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## **Suicide – Dying for a higher purpose?**

A study of the motives of the Islamic female suicide bombers through  
Emile Durkheim's structural view on suicide



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Bachelor Thesis: SOCK04, 15 hp

Spring Semester 2017

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## **Abstract**

There have been several accounts of suicide attacks in the last few years; and although male attackers outnumber female attackers, the number of female suicide bombers has been on the rise. This thesis analyzes the motivation of Muslim female suicide bombers using Durkheim's theory on suicide and society. Interviews with experts on suicide and radicalization were conducted to provide a perspective that enriches the literature review and the statistical analysis. Drawing on Durkheim's theory on suicide I argue that radical Muslims view perceived pious femininity as less important than martyrdom and therefore have a different set of norms for women than men.

*Keywords:* Suicide, Suicide Terrorism, Islam, Gender, Martyrdom

## **Thank you**

I want to take the opportunity to say thank you to my adviser Sophia Yakhlef who has been very supportive during the whole process of writing this thesis. Also a special thank you to Ms. Kulp and Dr. Stephan who generously shared their knowledge in their various fields of expertise.

Thank you

Michelle Nilsson

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## 1. Introduction

"And do not kill yourselves. Surely, God is Most Merciful to you". "We are property of Allah and we will return to Allah one day"<sup>1</sup>(Amirhosein et al 2014:106).

There are many groups and individuals that can be associated with terrorism and radicalization. These people can be found in different cultures and countries and even throughout history. These groups and individuals might have different reasons for justifying violence as a tool to enforce different discourses, such as religious beliefs or political beliefs. Many organizations apply a variety of discourses to encourage the use of terrorism as a radical way of implementing the ideals of the group in the larger society. It is of utter importance to emphasize that there are several perspectives and filters that can be used when studying suicide terrorism. One of these filters is religion, in particular Islam, which is first and foremost a religion that is practiced differently by millions in many countries. Therefore, Islam provides an intriguing perspective to viewing terrorism, especially when it is combined with variables such as gender and culture that vary within the Islamic discourse.

When looking at gender roles from an Islamic perspective, two general views can be inferred from the Qur'an: men are meant to exemplify masculinity and women femininity, although there is a sense of spiritual equality among men and women (Eaton 2000:91). The basic understanding of women and men in Islam is that they complement each other and function as a pair, just like the rest of the universe as "humanity has been created in a pair."<sup>2</sup> This perspective implies that one cannot be complete without the other (Murata 1992:14). This polarity, which is created by emphasizing the completion of the two sexes, creates a separate view of functions in society (Eaton 2000:92). The common interpretation of these functions is that women's primary sphere is in the home, and the men's main sphere is in the outside world and society. Therefore, according to Islamic teaching women's participation in the public sphere, especially something as masculine as militarism is frowned upon, let alone being a suicide bomber.

Moreover, looking at gender roles in Islam, it is of great importance to recognize that life and family are central to society (Eaton 2000:93). One can infer when reading verses from The

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<sup>1</sup> The Noble Qur'an, translated by Qarib. Chapter 2: Verse 156.

<sup>2</sup> (Sūrat al-Dhāriyāt, 51:49)

Qur'an that life is supposed to be viewed as something sacred. Life should be regarded as a gift from the creator, which we are obliged to care for. Therefore life cannot be taken without justification (Eaton 2000). This again contradicts how female suicide bombers, who tend to be strong believers, do not regard these two social norms and religious values.

When taking gender roles into account with religious and cultural aspects, one could question the motivation for these women suicide bombers. With the structural functional view on suicide that Emile Durkheim argues, specifically that stronger social control results in lower suicide rates, this paper analyzes how religiosity can explain the possible motives behind suicide terrorism among Muslim women.

## **1.1 Background**

There have been numerous suicide attacks around the world during the last couple of decades by Muslim terrorists. According to various news media such as The New York Times and The Telegraph, a 27 year old man performed a suicide attack outside a bar in Ansbach, Germany, injuring 15 people (New York Times 2016/07/26). Another attack happened in Stockholm in 2010, where a man used pipe bombs to perform the attack, however only killing himself (The Telegraph 2010/12/10). These attacks are just a few on many recent suicide attacks reported in in the world.

When studying suicide terrorism, a lot of focus is placed on the modus operandi<sup>3</sup> of the terror groups committing the deeds. Women have been a part of terror organizations throughout history. In many countries and in many religions and cultural formations, these women have been used as hostage-takers, hijackers, soldiers or suicide bombers (Davis 2008:72).

However, most often suicide attacks are performed by men; in fact, both the attack in Germany and Sweden were. According to Yarchi (2014) male suicide attackers receive more media attention than female suicide attackers. Previous research on suicide terrorism portrays female suicide terrorists in traditional and stereotypical ways focusing on gender roles.

However, they do mention that female perpetrators are not the expected or the norm. Research has viewed female terrorists as very different from male terrorists; therefore, can we compare them to the typical idea of a terrorist? (Yarchi 2014:677).

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<sup>3</sup> Criminal methods used by perpetrators or a method, mode of operation.

Women radicalization is a phenomenon that is at the center of many policy agendas. More recently, the Islamic State, ISIS, showed a new image of women devoting themselves to more radicalized beliefs of Islam (Pearson 2015:5), among other terrorist organizations. In recent years female suicide bombers have increasingly been accounted for throughout the world. Global jihadist groups have specifically been seen an increase in recruiting and encouraging female suicide bombers in their actions. They tend to use women as a tactical surprise, for strategic purposes, and for filling recruitment void (Davis 2012:279).

## **1.2 Research question**

The purpose of this paper is to outline possible motivations of female suicide bombers through Emile Durkheim's (1897/1983) structural perspective on suicide. As mentioned in the introduction there are different suggestions of why some women decide to go through with talking their life as suicide attackers. There might be religious, cultural, financial, or other motivations for becoming a suicide bomber, and these motivations might be on an individual level or a societal level. In this paper, I use Durkheim's structural perspective on suicide to analyze the reasons behind these possible motivations for suicide terrorism. This is done by analyzing previous research on suicide terrorism together with statistical data, two qualitative interviews, and Durkheim's structural perspective on suicide.

Durkheim argues that as social integration decreases, suicide rates increase and among the various types of suicide, altruistic suicide happens when there is excessive regulation of individuals by social forces, such that a person will be moved to kill themselves for the benefit of a cause or for society at large whereas anomic suicide occurs when a person experiences a sense of disconnection from society and a feeling of not belonging that result from weakened social cohesion (Durkheim 1897/1983).

Specifically, my research question is how religiosity can explain the possible motives behind suicide terrorism among Muslim women? I argue that radical Muslims view perceived pious femininity as less important than martyrdom and therefore have a different set of norms for women than men. In relations to Durkheim's theory, my argument stresses that in radical Islam, altruistic suicide is given higher values and rewards than social norms and gender roles, although it might be viewed as a form of anomic suicide by non-radical Muslims and others.

## 2. Theory

In the history of Sociology, different views on how society works has been presented and constructed. One of the predominant sociological theoretical approaches during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was structural-functionalism. This approach aims at explaining society as a system with different underlying structures that interact with one another. These structures have an impact on how people think, feel, and perceive things and others. Thus, structural-functional theories explain society as a multifarious system of components that collaborates to create stability and solidarity. These systems and underlying structures also work as creators of norms and rules for members of society (Piaget 1971).

One of the founding sociologists who applied the structural-functional thinking on social matter was Emile Durkheim. According to Durkheim, the thing that determines how and why people act or don't act in different ways, is a result facilitated by structures created from a collective consciousness in society, which is conceptualized by norms, beliefs, and values. This collective consciousness develops in to a united way for different groups in society to understand the society and provides guidelines in how to behave, which produces a bond between the individuals in the group, which generates social integration (Lukes 1985).

### 2.1. Structural-functional theory, Durkheim on suicide

Emile Durkheim describes in his book *Suicide* (1897/1983), how the theories on suicide tend to be based on how people are affected by different aspects of society and social settings. To explain his understanding of the concept of suicide further, Durkheim asserts that; "The term used for suicide deaths, directly or indirectly, is the result of a positive or negative action, conducted by the deceased, and which he knows will lead to this result" (Durkheim, 1897/1983:22).

In Durkheim's definition of suicide, he states that it does not matter if a suicide is an active (positive) decision, such as suicide by self-inflicted injury, or whether is a passive (negative) behavior, such as an individual using starvation as a suicide method they both qualify as a suicide (Durkheim 1897/1983).

Durkheim also introduces four different types of suicide; the egoistic, altruistic, fatalistic, and anomic suicide (Durkheim 1897/1983).



## **2.2. Anomic Suicide**

According to Durkheim anomic suicide is a type of suicide that occurs when the individual experience an anomie. Anomie is a phenomena implemented by Durkheim which describes a state of disconnect from society and a feeling that the individual is not belonging as a result from weak social cohesion. The anomic state often occurs when there is a time of economic, political or social upheaval, which often results in a fast change in the everyday life of the individual. During the anomie state, the individual might feel so confused and disconnected that they die by suicide (Durkheim 1897/1983).

Durkheim states that there is a connection between the suicide rate and the way important functions in society is regulated by society. This can be actualized and applied on how financial and industrial crises tend to increase the suicide rate. According to Durkheim no individual can be satisfied unless their needs are adequately adjusted to their means. The lack of capacity to satisfy the individual's needs can result in friction and a sense of lack of productivity, pain and a feeling of a general fading of the impulse to live (Durkheim 1897/1983).

## **2.3. Altruistic Suicide**

The altruistic suicide appears when there are excessive regulations of individuals by social forces. The individual can be encouraged to die by suicide in order to benefit the society or to benefit a cause. Hence excessive individuation leads to suicide. However, insufficient individuation does also, according to Durkheim, contribute to an increasing rate of suicides among individuals. When applying this to social context, one can exemplify this phenomenon amongst people, where servants and followers after the deaths of their masters or chiefs, kill themselves because it can be viewed as being their duty. This thinking was enforced by society for social purposes. However, in order for this to happen, the individuals' personal needs to have a little value. This state was by Durkheim referred to as a state of altruism (Durkheim 1897/1983). Similar to various other types of suicide, the altruist dies because he or she feels unhappy. Although the unhappiness is distinct in its effect and causes; the altruist often tends to pledge to a grander cause beyond this world, thus making the world a hindrance and a burden to the individual (ibid).

## **2.4. Egoistic suicide**

When individuals sense a feeling of total detachment from society and therefore die by suicide, it tends according to Durkheim to be categorized as an egoistic suicide. On a general basis individuals are associated to society by family bonds, community bonds, work or by other social ties. However, when these bonds are damaged the risk of suicide is greater. Examples of damaging these bonds could be loss of family, friends or retirement. The egoistic suicide therefore transpires when there is low social interaction creating a greater risk of suicide for the individuals who are not supported by membership in a group or are not part of a social setting. Durkheim claimed that the detachment from society might lead to or create detachment in life since, from an egoistic perspective; society gives life a meaning (Durkheim 1897/1983).

## **2.5. Fatalistic suicide**

The final type of suicide that Durkheim presents is fatalistic suicide. This type of suicide occurs when there is extreme social regulation. These social regulations tend to be results of conditions that are oppressive to the individual person and the denial of agency and of the self. During these circumstances, people might choose to die by suicide instead of living under the oppressive conditions. The fatalistic suicide is suicide committed by people whose passion is controlled by an oppressive discipline. Therefore, the fatalistic suicide tends to often occur in settings where the individual cannot see any probable way of improving his or her life conditions. These conditions can for example be economical or social (Durkheim 1897/1983).

## **3. Method**

In this following section I describe the method I chose to collect data, process it and analyze it. This thesis uses method triangulation to study the motivation of female suicide bombers from Durkheim's thoughts on suicide and on the structural-functional theory. The method triangulation was used because of the benefits regarding the advantages of different methods complimenting each other. Quantitative methods are generally used to understand and control facts and phenomenon in objective ways. The qualitative approach, on the other hand, aims at understanding different perspectives, such as putting emphasis on different actors in the field and different perspectives of situations (Bryman 2011). The purpose of combining the two approaches is to offer objective background information regarding suicide terrorism with the

help of statistics and literature, and to provide a combination of objective and subjective opinions from two experts on suicide and radicalization.

There are many different factors that I considered when analyzing this phenomenon: First, there is no direct information from the study subjects, since I could not interview female suicide attackers. Therefore as a researcher, I only had access to secondary and third party data. However, this paper combines the opinions of two experts in suicide and radicalizing with literature and statistical data, and applies the theory of suicide and views on society by Emile Durkheim.

Another important thing to consider is the reliability (Bryman 2011), and ensuring that the measurement of motivations really measures the motivation? When studying the motivation of female suicide bombers or suicide bomber in any instance, there might always be a certain feeling of issues with the reliability since the data often isn't acquired from the original source, the suicide bomber. However, this paper doesn't aim to create a generalized theory on what the motivations are nor, does it claim to be based on the information from original source, but rather from statistics, "experts" or second/third party literature.

One could also discuss if the paper would have benefitted in having more interviews with experts in various fields, such as women's rights in Islam or terrorism, to create a broader informational background to the paper. However, due to the time restriction and outline restriction the two interviews performed for this paper were sufficient to achieving the objectives of this paper.

### **3.1. Interviews**

This thesis uses information from two semi-constructed/constructed interviews done with individuals who have professional knowledge in the areas of radicalization and suicide. The usage of a semi-constructed interview was chosen since the aim of the interviews is to provide the interviewee with a freedom when responding and create a more natural conversation (Bryman 2011:301). However, since there was an interest in getting information regarding small areas of their respective fields, a mix of a constructed and semi-constructed interview method was used to provide information in the area of their fields that was appropriate for this paper.

Positive aspects of using interviews as research methods is that there is a chance to display

details and depth which can help to understand complex research questions. There is also the positive effect of getting the chance to take part in the interviewees reasoning regarding certain situations or phenomenon. The data acquisition method can also be viewed as very flexible since there is a chance to ask follow up questions in order to make sure the validity is high (Bryman 2011). To ensure high transparency, excerpts from the interview transcripts will be provided in the appendixes. Ensuring transparency is of importance to show that the results of the interviews are reported regardless of outcome, as well as to give the readers a chance to insert a cohesive connection of all that was discussed in the interview (Bryman 2011:301).

The two interviews that are used in this paper were done with two professionals who inhabit professional knowledge in the areas of suicide and radicalization. I have not been interviewing individuals who have been in personal experience with suicide attacks and therefore I will not be analyzing the motivation of suicide bombers from the individual's perspective. Hence, the data used from the interviews is based on the professionals' expertise in their specific area and not opinions and thoughts from people involved in suicide terrorism.

A semi-structured interview was conducted with an expert on suicide, Interim Executive Director Amy Kulp at American Association of Suicidology (AAS), in Washington DC, which is a professional organization that works with educating professionals about suicide. I contacted her because of her extensive background in the professional setting in the field of suicide. I hope to provide data regarding the general professional approach towards suicides and detecting themes concerning causes and motivation for suicides. The main focus of the interviews was to discuss possible motivations and causes for suicide from a professional perspective. Mrs Kulp was chosen because her 5 years of experience of working in a 24-hour crisis center for suicide and have been working AAS for over 22 years. She has a Bachelor in Social Work and Master of Science Applied Behavioral Science from John Hopkins University. The aspiration was that Mrs Kulp would provide professional knowledge in the field of suicide.

Another semi-structured interview was done with Dr. Rita Stephan, Deputy Director at the Office of Data Analytics, Office of the Executive Secretary in Washington DC. The interview with Dr. Stephan was done to provide a professional perspective on the radicalization of female suicide bombers as the author of "War and Gender Performance" (Stephan 2014) and editor of *In Line with the Divine* (2015). This interview also provides background information regarding the settings of many suicide attacks.

As demonstrated above, the interviewees were chosen because of their extensive knowledge in the specific fields of suicide and radicalization.

### **3.2. Literature review**

This thesis also uses data and theoretical aspects from books and scholarly articles. A large amount of articles were used to understand the different components of suicide terrorism, for example the article *Martyrdom in Modern Islam* 2014, by Hatina, was used to study the concept of martyrdom and Islam. To understand the gender roles of Islam bot Eaton (2000), and Nicolau (2014) has been used.

A study that was used frequently as a reference regarding data on female suicide terrorist was *Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reasons?*, written by Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor (2008). This paper analyzes 30 biographical accounts of suicide terrorism and classifies the different motives between the genders.

Emile Durkheim's theory on society and suicide is a central part of this thesis. Durkheim is one of the main sociologist who have analyzed suicide and created categorical types of suicide. His theory of suicide is often connected to the suicide terrorism discourse and mentioned in book and articles that uses sociological theories to explain suicide terrorism. I argue that his theory is applicable on many different types of suicide and therefore an interesting fit for suicide terrorism, since one of his suicide categories is, altruism, offers clear indication that it can be applicable on suicide terrorism. For the theoretical aspects of the paper, Emile Durkheim's theoretical input on suicide was used as a base to analyze the motivation of Islamic female suicide bombers from a professional aspect. Durkheim's theories were chosen because of his emphasis on societal factors, which might offer another dimension to the analysis of the motives of suicide terrorism.

### **3.3. Statistical Data**

The statistical data that was used in this paper was gathered from Suicide Attack Database reported by University of Chicago. The CPOST Suicide Attack Database (CPOST-SAD) contains statistics on suicide attacks in different countries. CPOST-SAD enables the researchers to have different variables such a target classification, systematic information about the demographic and general geographical personal aspects of the suicide attacker, when gathering the statistical numbers. The CPOST-SAD uses news websites as a way to

verify the different accounts of suicide attacks. These websites as open sources as for example OpenSource.gov and Lexis Nexis, although CPOST also uses other electronic recourses such as martyr videos, social media accounts and militant group websites to identify attacks.

Data from a study done by Karen Jacques and Paul J., has also been used in this paper. The article analyzed biographical accounts from 30 males and 30 females suicide terrorist. These biographical reencounters were coded as, motivation for attack, outcome of attack and method of recruitment. Then the authors performed a log-linear analyst on the data.

The advantages for this paper when using quantitative data, is that it provides a random sample which creates a representative distribution of answers, making it more possible to generalize the original population (Denscombe 2009), than it would if only using qualitative data.

### **3.4. Ethical dilemmas**

One of the ethical dilemmas which has presented itself in this paper is the question regarding showing the names of the interviewees whom acts as “experts”. Consent is a very important part of qualitative research that uses interviews, because there has to be trust between the researcher and interviewee (Bryman 2011). In this paper both of the interviewees was asked if they wanted to stay anonymous or if their name could be published. Both of the agreed on that their names could be published in relation to their interviews.

The negative aspects of using interviews as a method can be the anonymity of the interviewees, which has to be considered. In this paper I asked both of the interviewees regarding consent in publishing their names. The negative aspect of using interviews as data collecting method is that the processing of the data can be tedious and the sample of interviewees can be limited (Bryman 2011). In this instance I chose to publish the experts name because I argue that it enhances the legitimacy of the statements done by the interviewees. However, if the interviews were based on personal information about the interviewees personal experience I would not have to published their names since it is important to protect the privacy of the interviewees and it is also important that the interviewees feel comfortable with what is published about their private lives (ibid). I was granted permission to publish both of the interviews name in this thesis.

Dr. Stephan was interviewed because of her extensive expertise in the field of radicalization. She has previous professional experience as a Strategic Planner, Center for Strategic Counter-Terrorism Communication and as a Senior Analyst for Syria and Lebanon at the US Department of State. The interview provided valuable insight in the field of radicalization but also as a person who has tremendous knowledge about the culture since she was born in Syria.

### **3.5. Analyzing Method**

The analyzing method that was used in this paper is the content analysis, which is a method based on analyzing written text, oral text, audio visual texts, or ionic texts. The texts that are analyzed are usually text and documents from past times produced by communication processes. This method allows the researcher to process large amount of data and information. When using the content analysis method the researcher often uses key words or themes when analyzing the texts. The reason for this is to create a type of categorization that provides the researcher with a frame for the content that is being analyzed (Bryman 2011). For this analysis the categories that have been used are; suicide terrorism, gender and Islam.

The analysis uses the methodological outline of excerpt commentary unit to display the findings of this paper (Emerson 1995:182). Excerpt commentary unit is a method where there is an analytic point which usually displays how the author of the paper wants the reader to interpret the excerpts by directing attention to certain features in the excerpt. The analytic point can also act as a link to previous ideas displayed in earlier paragraphs, which can strengthen the sense of cohesiveness and enforce certain themes that the author wants to enforce. After the analytic point, the author provides orienting information, which acts as a bridge between the previous section analytical point and the excerpt from the interviews. The orienting information can often include information regarding main subjects that are studied such as names of subjects or their roles in the situations studied is being analyzed (Emerson 1995:183). Then, the excerpts follow the orienting information, which in this study are excerpts from interview. After the excerpts a discussion of the excerpts are in a phrase that according to the excerpt commentary outline is called analytic commentary, where the author normally describes why the excerpts is of importance (Emerson 1995:184). The reason behind using excerpt commentary unit is to maximize the interaction between an analytic idea and excerpt, giving the reader a chance to follow the reasoning behind the analytical points made.

## **4. Analysis and Dialogue with the Literature**

Research in this paper is based on articles that explain variation in suicide terrorism and gender. The areas that are being examined are suicide and terrorism, its relation to Islam, gender in Islam, recruitment and radicalization, motivational factors and martyrdom from an Islamic perspective.

### **4.1. Suicide, Terrorism and Gender**

The definition of suicide terrorism varies in different countries, however; most definitions seem to generate a general understanding that terrorism is a strategic, unlawful and political act (Jayasena 2011:25). Suicide terrorism is described as a “politically motivated violent attack perpetrated by a self-aware individual (or individuals) who actively and purposely causes his own death by blowing him or herself up along with the chosen target” (Schweitzer 2000:1).

Saathoff (2017) states that terrorism tends to be a “group” activity, which is organized by people who inhabit means, such as weapons, money, and transportation. However, the individual who kills him or herself in the mission of killing others can in these settings deserve special attention since his or her sacrifice is viewed as solidarity and strength by the society. There is no special profile of these people who self-sacrifice, as those who commit these crimes are often part of a heterogeneous group in society (Saathoff 2017:2). Saathoff argues that people who are willingly involved in self-sacrificing behavior rarely suffers from mental illness, but are often described as “normal.” The individual approach can thus be based on self-sacrifice or suicide because of situational, social (Saathoff 2017:4), or other individual reasons. This analysis then suggests that from a Durkheimian perspective, anomic suicide is less applicable to suicide attackers.

When Durkheim aimed to explain the reasons behind suicide ideation, he focused a lot on the norms in society (Durkheim 1897/1983). The reasons for committing suicide are many and varied based on a combination of circumstances that might be individual or social.

When explaining typical risk factors for suicide ideation from an applied perspective, Mrs. Kulp agrees with Durkheim that the reasons are complex: *“Suicide is a complex phenomenon with rarely a single cause. Risk factors for suicide include undiagnosed/untreated depression,*



*drug/alcohol use, losing a close friend or relative to suicide, a recent significant loss, and feelings of disconnectedness.*” Grave loss might give the person the feeling that she or he has nothing left to lose and will therefore feel less attached to life and society and would then be committing what Durkheim calls anomic suicide as a result of disconnection from society and loss of sense of belonging.

Beyond anomic suicide, Durkheim argues that there are several different risk factors that could generate a greater likelihood of suicide ideation including fatalistic, altruistic, and egoistic suicide (Durkheim 1897/1983). The risk factors that Durkheim describes were also mentioned in the interview with Mrs. Kulp, as examples of the factors that often distinguish the classification of the different types of suicide.

The data shows that while women are less likely to engage in suicide attacks, this phenomenon is growing. According to data posted by the Suicide Attack Database (CPOST-SAD 2017), reported by University of Chicago, between 1974 and 2016, 2360 attacks were done by men (which resulted in 21707 deaths, and 60330 injuries). At least 221 attacks were done by women and there were 2286 deaths and 5184 people were wounded. In 2284 other attacks, the gender of the suicide attacker was unknown. Of the 221 suicide attacks that were performed by women, 189 were done between the years of 2000 and 2016 and 32 attacks were done between 1974 and 1999. While men in the US, according to Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program are 73% more likely to engage in crime, they are ten times as likely to commit suicide.

When dividing the years with the amount of attacks, it can be discovered that there were 1.3 suicide attacks every year that was done by women between 1974 and 1999 whereas between 2000 and 2016 those rates were at 11.8 attacks every year. Hence one can infer that there has been an increase the last 16 years in the female suicide attacks. When using Durkheim’s theory on suicide to analyze this increase, one could argue that since there is an increase in the amount of females that does suicide attacks, is due to a change in society. This because Durkheim argues that suicide often is a result of pressure that society puts on the individual Durkheim (1897/1983) However, there are many norms according to Durkheim that affects the individual and why they make decision.

## 4.2. Suicide and Terrorism in Islam and the Qur'an

When analyzing radicalism and suicide together one could infer that the two phenomena have their motivations in societal matters. Dr. Stephan explained her opinion on the types of individuals that become radicalized and kill themselves in a suicide attack; "...those who have nothing to live for, and I have heard that before, people who have lost everything and have nothing else to lost, so psychologically this would be the next thing to do; and these people are easily manipulatable because they are willing to do anything without thinking of the consequences or the impact on others..."

The characteristics that Dr. Stephan describes in her statement could be applicable to the one type of suicide Durkheim names as the anomic type. In the categorization of anomic suicide, Durkheim emphasizes how the "anomie" state influences that individual, because of the lack of association and norms that anomie brings, and therefore put the individual at a higher risk of suicide. According to Beyler, 2003; Kushner, 1996 there are key events that can be viewed as triggers to the motivation of suicide attacks. These key events can be the loss of a family member which can cause the individual to feel disconnected from society since they possibly lost the only connection they had with society. The individual cannot handle and finds him or herself in a state, which is describes as an anomie by Durkheim. Interestingly, this opinion was echoed by Mrs. Kulp from the practical perspective. She sees that people who suffered a great loss in their lives feel this kind of disconnect. Individuals who have lost everything are at a higher risk of suicide deviation (Durkheim 1897/1983).

Dr. Stephan described the second type of radicalized suicide bombers as: "...those who strongly believe in the higher cause in what they are doing and to them 'the end justifies the mean'. These are the brainwashed to a point that they are willing to give up the most precious thing, life, for the cause. Soldiers in armies belong to the second category, and I find the difference between a person who joins an army and one who joins a terrorist group is the legitimacy of the group, the motivations are the same..." When using Durkheim's classification on the set of cases Dr. Stephan describes, one could apply the altruistic type of suicide. Durkheim states that the altruistic suicide type happens when there are excessive regulations of the individual. They believe in a "higher cause" which according to their thinking justifies their thoughts. In these stations the individual needs do not have high value since the group ideals is the main interest of the group (Durkheim 1897/1983).

The Qur'an states; "Cast not yourselves to destruction with your own hands." (Sura 2, verse 195) and "And do not kill yourselves. . . . Whoever does so in enmity and wrong, verily, we shall let him burn in Fire" (Sura 4, verses 29–30). This indicates that suicide attacks are forbidden (Küntzel 2008:228). However, the writings in the Qur'an can also be interpreted as allowing killing of the unfaithful, (4=89, 9=30, 47=4) and in some cases even seems to encourage it (4=74). Therefore, Islamic terrorist organizations can express and interpret religious justification for a holy war using justification from the Qur'an (Küntzel 2008:228).

Another possible interpretation that turns in to justification is the Muslim doctrine of jihad which can be said to advocate that Muslim believers who find themselves in a struggle with non-believers, to sacrifice their lives as Shahids<sup>4</sup>, instead of surrenders (Küntzel 2008:228). Some argue that Islam encourages martyrdom for the Umma of Islam (community of Islam) while others say that this literal interpretation is far from the truth. This love of nation, or community, is not unique to Islam but any other "imagined community" (Anderson 1991). According to Benedict Anderson, an imagined community is a concept that describes nationalism as "a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group" (Anderson 1991).

### **4.3. Women and Gender in Islam**

When looking at gender roles from an Islamic perspective, two general views can be inferred from the Qur'an: men are meant to exemplify the religious and cultural norms of masculinity and women of femininity; and the second view is there is a sense of spiritual equality among men and women (Eaton 2000:91). The basic understanding of women and men in Islam is that they complement each other's functions like the rest of the universe as "humanity has been created in a pair."<sup>5</sup> This implicates that one cannot be complete without the other (Murata 1992:14). Some might say that this approach generates a polarity that is created by emphasizing the differences of the two genders, which leads to a separate view of their functions in society (Eaton 2000:92). The common interpretation of these functions is that women's primary sphere is the home, and the men's main sphere is the outside world and society. Hence, when looking at gender roles in Islam it is of utter importance to recognize that the center of life and society is the family and home (Eaton 2000:93).

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<sup>4</sup> martyr.

<sup>5</sup> (Sūrat al-Dhāriyāt, 51:49)

According to Nicolau (2014:712) in some of branches of the Islamic practice, women are viewed as inferior to men. Nicolau argues that this view originates from? The belief that Muhammad, even though he valued women, enforced tough stipulations through the Qur'an, led many to believe that women should be inferior to men. The sense of women's inferiority can be exemplified through marriage, since the marriage is a legal contract between the future husband and the woman's guardian, her father. This legal contract has often certain conditions that need to be fulfilled, possible conditions might be consent from the two parties, legal formalities or a dower.<sup>6</sup> Some Muslim women do not get a chance to meet their future husband prior to their marriage; and girls are married off by their parents as young as 10-12 years old. Women can therefore be viewed as inferior to men since they do not take part in creation of the contract and are represented by their fathers who speak on their behalf (Nicolau 2014:713). This view of course represents one interpretation to these laws. If one places these teachings in a historical perspective, we can see that these ideas were introduced in the same time that women elsewhere did not have any rights.

Alternatively, Hoveyda (2014) argues that it is in the mainstream practice of Islam, not in its paradigms, that the profoundly opposed views of women occur. The Qur'anic Schools, madrassas, for example display two distinguished views of women; the first one argues that women are inferior to men and the second one infers that women are not to be trusted. These teachings of how to view women tend to enforce the views of women in Islamic societies (Hoveyda 2014:216-217). One could therefore claim that the polarity, used to describe gender roles in Islam, creates a serious imbalance between women and men in the Islamic societies around the world (Hoveyda 2014:217).

In the article *Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reasons?*, written by Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor (2008), the authors discuss 30 biographical accounts of suicide attacks done by men and 30 biographical accounts of suicide attacks done by females. The authors state that most of the extremist groups have nationalistic or religious motivations behind their actions. They also suggest that membership in a group creates motivation that is fostered by a collective identity. This collective identity offers goals that trump individual goals. Therefore, creating a form of de-individualization increases the likelihood of someone taking his or her own life (Pape, 2005). This, combined with an indoctrination of group

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<sup>6</sup> The dower is a wedding gift, which is stipulated by Qur'an. And is supposed to be given to the man from the woman's family (Nicolau 2014:713)

values, gives the individual a new purpose and complementary motivation for participating in a suicide attack (Bloom, 2005; Sageman, 2004; Moghadam, 2003). However, the motivation of joining extremist groups might vary between men and women, and between individuals according to McMahon (1995), Taylor and Lewis (2004). In Juergensmeyer's (2000) argument, men are more likely to experience a perceived loss of collective identity and are therefore more likely to join nationalistic or religious groups that provide them with social and individual identity. Using Durkheim's categories, the first group might seem to suggest that suicide bombing is motivated by altruism, while the second group suggests that it might be anomic or even egoistic, as a result of people feeling detached from nationalistic identity and greater identification with religious individual identity.

One way to analyze the female Islamic Suicide bombers and their motivation is to look at how the gender roles within the Islamic culture and religion. Throughout society one might say that gender roles tend to be perceived and produced differently. One can wonder if these motivations or risks are the same between men and women and if the beliefs of religions affect these gender roles. For example, according to some branches of the Islamic culture, women are viewed as subordinate to men. These women often spend a lot of their time in their homes caring for their children, homes, and husbands while the men usually work and operate in society outside the home (Nicolau 2014). These different spheres might come with a different set of norms which can be viewed as separate based on gender since the men and women operate in different spheres.

One could discuss that the women and men might have separate perceptions of their gender roles because of the different spheres that have been enforced by various actors in such society as religion and culture. When using this point of view one might argue that the motivations for becoming suicide bombers might be different between the genders but it is not totally true.

When I asked Dr. Stephan if the motivations between the sexes vary, she stated:

*“Not in my opinion, although women are more likely to fall victim to social desirability; that is doing something in order to please someone. This is a sign of lack of maturity. Usually children are pleasers but also people who lack self-determination. However, I believe that generally women tend to get dismissed as being fully capable agents”*

Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, state in their article *Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reasons?* that many of the risk factors and motivations seem to be the same, although there are a few differences. It has been found that in some cases men tends to show more aggression when public order isn't performed and is more likely to experience a loss of collective identity and there for seek join another group (Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor 2008). Using Durkheim's societal thinking, (Durkheim 1897/1983 ) one can argue that since gender roles and norms are perceive differently, women could face greater pressure and feel greater disconnection from society. After all, women and men in some instances operate in different spheres, the home and out in society, they could be subjected to different sets of norms from their interactions and from society.

#### **4.4. Recruitment and Radicalization**

Recruitment into suicide terrorism can be viewed as a reactive or proactive process, or as a combination of both processes. In some instances, there are social or religious groups that act as gates into extremist activities. Being a member of a group can provide group solidarity for the individual which creates an in-group dynamic. This dynamic can display rules and norms for the group members and can lead to getting individuals to provide tactical support for the group ideas, which in some instances can be extreme ideologies (Lofland and Stark, 1965; Sageman, 2004). Some of the other recruitment tactics that can be seen is peer pressure, which emphasizes the pressure that might come from family members or friends to engage in suicide terrorism (Post, Sprinzak, and Denny, 2003). In many suicide attack cases one can see that friendship bonds have an important role in the initial integration in the extremist groups. In many of the cases friends or acquaintances were the ones who recruited the subject and introduced him or her to extremist groups (Sageman, 2004). Comparing these findings with Durkheim's category, recruitment in the first instance can be categories as altruism suicide.

Recruitment can be viewed as a step towards becoming more radicalized in one's beliefs. When an individual becomes a member of a group, it often adapts to the rules and norms created within the group. Group ideals are adapted by the individual giving the individual a sense of being connected to the group dynamics and sharing its beliefs and ideals.

When I asked about the motivation behind radicalization, Dr. Stephan stated that a possible reason was; *"Feeling despair whether this despair is caused by economic, political or social*

*reasons...* Hence, Dr. Stephan puts motivational aspects of radicalization as related so a sense of despair which can be linked to different aspects of society, suggesting that society can be seen as a connecting factor. According to Durkheim's structural-functional thinking also emphasizes the role of society. If Durkheim's theory (1897/1983) on society were to describe the phenomenon of radicalization, one could infer that radicalization is a result of interaction between different components in society that pressure individuals on political or economic levels.

According to Lofland and Stark (1965) and Sageman's (2004), religious and political activity in some cases can lead to extremist activities, enforcing the belief of that group norms or societal norms can have an impact on the individuals way of acting. Political or economic norms can be created when interactions between individuals and groups are taking place. These norms might affect the individual either negative or positive which then can act as a motivational factor for the extremist behavior which can lead to suicide terrorism. Hence, both Lofland and Stark, 1965; Sageman, 2004 and Durkheim (1897/1983) describes group dynamics as a big part of the motivational factors regarding the individual's way of acting. Describing that norms that are created in society, and therefore groups, enforces the individual to behave a certain way or making certain decisions. From this one can infer that in the case of analyzing motivations regarding radicalization, one has to look at the setting the individual lived in to understand the motivational factors.

#### **4.5. Women's Motivation**

There are several possible motivations among women who participate in suicide terrorism, for examples motivation can be nationalistic or religious reasons. According to research a lot of the terrorism organizations tend to fight for either nationalistic or religious reasons (Pape, 2005).

Personal motivation is another possible trigger for an individual to decide to become a suicide attacker. Personal motivations can differ from other motives, such as nationalistic or religious motives, because the personal motives can be a key event that happens in the individual's life that fuels the motivation of the individual. Alternatively, nationalism and religion can be bases for motivation of a group involving group dynamics and norms that is created by the groups (ibid).

Studies have shown that women tend to have more personal motivations than men. Even the women who can be viewed as having ideological elements in their motivation can in some cases be found to have personal motivations dualistically with the ideological elements (Cunningham, 2003). Personal motivation can be isolation from society (Sageman, 2004), Depression (Myslobodsky, 2003), low self-esteem (Israeli, 1997), or family honor. Hence, the suicide attack can be conducted to restore family honor or raise low self-esteem (Victor, 2006) (Lester, Lang, and Lindsay, 2004).

A personal motivation could be revenge or a key event that took place in the individual's life. A key event is something that occurs, which leads to the individual having a physiological response due to the event which is beyond the individual's control (Beyler, 2003; Kushner, 1996). Examples of key events can be deaths of close friends or family members, which often can be seen by the individual as the last "thing" that settles the actual decision of becoming a suicide terrorist (idib). The key event can also be exemplified through humiliation or degradation by the enemy towards the individual, which acts a traumatic event, which motivates the suicide attack (Victor, 2006).

Key events like these are often accompanied by difficult living circumstances, which create a turning point for the individual who then might face the decision of becoming a suicide bomber. For women there are additional types of key events which often can contribute to the motivation of becoming a suicide terrorist, such as exploitation. In these situations, organizations often take advantage of the individual's circumstances to recruit that person (Kimhi and Even, 2004).

Regarding the motivational revenge, research has shown that both male and female suicide attackers have cited revenge as motional when acting out a suicide attack (Kimhi and Even, 2004; Speckhard and Akhmedova, 2006). However, the origin of the revenge may differ between personal factors, like sexual abuse, death of a loved one or socio-political occurrences such as occupation of their country (Kimhi and Even, 2004). Although some motivations can be categorized as fatalistic in Durkheim's terms, others are clearly not so.



## 4.6. Martyrdom

Martyrdom is a phenomenon that has existed since early human history. For example, the notion of evil, good, and heroism have occurred in the religions of ancient Greece and of Egypt. Islam and eastern Christianity created ideals of warrior heroes who could communicate with prophets, were promised immortality, exempt of Judgment day and released from sins (Hatina 2014:2).

Displays of martyrdom have been persistent into modern time. Self-immolation by Vietnamese Buddhist monks to protest against the American occupation in the 1960s, kamikaze pilots who flew their planes into American fleets causing explosions during the Second World War, and activists in liberation organizations in the Third World and Middle east could all be seen as examples of manifestation of martyrdom (Hatina 2014:2).

There are numerous ways of explaining the reason behind why people die for their beliefs. Some of these theories suggest that the main reason behind martyrdom is the existence of tyranny and prosecution. Another theory focuses on honor and social degradation, suggesting that when individuals are degraded, restoring their self-esteem and dignity become their main priority. More psychological explanations put the emphasis on group imitation and competition. Another approach is the social control which aims to pin out that it is the groups capacity to retain loyalty of the group member and prohibit their allegiance to collective norms (Hatina 2014:2).

Looking at martyrdom from Durkheimian perspective, we see that an individual willing to die and become a martyr, who normally lacks the resources, information, and logistical capacity to turn his intentions into actions, needs an organization that helps indoctrinate him in believing that he or she is dying in the name of God (Bakken 2007).

When trying to define the word Martyrdom, one should understand that there are several different understandings of the phenomenon. From an etymological aspect, a martyr is a witness. When viewing it from a Christian context, the apostles personified witnesses to the Christ's sayings and acts. In early Christian history the term could also be linked to the meaning of testimony or to religious beliefs (Hatina 2014:3).

In both modern and ancient cultures, there has been pantheon of heroes who could fit the ideals of martyrs. Martyrdom can be obtained in numerous ways, for instance by choosing

death or suffering over giving up rights, principals, or faith. The term “martyr” thus holds a wide range of motivation and behaviors (Hatina 2014:3)

Group pressure and socialization have important influence on the motive, hence making ideals of self-sacrifice more influential in collective cultures than in other cultures. The higher the rate of self-sacrifice is, the higher is the risk that this behavior would be adapted as normative. This shifts self-sacrifice, from a collective point of view, to add morality, quality and positive values to a group or collective. Consequently, can martyrdom be seen as an efficient tool when forming groups or reinforcing existing groups. Indeed, the usage of martyrdom can unify communities and reinforce resisting when the group is confronting stronger groups (Hatina 2014:3)

One could argue that the act of martyrdom should be done in public, or as a minimum publicized widely thereafter, since the act of martyrdom challenges the legitimacy of the empowered side whilst reinforcing the members of the group. The legends and stories of the act of martyrdom can be used to utilities solidarity. (Hatina 2014:4)

Islam forbids a believer from intentionally seeking death. However, in the modern era Shaykh al-Azhar Mahmud Shaltut expressed that jihad/martyrdom should be granted in three situations only “*to repel aggression, defend the mission of Islam, or defend Muslims’ freedom of religion in non-Muslim lands*”(Hatina 2014:6).

During war, death on the battlefield is glorified. The men who die like this are often regarded as perfect young heroes and are honored by ceremonies. The martyrdom in these cases can be viewed as a part of a competition of political supremacy over the community. On the one hand the death of the martyr in the struggle of the external enemy and on the other hand, the external enemy. However, martyrdom can also be used as a way of enforcing the struggle against political enemies within in the community or group and thus fills dual purposes when delegitimizing the outside enemy, but also strengthens the status of her or his group within the community (Janes & Houen 2014; Hatina 2014:7).

As can be inferred from the discussion above, martyrdom can reinforce national and communal identities, particularly in crisis situations. The mission of the martyrs shifts from him or her to the representatives of the martyr, whom handles the politics of the martyrdom. These representatives represent a person who through a publicly witnessed death, carries a

message of commitment, determination and a non-submission to the enemy and does at the same time serve as a role model who is worthy of imitation (Janes & Houen 2014) (Hatina 2014:7).

Another important factor regarding martyrdom is the narrative, which can determine the significance of the martyr. The narrative of the martyr is shaped by written and oral traditions in the community. If the culture in the community is prone to tragic, the narrative tends to reflect the tragic aspect. However, this narrative of the martyr might not be created at the time of death of the martyr (Hatina 2014:8).

In regards of the phenomenon of martyrdom, which in Islam can be seen as a result of a struggle against an enemy, but can also strengthen the status of the groups using martyrdom within communities (Janes & Houen 2014) (Hatina 2014:7). Durkheim stated that the martyrdom could be viewed as a manifestation of the group solidarity. In one of his suicide classifications, Altruism, he proceeded to explain how the altruist often sacrifices themselves and their needs for the group. This sacrifice can generate a strengthened groups solidarity (Durkheim 1897/1983).

When I asked Dr. Stephan about how female suicide bombers feel about martyrdom her response was that the situation is complex:

*“... Women have traditionally been viewed as victims in the triangle of victim-villain-hero ... The literature is rich describing the experience of women as victims, we have seen some studies of women as heroes ...so martyrdom in this context is probably sanctioned; and now female suicide bombers are studied as filling the space of villains...I believe that women villains have existed throughout history, but never as causing so much destruction. Martyrdom in the villain context is less acceptable and I believe the general reaction to female suicide bombers is to dismiss their conviction in the cause, and present them as lost souls that were easily manipulatable.”*

According to Hatina (2014) Martyrdom symbolizes an effort to break social and ideological boundaries through acts of heroism. Death can in some instances be viewed as victorious, contemplating that even if the body is defeated, the spirit cannot be destroyed. The heroism inferred by the martyrdom can be viewed as related to altruism. Altruism can be actualized through the act of self-sacrifice, which runs alongside individuals' instincts for survival. The one who sacrifices oneself for the collective reflects her or his readiness to act as sacrifice and

as sacrifice. The altruistic death can be viewed from two symbolic aspects; purity and strength. These aspects can be seen as representatives of redemptive suffering and self-discipline (Hatina 2014:4).

Durkheim emphasizes the importance of cultural institutions and group processes factors impacting people's behavior. Hence, making self-sacrifice is a manifestation of group solidarity. When applying the altruistic suicide type developed by Durkheim, the individual sacrifices themselves and their needs as an organic part of the group for the group. This self-sacrifice provides the individual with a sense of group solidarity, which generates a sense of identification with the collective values of the group (Durkheim 1897/1983).

When subordinating physical survival to ideology, martyrdom authorizes superiority to the values of the ideology and to the personal being. These values gain gratification as the true essence of life and are therefore superior to the individual (Hatina 2014:4).

If taking in to account that women and men can be viewed as having a different set of norms regarding their roles in society according to some branches in Islam, one could say that there is the society perceives men and women differently as in regards of what their societal purpose is. Dr. Stephan statement suggest that the female suicide bombers could be dismissed by society as individuals who are easy to manipulate and might be more considered as lost souls because of the norms of the culture these women is a part of. According to Juergensmeyer (2000), men are more likely to feel aggression when public order is not maintained, and the radicalized groups tend to use aggression as an outlet for their anger.

When analyzing the different norms of women and men in branches of the Islamic religion one could discuss whether the access to society and different setting of norms based on their gender would lead to differences in the motivation. According to Durkheim the way people act is a result of norms created by interaction in society (Durkheim 1897/1983). And according to Cunningham (2003) studies show that women tend to have more personal motives than men have to become suicide attacks. Hence, when applying Durkheim's thoughts on norms, one could suggest the female suicide bombers motivation act based on the norms which they are affected by.

Durkheim's theory on society is based on the thinking that society is a unique system of components which are created when the consciousness of individuals fuse together. These

components interact with each other creating a norm which acts as a collective norm. These collective norms later norms that is applicable on groups and individuals in society. These fuses and norms are very influential parts of society which makes the interaction between individuals a central part of the structure of society according to Durkheim (Durkheim 1897/1983). When deconstructing the phenomenon suicide terrorism, one can look closer on the radicalization discourse and the suicide discourse to analyze the motives behind suicide terrorism.

## **5. Conclusion**

The one main thing that can be inferred when looking at the literature on suicide terrorism, and the interviews, is that the motivation of a suicide bomber lays in societal norms that often affect the individual. These motivations, or risk factors, can be individual as in norms that affect the person on an individual basis, such as a key event (Beyler, 2003; Kushner, 1996), seen more in the altruism and anomie categories of suicide (Durkheim 1897/1983). But this can also be related to identity which the individual wants to obtain, and identity created by group norms enforced by society (Ibid).

This paper aimed to provide a possible answer to the research question “how can religiosity explain the possible motives behind suicide terrorism among Muslim women?”

With statistics, two interviews, and literature review I argued that radical Muslim views of women subordination and gender roles are less important than their valuing of martyrdom as altruistic suicide. Therefore, gender norms for women and men in this context are not different but they take advantage of the disconnection and lack of belonging that individuals feel in order to promote terrorist organizations’ objectives.

According to statistical data there has been an increase of female suicide attackers compared to earlier years, which according Durkheim’s suicide theory can be viewed as a result of changing norms in the society. In a few branches of Islam, the gender roles are very separate and norms put women and men in different spheres. Despite separating the spheres and norms that are set for men versus women, these difference settings might create different sets of motivations that urge men and women to join terrorist organizations and commit suicide attacks. Even though men outnumber women in being suicide bombers, there has been an

increase in women killing themselves as well, and that number is on the rise in alarming rates. It is very important to note that this view of gender doesn't apply to the main practice of Islam, but as in other cultures, occurs in radical branches of the faith.

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## **News Articles**

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([https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/26/world/europe/ansbach-germany-music-festival-explosion.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/26/world/europe/ansbach-germany-music-festival-explosion.html?_r=0)).

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## **Databases**

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## **7. Appendix**

### **7.1. Interview with Mrs. Amy Kulp 03/23/17 (excerpt)**

**I: Researcher IP: Amy Kulp**

**I: Can you please tell me about your experience working on suicide?**

IP: I worked in a 24-hour crisis center for almost 5 years. I've been at AAS for over 22 years.

**I: Can you explain a little bit about the general reasons / motivations behind suicide?**

IP: Suicide is a complex phenomenon with rarely a single cause. Risk factors for suicide include undiagnosed/untreated depression, drug/alcohol use, losing a close friend or relative to suicide, a recent significant loss, and feelings of disconnectedness. Suicidal persons often feel hopeless, helpless, and alone. They don't really want to die, but are searching for a way to end their pain and suffering.

**I: According to your experience as a person that been in the field for numerous years, do you believe that the reasons behind suicidal deviation is based on individual factors or more structural factors created in society?**

IP: I don't think the two can be isolated, as one can influence the other.

**I: Can you explain more about why and how do you believe one can influence the other?**

IP: I don't know that you can isolate the two...

**I: mhm..**

IP: Because you know both of those things.. have equal ..ehm.. equal influence on a persons ability to cope and umm. The particifating events behind a suicidal attempt so I mean you could have.. Lets take a teenager who is being bullied for instance. Ummm You he has got the societal factors of being bullied and the shame the embarrassment that goes along with that... umm .. which in of it itself can precipitate suicidal though. Umm. On the other hand you can have a youth who is going through that who is not suicidal because they have a strong emm.. support system at home, from religious beliefs.

**I: Yes..**

IP: Or um they just have a strong personality where they, they basically can dismiss it and it roles of their back.

Umm similar type of thing you know youth who maybe depressed, who is struggling with a,b and c may not nessacarilly become suicidal...were someone else might. There is just there is so many factors that come in to play that it is difficult to say that one has a stronger baring over the other. Does that make sense?

**I: mhmm..**

**I: What societal factors affect people's motivation to commit suicide more than others? (like culture or age?)**

IP: I'm not sure what you mean by motivation. The elderly have the highest rate of completions but youth have the highest rate of attempts. Some cultural factors can be protective (like religion), as can being a parent for women.

**I: Can you explain more about how factors can be protective and if these protective factors also can be risk factors?**

IP: and then societal factor.. When we talk about risk factors and protective factors.. risk factors are the things that we know can contribute to someone being suicidal, like eh depression, you know untreated depression, having gone through abuse. Experience of severe loss, having lost someone to suicide, all those kinds of thing, those are risk factors. Protective factors on the other hand are things which are opposite or reverse factors. Protective factors are those things if you can tap in to typically in a clinical set they will reduce the likely hood that someone will be suicidal and make an attempt, Like umm, a strong religious belief that you know.. eh.. life is sacred the worst sin that on can commit to is to kill our selves, good never gives us more than we can handle – all those types of religious beliefs.

ISO those.. If you were in a clinical situation and somebody was talking about suicide even if they just brought it up umm, lightly, you may tap in to that, and you know they are a really religious person and and say “well tell me more about that”. You know habits that strengthens you, those kind of thing, you tap into that. Similarly we know that not all women but many women who have ideation may not act on it because they would be concerned about what would happen to their children. So it becomes a protective factor against suicide attempts.

Does that make sense?

**I: Yes I guess.. I was thinking about can a protective factor also be a risk factor, do you know what I mean when I say that?**

IP: no , I don't.

**I: So being a mother or like having these religious beliefs might be a protective factor but could it also be a risk factor. Or like.. As a mother you might be more open to stress, might be more open to depression , is t like a gate way to other factors?**

IP. Obviously stress can be.. stress in it self can be a risk factor but I have never heard of there being a mother .. being a risk factor.

**I: Yeah..**

IP: it is usually more of a protective factor.

**I: Okay lets take another example religion, because like religion can be such a big thing or like culture could be such a big thing , you could have support but there can still be a lot of stress that comes with it?**

IP: Well certainly if someone feels like.. feels like they are shamed ..

**I: Mhmm..**

IP: In the family or lets say that there are you know you are a member of a church and they get. They are found guilty for you know molesting boys..

**I: yeah..**

IP: you know.. the fact that they had a strong religious identity . but there the risk factor would not be the religion, the risk factor there would be the shame and embarrassment and the stigma associated with the crime.

**I: We hear a lot about religion as a factor that affect people in their suicidal deviation. I am going to ask you opinion about that in three situations:**

- a. Giving up one's life**
- b. Giving up one's life for something higher**
- c. Giving up one's life to kill someone else (soldiers)**

IP: Sorry, I'm not qualified to answer this one.

**I: How do you stop people who want to commit suicide from doing so? How about in the case of suicide bombers?**

IP: The best way to prevent suicide is to recognize the warning signs and help the person get treatment. Suicide bombers often have a different reason for dying. They aren't necessarily looking for an end to the pain, but doing it for political reasons and belief it is for a greater cause.

**I: What steps do you believe is essential to catch the minority groups that doesn't seek help from organizations?**

IP: Reducing the stigma around asking for help, and offering programs that are culturally sensitive and relevant.

## **7.2. Interview with Dr. Rita Stephan 03/26/17 (excerpt)**

**I: Researcher IP: Dr. Rita Stephan**

**I: Can you explain to me about what your experience with radicalizations is?**

IP: I have seen radicalization on the rise for at least the last 10 years in Syria as a reaction to modernization, opening in the economy and expanding freedom of speech. This opportunity was taken advantage of by the Wahabi-supported evangelism mostly financed by Saudi Arabia. I see radicalization as a geopolitical event that took advantage of people's frustration with lack of economic opportunities and corruption. Also more people are choosing radicalization as a rejection of western contradictory values that champion liberty and freedom globally and oppress it in the region by supporting corrupt regime, waging wars against many countries in the region, and the unconditional support for Israel.

**I: What's the main motivation behind radicalization?**

IP: 1) Feeling despair whether this despair is caused by economic, political or social reasons; 2) the presence of anti-hegemonic rhetoric that appeals to the person feeling despair. There are both pull and push factors.

**I: Is there a difference between women and men regarding this motivation?**

IP: Not in my opinion, although women are more likely to fall victim to social desirability; that is doing something in order to please someone. This is a sign of lack of maturity. Usually children are pleasers but also people who lack self-determination. However, I believe that generally women tend to get dismissed as being fully capable agents.

**I: Can you talk a little bit about the type of people who becomes radicalized and who kill themselves in suicide attacks?**

IP: I believe there are 2 kinds of people who commit suicide attacks: 1) those who have nothing to live for, and I have heard that before, people who have lost everything and have nothing else to lost, so psychologically this would be the next thing to do; and these people are easily manipulatable because they are willing to do anything without thinking of the consequences or the impact on others. 2) the second type are those who are strongly believe in the higher cause in what they are doing and to them "the end justifies the mean." These are the brainwashed to a point that they are willing to give up the most precious thing, life, for the cause. Soldiers in armies belong to the second category, and I find the difference between a person who joins an army and one who joins a terrorist group is the legitimacy of the group, the motivations are the same.

**I: Within the organizations who radicalize people, is there a different view of men and women and of their role in the organization?**

IP: Men are seen as more capable terrorists whereas women as seen as less visible and suspicious. Radical leftist organizations (not the Islamic State, but organizations like the Palestinian and other radical groups) believe in gender equality and therefore put women forth as capable candidates of committing the most difficult and important act to them, terrorism.

**I: Whats your take on Martyrdom and female suicide bombers?**

IP: It is a challenge for feminist theory to deal with female suicide bombers. Women have traditionally been viewed as victims in the triangle of victim-villain-hero (see articles by James Jasper). The literature is rich describing the experience of women as victims, we have seen some studies of women as heroes (Stephan, and women in the military) so martyrdom in this context is probably sanctioned; and now female suicide bombers are studied as filling the space of villains. Does this achieve gender equality in this field? I would rather not. I believe that women villains have existed throughout history (Delilah in the Bible, the Witches in European context), but never as causing so much destruction. Martyrdom in the villain context is less acceptable and I believe the general reaction to female suicide bombers is to dismiss their conviction in the cause, and present them as lost souls that were easily manipulatable.



### **7.3. List of Islamic terror organizations of interest's in lines with the United States State Department list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations**

Abu Sayyaf, Philippines

Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Gaza Strip and West Bank

Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, Egypt

Al-Qaeda, worldwide

Al-Shabaab, Somalia

Ansar al-Islam, Iraq

Ansar al-sharia, Libya

Armed Islamic Group (GIA), Algeria

Boko Haram, Nigeria

Caucasus Emirate (IK), Russia

East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), China

Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Egypt

Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front (IBDA-C), Turkey

Hamas, Gaza Strip and West Bank

Harkat-ul-Mujahideen al-Alami, Pakistan

Hezbollah, Lebanon

Islamic Movement of Central Asia, Central Asia

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, worldwide

Jaish-e-Mohammed, Pakistan and Kashmir

Jamaat Ansar al-Sunna, Iraq

Jemaah Islamiyah, Indonesia

Lashkar-e-Taiba, Pakistan and Kashmir

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Pakistan

Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Philippines

Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group, Morocco and Europe

Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Gaza Strip and West Bank

Tawhid and Jihad, Iraq