is often non-linear and can take place at varying paces, at times causing an individual to skip stages (Ranstorp & Hyllengren, 2013, pp. 80–81).

**Push and pull factors**

The concept of push and pull factors have long been used in other areas of research, one of the being migration. Here push and pull factors are used to explain why individuals choose to leave their homes in one country for the opportunity to settle in another country (European Commission & Statistical Office of the European Communities, 2000). The concept has also been used within the criminology field, where it is utilised by the Containment theory from a psychological perspective. The theory argues that individuals are either pushed or pulled into crime by factors such as lack of opportunities, unemployment and minority group status unless counteracted by inner and outer containments as family, friends and society in general (Cardwell, 2013). Within research of radicalisation, push and pull factors can be used to explain why some individuals are susceptible.

Push factors are conditions of the person or in their life situation that pushes them away from mainstream society and causes them to be more susceptible to radicalisation. These include the feeling of alienation or perceived global injustices. Pull factors draw the individual towards the acceptance of violent extremism with positive incentives. They often play on the individuals need for belonging, meaning and search for identity (Tarras-wahlberg, 2016). These factors do not give rise to radicalisation in them self. They should rather be seen as examples of necessary but insufficient factors that can explain why an individual end up as a violent extremist (Säkerhetspolisen, 2010, p. 34). The general criticism of push and pull factors are based on the fact, that these do not explain why some individuals are affected by these factors and become radicalised, while others who are experiencing the same factors do not.

There is considerable variation in the push and pull factors making an individual susceptible to radicalisation. Research based on radicalisation processes in Europe have revealed push and pull factors to be an interaction between individual psychological traits, social and political factors, ideological and religious dimensions, cultural identity, traumatic experiences and group dynamics (Ranstorp & Hyllengren, 2013, p. 86). The factors vary depending on the individual and are often a cumulative process taking place simultaneously on micro-, meso- and macro-level. When looking at the micro-level, factors
influencing the radicalisation process can consist of feelings of insignificance and personal uncertainty. At the meso-level these factors can include discrimination, alienation, lack of close social ties and a sense of injustice. Whereas, factors influencing radicalisation at the macro-level could be the perception that Western cultural lifestyle prevents one from practising one’s religion to the fullest (Doosje et al., 2016). To make the distinction between these more simplistic in relation to radicalisation, they are divided into push and pull factors as illustrated in table 1 below (Ranstorp & Hyllengren, 2013, p. 86):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Push factors</th>
<th>Pull factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Searching for identity or difficulties in combining two different identities</td>
<td>Belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination (of yourself or others)</td>
<td>A sense of purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienation (of yourself or others)</td>
<td>Significance, respect or status in the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived global injustice</td>
<td>Feeling of power and control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived oppression (of group, country or religion)</td>
<td>Community and friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching for purpose</td>
<td>Clear rule of life to adhere to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult or destructive family relations</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fascination with violence and searching for thrills</td>
<td>Attractive ideological arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A will to make a difference</td>
<td>Confidence that you stand for good and fight evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A sense of adventure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Säkerhetspolisen, 2010, pp. 34–35) *(My translation)*

Though it is important to focus on all levels of analysis to get a deeper understanding of radicalisation, it is also essential to remember that macro-level factors affect a significant amount of the general population, of which only a small fraction turn to violent Islamist extremism (Denoeux & Carter, 2009). Likewise, one should keep in mind that these underlying conditions of radicalisation differ both across regions, countries and depending on time periods, thus what might be a relevant factor in Europe are not necessarily relevant in Asia. Violent extremism of any kind springs from radically different social, political and economic environments and from impoverished societies to advanced industrialised countries (Denoeux & Carter, 2009).

**METHODOLOGY**

The foundation of the present thesis was secondary qualitative research in the form of existing research within the subject of push and pull factors. This allowed for synthesising existing knowledge from previous research on push and pull factors connected to radicalisation leading to violent Islamist extremism. The result was presented in a comparative manner between men and women to highlight similarities and differences. In continuation hereof, an illustrative analysis of prevention measures used was conducted to showcase how radicalisation prevention measures targets push and pull factors. This illustration subsequently allowed for a discussion about how the found results of the push and pull factor analysis could help inform prevention practice. Relevant quotes are used throughout the analysis to support the statements. These are presented in their original state and are thus, subject to spelling mistakes and Arabic words. In addition, supporting research has been implemented so provide perspective to why push and pull factors are effective.
**Method**

Due to limitations in time and challenges in collecting primary data from the research population who are often hard to access, secondary qualitative research was chosen for the answering of the research questions. Secondary analysis of existing data can be described as “the use of existing data to find answers to research questions that differ from the questions asked in the original research” and can be used to “apply a new perspective or new conceptual focus to the original research issue” (Long-Sutehall, Sque, & Addington-Hall, 2011, p. 336). Using secondary qualitative research allowed for multiple and varied research connected to push and pull factors to be included, giving a more in depth and rich portrayal of the factors and differences herein. This method also generated new knowledge by placing existing research into a different perspective and exploring differences in push and pull factors between men and women.

Relevant material was found through a library search, online search engines and by evaluating references used in the reviewed research pertaining to the subject. Far from all research exploring push and pull factors is based on quality primary evidence. To ensure a high quality of the analysis result, it was therefore necessary to further sort the material according to five inclusion criteria:

1: The included research had to be targeting radicalisation leading into violent Islamist extremism. This criterion was set, as was assumed, that the push and pull factors differ from left to right wing radicalisation.

2: The data collected in the included material had to be addressing Western individuals, as research has shown that push and pull factors differ across regions and context (Denoeux & Carter, 2009).

3: Only research published after the terrorist attacks on 9/11 was included. Due to naturally occurring shifts in the structure of society, generations and nonetheless terrorist organisations, this criterion secures the most current information in relation to the chosen subject.

4: It had to be clearly stated or visible through review of the included material which sex they were investigating. As the research questions are aimed at comparing the sexes this criterion was essential.

5: Research included had to provide evidence for their statements in the form of empirical data, either through interviews with the radicalised person him or herself, with individuals close to the radicalised person or through databases and cases available to the public. This was done to ensure that the information used was as credible as possible and not affected by author bias.

**Data analysis**

The analysis was exploratory in design and drew on a thematic analysis process to identify and map themes. Boyatzis (1998, p. 4) states that thematic analysis is “not another qualitative method, but more a process that can be used with most, if not all, qualitative methods”. It is a process that allows for “identifying, analysing,
and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). Few of the included materials directly addressed the categories chosen for this investigation and if they were addressed, it was often using different categories. Using thematic analysis therefore allowed themes to be identified despite lack of consensus in the chosen material, making it possible to synthesize the data and make a comparison between sexes.

The analysis used a deductive approach with an ‘a priori framework’ in the form of predetermined categories derived from the examples of push and pull factors in Table 1. This approach was ideal, as the intention with the thesis was not to derive new theory, but challenge and broaden the understanding of the concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The predetermined categories have been used as they are reflective of the general understanding that push and pull factors do not differ depending on sex and thus, comparing within this framework accentuates the findings. Another advantage of these predetermined categories was that it saved time during the coding process. It is important to note that some factors were only found to be relevant for one sex and it was therefore not possible to make a comparison. This does not necessarily imply that the factors do not play a role for both sexes, just that evidence could was found to support this notion. Furthermore, some overlap is present between the factors and across pull and push factors.

**Reliability, validity and fidelity**

Reliability can be understood as the possibility of reproducing consistent results over time using a similar methodology and that the results are representative of the total research population (Nahid, 2003, p. 598). The research population at hand does not exist in a vacuum and are influenced by a variety of factors. It is therefore not a given that using the same methodology would yield the same results as present in the present thesis. The methodology used can however be transferred to similar groups and settings to derive deep and rich information about differences between men and women in relation to push and pull factors.

Validity is the applied methods ability to measure accurately and their ability to measure what they were intended to (Nahid, 2003, p. 699). Using pre-determined categories which has already been established by previous researchers heightens the validity by ensuring a framework for interpretation of the included material and consistency throughout the comparison between the sexes.

Fidelity was also a consideration throughout the research process. The primary researchers had the advantage of face-to-face interactions where the informant could clarify or correct the researcher, if he or she failed to fully understand the informants’ perspective. This opportunity was not available when doing the secondary analysis of the data. Thus, in addition to evaluation of the evidence presented in the included material, attention was paid to the original researchers’ analysis thereof.

**Ethics**

As the thesis would include secondary research available to the public, there was no need for ethical approval. Despite this, it was still necessary to ensure that the re-use of data did not violate the initial consent form made between the primary researcher and the participants. This was ensured by judging the fit between the original research questions and the questions posed in the present thesis. In
addition mind was given to the context in which the original data was collected, as to not change focus from the initial intention of the research (Long-Sutehall et al., 2011).

RESULTS

Push and pull factors from the chosen material will be presented and analysed in the following two sections. Each push and pull factor presented will consist of an introduction and a synthesis of push and pull factors for women and men, respectively. A conclusion will be made at the end of the section, followed by a table highlighting the results.

Push factors

As previously stated, push factors consist of conditions of the individual or in their life situation which pushes them away from mainstream society and causes them to be more susceptible to radicalisation.

Searching for identity or difficulties in combining two different identities

Searching for one’s identity is often viewed as a mandatory phase during adolescence, brought on by the shift in demands, expectations and freedom experienced when crossing from childhood into adulthood. According to the Oxford dictionary (2017) identity crisis is characterised as “a period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person’s sense of identity becomes insecure, typically due to a change in their expected aims or role in society”. For men and women with an ethnocultural minority background, this phase can be further complicated by the multiple values and identity models with which they are confronted.

This struggle between conflicting identities is particularly evident in the research exploring push factors behind the radicalisation of women. A report based on a database tracking and archiving social media material from over a 100 Western women who has joined Daesh, reveals that these women struggle not only with identity as any other adolescence but with additional difficulties with finding their place between two cultures (Saltman & Smith, 2015). More explicit evidence of the complications associated with having multiple values and identity models can be found in a Dutch study which includes interviews with radicalised individuals and people close to them. Here a teacher described how this conflict had been visible in one of her students, who had been arrested for trying to migrate to Syria:

*Jamila asked me practical questions about Islam, how to pray for instance and how to wear a headscarf. She was very curious. But at school, Jamila didn’t behave like a practising Muslim: she smoked, drank alcohol and didn’t wear a headscarf. I could see she was struggling with herself. She was constantly thinking about where she belonged and how she had to deal with her Islamic identity* (Bakker & Grol, 2015, p. 8).

Females experiencing a clash between cultures when it comes to identity and womanhood was also a trend visible in a Canadian study based on interviews with women who had gone or attempted to go to Syria (Conseil du statut de la femme,
The researchers of the study assert that on the one hand, these young women are met with the liberal Western culture in which they are expected to be independent and use their freedom to make their own choices, which can seem intimidating. On the other hand, they are faced with a traditional Muslim perspective of womanhood that has its reference point in a more gendered and less egalitarian world, but offers guidance and reassuring via clear obligations. Through this perspective they are offered a basic identity, that is less fraught individual responsibility and uncertainty about the future (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2016, p. 57).

Compared to their female counterparts there is no evidence available suggesting that men who become radicalised struggle with negotiating between differentiating cultures and only minimal evidence suggesting that identity, in general, was an issue. A Dutch study based on interviews with potential foreign terrorist fighters and with individuals close to them have a single mention of one interviewee who seems to be searching for identity (Bakker & Grol, 2015, p. 7). A study from Denmark found that uncertainty in relation the future and role in life was feelings present in their study population, which could also serve as an indication of identity being an issue (Lindekilde, Bertelsen, & Stohl, 2016, p. 862).

Discrimination (of yourself or others)
Muslims who have been raised in a society of Western culture, may experience tension in the form of racial motivated attacks or discrimination if they try to preserve their religious values and at the same time wants to integrate into society (Pooley, 2015). Racial attacks and discrimination affect Muslims much like ‘fear of crime’ affects women. They need never have been the victim of such an attack, but are, nevertheless, acutely aware that they belong to a group that is at risk thereof (Bowling, 1993, p. 240).

The women included in this thesis are more visible in their religion as they are often wearing clothes reflective thereof. This visibility makes them easier to spot and target for perpetrators, which is evident in statistics and cases exploring how men and women are subjected to hate crimes based on race and religion (Feldman & Littler, 2014; National Council of Canadian Muslims, 2015). These forms of hate crimes were also a debated subject in interviews with women who had tried to leave for Syria (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2016, p. 62).

Through men also report attacks and hateful comments based on their religion or ethnicity, this was not present in the reviewed research. Rather they seem to experience feelings of discrimination in relation to equality between ethnicities. Researchers in a study of Dutch foreign terrorist fighters concluded that the men they interviewed felt deep frustrations connected to societal positions, both individually and in relation to their ethnic group in general (Weggemans, Bakker, & Grol, 2014). The same theme can be traced in another study analysing the content of foreign terrorist fighter’s proclamations on YouTube. Here a man from the studied material states:

But know the lands of the Kuffar are not a place for the Muslims. And you can see it according the humiliation in which you are daily living, where your women daily live in. They are insulting the Prophet, they are insulting Islam, they are treating you like their
slaves and dogs. Therefore, if you want to be free, look for your freedom (Mans & Tuitel, 2016).

Interestingly, a study found that though men find it hard to give specific examples of discrimination, even though they felt more discriminated than women (Ryan et al., 2009, pp. 31, 40).

**Alienation (of yourself or others)**

Multiple reasons can cause one to feel disconnected from values, norms and social relations in society, for example, victimisation and discrimination as described above (The Primer, 2012, p. 12). A Swedish study investigating how Islamophobic hate crimes were experienced by women wearing identifiable religious markers, revealed that some females deliberately took precautions and avoided certain situations in fear of being attacked either verbally or physically (Lindström, 2016).

The effect of hereof was also present for radicalised women. The Canadian study based on interviews with young females found that these felt alienated and expressed difficulty relating to mainstream society, because of discrimination based on their choice of clothing and religion (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2016, p. 62). Media was also found to play a significant role in the feeling of alienation. Some women expressed that offensive and inaccurate, often sensationalised, headlines in the media contributed to the feeling of isolation and persecution (Ryan et al., 2009; Saltman & Smith, 2015).

As with discrimination men differs from women when it comes to what causes a feeling of alienation. One study based on interviews with men who considered becoming foreign terrorist fighters observed that most of the study population had limited chances on the labour marked, primarily because of their lack of education and skills. In addition, most of them had few friends, limited contact with their family and expressed that they felt like their future and the opportunities to advance in life were limited (Bakker & Grol, 2015, p. 13). Another study reports how radicalised men in their study population had cut the ties to their former social environment. Also, they found that the men expressed feelings of apathy and lack of meaning in life (Weggemans et al., 2014). Finally, one study based on three radicalised Danish men states, that a remarkable amount of their data pertains to narratives about exclusion from communities and society in general (Lindekilde et al., 2016, p. 862).

**Perceived global injustice**

This feeling of discrimination also manifests itself through perceived attacks on Muslims worldwide, resulting in shared grievances. Emotions are typically viewed as an individual phenomenon, triggered by events that are meaningful to the individual, either positively or negatively. Research shows that emotions as an intergroup phenomenon exist and that events not personally connected to an individual, can still result in emotions when it affects people who that person identifies with. A survey conducted after the terrorist attacks on 9/11 showed that people who valued their American identity very strongly, also experienced stronger emotions of fear and anger in response to the attacks, compared to individuals who viewed being an American as less important (Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007). Similar parallels can be drawn to perceived global injustices. The
stronger the individual identifies with Islam, the stronger the effect of attacks against the Muslim community becomes (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009).

The perceived attack on Muslims as a group are present in multiple studies with females as a research group. Through their analysis of social media material, Saltman & Smith (Saltman & Smith, 2015) found, that the perceived oppression of Muslims internationally was a reoccurring theme among radicalised women. Violent images and videos from conflict zones where widely shared, often naming the West the enemy and proclaiming it at war with Islam. A narrative which was often based to justify their extremist beliefs. The theme of injustice was also present in another study based on social media posts by British women who had migrated to Syria. Here a female migrant tweeted her frustration about how fasting and halal had been made forbidden in other parts of the world (Pooley, 2015, p. 59). The same study concludes that attacks on the global Muslim community were the most mentioned theme among their study population (Pooley, 2015, p. 58). Grievance with the perceived suffering of Muslims in conflict zones was also present in the Canadian study, where some of the women seemed to draw a parallel to their own experiences within their local communities (Conseil du statut de la femme Centre, 2016, p. 65).

Perceived global injustices were a present push factor for men too, though less prominent compared to women. Interviews with potential foreign terrorist fighter, who had either been arrested before leaving or were undecided, revealed videos and pictures as a highly determining factor for wanting to leave (Bakker & Grol, 2015). Injustices were likewise a theme in the analysis of YouTube videos. Here some men who had migrated to Syria as foreign terrorist fighters equally expressed their feelings of sadness and frustration about the situation:

> You cannot just watch hundreds and hundreds and thousands of people getting slaughtered. I feel sorry for the people getting slaughtered. I feel sorry for the people at home. That is my honest opinion. How can you be sitting at home? (Mans & Tuitel, 2016, p. 7).

**Pull factors**

Pull factors are positive incentives which draws the individual towards the acceptance of violent extremism.

**Belonging**

A consequence of social and cultural alienation is that individuals search for places to be accepted and a part of a community. Kathrine Brown (2006) argues that the idea of a Muslim community, as proposed by Daesh, enables a development of a universal Muslim identity which unites people across class, race and age.

Studies based on social media material found that one of the most influential pull factors of women were the possibility of belonging and sisterhood. A feeling that these women often contrasted by expressing that they felt that their relationships in the West had been false and shallow (Hoyle, Bradford, & Frenet, 2015; Saltman & Smith, 2015). For those choosing to migrate to Syria, the vision of a new Muslim state and strict Sharia law also contains acceptance and inclusion,
seemingly unobtainable for them in their Western home countries. This notion seems to be particularly attractive for women who has suffered discrimination and alienation based on their religion or race, living as a minority in a Western society (Pooley, 2015). Women who had migrated also put a lot of emphasis on the newfound camaraderie and sisterhood found within Daesh territories:

seeing the true sisterhood of islam purely fisabelilah [in the way/cause of Allah] was truly an emotional moment. Once you start speaking to them the sisters treat you like their own and share everything with you, are always look after you and fussing over you subhanAllah [glory to God] may reward them (Kneip, 2016, p. 94).

Some radicalised women who however did not leave for Syria also described how a local religious community centre acted as a refuge where they could express their identity and how the friends they made there came to feel like family (Conseil du statut de la femme Centre, 2016, p. 66).

Men did not express belonging as having as strong a pull as women did throughout the included material. Here only two studies briefly mention belonging. The first based on interviews with potential foreign terrorist fighters concluded that the sense of brotherhood in Islam was a pull factor for some of the young men (Bakker & Grol, 2015, p. 9). The second reports of just one foreign terrorist fighter returnee, who describes that the group supplied him with a sense of belonging (Lindekilde et al., 2016, p. 862).

A sense of purpose
The allure of violent extremism can be explained from a psychological perspective as targeting the basic human need for closure. The need for closure entails the desire to find certainty and avoid ambiguity, allowing the individual to feel assured about the future and his or her role in life, which, if found, provides structure and coherence (Kruglanski, 2014, para. 2).

Few of the females travelling to Syria have the intention of participating in armed combat. Rather, they seem to want to fulfil the expectations put on them, by being wives and mothers, in addition, to supporting the men doing jihad (Conseil du statut de la femme Centre, 2016). Likewise, they want to live in a new society under Sharia law and contribute to its creation in cooperation with others wishing to preserve their religious values, was a strong pull factor for women who has migrated to Syria (Hoyle et al., 2015; Pooley, 2015).

The sense of limited prospects in their home country and the possibility of starting a new life in another, served as a pull factor for several men interviewed in a Dutch study (Bakker & Grol, 2015). Being able to join and protect ‘the state’ was a pull factor for some Danish foreign terrorist fighters (Sheikh, 2016). Comparable conclusions can be drawn from another study, that also portrays how participating in Syria seemed to provide them with a sense of purpose and fulfil their need to belong (Weggemans et al., 2014). One radicalised man expressed that he was attracted to the simplicity of Islam and the idea that if everyone followed the rules, it would create an ideal society (Bakker & Grol, 2015, p. 9). The interviews with Danish foreign terrorist fighters revealed that the ‘the state’ was not only viewed as an entity waging war against the West but also partly as a project of restoring Islamic pride. The author also found a reoccurring argument
legitimising ‘the state’ was a form of revenge, as they perceived themselves as victims of society (Sheikh, 2016). Some men described viewing fighting for the Muslims who suffer as a noble thing to do (Bakker & Grol, 2015). A sense of purpose is not limited to the feat of joining Daesh. Some also found meaning before leaving for Syria through collecting money for foreign terrorist fighters, participation in missionary outreach and by spreading propaganda online (Lindekilde et al., 2016, p. 866).

**Feeling of power and control**

There is an aspect of anticipated gender-specific emancipation connected with the decision to join ranks with Daesh. Though this might not correspond with the Western understanding of emancipation, it resonates with these young women nevertheless. Feelings of power and control were only found to be a pull factor for women. The opportunity to take control over their lives and rebel against their parents by making Islam the sole foundation of their identity and thus, rejecting any social or religious practice that deviates from pure Islam, gives them this feeling of emancipation. An example of this adoption of ‘total Islam’ in spite of parents opinion, were found on the social site Tumbler where a woman wrote: “yaaaaay my niqaab has arrived today [...] I really do not care what my parents opinion of this will be!” (Kneip, 2016, p. 94). Another study found that some of these women who leave, see it as freedom because it is their choice to do so, opposed to staying at home at possibly being married to someone chosen by their parents (Kneip, 2016). As they are more often victimised than their male counterparts, they also want to challenge the view by non-Muslim people, that they are oppressed and without rights and thus wishes to portray themselves as independent and strong (Gilsinis, 2014, para. 9).

**Significance, respect or status in the group**

Significance is argued to be another basic human need, and the search thereof is met by violent extremist ideologies, as used by Daesh. They offer “an invaluable psychological reward, a prize like no other. It is the sense that, by joining the fight against infidels, they earn the status of heroes and martyrs, thus gaining a larger-than-life significance and earning a spot in history” (Kruglanski, 2014, para. 8).

In a Canadian study, women expressed that an adaptation of ‘total Islam’ can bring respect, esteem and popularity amongst the peer-group. One woman described it as follows: “You had to wear the jilbab, have a Facebook account with Islamic reminders, that was the trend. Everyone had become so intense for religion. You had to show you were on the right path. It was almost a fashion” (Conseil du statut de la femme Centre, 2016, p. 59).

For men, the level of significance seemed to be equal that of women. The act of declaring support to or joining a terrorist organisation is a way to gain status whether positively or negatively. By doing so, the individual becomes a part of an exclusive club, only a few join.

**A sense of adventure**

It is generally agreed upon, that violent extremism is not caused by mental illness (Pressman, 2009, p. 8). This, however, does not exclude that some individuals possess certain character traits such as being thrill-seeking, which can make individuals more susceptible to radicalisation. This notion is reflected in statistics of individuals who migrated to Syria, which reveal that 73% of men, compared to
36% of women, were previously known by the police. The statistics also showed that men had a higher intensity of offences than women (Federal Criminal Police Office, 2016, p. 38). The search for adventure could arguably also related to the lack of purpose and future and future prospect (da Silva & Crilley, 2016).

Some of the reviewed research revealed that women are drawn by the romantic notion of adventure and marriage. One study found that the thought of being married to an attractive man, who would treat their wife like a princess was appealing for some of the women in their research. Upon being asked if she was not afraid of being forced to marry someone she did not like, one woman states: “They’re all handsome. It shows on the photos. They’re really handsome. When you do jihad, it’s physical, of course you’re in shape” (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2016, p. 72). Yet, the desire for a life as a wife and mother does not exclude some women from wanting to wage jihad. A study of individuals from Germany having migrated showed that only 18% of women had expressed desire to participate in combat (Federal Criminal Police Office, 2016, p. 38). This number could be influenced by the fact, that it is illegal for women to partake in combat according to the law upheld in Daesh territory (Hoyle et al., 2015, p. 33). Yet there are evidence to be found on those who have a desire to fight: “I wonder if I can pull a Mulan and enter the battle field” (Hoyle et al., 2015, p. 32).

In contrast to women, 56% of the men expressed armed combat to be a pull factor (Federal Criminal Police Office, 2016, p. 38). This trend is also present a Danish study. Here one of the interviewees stated that the thought defending ‘the state’ was a crucial pull factor for his decision to leave Denmark (Sheikh, 2016). Not surprisingly, the German study showed that desire to participate in combat was a strong pull factor for approximately half of the men who had left (Federal Criminal Police Office, 2016, p. 38). In another study an interviewee described his fascination with watching videos of foreign terrorist fighters and how these affect him: “It may sound weird, but when I watch these videos of Islamic fighters, I get a warrior feeling: I like the idea of truly fighting for your religion” (Bakker & Grol, 2015, p. 4). A mapping of German foreign terrorist fighters’ motives found thrills, fun and adventure were a pull factor in four cases (Hellmuth, 2016).

**Findings**

The above comparison illustrates how push and pull factors connected to radicalisation differentiate between man and women and by further examination three trends are exposed.

First, the analysis showed that the overall category factor does not differentiate significantly, as both the pushes and pulls experienced by men and women fit hereunder. Yet, a sense of power and control was found to be exclusively relevant to women and a present in several of the studies using woman as sources.

Second, nuances in what causes the push or pull factor to be relevant within each category can be detected. Difficulties in combining identities of two different cultures are undoubtedly a push factor for women, as it is a theme present a considerable amount of the included research. It was not possible to find evidence that combining culture and identity acted as a push factor for men. However, there was some evidence present indicating that the search for identity was a factor for men. Discrimination as a push factor also differed depending on sex. Women expressed much greater concern about racial and religious motivated attacks,
whereas men expressed feelings of discrimination in life opportunities between ethnicities. Both sexes were pulled by the sense of purpose, though the purpose manifested differently between women and men. Women sought to fulfill expectations such as being good wives and mothers, in addition to be able to practice their religion without judgement. For men, the purpose most often reflected a desire to protect and rebuild ‘the state’.

Third, some factors were found to be more prominent than others, which indicate that some factors are more important. The importance does not seem to be symmetrical across category and between the sexes. Identity was a more central theme with women, than men and thus, seem to be an important push factor for women. Feelings of discrimination also differed between the sexes. Despite women being the subjected to racial or religious attack and men having difficulties naming specific situations of discrimination against them, men did perceive being discriminated more often than women. Perceived global injustice did effect women more than men, as it was present in most of the used research. One study even noted that this theme was the most mentioned among their female study population. The need for belong also differentiate between men and women. Compared to their female counterparts, limited evidence was present that belonging was a pull factor for men. It was however found that a sense of purpose was a common pull factor for men, whereas it was found to be a less prominent pull for women.

Table 2. How push and pull factors differentiate according to sex

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<td><strong>Push factors</strong></td>
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<td>↔ Alienation (of yourself or others)</td>
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<td><strong>Pull factors</strong></td>
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↑ More important; ↓ less important; ↔ equally important; • factor only present for one sex

To provide a better view of the findings, these are presented in Table 2 above. As push and pull factors interact and overlap, one single factor can stand by itself as explanatory for radicalisation. It is therefore not possible to rank them according to importance across themes. Yet, it becomes clear that there are differences between the sexes. Though the push and pull factors do not vary much according to the category, they do vary in what causes them to affect men and women and in
how much they affect the them. These results are important not only because they further nuance the push and pull factors into violent Islamist extremism, but because they also highlight the importance of individually tailored approaches. If we want to further advance our prevention programs, it’s not enough to work with the push and pull categories, we need to know why and how these affect the individual. Knowing the pushes and pulls leading individuals into radicalisation, how do we neutralise these, and thus, prevent radicalisation?

**Prevention**

With push and pull factors being complex, context based and highly depended on the individual, there is no universal approach to preventing these. As radicalisation is influenced by push and pull factors affecting the individual, preventing the effect these, can be done by targeting and neutralising these factors (Säkerhetspolisen, 2010). To do so, prevention measures draw on already existing knowledge of traditional crime prevention approaches within the criminological field, which can be put into four categories: developmental prevention, situational prevention, community prevention and criminal justice prevention (Welsh & Farrington, 2010, p. 3,4).

In the following section, an illustrative analysis of preventive measures from Sweden, Denmark and England will be conducted. The strategies are not presented in full but limited to include aspects which pertain to push and pull factors. The aim is to explore how the knowledge of push and pull factors are incorporated into preventive measures and whether these are sensitive to the sexes. Each strategy will include a brief intro where after the measures will be described and put into perspective using the push and pull factors detected in the above analysis and an assessment of sensitivity towards sex.

**United Kingdom’s strategy**

A part of the United Kingdom’s CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy is Prevent, which includes an objective to “respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it” (HM Government, 2011). It is important to highlight that Prevent is not limited to violent extremism, but is intended to target all forms of extremism. Challenging these extremist ideologies includes restricting access to and the availability of extremist material, by removing propaganda from social media networks, suspending accounts propagating extremist views and by training civil society groups in creating counter-narrative campaigns (HM Government, 2016). The intention is to “disprove the claims made by terrorist groups and to challenge terrorist and associated extremist ideologies”(HM Government, 2011).

From a criminological perspective, this measure aligns to situational crime prevention which is already used in relation to prevention of terrorism and cybercrime (Hsu & Newman, 2017; Me & Spagnoletti, 2005). The objective of situational crime prevention is to reduce crime by increasing the effort and risk associated with committing a crime, in addition to reducing the rewards hereof (Clarke, 1995). By removing propaganda from social media networks and suspending accounts propagating extremist views, the Prevent strategy seeks to control the spread propaganda fuelling the radicalisation process and deflect possible recruiters by limiting their access to these social networks. Prevent also rely on users of social media to function as additional surveillance in the form of whistle-blowers, by making it easier for individuals to flag content and users who
are propagating extremist views (UK Ministry of Defence, 2011, p. 76). Likewise, the strategy also uses ‘human target hardening’ as it aims at building resilience by supplying counter-narratives, which ideally makes the individual less susceptible to extremist ideologies and propaganda. Research documenting the effect of counter-narratives is, however, limited and have ambiguous results, some even revealing that counter-narratives may be counter-productive, causing alienation by targeting too broadly (Ferguson, 2016; Gemmerli, 2016).

Push and pull factors are not explicitly mentioned in the strategy, neither do the material supplied by the Government elaborate further on what themes counter-narratives should target, nor which sex they should be targeting. This does not exclude push and pull factors from being targeted by this prevention measure, as counter-narratives can be versatile in their aim and used to target a wide range of the push and pull factors leading people into violent extremism. It does, however, seem plausible that the objective is built around situational prevention and thus, the intention is not to target push and pull factors directly, but to limited the perpetrators access to influence the target.

**Sweden’s strategy**

The aim of the Swedish Governments prevention strategy is to “make society more resilient to violent extremis” by creating measures based on knowledge about violent extremism, including the needs and desires of the target group most susceptible to radicalisation (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015, pp. 8, 22). One objective of the strategy is to create measures which protect democracy and ensures equal value and right of all individuals in society. By protecting democracy against violent extremism, the intention is not only to counter ideological views legitimising violence, but also to prevent circumstances such as discrimination which contribute to radicalisation. This aim is to be reached by targeting relevant groups, such as students, young people and faith communities, as a mean to reduce “the breeding grounds of antidemocratic behaviour and violent ideologies” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015, p. 8). Multiple measures used to reach this goal, one being the ‘No Hate Speech’ campaign. The campaign, which is an online initiative, focuses on improving youth’s ability to think critically, not only about what they read online but also about what they post. The intention is to teach young people how to properly and respectfully use their right to freedom of speech and encourage them to participate in democratic debates (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015, p. 28). Similarly, students are also taught about forms of intolerance such as homophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, both in history and in modern society. The goal hereof is to increase tolerance and create a society with high levels of mutual respect and solidarity between people whereby all individuals can feel secure and included (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015, p. 29).

The above measures fall under the category of developmental crime prevention, which aims at preventing criminal potential from evolving, by targeting risk factors and enhance protective factors. Prevention in the form of pre-school and school-based programs, such as the Perry Pre-school project, shows positive long-term outcomes in the form of better records of employment and fewer arrest among participants (Rocque, Welsh, & Raine, 2012). The developmental approach is effective, as the brain is particularly sensitive to negative and positive influences during childhood and adolescence and thus, programs targeting anti-social behaviour have been shown to be most effective during this period (Galván,
2014; Yoshikawa, 2015). Also, research indicates that it is possible to reduce racial bias by increasing awareness about stereotyping and discrimination, by articulating the existence hereof and creating counter-stereotypic images (Godsil, Tropp, Goff, & Powell, 2014). Another study investigating prejudice towards transgender individuals, concludes that it is possible to change people’s understanding for individuals in minority group, simply through conversation. Going house to house asking people how likely they were to vote in favour of legislation benefitting transgender people, followed by a 10-minute conversation where the interviewee was actively encouraged to take the perspective of transgender, increased the likelihood of the individual voting in favour. This effect was found to be lasting for up to three months after the initial conversation (Broockman & Kalla, 2016).

Despite not being explicitly stated the Swedish model does target some of the push factors present in radicalisation into violent Islamist extremism. It is imaginable that teaching about different phobias in school would influence the level of tolerance and consequently reduce discrimination and relieve stress associated with two opposing identities for religious minorities. Though these initiatives are limited to a school setting, it could serve as a basis for challenging the sense of ‘us versus them’ and secure a feeling of inclusion. The effect being limited may even have a more profound effect, as research show that being excluded from social group settings such as those found at school, can result in lasting negative consequences for an individual and his or hers feeling of belonging, self-esteem and sense of meaningfulness (Williams & Nida, 2011). It would also create the possibility to broaden understanding and eliminate misconceptions causing religiously minority groups feeling alienated based on their choice of clothing. Although differences between sexes are addressed as a part of the strategy, as being important for prevention of violent extremism, the efforts hereof are primarily aimed at men with views that are opposed to gender equality and the rights of women (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015, p. 21). This is argued to be done due to a study showing that young men, who are opposed to gender equality and holds stereotypical views about masculinity and femininity, are at risk of becoming abusive and violent (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015, p. 34).

**Denmark’s Strategy**

The Aarhus model is a part of Denmark’s anti- and de-radicalisation strategy. The model has its offset in constitutional rights, freedom of speech and the notion, that a modern democracy benefits from critical opinions, whether these are political and religious in nature. It empathises the principle of inclusion, defined as meaningful participation in cultural, social and societal life (Bertelsen, 2016). The model differs from the two previously mentioned measures, as it does not focus on ideological correction and censuring, nor on changing tolerance levels in a wider group setting. Rather the model focuses on the individual and targets criminal conduct and activism falling outside the boundaries of the law. The aim is to develop and form political and religious activities, into legal forms of participation in society. Mentors are used to reach this goal. They are to help the individual find alternative ways to be included into society through work, leisure time and education (Bertelsen, 2016).

This form for mentoring can also be described as within the scope of developmental prevention. Research evaluating the effect of mentoring as an approach to counter violent extremism is limited, but evidence from other fields
show tentative positive results (Willem, 2015). An example is mentoring of youth in general, which have been found to have a positive effect on both career and employment outcomes. In addition, this approach have an effect on self-esteem, emotional and psychological well-being and positive social relationships, however small in effect size (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008).

The Aarhus model have the potential to target push and pull factors leading an individual into violent Islamist extremism. Mentors are trained in a variety of subjects relating to radicalisation, herein risk factors, identity formation in youth and cultural psychology (Bertelsen, 2016). What mentoring includes depends on the needs of the individual mentee and the capability of the mentor. Nevertheless, it can help develop an identity and mediate the demands of opposing cultural values and norms. Departing from the notion of freedom of speech and opinion, if it is within legal boundaries, the individual might feel acknowledged, heard and understood. By finding alternative ways to feel included into society, the mentoring approach also aims at reducing alienation. Sex in relation to individuals being radicalised is not a part of the model per say, but the suitability of the mentors is among other criteria based on sex (Bertelsen, 2016).

Findings

Not all measures of prevention can be described as targeting push and pull factors; therefore, only some measures were included in the present section. Though push and pull factors are not clearly mentioned, the measures do reflect the existence of these, and interestingly each strategy has implemented measures which address the push and pull factors differently. The United Kingdom targets extremist narratives online by removing propaganda, suspending accounts propagating extremist views and by creating counter-narratives. These counter-narratives has the potential of being addressed to whichever push or pull factor deemed most relevant, yet the strategy does not elaborate on which factors are important. The Swedish prevention strategy aims at increasing tolerance for others, by teaching about subjects such as discrimination and hate speech in school. This measure can potentially target discrimination and alienation which are two of the push factors found in the previous analysis. The Danish Aarhus model utilises mentors, with the aim of showing individuals at risk of radicalisation an alternative way of being included in society and express his or her opinion, without leaving the boundaries set by the law. Depending on the mentor and the needs of the mentee, push and pull factors are targeted by using mentors in the Aarhus model.

Very little attention is given to differences between the sexes in prevention measures, if any at all. The publication available on the United Kingdom’s Prevent strategy is completely void of any mention of sex. The Swedish strategy does mention the importance of taking sex into account, though this is only expressed as relevant in relation to men. The Danish Aarhus model does likewise not mention sex in relation to push and pull factors, but do however state that sex is a consideration among the criteria on which mentor is paired with the mentee. The above findings are in line with differences in sex not being an issue in existing research pertaining to radicalisation. With thought to the findings in the previous analysis of push and pull factors, knowledge about the sexes could help inform prevention measures.
DISSUSSION

In the following section, the implications of the findings will be discussed. This will be done by placing the results of the push and pull factor analysis into the context of the above prevention measures. In addition, examples of possible ways the results can further inform practice will be presented. Finally, limitations and future research opportunities will be addressed.

Implications for practice
As research has concluded, there is no single profile of an individual who becomes a violent extremist, yet as with other areas within the criminological field, there are trends which can be detected. By mapping these trends, it is possible to utilise them to construct more efficient and targeted prevention measures aimed at radicalisation. A better understanding on how push and pull factors function according to sex does not only help make prevention more effective but can also give directions of what not to do. The following section will discuss how the knowledge about push and pull factors and sex differences can be used to inform and direct practice.

United Kingdom's strategy
There are many ways in which it is possible to target push and pull factors leading into violent extremism, one of them being counter-narratives as used by the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, targeting extremist ideology without consideration to push and pull factors does not capture the essence of which and how push and pull factors affect the individual and fails to acknowledge discrimination, belonging, purpose and identity as important factors. Based on the push and pull factors it is important to avoid stigmatisation of communities or religious groups, as this can further cause a perception of discrimination, alienation and grievances which risk reinforcing violent extremist narratives used by terrorist organisations. It is also important to secure equality, human rights such as freedom of expression, which includes the right to seek and receive information and to hold an opinion, if it does not impede on another individual's rights, by advocating violence and racial or religious hatred.

Research measuring the effect of counter-narratives is challenged, as it is difficult to assess if the specific target group has been reached and how they have reacted to the narrative. A study analysing the reach of the counter-narrative campaigns ‘Average Mohamed’ and ‘Harakut-Ur-Taleem’ used in the United States showed, that the selected narratives were predominately viewed by males. The female views only consisted of approximately 33% of the overall views (Silverman, Stewart, Birdwell, & Amanullah, 2016, p. 25). The uneven distribution of views between sexes illustrates that there is a need for specific targeting. As violent extremist groups successfully target the sexes differently, counter-narrative should naturally do the same. The creation hereof would, therefore, benefit from knowledge about how push and pull factors affect the sexes differently.

Adding further to this reasoning Gemmerli (2016) argues, that radical online cultures are reflective of the community and social identity created around the sharing of narratives, composed of dreams, feelings and politics. Thus, a counter-narrative presenting ‘facts' about reality, fail to grasp what makes radical narratives so effective, causing a feeling of manipulation. ‘Normality campaigns'
aimed at selling a better alternative than violent extremism, likewise miss the mark, as "part of the attraction of radicalism is precisely that it turns its back on a normality that can appear unattainable and is not open to the kind of political and religious diversity youths seek" (Gemmerli, 2016, p. 4). To ensure a better understanding of why radical narratives are so effective, it would be beneficial to look at the different effect push and pull factors have on men and women. Despite the fact, that the United Kingdom’s counter-narrative objective reflects situational prevention, this measure has the potential to target multiple push and pull factors, and one approach does not exclude the incorporation of the other.

**Sweden’s strategy**
The Swedish strategy’s prevention measure in the form of education used to increase tolerance, targets the push factors discrimination and subsequently alienation. This measure is not differentiated according to sex, but neither does it necessarily need to be. Increasing tolerance targets everyone across sex and on group level, instead of individually. It intends to prevent the feeling of discrimination by preventing, what causes it, from developing. The knowledge of how push and pull factors differentiate in how they are felt and what causes these feelings can nevertheless help inform and broaden the measure. In line with teaching tolerance, there is also an opportunity of addresses identity and the formation hereof in education. Addressing and debating identity during adolescence where personalities and values are shaped, can help prevent a vacuum which could otherwise be filled with violent extremist narratives (Knani, 2013). Teaching about different opportunities within the field of activism could counteract the push factor 'perceived global injustices', giving individuals an alternative way of making a difference for society within the legal frames of the law. As an additional benefit, this could lead to the creation of 'a sense of purpose'.

**Denmark’s Strategy**
The Danish Aarhus model utilises mentors who's aim is to show individuals at risk of radicalisation alternative ways of being included in society and express his or her opinion, without crossing the boundaries set by the law. The measure does target push and pull factors broadly, but attention to sex differences can further advance the effect hereof.

The model states that sex is a consideration among the criteria on which mentors are chosen, and research shows that the sex of the mentor is important, as a meaningful relationship between the mentor and mentee is dependent on mutual understanding, trust and respect (Rhodes, Bogat, Roffman, Edelman, & Galasso, 2002). The possibility of creating a meaningful relationship can also be advanced by selecting a mentor who has had similar experiences to those of the mentee. For female mentors, these experiences could pertain to having found identity opposing cultures or a successful search for belonging. For male mentors, this could include someone who finds the future meaningful, despite having faced opposition. As such it would act not only to improve the mentor-mentee relationship, but also more adequately target the push and push factors present.

A study measuring mentees perceptions of the degree of role modelling, psychosocial and career development in the mentoring they received, showed that female mentors provided more role modelling than career development compared to their male counterparts. This effect was present whether the mentee was male or female (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). This makes the sex of the mentor ever more
important in targeting the factors of radicalisation, such as women search for identity and men's perception of discrimination, causing perceived limited prospects.

**Additional possibilities**
Paying attention to similarities and differences in push and pull factors between men and women does not limit itself to informing the highlighted measures above. It also gives practitioners knowledge about other areas, which have either been neglected or can be enriched.

An example of a neglected area could be the fear of racial or religious motivated attacks, which influenced women under the push factor 'discrimination'. Fear of crime is a well-studied phenomenon, and thus, there has been created array strategies countering this, some of which could be similarly be transferred for fear of hate crimes. A previously mentioned research exploring women's experiences of Islamophobia and hate crimes in Malmö discovered that such incidents were common in the public sphere and that the research population frequently mentioned places such as streets, squares and buses (Lindström, 2016, p. 24). An initiative to counteract the fear of racial and religious motivated crime could involve increased police visibility at such places and an effort to increase trust in the police, which has shown to reduce the fear of crime in general (Salmi, Grönroos, & Keskinen, 2004).

An area which could be enriched by the knowledge of differences between men and women could be risk assessments used to assess individuals considered to be radicalised and at risk of committing future violent acts. One such risk assessment is the Violent Extremist Risk Assessment (VERA-2) which is a structured professional judgement tool based on root causes connected to radicalisation and terrorism (Pressman, 2009). The factors measured upon in VERA-2 includes push and pull factors such as identity problems, grievances, search for belonging and alienation from society (Pressman, 2009, p. 20). Though VERA-2 does measure the level in which these factors are felt, it does currently not consider how factors differentiate depending on sex. By making the assessment sensitive to sex, it could ensure more reliable evaluations, limiting the risk of false predictions.

**Limitations**
This research has several limitations, which needs to be considered when interpretation the result.

First, the result is influenced both by the general lack of research using primary evidence in general and by the lack research addressing men causing an uneven distribution of data between men and women, which can have skewed the result. Furthermore, the evidence used in the included material is not always unambiguous. Some of the material included analyses social media posts created by individuals residing within Daesh territory, whom, as earlier mentioned, both restricts the flow of out-coming information and heavily uses propaganda, limiting the validity. Qua the violent Islamist extremist world the studies based on interviews with radicalised individuals may be influenced by social desirability bias or portraying a rationale developed to justify the actions (Coolseal, 2015). Consequently, the found results pertaining to the push and pull factor analysis should be reviewed critically and rather as trends, rather than definitive results.
Thus, the present thesis is limited as exploratory in design, warranting further primary research to establish more conclusive results.

Second, the investigation of how prevention measures targets push and pull factors and whether these were sensitive to sex, were influenced by the lack of information available on the theories on which they were based. As some of these were collected from the government’s official pages, they were descriptive rather than explanatory. It is therefore possible that these are derived on knowledge of push and pull factors, or that there later in the implementation of the measures are more substantial descriptions of what they should target.

**Future research**

As showcased in this thesis there exist little consensus about within the research field of violent Islamist radicalisation, which opens for a wide array of research possibilities.

Paradoxically, more men than women have migrated to foreign countries like Syria and Iraq to participate in building ‘the state’. Thus, the male study population should in theory far outnumber that of females. This discrepancy could be the product of the intriguing misconceptions surrounding women and radicalisation. Women are often viewed through stereotypes as being passive, victims and coerced which causes a greater interest in exploring why they would leave a seemingly safe place for an un-egalitarian life, in a place strained by war and destruction (Knani, 2013). Thus, the research field would greatly benefit more focus being put on men, as well as the differences between men and women. Yet, further research is hindered by the current access to the research population and primary qualitative data. Databases holding information on known radicalised individuals are slowly starting to emerge, but not yet available to independent researchers. Likewise, intelligence services and police presumably hold a wealth of information not accessible, due to security reasons (Schmid, 2015). Overcoming these barriers would help advance the knowledge base.

The way in which each government understands the reasons behind radicalisation shapes the creation of preventive and de-radicalisation measures. Necef (2016, p. 3) presents two approaches from which radicalisation is viewed. The first approach is based on structural factors. These structural factors may include marginalisation and exclusion, leaving the individual open to radicalisation. The second approach focuses on the individual’s agency and argues that the structural approach victimizes those who becomes radicalised, without paying attention to the individuals own desires, ideas and tendencies (Necef, 2016, p. 4). In addition, there are multiple theories on which the preventive measure can be build, not only within the field of criminology, but also from other social sciences. To better evaluate prevention measures, it would be beneficial to delve further into individual measures and their theoretical background. This could be achieved by evaluation how these measures are implemented locally, which could also serve as a basis for evaluation the effect.

Though most individuals are exposed to push and pull factors, it is only a few of these who becomes violent Islamist extremists. The fact that most individuals can resist, could be due to resilience or protective factors which, if present, makes it possible for the individuals to cope with change. Interestingly, belonging to a radical group may also create resilience and protective factors which makes it less
likely that the individual is susceptible to de-radicalisation (Doosje et al., 2016). Exploring how protective factors and resilience interact with push and pull factors, would further our understanding of the subject of radicalisation and effective prevention measures. Such an investigation is an obvious opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration with scientific fields like psychology and social work.

Despite push and pull factors being dependent on a variety of factors a comparison of these across terrorist organisations and time is warranted. It is possible that such knowledge could help expand our understanding of push and pull factors and what causes these to be effective. In addition, it could help counteracting these making for more effective prevention which is not only crucial in contemporary times, but could also secure more swift and effective solutions to future developments within violent extremism.

**CONCLUSION**

The terrorist organisation Daesh has managed to gather a large group of supporters which has been evident in recent years’ terrorist attacks and in the number of foreign terrorist fighters, who has been drawn to the organisation. Undoubtedly researchers and practitioners have been hard stressed to break the curve. What makes an individual susceptible to radicalisation into violent Islamist extremism has consequently been of great interest.

The first objective of this thesis was to address a research gap, by comparing push and pull factors present for men and women. The analysis revealed three trend. First, there were limited variation in the overall categories describing the push and pull factors present for men and women. Second, when looking at what caused push and pull factors to manifest differences between men and women existed. Third, there were differences in the degree of how much men and women were affected by these factors.

The second objective was to investigate how preventive measures targeted push and pull factors, and whether they did so with the respective sexes in mind. It was found that none of the measures explicitly mentioned push and pull factors, yet they all had the potential of targeting these. Sex was included in some aspects of the measures, but was never a consideration in relation to the targeting of push and pull factors.

The third objective illustrated through a discussion showed that the results of the push and pull factor analysis could help inform and direct practice. Not only could the found differences be applied to already existing measures and possibly, make these more effective. They can also be used to highlight areas in which we do not yet have preventive measures installed.

It is necessary to understand how push and pull factors work, if we want to adequately challenge violent Islamist extremism and ensure the best possible prevention of radicalisation. The results found in this thesis, indicates that we need to develop on existing knowledge about push and pull factors and explore the possibility that differences between men and women exist. This is of importance not only because it advances our understanding of radicalisation, but
also because it is important for how prevention measures are designed to challenge the occurrence thereof. Yet, to properly achieve this goal more empirical evidence on push and pull factors needs to be generated in the future.
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