

Youth and Terrorism

A six-step interdisciplinary explanation



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Key note at the *Young Scientists Conference* of the 18th Triennial Conference of the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP), Vienna July 5-8, 2017

This research was supported by the Dutch Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)

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Today's talk

- 2015: Paris
- 2016: Brussels, Nice, Würzburg, Charle  Universiteit Utrecht
Berlin
- 2017: London, Stockholm, Paris, Manchester,
London
- Terrorists in majority of attacks aged between 20
and 31
- Terrorism and youth?
- Probably, six steps from sociology to psychology.
Empirical evidence for each of the steps

1. Adolescence as social invention

Transition	1950	2015
	Age	
School leaving age	15	21
First intimate partner	20,5	17
First marriage	23	30



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So: prolonged period of education, 6 years and of experimentation with intimate relationships, 10 years. Adolescence as life-phase and youth as group

Note: faster increase of personality maturation, agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability in countries with earlier timing from school to job

2. “Don’t trust anyone over 25”

Youthcentrism



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- In group-out group differentiation
 - Negative attitude against parents, strong orientation on peers
 - Critical to adult institutions (school, state) and its functionaries (teachers, police, politicians)
 - Generation gap: ‘...hope to die before get old...’
 - Young people are able to oppose the adult world
- 1965: ‘Teenage-ethnocentrism’ (Schofield), 1981 Jugendzentrismus (Zinnecker et al.)

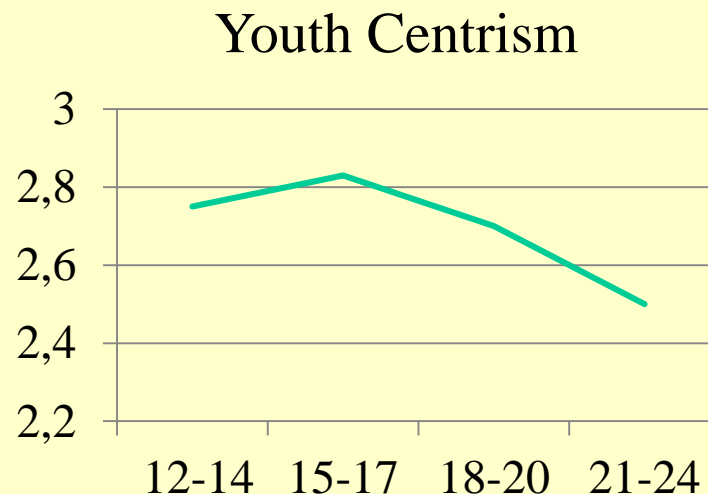
Scale item: *‘Young people and adults: Two totally distinct worlds’*

Youth centrism: Empirical findings

- Adolescents endorsing youth centrism: between 30 and 40%
- Youthcentrists: poorer relationships with parents, more engaged in youth subcultures, poor school performance, more unemployment, and most prevalent in middle adolescence



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3. No Future...

- The grim aspect of youth centrism
- Latent aspect of group consciousness in all youth generations: there is no place for us in this society
- Examples: present Dutch discussion on pensions, UK discussions on Brexit, or more severe: youth violence in Paris suburbs in 2007-2008
- Real ground for No Future: in times of unemployment youth unemployment always has strongest increase



No Future: Empirical findings

- Social hedonism (cf Smetana's Social domain theory)

'Why do they simply not allow us to be happy?'



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- Anarchism

'This is us, and we do as we like'

- Youthcentrism

'Young people and adults: Two totally distinct worlds'

- No Future

'Live fast – die young'

'Youth 2016: No future!'

The adolescent rebellion escalator: A cumulative scale model

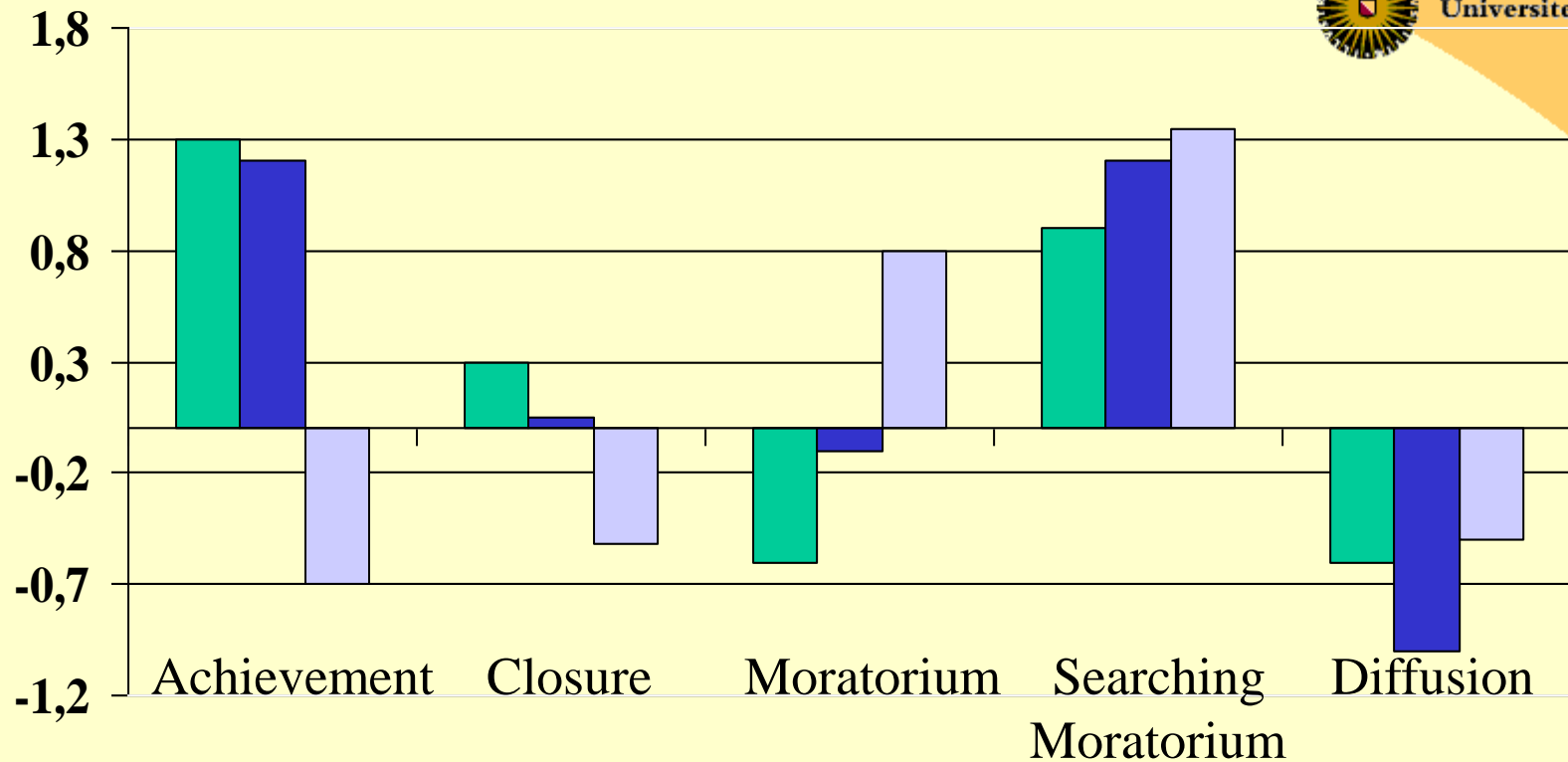
Youth in despair	4	1	1	1	1	13%
Generation gap	3	1	1	1	0	20%
Resistance to adults	2	1	1	0	0	26%
Youth oriented	1	1	0	0	0	51%
Adult oriented	0	0	0	0	0	49%
Label	Position on dimension	Social hedonism	Anar-chism	Youth-centrism	No Future	%

4. No Future: Identity diffusion and Moratorium

■ Commitment
 ■ In-depth exploration
 ■ Reconsideration



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Prevalence
12-20

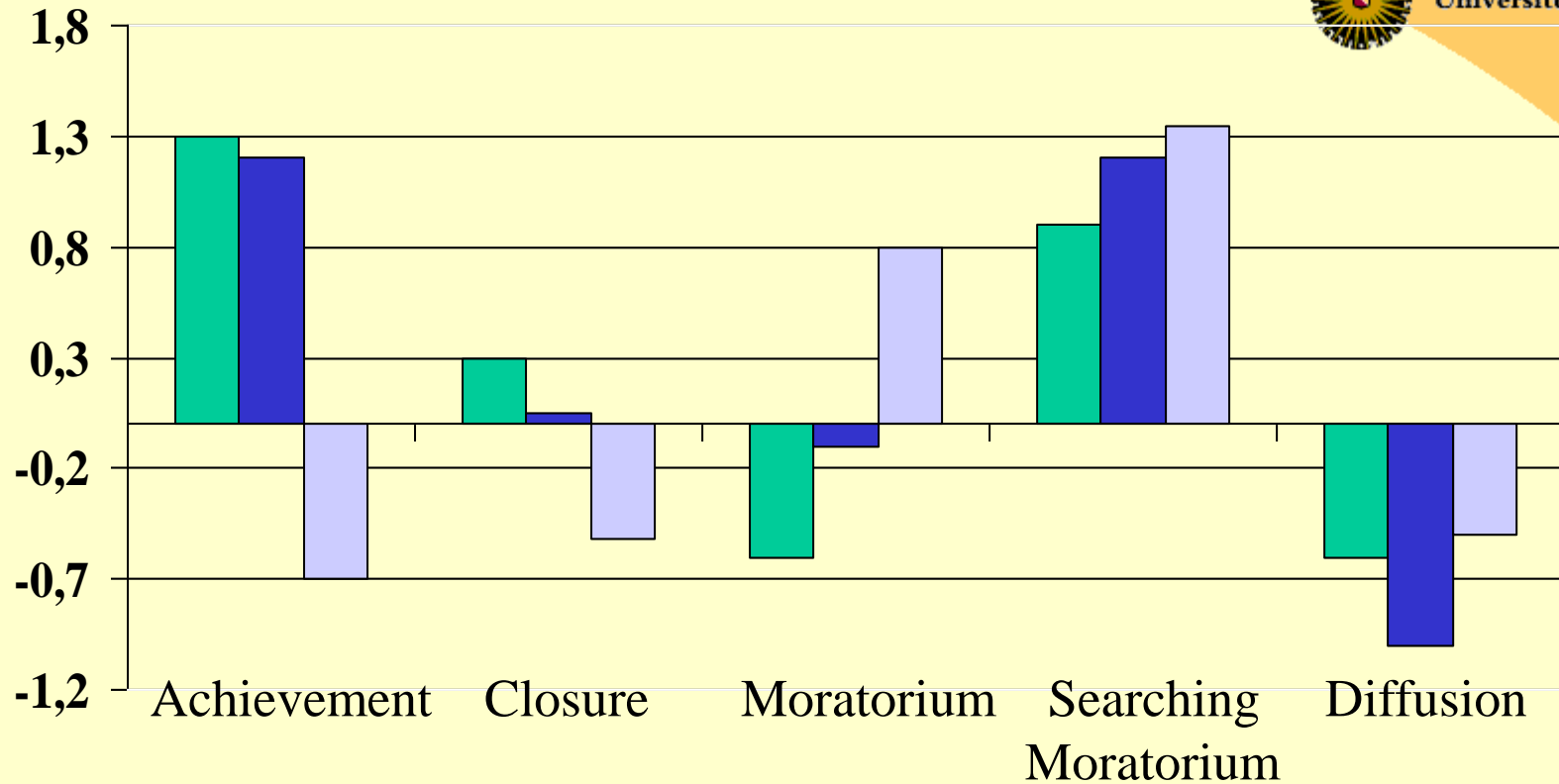


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4-year
Stability

62%

80%

39%

18%

39%

Correlates of Identity diffusion and Moratorium



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- Low stability of Moratorium and Diffusion
- Apart from these: Moratoriums & Diffusions are
 - More depressed and anxious
 - More aggressive and delinquent
 - Less prosocial
 - Have poorer relationships with parents and peers
- So in a state they want to get out...

5. Absence of commitments: vulnerability for identity change

Insecure identity is a predisposing condition for conversion
(Lofland & Stark, 1965)



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Religious conversion, predisposing conditions	Converts	Non-converts
1. Experience of enduring, acutely felt tensions	67%	20%
2. With a religious problem solving perspective	22%	7%
3. Self-definition as religious seeker	54%	24%
4. At turning point in life	67%	46%

6. Especially when relationships in old network are poor and interaction with new group is intense



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Religious conversion: the social fabric

	Converts	Non-converts
5. Meeting with recruiters and formation of affective bonds with new group	80%	-
6. Absence of		
- Emotional support parents	79%	37%
- Emotional support peers	67%	28%
7. Interaction frequency with members new group	67%	-
8. Change of general ideas	78%	17%

The predictive power of the religious conversion model



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N = 84

<i>Group</i>	<i>n</i>	Prediction	
		<i>No conversion</i>	<i>Conversion</i>
No conversion	43	39 (91%)	4 (9%)
Conversion	41	5 (12%)	36 (88%)

Correct prediction for all: 89%
 $\chi^2 = 62.52, p < .001$

4 of the 7 model elements contributed to the prediction

In sum

Sociological level

1. Prolonged adolescence



2. Don't trust anyone over 25



3. No future



Psychological level

4. Diffusion/ Moratorium



5. Vulnerability for conversion



6. Change of social network



New (radical) identity

Needed: A European two step study to test these ideas



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