

**Life Before Psychosis:
A Qualitative Investigation into the Possible Role of
Social Events, Interactions and Situations in the
Onset of Psychosis**

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Abstract

In order to investigate the possible role of social events, interactions and situations in the onset of psychosis six people who have experienced psychosis were interviewed twice and one focus group was held allowing respondents to react to and reflect on preliminary findings. Both because of the lack of previous Anthropological or Sociological research and theorizing regarding this topic as well as in an attempt to stay close to the data, theory was built from the ground up. This approach is mirrored in the structure of this thesis by proceeding from a presentation of the findings regarding respondents' description of psychosis, the context in which it occurred as they experienced it and why they believe it occurred. Following this, possible links between social and psychotic experiences and how the similarities found in the different narratives relate to these links are presented. These findings are then connected to epidemiological, neurobiological and phenomenological research on psychosis carried out previously.

The findings thus presented in this thesis suggest that social events, interactions and situations could play a role in the onset of psychosis by implying and/or being related to (1) The Disappearance of (a) Social World(s), (2) Problematic Contact, (3) the Lack of a Mutual Construction of Meaning, (4) Social Defeat, (5) Attempting to Tackle a Problem and (6) Stress. The way in which they can be seen to do so is through their being (part of), leading to, resulting from or being otherwise associated with (1) the conditions in which psychotic experiences understandably arise, (2) setting the stage for and/or their function as triggers, (3) the mirroring of psychotic experiences and (4) the organizing principle of such experiences. In addition, their impact on the neurobiology of an individual could be seen to add to their role in the onset of psychosis.

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In addition, I would like to thank all of my respondents very much. Without them too, of course, this thesis would not have been possible. Specifically, I would like to thank them for their openness regarding a period in their lives which definitely was not their finest hour, and in some cases is still painful to reflect on. Furthermore, one respondent, 'Erik', more than deserves to be mentioned separately, as he, after I came into contact with him through Mr. Beijers, was extremely helpful in getting into contact with others who have experienced psychosis.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family in general for their support and helpful comments throughout the (preparation of the) research project and the writing of this thesis, in particular T.K. Roberts and Erhan Can.

We weten 't allemaal, 't is een bende
't Is te eng, en te vijandig, en te vol
Het is in hoofdzaak grote rotzooi en ellende
Op onze groene, blauwe, grijze bol
't Is haat en nijd, elkaar de pas afsnijden
En door de steden raast een 'rücksichtlos' geweld
Maar of we vloeken, vechten, vallen, lachen, lijden
Er staan altijd weer boterbloemen in 't veld
Al lijkt dat bolletje nog zo negatief
Tussen de puinhoop schemert altijd de ontroering
Van mensen die nog zachtjes zeggen:
"Ik heb je lief."

Toon Hermans
(See Annex for English translation)

Table of Contents

Part I: Introduction

1. Introduction	1
2. Research Question & Method	3
2.1 Research Question & Sub-questions	3
2.2 Method	4
2.2.1 Research Activities	4
2.2.2 Building Theory	6
3. Theoretical Framework	7
3.1 Prior Sociological & Anthropological Research in the Field	7
3.2 Hypotheses & Experiences of Psychosis	7
3.3 Sociological & Anthropological Theory	9
3.4 Summary	10

Part II: Research Findings

4. Michelle	11
4.1 What is Psychosis?	11
4.2 The Context of the Psychosis	12
4.3 Why did it happen?	14
5. Sanne	15
5.1 What is Psychosis?	15
5.2 The Context of the Psychosis	17
5.3 Why did it happen?	22
6. Annemiek	23
6.1 What is Psychosis?	23
6.2 The Context of the Psychosis	25
6.3 Why did it happen?	27
7. Patrick	28
7.1 What is Psychosis?	28
7.2 The Context of the Psychosis	30
7.3 Why did it happen?	38
8. Maikel	39
8.1 What is Psychosis?	39
8.2 The Context of the Psychosis	39
8.3 Why did it happen?	41
9. Erik	42
9.1 What is Psychosis?	42
9.2 The Context of the Voices Getting to Him	43
9.3 Why did it happen?	46

10. Analysis I: Social & Psychotic Experiences	48
10.1 Michelle	48
10.2 Sanne	49
10.3 Annemiek	52
10.4 Patrick	55
10.5 Maikel	57
10.6 Erik	59
10.7 Conclusion: Pathways to Psychosis?	61
11. Analysis II: Similarities	64
11.1 The Disappearance of (a) Social World(s)	64
11.2 Problematic Contact	66
11.3 The Lack of a Mutual Construction of Meaning	67
11.4 Social Defeat	69
11.4.1 A Subjective Experience	69
11.4.2 A General Hypothesis of Specific Findings	71
11.5 Attempting to Tackle a Problem	73
11.6 Stress	74
11.7 Conclusion	74
Part III: Conclusions	
12. Discussion	76
13. Research Limitations & Further Research Suggestions	79
14. Conclusion	80
Bibliography	82
Annex	87

Part I: Introduction

1. Introduction

Sitting across from me during our first interview, Patrick tells me that prior to his psychosis he “slipped into [...] a very heavy depression.” He would wake up in the morning and wonder “how in the name of *god*¹ would [he] get through this day.” During parties he would sleep on a couch to distance himself from “the social happening.” He “didn’t have anything to say anyway,” “nothing interested” him. Before, referring to his experiences as a teenager, “everything was still new,” but now at 18 “everything had already been seen really.”² At home he would sleep a lot as well, often on a couch in the living room with the TV on, prompting his mother to say “god damn it, go do something instead of lying around on the couch.”

One evening, after coming home from smoking marijuana with his friends, he became “manic.” He did not “even realise” he “didn’t have to sleep.” He listened to music and wrote down an “incoherent story.” The next day, still not having slept, he took a train from his village to a city. He went to a coffee-shop, bought weed and drank coffee.

He then “started walking again, through the city,” and he felt as if he was being followed. He saw a car, thought the people inside looked like plain-clothes cops, and tried to “shake them off.” A few blocks further on, he saw a different car and he thought, “well, these are different people, but they are the exact same types,” and they were looking at him. He felt as if everything was approaching “a sort of climax.” “It was going [...] to a sort of climax,” he says. Hearing parts of other people's conversations, he explains, only recognising “a few words in that conversation,” “your head turns what you hear into a completely different story.” Or when “a word just happens to sound a bit like your name,” he would think people were in fact saying it.

This made him very paranoid, and he wondered whether he was “going crazy” or whether people were really talking about him. This paranoia was “confirmed at some point,” “see, they *are* talking about me,” “what the fuck is going on here?!” At some point he walks into a university building, and there he “*really* flipped out.” He started shouting at people, “leave me alone,” “don’t follow

¹ Emphases in direct quotes of the respondents always reflect verbal emphasis by those respondents during the interviews. In no case are they added by the author.

² The Dutch saying which follows and explains this statement further is literally translated as “the cookie was kind of/a little bit finished” (“de koek was een beetje op”).

The exact meaning this conveys is impossible to translate to English, but “the party was kind of over” and “everything had been worn out” come somewhat close.

me!” Holding a chair in his hands, he thought “the first person that *approaches*” will be struck with the “chair on his head.”

This description of Patrick’s case contains all of the necessary elements for a 'psychotic disorder' as defined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders – V* (2013): persecutory and referential delusions; auditory hallucinations; disorganized thinking; grossly disorganized behavior in the form of unpredictable agitation, and some negative symptoms (avolition, alogia, anhedonia, asociality). Furthermore, Patrick’s use of marihuana can be seen to have triggered the psychosis.

But is something important not being lost? I believe so, and this is why I have undertaken the research to be presented in this thesis. Since throughout our lives we often find ourselves surrounded by others, this paper will focus on the way social events, interactions and situations might play a role in the onset of psychosis. As psychosis refers to any “mental illness or disorder that is accompanied by hallucinations, delusions or mental confusion and a loss of contact with external reality” (Beer 1996), because of the difficulty in disentangling what was real and what was simply perceived as such reflecting on what happened *during* a psychotic episode is of course highly problematic. This paper will therefore be concerned with social events, interactions and situations *prior* to psychosis.

In light of the vast amount and long history of quantitative research projects shedding light on the social correlates of psychosis, it is beyond doubt that the the social context relates in some way to variations in incidence or risk of psychosis (e.g. March et al. 2008, Beards et al. 2013). The way some of these aspects of the social relate to such variations, moreover, seem to imply causal influence, for instance because a dose-response relationship³ has been found (e.g. Varese et al. 2012; Vassos et al. 2012) . Finally, evidence suggests that the impact of adverse social contexts on the risk of psychosis on a higher level of social aggregation is explained by exposures at the individual level (Heinz, Deserno & Reininghaus 2013).

Surprisingly, considering the large amount of quantitative research, qualitative research into these social factors and their relationship to psychosis did not exist prior to this study. I believe their combination to be essential, since whereas quantitative research yields a small amount of decontextualized findings regarding a great number of people, qualitative research has the ability to

³ This refers to an increase in the amount of exposure increasing risk, here for instance the increase in the urbanicity of an area being associated with a commensurate increase in the risk for psychosis people living in those areas. One of the so-called Hill’s Criteria, it is considered strong evidence for a causal relationship.

yield large swathes of context-as-experienced by a small number of people. Since the latter was as of yet unavailable, I took it as my project.

2. Research Question & Method

2.1 Research Question & Sub-questions

The goal of the research presented in this thesis was to attempt to answer the question

How could social interactions, events and situations play a role in the onset of psychosis?

This question can be divided into a number of sub-questions:

1. How is this topic embedded in already existing theory?
2. In the view of those who experienced psychosis, what is psychosis, what was the broader social context in which it occurred and why did it happen to them?
3. Is there a relationship between respondents' descriptions of psychosis and the social interactions, events and situations they experienced prior to psychosis? If so, how do they relate?
4. Are there similarities between the various stories? If so, what are these similarities and what role did they play in respondents' lives before psychosis in relation to respondents' descriptions of psychosis?
5. How do these findings relate to what is already known about psychosis?

Already existing theory in this field will be briefly discussed in the following, final chapter of this Part of the thesis, in order to provide the reader a short overview of the current state of theorizing regarding psychosis. In addition, a small number of core theoretical ideas from anthropology and sociology will be discussed. Throughout the course of this study, these ideas often crossed my mind, as they seemed to fit many aspects of the data quite well. That said, in an attempt to remain as close to the data as possible, theory will largely be built from the ground up, inductively. This approach is known as 'Grounded Theory' (Glaser 1995), and information on how exactly I built theory is to be found in the following section. The result of this process will be presented in Part II of this thesis, by answering the second, third and fourth sub-questions. The final part of this thesis will summarize the results of this study and integrate them with other research findings, discuss the

limitations of this study and associated possible future directions of research, and answer the research question.

2.2 Method

Given the absence of prior qualitative research, in order to begin to answer the research question posed above, I decided it would make sense to start with those who have experienced it. The problem, then, of course was how to come into contact with such people. In my own social network, I knew of only one person who had experienced a psychosis, and thankfully he was willing to participate. Next, I came into contact with Huub Beijers, who works with Steunpunt GGZ Utrecht who became my supervisor for this thesis. With his help, I was able to put a call for respondents on the website of the Steunpunt, and he also asked some people he knew personally. One of the people who responded in this phase put me in contact with two others who had experienced a psychosis, as well as someone working for another mental healthcare organization. She then asked some people she knew who might be willing to participate. In the end, six people who experienced psychosis participated in both rounds of interviews. Such a sampling procedure is usually called snowball sampling (Bryman 2004).

2.2.1 Research Activities

The data for this paper was gathered by means of twelve interviews and one focus-group discussion with people who have experienced psychosis.⁴ Participants gave their informed, written consent (see Annex), and the data has been anonymized in order to protect their privacy. All six participants have been diagnosed as having had one or more psychoses, although their exact diagnosis differs. These will be discussed in chapters four through nine. Three of the respondents were female, three of them were male. The age of onset varied between 18 and 35. All reside and were born in the Netherlands. The interviews focused on ascertaining important parts of the respondent's explanatory model, what psychosis is to them and why they think it occurred, and initially on the year preceding their psychosis in general. In case they experienced multiple psychoses, the focus was on the year preceding the first. In practice, this year was often too rigid of a time-frame and experiences prior to this year were also focused on because they were of importance to the respondent(s). The

⁴ Initially, there were seven participants. One of these, however, was admitted to a mental hospital in the period between the first and second round of interviews. In light of the incomplete nature of the data gathered regarding this person, as well as the breadth and depth of the rest of the data gathered, this person was not included in this thesis.

interviews were recorded and transcribed by myself, and during the focus group my supervisor took minutes.

The first round of interviews were semi-structured in the sense that similar questions were asked to all participants (see Annex). The questions focused on ascertaining important parts of the participants' explanatory model, asking them to describe what 'psychosis' is to them and why they think it happened (at that particular moment in time). Following this, a general description of the period preceding psychosis was elicited. Moreover, since findings in other research have pointed out a possible link between stress and the onset of psychosis, towards the end of the interview participants were asked if they experienced this period in their lives as stressful, and if so, why.

Finally, together with the participants, I attempted to reconstruct the year prior to psychosis by means of a so-called 'Life Grid.' Such a Life Grid is thought to increase the accuracy of retrospective data, and there is evidence to back this up (Bell 2005; Freedman et al. 1988). For this reason, a somewhat less structured version, centering around 'living (space)', work/study, friends/acquaintances and family, concerned with enhancing recall, greater clarity of chronology and elicitation instead of quantification was used during the interviews. As Bell (2005) already noted, however, having respondents fill it out the Life Grid at times proved rather difficult and impeded the building of rapport. On one occasion there was even clear friction as a result of my repeated attempts to have the form filled out, and therefore I decided against putting so much weight on the Life Grid in the following interviews. Instead, in order to clarify respondents' narrative in a chronological sense, I simply resorted to asking when something they had told me had occurred, if it was prior to something else they had told me or instead after, etcetera.

The second round of interviews was similar in nature, yet slightly more structured in the sense that I had prepared more questions. The analysis of the first round of interviews yielded individualized questionnaires, based on (1) the first interview with the participant in question and (2) on the first round of interviews as a whole. The aim of these questions was to (1) elicit a more detailed description of the period preceding psychosis, based on what the participant had already told me and (2) to look for differences and similarities between the experiences of the different participants in this period (see Annex). The goal of the focus group discussion was to collectively think about the question that had guided the research, and to reflect on/respond to the preliminary findings of the research. During this discussion I presented the preliminary results of the research, both discussing the similarities which at that point had been identified as well as giving personal

feedback regarding specific findings, asking the respondents whether they recognized what was presented. In addition, reflection by and between the respondents was encouraged. This bears some similarities to what is known as the 'Delphi Method' (Rowe and Wright 1999).

2.2.2 Building Theory

The analysis of the first round of interviews yielded 17 main possibly important similarities from which to continue to the second round of interview, as well as 22 other possibly important aspects of life before psychosis. These "themes" (Ryan & Bernard 2003) or "categories" (Glaser & Strauss 1967), even when they bear similarity to theories and studies which were already known to me prior to the coding process, were identified inductively. Although unconscious bias can never be fully excluded, they came to light by coding as much of the "expressions" or "incidents" to be found in the transcribed interviews. At the height of the coding process, about 220 separate codes labelled different expressions or incidents. The importance of the identified themes was mainly related to their occurrence *across* the various stories, as well as their importance *in* one or more stories. In other words, they were "topics that occur and reoccur" (Bogdan & Taylor 1975: 83) throughout the data-set.

As the relatively great number of (partial) similarities already suggests, almost all of these were not specifically elicited in the sense of 'would you call your life prior to psychosis stressful?' Because of this, there were many 'gaps' which inhibited comparison: some people told certain things about certain occurrences/situations which others told nothing or very little about. These gaps were identified, and formed one pillar upon which the personalized questionnaires for the second round of interviews were constructed. In addition, following the first round, the stories of the participants were reconstructed with some emphasis on these points. These reconstructed stories then formed the second pillar on which aforementioned questionnaires were built, relating more to gaps *in* stories rather than gaps *across* stories. A third pillar was mainly based around questions of 'when,' relating to the Life Grid.

Following the second round of interviews, these individual stories were then expanded, yielding a 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) of the period preceding psychosis. During transcription and the expansion of these stories, a second thread of findings began to emerge, to be discussed in Chapter 9. This second thread of findings is rooted more clearly, and finds its' validity, *in* each separate story. In summary, these findings were related to the link between what the specific participant had

said about what psychosis is to them, and the social interactions, events and situations they experienced *prior* to it. In preparation of the focus group interview, and as yet another step of the analysis, the first thread of findings regarding similarities across stories was condensed to five points which could be found in *all* of the stories of those who participated in both rounds. The second track was also fleshed out, and presented for each person separately. So doing Lincoln & Guba's (1985, 1994) criterion of credibility was established through respondent validation.

Analysis continued throughout the writing of this thesis, and one additional similarity which could be found across respondents' narratives was found and a categorization of the ways in which social experiences relate to psychotic experiences emerged.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Prior Sociological & Anthropological Research in the Field

Surprisingly, notwithstanding a recent call to look into the “interplay of culture, brains and experience” in the emergence of psychosis (Anne & Myers 2012, 113), sociologists and anthropologists have not focused on how social factors could play a role in the onset psychosis. Rather, they have investigated the negative impact of labeling on illness outcomes post-onset (Bruce et al. 1989); the way 'the mad' work with culture, confront society with its' contradictions and the processes of denial and exclusion which follow (Van Dongen 2002); changing views of 'madness' over time (Foucault 1975); or the clinical setting in which schizophrenia is diagnosed, treated and experienced as well as the construction of the diagnosis itself (Barret 2006). In other words, not much is known about the social context which precedes psychosis, let alone how it could play a role in its' onset.

3.2 Hypotheses & Experiences of Psychosis

The large body of quantitative research in the epidemiological domain, however, has lead for instance to the formulation of the Social Defeat-hypothesis. This well-known hypothesis argues, on the basis of research done into the association of migration, low intelligence, urban upbringing, childhood trauma and drug abuse with risk for psychosis, that prolonged exposure to a subordinate position or outside status increases risk of schizophrenia. Interestingly, this hypothesis relates to the main biological hypothesis, that of dysregulated dopamine transmission. On the basis of some

research done on humans and extensive studies on animals, it is thought that Social Defeat sensitizes the dopamine system, thereby increasing risk of psychosis (Selten & Cantor-Graae 2005; Selten et al. 2013).

First formulated in the mid-1960's, the dopamine hypothesis currently states that dopamine transmission is dysregulated with one part of the brain showing a lack of activity while another is hyperactive. It is thought that a lack of activity of the neurotransmitter dopamine in the Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex (DLPFC) contributes to dopamine hyperactivity in the head of the so called caudate. This is because dopamine activity in prefrontal areas, of which the DLPFC is a part, usually inhibits activity in the limbic areas, of which the caudate is a part (Abi-Dargham 2012). Another interesting finding is that the neurotransmitter and hormone oxytocin has been shown to have anti-psychotic effects (Pedersen et al. 2011). Returning to dopamine on a higher structural level of the brain, McGilchrist (2009) has pointed out that the phenomenology of (acute) schizophrenia indicates an abnormal hyperactivity of the left hemisphere of the brain, which is more reliant on dopamine than the right.

Phenomenological psychiatry, dating back to Karl Jaspers (Bürge 2008), aims to understand and capture the subjective experience of the patient. Regarding psychosis, such inquiries have yielded an interesting picture of (pre-)psychotic experiences from a first-person perspective. Importantly, the social is all but absent from such descriptions. Parnas & Handest (2003, 126) have, for example, noted the feeling of a lack of immersion or imposed detachment from the world and a difficulty in demarcating self from not-self, and Stangellini (2004, 99) describes the underlying problem as a “disorder of attunement” with others.

Generally, it has been argued that psychosis should be understood as a disorder of aberrant salience. This refers to aberrations in the process whereby, through their association with certain stimuli, aspects of reality grab attention and drive action. This, moreover, links the phenomenological approach to neurobiology yet again, as dopamine plays a central role in the attribution of salience (Kapur 2003). Thoughts become objects for thought in what is known as hyper-reflexivity (Parnas & Handest 2003), and Stangellini (2004, 102) describes for instance “an expansion of the horizon of meaning.” In the transition to full-fledged psychosis, this increased awareness combines with a “sense of anxiety and impasse,” and the drive “to make sense of the situation” is followed by a sense of relief and “new awareness” as highly idiosyncratic beliefs (‘delusions’) crystallize and hallucinations emerge (Kapur 2003, 15) in a process that has been called “psychotic

repersonalisation” (Parnas & Handest 2003, 131).

However, in this phenomenological literature descriptions referring to social factors seem to be considered merely as reflections of an underlying psychoticism. This, too, is rather surprising, as the large and growing body of evidence regarding the social correlates of psychosis clearly indicate the possibility that, for instance, the feeling of a lack of immersion in the world is, instead, a reflection of being in the position of the outsider. Therefore, a mainstay of the theory-building described in the previous chapter entailed looking for possible links between respondents’ descriptions of psychosis and their social experiences prior to onset.

3.3 Sociological & Anthropological Theory

Although, as previously discussed, sociological or anthropological theorizing and research regarding the role social factors may play in the onset of psychosis is not to be found, this of course does not mean there is nothing in these traditions which could be of value for this project. In fact, there are many useful insights, ranging for instance from Clifford Geertz’ (1973, 5) famous statement that “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun,” to Karl Marx’s (1852, 5) argument that, although “men make their own history” they do so “under circumstances existing already,” to the so-called Thomas theorem which states that if people “define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Merton 1995, 380).

One of the most interesting developments to come out of sociology in the past decade is Interaction Ritual Theory (Collins 2004). A full discussion of this theory, resulting from almost a hundred years of sociology, is not possible considering its’ breadth, but the Goffmanian idea that the self is constructed or enacted through interaction with others is important to mention. Relatedly, the “individual is the interaction ritual chain,” that is, “the precipitate of past interactional situations.” At the same time, it is also an “ingredient of each new situation” in a non-deterministic sense since the situation emerges from the interaction between individuals and their surroundings. Some kind of event is another necessary ingredient for interactions between people, ranging from the mundane ‘Hello!’ to such historical events as the 9/11 attacks. Such events can be mutually focused on, and the associated emotional stimulus can lead to the experience of shared mood, if and to the extent that people become entrained in one another's bodily rhythms (Collins 2004, 4;48). In a conversation that flows smoothly, for instance, the participants can be seen to rhythmically attune their vocalizations to one another: they neither talk through one another, nor do ‘uncomfortable

silences' occur.

Importantly, moreover, thought is considered to be “internalized conversation,” at any point in time intimately tied up with the interactions and situations which an individual has experienced or is experiencing (Collins 2004, 183). Hence, the webs of meaning man has himself spun can be seen as related to the events, interactions and situations he has encountered and participated in; part of the circumstances existing already are individuals as shaped by past encounters; and people’s definition of situations is inextricably linked to their interactions with others. Such a sociological and anthropological view could be summarized by the statement that “being-in-the-world is always being-with” (Richters, Rutayisire & Dekker 2010, 105).

3.4 Summary

In summary, the topic of this thesis is embedded in existing anthropological and sociological knowledge by, on the one hand, attempting to fill a gap therein, while on the other, taking core theoretical ideas in these traditions as part of its' outlook. So doing, the links between main hypotheses regarding the social and neurobiological hypotheses of psychosis and the phenomenology thereof could be investigated further. Bearing this in mind, I will now present the findings of the research undertaken.

Part II: Research Findings

In this part of the thesis, the research findings will first be presented in chapters 4 through 9 in such a way that the reader will be able to understand what each respondent considers to be psychosis and its' cause, as well as the broader context of the psychotic break as each respondent sees it, answering sub-question 2. This will then form the foundation upon which the analysis is built in chapter 10 and 11, answering the third and fourth sub-questions. So doing, the structure of this thesis mirrors, in a general sense, the inductive strategy of the study.

4. Michelle

Michelle experienced her first of four psychoses at age 24, and was eventually diagnosed with schizo-affective disorder.

4.1 What is psychosis?

For Michelle psychosis is “a disturbance in your perception,” as well as a “disturbance [...] in your thinking.” Everything she perceived, she interpreted “very different than normally.” Everything became “magical” and “symbolic for something else.” “*Very* normal things,” she continues, were “cause for very deep thoughts, about life and things like that.” There was a theme to her psychosis as well, about God and the Devil, the end of days, and the related “final struggle” which she found herself in the middle of. She also created a “whole theory” about reincarnation and how it relates to which star-sign one has. Receiving messages from God as well as aliens, “it was just like a kind of fantasy-movie.” And watching music videos on MTV, she saw all kinds of messages directed at her in those “very chaotic clips.”

*“Everything you have ever read, heard, you **include** in those [...] streams of thought [...] For me [...] it was [...] like your brain is a card catalog, which is *pow!* tossed up. And everything flies [around]. And you, get all sorts of things, you take from that, flapping card catalog [...] [all sorts of] knowledge you take with you, you know, a sort of, super-distressed brain.”*

Her thinking was “running amok⁵,” going very quickly and being “very associative.” There was no more “reality check,” no thought “does this still make any sense?” It “does not stop,” moreover. Once in a while she would think “now I got it,” but then “it would just continue.” It is a “processing of information” which is “running amok.” In the context of all these experiences, she also became “very scared.”

4.2 The Context of the Psychosis

Michelle’s mother died when she was fifteen. Soon thereafter, with her brother and father, she moved in with who was to become her stepmother and her children. Her relationship with this stepmother was very problematic. She describes her as dominant, conservative, “very overpowering,” and “pretty rude.” When Michelle would call home and her stepmother would answer the phone, she would be “upset for two weeks.” Her stepmother would pressure her and she was prone to say things like “your father is disappointed in you,” and “if this or that, *then*, he will be disappointed in you.” She did try to talk things through with her, but “then you really had to [...] talk for hours to make it *clear* what you meant.” Moreover, “the next day,” “she was doing exactly the same.”

Importantly, when interacting with both her stepmother and her father, her stepmother would block certain topics of conversation by initiating others. On top of that, interacting with her father alone was made difficult by the stepmother. Summarizing the contact she did have with her father, Michelle says it was “*very*⁶ superficial.” “When I dealt with them,” she adds, “I dealt with my stepmother.” So, she could “never have a real conversation about something that was going on in my life⁷.” This situation Michelle describes as the “big theme” of that time in her life, and by the time of her psychosis it had been so for quite a while. Although “fleeing out of the house” when she went to polytechnic and thereby leaving this situation behind her “physically,” she was “still tied to them.” She did not break contact with them, and still went home from time to time. So, at age 24, things had not been right “for a long time,” and she “was troubled by that a very great deal.”

“I was in a bit of a bind⁸ so to speak [...] If I would [stand] up to her [...] then I

5 Literally, the translation would be something like “beaten to run” or “started to run.” The Dutch phrase “op hol geslagen” can be seen to convey the image of a spooked horse which starts to run, or of a herd of animals stampeding.

6 Literally, she says “heel erg” without emphasis. Literally this means “very bad(ly).”

7 Literally “what kept you busy” (“wat je bezig hield).

8 Literally “split” (“spagaat”).

would lose my father I thought. So I wanted to hold on to my father, and I wanted to struggle against her⁹, but that wasn't possible at the same time either. [...] So that was a big [...] theme of [...] that time, that lasted for a really long time.”

Specifically, she wanted to talk to her father about the death of her mother, but because of the situation described above, she was not able to. The stepmother, moreover, has every reason to block this topic, as her previous husband had died as well and she did not want to be reminded of this.¹⁰ Although Michelle does say that she did, at times, talk to friends about it, his traumatic event remained “unprocessed,” simply “parked in a corner” most of the time, and in the period preceding her psychosis her social life in general was “very superficial.” Talking to others about the problematic situation regarding her father, also “wouldn't lead to anything.” Furthermore, this superficial social life was, at the same time, also a very busy one. She was part of five different social groups, and on average she went out four times a week. This included drinking a lot of alcohol.

*“That was very undermining [...] all very superficial, and you do spend your energy on that, which you might actually really need for other things, you are shredding¹¹ so to speak. After all, so many people, and actually never [...] returning to yourself [...] [you] are only acting **socially** [...] adapting yourself [...] you want people to think you're nice.”*

In addition, she had a physically demanding job on the side, which entailed working from 5pm to 11.30 pm without any breaks, and being responsible for everything that happened in a specific area of the café. She was also involved in a student association, which she found to be very stressful. Organizing and participating in meetings made her feel “very nervous,” and she found standing up in front of the class to inform fellow students about an upcoming action to be “very scary.”

In the midst of this “chaotic” and “messy” life, she did however have a “point of rest.” This was the student house where she lived, which she describes as “cosy¹².” There, she lived amongst friends, and felt “very safe as well.” Three people lived on one floor, and there was a “communal space,”

9 Literal translation of “tegen haar strijden,” which is not a common way to describe this in Dutch either.

10 This, of course, can be linked to the idea that part of the circumstances one encounters are individuals shaped by past social experiences.

11 Translated from “versnipperen,” conveying the image of a “papierversnipperaar”: a paper shredder.

12 Although “cosy” is the most related word in English, the word “gezellig,” although it definitely does not contradict it either, conveys less the image of being physically close to someone, and more the image of the positive atmosphere in a cheerful, busy but not too crowded bar. The best Dutch translation for “cosy” is instead “knus.”

which had a table, couch and a TV in it. And because their individual rooms were small, they hung out in the communal space most of the time. They would take turns cooking for each other and would eat together. She had a very good relationship with one of her housemates, which she says was “very important” as well.

She did not study that much, apart from just prior to exams. Because exams were now coming up and she had to take the first steps in starting research which would be the basis for a thesis she would write at the end of the academic year, “all of a sudden” she had to study very hard. Furthermore, a friend of hers temporarily vacated her room, and Michelle thought it would be a good idea if she were to stay there for a while so she would be able to focus on her studies. This place she moved to just three months prior to herself was very different from the student house described above. There, she had a “very big room” to herself, with a couch and a table in it as well. Moreover, she had little contact with others there, and she felt very lonely. Another aspect of Michelle’s life to mention here is her main hobby. She has always been an avid reader, whether books, magazines or newspapers. Regarding her main area of interest at the time, she says she “was always busy with stuff like [...] astrology [...] [and] tarot cards.”

In this context she decided to seek help at a mental health institution, because of the effect her mother’s death and the problematic situation regarding her stepmother and father was still having on her. It quickly became clear, however, that therapy there would take a very long time to make her feel better. Michelle wanted a quick solution. A friend of hers advised her to go to a type of therapist, who “worked with hypnosis and [...] rebirthing.” And they promised “everything will be fine” with just two sessions. On her way there, Michelle says she was “pretty exhausted,” and at her “wits’ end.” During, the therapist asked: “do you even want to live?” Although she thought “well, no, actually not,” she was afraid to say so. Instead she enthusiastically replied “Yes! Yes! Yes!” In summary, the treatment was “very quick” and felt “very intense.” But when she came home she did not feel better at all, and “within 15 minutes or half an hour, I was just utterly psychotic.”

4.3 Why did it happen?

Unsurprisingly, Michelle considers the aforementioned ‘treatment’ a “very clear trigger” for this psychosis. A second “trigger” she mentions is the “tension which had been [present] for a long time [...] related to my stepmother and stuff like that.” A third trigger for her was “living somewhere else temporarily,” which meant she was out of her “familiar things.”

In addition, she also says that “disposition,” something “you are born with,” is also an important factor for why one becomes psychotic. Although even if one has such a disposition, there still needs to be a trigger to make it happen, those who do not have such a disposition will not become psychotic even if there is such a trigger. Instead, they become irritable, have somatic complaints or, perhaps, become depressed. Michelle believes she has the “disposition for it to be *possible* to become psychotic,” and “if the circumstances are such”, “with a lot of stress”, “then it will happen.” In summary, she considers psychosis to be caused by a combination of “vulnerability in that direction” and “life events.” It “almost never” happens that “everything is just going fine and then all of a sudden” one has a psychosis: it comes “under pressure.”

5. Sanne

Sanne has been psychotic four times, and her first psychosis occurred at the age of 22. She was eventually diagnosed with Bipolar II because she responded well to lithium. However, she doubts this diagnosis “*very much*” for a number of reasons. Salient for the topic at hand, is the fact that in the month she started taking lithium, she says she also became romantically involved with someone, found a job and her mother who is prone to depression herself left. But, “they said it's a characteristic of bipolar disorder, that you do not accept your diagnosis,” which means her doubts are actually “a confirmation that you [are] bipolar.” So, “you know what guys, I'm bipolar.”

In addition, she has also been diagnosed as having ADHD. They told her “you are not hyperactive, but you also don't have ADD,” instead “you have ADHD without being hyperactive.”

5.1 What is Psychosis?

The onset of Sanne's psychosis was preceded or accompanied by what she calls “a million realizations.” These realizations, however, do not seem to have been delusional from the start. Instead, they seem to have had, initially, a lot of truth to them. However, the implications of these realizations as well as the realizations themselves, seemed to have been too much to deal with all at once, and the realizations quickly 'spun out' of reality.

“Suddenly you get a million realizations at the same time [...] And then I called my mother [...] and later she also told me, 'you said all of those things which were just

completely correct [...] [and] I thought, how does she know that all of a sudden, [...] you seemed like a kind of Buddha.' [...] [But,] shortly thereafter [...] I called [her] saying, 'grandma is no more, because I feel that,' [...] [but] grandma was still alive."

Sanne's description of psychosis as "fearful" is intimately tied up with such realizations. For instance, everything being "suddenly real," made her afraid of war. "Because," she explains, "you see everything on TV and then you think oh, that is so far away from me." But, suddenly "you do realize you are actually here." To Sanne psychosis also means that she always assumes that what she thinks is in fact the case. This means that when she thought something, there was no other thought which said "well that's a thought but that doesn't have to be the case," "maybe it's not so." For instance, when it was raining very hard, she thought the Netherlands would flood. She did not think to ask someone "why a country actually floods."

Similar to, and seemingly co-occurring with her 'million realizations,' she also remembers finding herself and coming into her body¹³, which felt like a home to her. However, after she found herself, she went "outside of that *I* again." This is because she "got so incredibly scared," that she "could not [...] deal with that." The same process seems to have applied to her coming into her body, as she thinks that she "went out of there completely" again because "the realization" of being in her body was "too overwhelming." During her psychosis, she was sometimes able to (try to) get into her body again. However, she then "felt too much."

'Mindfulness' is the opposite of psychosis for Sanne. The essence of mindfulness is "to live in the here and now," from one's "core" and one's consciousness yet without having all sorts of thoughts about what you experience. When being mindful, moreover, one's inside and outside correspond. You relax, and "feel the air." Finally, Sanne says that during her psychosis she was in her "own little world," having her "own fears, and thoughts, which were not correct." "But", she continues

"I did have the feeling sometimes [of being liquid] [...] and even fusing¹⁴ with the TV [...] and also with my brothers."

5.2 The Context of the Psychosis

13 Coming into one's body is meant to be taken as literally as possible.

14 Literally "walking/running/spilling over into" ("overlopen in").

Sanne experienced intense bullying by her older brothers up to the age of fourteen, of which the central theme seems to have been her being “small” and “unimportant.” Everything she said was “dumb,” and her brothers’ “hobby” was to “get her to cry as quickly as possible.” She was, moreover, always “the odd one out” in her family. At dinner, the conversation was “always about politics and economics and stuff like that.” Her brothers found this to be very interesting, but Sanne “didn’t know anything about it really,” so she was never a part of it¹⁵. In addition, her parents “have always maintained a kind of distance.” She says that because of this, she “always kept that feeling,” of people who are higher in a hierarchy and people who are lower.

Summarizing the effect of this long-lasting situation, Sanne says that she “always thought that people thought I was *stupid, dumb, ugly*, weird, strange, and... different.” Because, she explains “that is what I really was in my family.” This stuck with her throughout her life before psychosis.¹⁶ Furthermore, she says that in general, she saw people “very much” as a “threat.” This is perhaps “a bit my mother” whom she “projects” on others. She would think people had a certain opinion, “but they don’t say it,” except behind her back. “Because,” she explains, her mom “always has a great deal of opinions,” but “she never says what she thinks.” Like her mom and her brothers, she concludes, “that is how I saw the whole world... except for my best friends.”

An example of her mother not saying what she thinks relates to another important aspect of Sanne’s life. When Sanne was part of the “gabber”-subculture and wore Nike Airmax, crop tops and dyed her hair blond, her mother thought she was doing drugs even though she was not. When Sanne went to university, she changed her image drastically, started to wear “normal” shoes and dyed her hair brown. In addition, a few months prior to her psychosis she also joined a rowing association, whose members she describes as “posh.” However, she could not fully ‘integrate’ there and start wearing, for instance, polo-shirts, because that would be frowned upon by the ‘gabbers’ back in the village she grew up. So she tried to strike some sort of middle ground.

Joining the rowing association was problematic for another reason, because “you were really forced a little into a group-something,” and “then all of a sudden you become friends, oh!.. huh?!” In addition to the already mentioned effects of her situation as a child, she describes being insecure, and having the feeling of being kept on the sidelines even when she was the center of attention.

15 Literally: “[I] always completely hung outside of it” (“hing er altijd helemaal buiten”).

16 This, ofcourse, is reminiscent of the idea that the individual is the chain of interaction [s]he experienced,

When I asked her if there were any signs that would indicate this, she said in hindsight there were not, but she “did see it.” For instance, when her roommate, also a member of the rowing club, would go shopping with one of the other girls there, this would confirm her perceived position. Another example is that, when taking pictures, she always felt that she was standing to the side of the frame. In a circular fashion, she noticed such things because they were a confirmation of what she already felt and thought, and she continued to feel and think this way because she noticed such things.¹⁷

Around the same time, Sanne’s parents moved to the other side of the world. She says she had never been close to them, and therefore they had very little contact after they left: “they were just, well, gone.” Furthermore, she also found out that her best friend for the past six years had only been pretending to be her best friend. In fact, she saw her “more like a sort of competition” and “someone to talk bad about.” She would use Sanne to make herself feel better¹⁸, and what “she found stupid” about Sanne, she would use to put her down. Although she already had “a vague suspicion” this was the case, when people told her and her suspicions were confirmed, she felt as though she really had to do something about it. But, she says, “what do you do?”

Apart from these considerations, “all of a sudden” things went very well for her. She found her studies to be very easy, which she says lead her to take on a job on the side, where she seems to have done great. This lead to an “internal conflict,” however, because it contradicted her having put studying on a pedestal and thinking she was dumb. Moreover, in this context she was also doing exams and had to do an assignment for which she had to analyze her “own identity and image.” So then, for “the first time in your life you start to think consciously about yourself.”

Combined with concretely finding out that her 'best friend' actually was not, the positive changes in her life seem to be associated with the breaking down of this friendship. “If you are very insecure,” she explains, “and all of a sudden you are doing very good things,” one gets “a bit of a weird attitude I think.” “All of a sudden” feeling like she was “someone,” telling her ‘best friend’ about all those things, this led to “a sort of [...] friction.” Her 'best friend,' who generally seems to have been very self-involved, then simply started talking about herself a lot. For instance, her friend participated in beauty pageants and concerned herself “a lot with her beauty,” and would just go on and on about that. Sanne would then think, “what is actually important in life?” And then, “all of a

17 Her definition of the situations she find herself, then, do seem to be inextricably linked to her previous interactions with her family.

18 Literally: “to (use to) pull oneself up” (“zich aan op te trekken”).

sudden” realizations “would come at you again,” because “so many things were different all of a sudden.” Sanne had always considered her 'best friend' as “kind of a sister,” they could understand each other “very well in a great deal of things,” but now it all changed.

*“I got this feeling a bit around her, like, 'why do you say that?' [...] and she would just keep on talking about herself and [...] I was really looking [at her] like.. 'why?'. and then I would say something, and that wouldn't interest her at all [...] or that was put down a little, and that I found normal **before that**, because I put myself down too [...] and all of a sudden I thought [...] I would pursue the matter¹⁹ [...] [so] I said like [...] yea, but why do you think so? [...] [or] 'don't you think [...] you do that [...] too, a little bit?' [...] Before, I wouldn't have [...] confront[ed] people with what they said [...] but [now] I did [...] and then all of a sudden [I] got a response, that you really think, 'whoaaa, ok, ok.' [...] [She would respond] very catty, but actually insecure herself [...] she would all of a sudden start acting very big.”*

Sanne considers this to have been an attempt to stay above her, in a hierarchical sense. Before, she always had her 'best friend' “on a pedestal a bit” and “she had also really been the one who would drag me along” into the village. There, she would meet “all these people” and “her friends became my friends.” “I was glued to her a bit,” she continues, “so we really identified with each other.” They were “very similar,” could “understand each other very well in a great deal of things,” and everyone would ask “if we were sisters.” She found this very “cosy²⁰.” When she got the feeling described in the quote above, this all changed. When I asked her if her friend did at some point get the better of her again, she replied “not anymore, at some point.” But, because of this it also became “less cosy.” Before, they did not “need words,” it was always “cosy and fun,” and they fit together “seamlessly.” Now it was as if the “click” had disappeared.

In addition, Sanne's life before psychosis had already seen a falling apart of the group of friends which she became part of because of this best friend. Consisting of “some couples,” all except one had broken up, and one person in the group had joined the army. This relegated this group to “the background,” so that her main social activity when she returned to the village she grew up in became going to a bar with her 'best friend.' Moreover, as already mentioned, her parents had left to the other side of the world. Even though “emotionally” she “had little connection” to her parents,

19 Literally “go into it” (“er op in gaan”)

20 Again translated from “gezellig.” The same applies to the other instances of ‘cosy’ in this paragraph.

“in a practical sense” they were very important.

“Financially, of course, but also [...] I think that they [...] have always been a constant factor in my life, they were in fact there all the time, and [...] you know, you come home, and...[...] [my mother] was there you know [...] I can imagine that them [...] going abroad [...] for me, totally gave me such a floating feeling, like, yea, it doesn't even matter anymore where you are in the weekends [...] Then you go for those friends in [my village], but, that was going a bit weird [...] didn't feel one of [them] there [...] because of that [best] friend of course [...] Who I did see, but, not [...] in that home-way, so to speak [...] it is possible that, my parents [...] [their] absence [...] pulled the last [...] rug out from under me²¹ so to speak, of my structure.”

Although the lack of an emotional connection with her parents did not do away with their importance in her life, it did seem to have had important other effects. “If you felt emotion,” she explains, “then really most of all you should just not talk about [...] nor listen to, nor think about it.” In fact, one should “just not experience it.” Relatedly, she says that it was only after her first psychosis that she found out “that there actually exists something like [...] sincere interest” and “having a *connection* with someone.” So there was “no one in my life, in all of my life,” with whom she talked about feelings or problems, and problems and feelings “of course” often go “hand in hand.”

This meant she had to “struggle with problems” by herself, which in her case meant “just doing whatever crossed my mind.” This would then, she explains, actually not be “the right thing of course, because if you don't think about it well, and talk about it well,” it does not work out well. For instance, this applies to the situation regarding her 'best friend.' Confronting this 'friend' with the things she had said behind her back only lead to the further problematization of their relationship. Relating to the inability to solve this problem, Sanne says that “then you actually also have to have [an idea] ready for yourself,” about “what do you actually want to solve if you talk about it?” She would just say what she thought, and she “didn't have a goal in mind,” for instance that she “would like to come together,” or instead not “want that friendship anymore.” So, she “just did whatever,” and then, she concludes, “nothing much really happens.”

21 Literally “pulled out the last pin in the ground” (“de laatste grondpin eruit getrokken”), which can be seen to convey the image of a tent in a storm which loses the last stake which connects it to the ground.

Sanne also considers the period prior to the onset of her psychosis to have been stressful, and one reason she mentions is work-related stress. Although she, in fact, did her work well, and says that her boss was nice, she still always felt she was being kept an eye on. Sanne explains that what others think of her has always played an important role in her life, and her feeling this critical gaze from her boss would therefore make her work “*very hard*.” Furthermore, because she had a laptop from her work at home, moreover, this meant that her work spilled over into her private life. “That thing is always there,” she explains, so then “you don’t have any rest.” In a similar sense, since her roommate was also part of the student rowing association, this aspect of her life also seems to have ‘colonized’ her life at home to some extent as well, as she “had to be busy with that as well.” Combined with what was mentioned before, this meant that she “didn’t feel really at home anywhere anymore.”

Apart from what was already mentioned, another reason for the stressful nature of this period was the “tension” city she lived in. She hated it, and did not feel safe there. Going by public transport, 80% of the people would be “darker.” Although that “in itself isn’t a problem at all,” she would just feel “the tension in the air.” “Those are all different cultures,” she explains, “half of them don’t speak Dutch” or refuse to, “people don’t understand each other” and they “also have different manners.” They do not “hold doors for you,” for instance. In addition, in the first few months she lived in this city, about a year prior to her psychosis, this tension would be present when she was home as well. Because, she explains, it was a poor neighborhood she lived in, and she would see “all those little balconies where there were people as well,” who would put their laundry and satellite-dishes there. All of this “is just not nice,” she says, and “also troublesome for them to live there all together.” Although when her psychosis occurred, she was living in one of the “beautiful neighborhoods” which do exist in that city, “in principle, yea, the center is just” as described.

More specifically, she was “harassed a lot” in this city. Someone had tried to rob her of her purse, and someone else had followed her around for an extended period of time. During the day, it would be like “the entire city was hanging out on the street.” She would pass small groups of people, and the men would try to hit on her while the women would give her dirty looks. In addition, because of the big buildings and the modern architecture in the city, “it doesn’t really have a warm center.” When her parents had left, during the weekends she would be more prone to stay in this city. They had, moreover, bought her an apartment in the village next to the one she grew up in close to the onset of her psychosis, where she would now spend her weekends if she went back to this area. Then, she concludes, “you are of course completely away from those roots... well, to the extent” she

had any.

5.3 Why did it happen?

According to Sanne, “social shifts always played a very big role” in the onset of her psychoses. Regarding her first psychosis, in this context she mentions her parents moving away; finding out her best friend actually was not; joining the rowing club; starting to work and the assignment she had to do in which she had to analyze herself. Starting “to think consciously about yourself” for the first time in her life, she thinks, “is not a good thing [...] if you already have so much” going on in your life.

“Stress”, she continues, and “above all” what was already mentioned previously, played a role in the onset of her psychosis. She also mentions books she has read which say that “around the age of 21” the first psychosis usually occurs. Her grandfather “had 18 psychoses,” so she “does also believe a little bit that it can be a little bit hereditary.” But, “of course the situation” you are in and the upbringing you have had also “makes a difference/plays a role²².” She thinks that her first psychosis “was also a little bit a burn-out” and akin to Michelle, she says, “one gets a burn-out in the form that he can only lie on [his] bed,” whereas the other “gets totally confused.”

“[Psychosis] is the brain's way out, and not all brains have it in them to do that [...] Whether this is [a] negative or a positive [thing], it is, I think, just... a way out the brain can deploy, if you cannot deal with something. And, for me, I think I can do that because my grandfather could also do that [...] I think I could not cope emotionally with what I was going through, the awareness and all the sorrow. Because [...] then you are there and then you feel yourself, and your body, and that little girl that [...] wanted [to come] outside, or come untied²³ and.. for that to, become [so] you must first deal with the sorrow you have experienced, because of which it has been repressed²⁴ and that was too much I think.”

Disputing her diagnosis, she says that in the months preceding this psychosis, she did not become manic. Instead she was “just fucking busy.” Because she “did not know [herself] well” she did not

22 Literally: “counts along” (“meetelt”).

23 Literally: “loose” (“los”).

24 Literally: “pushed away” (“weggeduwd”).

know what would be better for her “not [to] do as well.” She “really went for what was socially desirable,” and “wanted to do something which would” make her “mean something,” even though she felt she did not “mean anything.” So, she started doing “more and more.”

6. Annemiek

Annemiek experienced one psychosis at the age of 35. She was diagnosed with severe post-natal depression / post-natal psychosis.

6.1 What is Psychosis?

Describing her psychotic break, Annemiek says “the whole room looked different, as if it was all coming toward” or going “away from” her. She “was completely lost,” and “sensorially [...] completely [...] freaking out,” thinking “what *is* this?!” Her whole perception was “exhausted²⁵.” She became afraid that she would not be able to sleep at all anymore, “because the cosmos is punishing” her, “or something.” She “also *really* had the feeling” she would lose herself, becoming “completely bonkers²⁶,” that “nothing will remain” of her. This was “very frightening.²⁷”

During her psychosis she “sort of disintegrated,” having the “very strange psychotic perception,” while lying on a bed, she “would fuse²⁸ with [...] the surroundings” and that her self²⁹ “would go away completely.” Reminiscent of Sanne's description, she concludes this point by saying that she “would fuse like a little puddle.” She also experienced “being in a kind of bubble,” “unable to make contact”, and “totally [...] displaced³⁰ from the rest of the people.”

*“I had just lost reality [...] normal contact with people, I didn't feel that [...] anymore, as if I was in a kind of **very lonely bubble** [...] I mean now I feel myself to be a part of [...] when I go out to walk, then [...] [I feel] I belong to the people, I belong to this*

25 Literally, she says “gaar,” which is the same word to describe food which has been cooked so it can be eaten. Perhaps “fried” is a good approximation, although dictionaries prescribe “exhausted.”

26 “Kierewiet.” The closest translation would be “bonkers,” although it perhaps sounds strange in this context, at least to some extent so does “kierewiet.”

27 This could be seen as supporting the Thomas theorem.

28 It should be noted here that the words she uses is “versmelten (met).” So, although in the translation there is a semantic similarity with Sanne's case, this similarity does not actually exist in Dutch. That, of course, does not mean the experiences they refer to are definitely not similar. In any case, it is still reminiscent of Sanne's description regarding the 'liquid' aspect of the experience.

29 Literally “mijn Ik,” “my I.”

30 It is very important, here, to note the literal translation of the word she used in Dutch. She says “ontheemd,” which means “de-home-d,” being in the situation of no longer having a home. All other occurrences of the word “displaced” regarding Annemiek's narrative are also translations of “ontheemd.”

*world. And then this was completely.. gone [...] I also could not go into a store anymore, because, that was normal, but that was, too painful, because that wasn't normal anymore. Everything felt scary, and weird, and then I would see students who were just, talking about all sorts of fun things and I thought, yes, before I did that too. I could laugh [...] [all of this] you have then completely **lost** [...] you have just completely lost yourself. ”*

She had lost “any propriety” as well, she “completely couldn't care anymore how” she looked. She had not put on make up for a long time and neither brushed her teeth nor showered. She “also did not want to feel” her body. Furthermore, Annemiek had the following experience while smoking a cigarette in the parking lot at the hospital where she was admitted:

*“There was always a specific [...] gray car, which was parked in [a] specific place, and [...] when I looked at that car, then I realized how sick I was [...] the car symbolized something I could no longer be, I could no longer be free, and drive the car, and just go somewhere [...] and I thought, I've lost everything [...] my child [...] my home [...] everything [...] I have no value anymore [...] I am going to lose myself [...] my knees were shaking and I thought, I, will become jelly [...] I felt myself shaking³¹, literally [...] Everything was, symbolic so to speak [...] But also concretely, my whole foundation³² had been [...] destroyed [...] From that moment on I had the feeling for a very long time [...] that I was in a horror story, and I am playing a leading role [...] [for instance] I was looking at the **tiles** [...] and I thought [...] this will never be normal again, I can never look at tiles in a normal way again.”*

During the final stages of her psychosis, “*all of a sudden*” she “knew it [...] how it all happened and [...] why those thoughts had become like that.” “That was pretty complicated,” and she “couldn't bring it to words properly.” She “had a very complicated line of thought, about the complicated line of thought” she had had, about how it came to be, and “how it doesn't come back.” She does not remember what this was, or “to what extent that was also psychotic.” It might have simply been the case that she just thought about it in a too complicated way, so that she couldn't put it to words in a normal way.

31 Alternative translations for the dutch word “wankelen” are: staggering, tottering, wobbling, faltering, vacillating, teetering, swaying, reeling, wavering.

32 Literally “bottom” (bodem).

6.2 The Context of the Psychosis

Like Sanne, Annemiek was bullied in early childhood. Although she does say that she was to some extent, “through [her] own actions” on the “sidelines” in high school, this does not seem to very central to the context of her psychosis. Again somewhat reminiscent of Sanne, however, is that in her professional life she “often felt intimidated.” Annemiek considers this “just a little bit of a weird trait” of hers, although she says that, currently, at the Steunpunt she does not “have any trouble with that at all.” In addition, whether early social experiences played a role in this feeling intimidated like they seem for Sanne, is not clear as in Annemiek’s case this seems to be more related to actual conflicts with her boss, as she says she had many throughout her working life.

About a year and a half prior to her psychosis she had planned to divorce her husband, and end the relationship which “was such that he did, in the ten years we were together, on occasion” deal with her “physically.” In addition, he was a borderline alcoholic, which led to problems in the relationship. However, Annemiek became pregnant, and she decided to try and continue the relationship. Her husband promised he would stop drinking when the baby came. He did not, however. After the baby came her attempts at solving these issues with her husband always remained unsuccessful. She could not “come to grips” with that. Following a specific incident,

“[One of my parents] urged [my husband] again, 'you should really, just start drinking less or stop completely, because it's just not right, you can't control yourself'³³. 'Yes, yes, yes' [he said], he would start working on that, as always.. just going along with it. And then I found out [...] after a few weeks [...] that he had drank again anyway [...] Then I went to [that parent again [...]] and I talked to her about it, and she said.. [...] 'you have to make him leave the house, so you have some [peace and] quiet for yourself [...] you just have to say to him, you stay somewhere else for three months' [...] and I think that was also a kind of a trigger.. because then he said 'yes! I will do that!' [...] [but] I thought, well, he is not going to do that, and what should I do then, if he doesn't leave. And [that parent] says, 'you just have to insist that he leaves.' But [...] [that parent] also knew that he had been physical [with me] in the past.. and, well, I was so [...] weak at that point in time [...] that I wasn't able.. to go through with that because then I [told him][...] 'this is going in the wrong direction [...] I want you to [...] go stay somewhere else [...] for two or three months now, somewhere,' and then he said 'well where should I go?' So then I conceded,

33 Literally: “you don't have a brake” (“je hebt geen rem”).

because I [...] thought, probably [...] I won't win this anyway."

Following this, she really felt like “the underdog,” and the relationship with her husband deteriorated further, until husband and wife stood in complete opposition to each other, signified by their mutual utterance of the words “I hate you!” This situation culminated in her “fleeing” with her child to a close relative, who lived on the other side of the country. Because of the state she was in, she was then admitted in a mental health institution for depression.

When she was released from the institution, she went to live with another distant relative without her child on the opposite side of the country, again far from where she had lived with her husband. There, her relationship with both relatives turned problematic. She had developed anorexia and so the relatives pressured her to eat more. Annemiek says she did in fact do so. However, she did not gain weight, leading the relatives to not to believe her. “That was such a blow” to her. Soon thereafter, Annemiek fled back to her husband under the pretext of trying to make the marriage work one more time, partly because she believed they wanted to have her admitted again, partly because she had was worried about her daughter.

However, she soon realized the situation she had fled to was even worse than the one she had fled from. She was “in the position of the underdog [to a] terrible [extent],” at least partly because her family now also refused to support her, because she had gone back to her husband. When she asked the relative with whom she had lived just before if she could come back, he said no.

Moreover, at least from the moment she tried to get her husband to leave the house onwards, she appears to have had little (physical) contact with friends. Annemiek explains that this was because it would have felt “very contradictory,” with all that was going on and how she felt, if she would have had “a little bit [of] fun,” and “gone to a little terrace with a friend.” It just “didn't make sense anymore.”

Only two interactions with friends were described in the longest interviews of the study. When she had fled to her mother just prior to her admission for depression a friend of hers came by. The topics of conversation seem to have been about if Annemiek wanted to go out walking “in the most terrible rain.” She could, but without her daughter. And her ability to work out if she were to go live with the other relative. Annemiek used to love to go swimming as her form of exercise, however because of her problematic relationship with her partner and having to take care of her baby, she felt

restricted to be able to leave the house to swim. Instead, she had started to work out at home, by “jumping” in the kitchen and, at times, using a rowing machine she had. Her friend helped her figure out if there was a gym near her relative's house or if she could bring her rowing machine with her there.

The only other interaction with a friend described in the interviews took place just prior to her admission for psychosis, when she had returned to her husband. A relative had asked her friend to stop by and see how she was doing, and if she was able to take care of her child. Although Annemiek felt very bad, the friend reported back to this relative that she was able to do so.

*“We were walking [around] [...] [and] I was behind the buggy, and [...] I had to try **very** hard [...] to stay together. Because then I was already really becoming [...] psychotic [...] I still think it's astonishing, that this friend had reported that [...] I could just, in a normal way, take care of [my child] [...] in my head I was [...] completely disintegrating really.”*

As could be expected, Annemiek considers the period prior to her psychosis to have been very stressful. Specifically, what stressed her out was the idea she “should break up with this man, and then what” was she going to do?

6.2 Why did it happen?

As for why all of this happened, Annemiek says she thinks that “definitely, genetic factors do play a role in whether you have a disposition” for psychosis, “as well as stress.” “But” she does think “in the social sphere [...] there might have been a straw” which broke the camel's back.” And “maybe it would have gone very differently,” if her husband and her “did not have any problems at all.” So that she “didn't have to worry about alcohol use,” and that he “would have cared more” for their baby “from the beginning.” “And then,” she concludes, “you do notice that social things are very important as well.” Because “that *relationship*, and the alcohol” gave her “sooo much stress.” And this on top of having “become a mom for the first time.” “Probably, for me” she then adds, “at least that is what they think it was,” it was “a kind of combination of an already present disposition” for psychoticism, “the *hormones*,” and the “stress of the relationship.” Relatedly, she considers the scene where she tried and failed to get her husband to leave the house “a sort of trigger.”

7. Patrick

Patrick experienced two psychoses in rapid succession, the first when he was 18. He was admitted only for the first, and does not remember what his diagnosis was. He does remember that, while admitted, a staffmember there told him that what he had is a “very well-known phenomenon in boys at the end of their puberty who smoke alot of weed.” “Probably,” he had added, “you will grow out of it” in a similar fashion to having “growing pains as a kid.” This seems to fit Patrick's situation, who, now well in his thirties, has not had a psychosis since. He is the only respondent participating in the study who is not currently on medication.

7.1 What is Psychosis?

To Patrick psychosis has to do with a missing “filter” in one's brain “of sounds you hear, which your brain [...] *is supposed to* register as just background.” But because it is missing, “you make all sorts of connections/associations³⁴ with things you see, hear, feel, and memories and fantasy, and impulses”: “it all just becomes *one big mush*, which your brain attempts to *order* [...] which is what a psychosis is.” “Because,” he continues, “you start to make connections/associations which aren't there at all.” In addition, the most prominent hallucinations are not those “you *see*, but those you *hear*.” Moreover, you are able “reason everything *towards* your psychosis.” And even “if you think, no, it is not the case.. then something *happens* or something is said or you receive a different stimulus which *does* confirm it.” For instance, his delusion that his parents had been forced to collude with the secret service which was trying to make him crazy, which originated because it took them a very long time to come get him at the mental health institution after the scene in the university and they came by cab, was confirmed by his first visual hallucination when he finally got home:

*“So I come home [...] and my mom is making tea and is nervous and so is my dad [...] My dad is sitting on the couch [...] and I looked at the TV and I see the reflection of the room [...] and I see the reflection of the couch where my dad is sitting, but my dad is not sitting there, I am **lying there**, on that couch, wearing **exactly** the same clothes as I am wearing, except I am completely shaking [...] as if I am having a kind of epileptic seizure on that couch. And [...] I look at that couch, and my dad is just sitting there [...] 'is this really*

³⁴ The dutch word is “verbanden,” which can be translated as either connections or associations. Although the word “associaties” and “connecties” also exist they are not used so often and could be considered Anglicisms.

*happening?' [...] And I **get up**, I walk, I think like '**from outside**, from the street, it is projected **on** [the TV]' [...] so I **walk across** the front [of the TV], in front of the screen, I then see it from a different **perspective**, [...] myself just shaking there like that. So I [...] walk to the kitchen, 'then they will turn it off,' and then I come back. [...] Still [I see it], wow [...] My parents [...] see that I **see** something, so [...] [they ask] 'what do you **see**?' So I say, 'don't you **see** that?' [They reply] 'No, no, the TV is off, [...] So then I also thought like, ah [...] LSD is just continuously being put in what I drink. So that I just have hallucinations **all** the time [...] later in that same psychosis I also didn't dare to drink water [...] from the **faucet** anymore, because [of that]."*

In addition, Patrick mentions having felt a “*deep instinctive* fear of death,” but also, at times, a “euphoric” feeling, as in “haha, I outsmarted them! [...] they didn't succeed! I'm still *alive*!” Later, he says that it is comparable to a “soldier on the *battlefield* [...] or a *top* athlete, who has to *exhaust* himself completely.” “Psychosis,” he adds, he also views “as a kind of *mental*³⁵ exhaustion.” For instance, it is “just really *bizar*,” “that you can just keep walking for a *day*,” “not having slept a night,” whereas “normal people just collapse dead or just sleep for forty-eight hours or something.” Returning to “that fear of *death*” a bit later, he thinks that they are just the same “primitive fears of death [...] [as] someone who knows he will die.” Like “a soldier who is being sent to battle,” or “someone who [...] has a *terminal* illness.” He knows “for sure” that he “had those *same* feelings [...] those *same* emotions,” because it “was just *one hundred* percent true for me at that moment.”

At some point during this psychosis, he was forcibly admitted into a mental hospital after he had pulled a knife on his father. Having gotten there, he “*completely* freaked out” and he destroyed the room he was in, even though “it was very heavy furniture.” He was then overpowered by the staff and given “an injection in my ass.” He initially thought that, for the next four days, he slept and had dreamt the following, but

*“**Later** I heard that I did walk around **in** those days [...] I have a [...] **very** intense memory of that [...] [I] walked **through** the hallway of the ward, and that I [...] stepped **out** of my body so to speak [...] [and] floated **two**, one **meter**, or **two** meters **above** my body, and saw **myself** [...] **walking**. Across that ward. To the table, instantly, pour tea, walk to the smoking area, take the tobacco out of the pockets of my pants, sit down, roll a*

35 The Dutch word translated here as mental, “geestelijk,” literally means “spirit-ly” or “mind-ly” since “geest” (like the German 'Geist'), among other things, means both mind as well as spirit.

cigarette, and smoke it.”

A similar experience came to light in the second round of interviews:

“ Your body is a kind of shell, which [...] wanders around aimlessly, and the mind /spirit³⁶ is somewhere else [...] or that that body you are in, is not your body [...] that you say so to speak, I'm not Patrick at all, I am something very different [...] my mind/spirit is something different.”

In addition, during as well as for a time after his psychosis he thought “this is what the city council [...] wanted to happen,” “they pushed me in my madness, they just made me crazy,” and in that way “they beat³⁷” him. Finally, he mentions “the well-known phenomenon of psychoses,” that one wanders or travels around aimlessly³⁸, in his case by train.

7.2 The Context of the Psychosis

Patrick had a “very relaxed” and “good, happy childhood.” The village he grew up in had “a lot of social control,” and it is in this context that he started to smoke marihuana “with a group of friends” at age fourteen or fifteen. It seems that, because they did so outside, they met other youths, and quickly his group of friends expanded. Describing this ‘scene,’ he says

“[We] were the alternative drop-out youths in that village: metal, punk, reggae, Doors, Jimi Hendrix, smoking weed, long hair, worn out clothes, skulls, weed leaves, anarchist-signs.”

Consisting of mostly “alternative youth” who “really had a *fucking hatred*” for the Christian morality in his village, it constituted a “*counterculture* against [...] the norm” there and “people were *really* scared to death of them.” Furthermore, starting immediately when they began hanging out and smoking marihuana as a group outside, they came into conflict with the police. One of their main topics of conversation was “that *fucking church*” and “really there should just be a place where we can just, in a relaxed way, listen to our music, smoke a joint, [and] drink beer.” The only

36 “Geest”

37 Literally he says “got under(neath)” (“er onder gekregen”).

38 Literally, in Dutch he says “to go on drift” (“op drift gaan”), conveying the image of a log floating out at sea.

place for youths to gather in the village at the time was a “sort of evangelizing youth center,” and, clearly, that was not to their liking. Their conflict with the police, and by association municipal authorities, then further escalated when the scene decided to squat part of a former non-christian youth center, which had had a very bad reputation and had been closed down. From then on, the conflict also acquired somewhat of a political dimension, implying the demand for a non-christian youth center.³⁹

The makeshift youth center was a success, and soon on the weekends around twenty people would hang out there. Quickly, however, the police evicted them. When the 'scene' squatted the building again, only to be evicted yet again, they changed tactics. There were a lot of “really big villas” in the village “which had been empty for ten or fifteen years,” and they decided to start squatting those.

“And then it was really like one empty building after the other [...] and then really like, on Saturday afternoon, we were evicted by 20 cops with a battering ram. And then we just got beaten severely [...] with the baton, on heads and on shoulders and on the arms [...] we were all kicked out.”

From then on, the situation seems to have been one of total conflict, including both police violence as well as guerilla-style tactics from the side what quickly became described as a “youth gang.” On three occasions, around ten local police officers would even put on “riot gear,” drive up in a riot police van, form a line and ““really just charge us away from our hangout.” At some point, the group was banned from gathering in the city center, and Patrick says that sometimes they were all arrested for no reason. The parents of someone in the group would then tell them that they heard from a friend, who worked for the police, that they would be arrested in the following week. “And really,” Patrick tells me, “the week after, we were just all arrested.” “For *nothing*,” he continues, “we were arrested, got beaten,” and “the next day we would be kicked out on the street again.”

In the case of another friend of Patrick’s, parents played a very different role. At age fourteen this friend had already been arrested multiple times, and now found himself in “a very bizarre situation.” He was not allowed to be out of his parents' house after the sun went down, and if he was not home by then “his parents would call the police and then [...] all [police] units had to look for him,” or “when they spotted him, arrested him immediately.” He would then be locked up for a

³⁹ ‘Demand,’ however, seems to be somewhat of a misnomer, as they did not ask for what they wanted, but instead simply took it.

night, and brought home the day after. “Then his dad,” he continues, “would beat the shit out of him.” There was “no social service whatsoever” involved, “just a kind of one-two⁴⁰ between the cops and the parents.”

Yet another friend of Patrick's, who was punk and had been in juvenile detention, “always had a police car behind him.” Since he did not have a bike, he would always walk through the village. And if he did so and “the police saw him,” “the police drove behind him, very slowly, at about five meters distance.” “But really just, for like an hour,” Patrick adds, “if they didn't hear there was a burglary somewhere or a traffic accident, that is what they did.” Something similar happened to the group as a whole when they would come together at two of their usual hangouts, the church or the municipal building.

*“When [...] the first [...] people came, a police car came which parked [...] facing us, at a distance of twenty or thirty meters, [and they] just stayed there the entire evening [...] until we would go home. Then it would drive off. **Really..Always.** [...] [It] was really bizarre, because, as a sport at some point, we would stand there with like fifteen people, and then we would all of a sudden run **very very** quickly, all of us in one direction, and the cops [would] really, floor it [and come after us] [...] [[and because of the lay-out of the center] we could shake them off pretty well [...] and sometimes we also stopped running and then they would also sometimes get out [of the car], and the cops would say, 'yea, can't we just act normal for once?' and we would be like 'yeah, what?!' [...] 'what?! What normal? You are watching us for three damn hours, we are not doing **anything.**' [And they would say] 'yeah, you, you know why we are here **just fine**, you know why we are keeping an eye on you **just fine.**”*

These experiences formed the backdrop to attempts by the authorities to gather information about Patrick and his group of friends. Moluccan youths who were part of Patrick's scene, as well as some older Moluccans, had told him about the existence of a local police intelligence service⁴¹. The village had a large Moluccan community, and had seen quite some unrest relating to a broader Moluccan movement in the Netherlands in the 1970's and '80's that included the armed highjacking of trains. At Moluccan weddings, which were visited “by something like five hundred Moluccans,” at times, a police officer would be present to take pictures, and it was always the same one. So, the

40 Football-related term signifying close co-operation between two parties without any other parties involved.

41 PID or Plaatselijke InlichtingenDienst (Local Intelligence Service).

Moluccans told Patrick and his friends, “that guy is a type of secret police.”

This same police officer was also “the one who would continuously try to start conversations” with Patrick and his friends, and at some point he and his friends thought “those Moluccans are right, it is always that guy and he just knows **a lot** about us.” Patrick and some of his friends had started going to squatters’ demonstrations and protests by the Anti-Fascist Action, and this police officer would, for instance, mention to them the fact that they had gotten arrested together multiple times during the latter.

In addition, suspicions arose that the only drug dealer in the village, was an informant for the police. When they came to his house to buy some marihuana, he for instance say to them that he heard that “last week the windows of the municipal building got thrown in,” continuing to say “cool man, the people who do that are really awesome!” This was then followed by the question “do you have any idea who did that?” At first, they would brag about it to him, “because of course he was the big dealer [in my village], and we were little brats of fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years old.” But at some point a friend of said

*“hey, but still, this is actually totally not possible, the cops **really** do know this guy is a dealer, he's been doing that since the eighties, and he is just **asking** too much: if you're a home dealer, you just don't ask those things. I think, he is just passing information along to the cops, and [...] they just overlook that he is dealing [drugs] [...] Everyone frequents [his place] [...] he's just a **huge** source of information for the cops, [that] guy's just a snitch.”⁴²*

Patrick and his friends did, in fact, throw in the windows at the municipal building. The conflict had continued to escalate, and now included the disruption of meetings by municipal officials, scrawling on walls, putting up posters and “trashing stuff” in addition to squatting buildings. Eventually he and some others were arrested and convicted of throwing in the windows at the municipal building, and had to pay large fines. This event also drew the interest of a local journalist, who interviewed Patrick about why they had thrown in those windows. Patrick explained this was because it had been clear for a very long time that they wanted an independent, non-christian youth center. Frustrated by the municipality’s lack of action, they took this radical course of action. The demand for a youth center then became one of the central themes in upcoming local elections, spearheaded

42 This can be seen as a good example of the idea that the ‘webs of significance’ one is suspended in are related to the events, interactions and situations one encounters.

by local Party of Labour (PvdA)⁴³ members, although they used a different name. Seemingly afraid of losing influence in the municipal government, suddenly, two weeks before the elections, the ruling coalition of SGP⁴⁴ and CDA⁴⁵ gave Patrick and his friends a key to the building and “a lot of subsidy.” They had their youth center.

The “awesome” struggle, which was “really a rush,” and had taken years, now had seemingly ended in victory. However, he says “it was a lot of work, and a lot of responsibilities, and we were just pot-smoking stoners.” A lot of his friends quit, and said “ugh, this isn’t fun!” Patrick instead thought, “well, we always wanted it, so then I have to keep up with it too.” Only two or three others did the same. The scene, which he describes as having been “very close,” split and became “a bit like two worlds.” The vast majority of the scene said they were “crazy” for doing putting so much effort into the youth center, that it was just “way too much hassle.” This, for Patrick, was “a kind of displacement⁴⁶,” which was additionally caused simply by friends drifting apart as they finished their school and started to work, and for instance the one friend moving in with his girlfriend and started leading a more quiet life, whereas the other started doing more drugs.

A significant aspect of the mentioned ‘hassle’ is related to the aforementioned drug dealer, which also confirmed Patrick’s suspicions about him. On the very first day the youth center was open he showed up, and already having a very bad reputation in the village, Patrick and his friends thought “*fuck*, because that guy is [...] here” that confirms the youth center “is a drug den.” Throwing him out, however, was not really an option. They “were pretty scared of him,” as he would “always come with a group of people,” one of whom also at one point threatened them with a gun.

At one [a.m] the youth centre had to be closed [...] I was standing behind the bar with another volunteer, that guy [the drug dealer] was sitting there with that creepy Moroccan⁴⁷ (footnote this is the one with the gun), four Moluccans, really all guys of about forty, forty-five [years old] [...] also really that you know that they’ve just been heroine junkies for twenty-five years, they were sitting at the bar [...] [and] two alternatives⁴⁸ sixteens year olds. We were [all] sixteen [and] seventeen, [and the bar] had

43 Partij van de Arbeid, literally translated. Virtually identical to the British Labour party.

44 “StaatsGereformeerde Partij,” “State Reformed Party,” the most hardline Christian party in the Netherlands.

45 “ChristenDemocratisch Appel,” “Christian-Democratic Party,” the largest Christian party in the Netherlands, traditionally considered to form the center of the Dutch political spectrum, with PvdA to the left and VVD to the right.

46 Displacement, here, refers to “ontheemding,” the situation of being “de-home-d.”

47 This is the one who threatened them with a gun.

48 “Alto’s,” designation for a subculture based on for instance metal and hard rock. Could perhaps be considered a ‘softer’ variation on the Punk-scene.

*to be closed at one o'clock, I said [in a high-pitched voice] 'Yes, last call', [then the drug dealer] said, 'last call? No fucking way, we'll just completely beat you up, you will just continue pouring [drinks] as long as we want.' [...] [So] we went into the kitchen, called the police, like 'err... yea, we don't know how to solve this,' [...] [the police said] 'yea we're coming,' [...] [but] the police never came [...] we had to call friends out of their beds, who then slowly trickled in, and [...] those friends said like 'yea, there are police there, there are police there, there are police there, they have been standing there for hours,' and [...] only at four o'clock, [would] those guys would leave, because then at that moment, something like fifteen or twenty friends of ours were there [...] At some point there were like big incidents, knives were pulled, and [...] beer bottles smashed on the bar [...] I did it too, I also hit someone **right** on the head with a barstool, and really like **intense** incidents, and the cops always came too late [...] they would wait around the corner. That [dealer] was **never** arrested, **never, never, never, never**. I pressed charges of being severely threatened **multiple** times [...] really those guys [were] never arrested, never never never never, were never prosecuted, never."*

Moreover, Patrick and his friends heard from sympathizing “left-ish⁴⁹” civil servants, that the purpose of the local authorities giving them the youth center was to be able to say, “look, we tried, but those youths cannot [...] take responsibility.” The municipal authorities thought “we just give those people what they want [...] they will make such a mess of it,” that “within a year it'll go down.” The youth center was “*fucking* stressful” for Patrick, but here yet another reason presented itself to keep working there, as he “*knew* [...] that *that* just was [their] intention.” Patrick and his friends started to experience this situation as a “trap” which had been set for him by local authorities, a “clamp” they had put him in. Attempts to get out of this trap by using the youth center as a platform to radicalize other youths like themselves failed completely.

“There was no shared goal anymore to [...] harass christian morality, and [...] the bourgeoisie, the civil servants.. because, yea, we had a youth center, what [...] are we complaining about? [...] Our argument was gone.. [...] the whole conflict was gone, the will to struggle so to speak, like 'ha! Now we are going to play the municipality a fucking nasty trick!' [...] it was completely pacified.”

It was then, about two years prior to his psychosis, that he started to slip into the depression

⁴⁹ These had, for instance, been active in the anti-nuclear weapons movement of the 1980's. This movement included the largest demonstration in Dutch history.

mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, which he considers to have been “a sort of stress.” “Compensating a little” for all of the above-mentioned, he had, moreover, already started taking XTC, speed and LSD on the weekend, once or twice a month, in a one-year period, “out of [...] a kind of escapism.” To “just get a sort of rush.” And, he reasoned, “what difference does it make to *not* do it?” He could not “be worse off anyway,” he reasoned. His friends, moreover, started to show “depressive behavior” as well, and Patrick says they now spent their days “watching MTV and Beavis & Butthead” while stoned. He was not lonely in this period, since he did always drag himself to places he knew there were friends of his, but

*“If I would be with friends on Friday nights [...] then [...] we would drink beer, and smoke joints.. and [...] then I would go [...] sleep on the **couch**, to so to speak shirk from [...] the social **happening**. I had nothing to say **anyway**, nothing interested me [...] So in some way I was excluding myself, but **still** I wanted to be among people..”*

“[Before we talked] for instance like 'man, what kind of prank shall we pull now to screw the municipal authorities,' or [...] [we were] philosophizing about life, and [...] 'gee how will we look in ten years,' or [...] about music, or movies [...] about different ways of being stoned [...] everything is still new so to speak [...] [but now] the cookie was kind of finished⁵⁰ [...] and of course that everybody had already told all of their stories, we saw each other everyday, and for years.”

As could be expected from the quotes above, Patrick did “not really” talk about his depression with friends. In addition, he says that he's “not really from a family where all sorts of things were discussed.” When I specified “feelings” as topic of conversation, he says “really absolutely not.” His mother at some point did ask whether he was depressed, but this did not lead to talking about it either, as he simply did not know what ‘to be depressed’ was, what it meant or what this phrase signifies. Regarding the “trap” he was in, he says he did talk with his friends, a statement immediately followed by “of course [it] was all escapist behavior, smoking a lot of weed.”

About a year prior to his psychosis, a friend of Patrick's was approached by a regional or national intelligence service.⁵¹ They asked him if he would want to become an informant regarding “that

⁵⁰ This statement, a literal translation of a Dutch saying, further elucidated in footnote 2, follows his statement, quoted in the introduction, that “everything had already been seen really.”

⁵¹ At some points during the interview Patrick says “RID,” referring to the “Regionale InlichtingenDienst” (“Regional Intelligence Service”). At other times he says

crazy group [...] who were spotted at a few actions and demonstrations.” This, Patrick says, led him to start reading about police and intelligence services.

Furthermore, one or two months prior to his psychosis, Patrick’s girlfriend of two years broke up with him. Although he says they had “just grown apart a bit,” and when she broke up with him it still came “a little out of the blue, ” Patrick does mention that

*“Some of her friends really just had like rightwing-extremist sympathies, [we did] on occasion have [...] quarrels about that [...] Let's say that the first one and a half years were really fun, that she really was [...] just crazy about me [...] and I about her, but [...] the last half year [...] there was mutual annoyance as well.. and [...] just really smoking a **fucking** lot of weed [...] [annoyance] among other things about her friends, whom I really thought of as [...] fascists.. not all of them, but, some I really did.. And [...] a kind of **emptiness** [...] really an emptiness of, smoking weed, smoking weed, smoking weed, hanging around in the coffee-shops, smoking weed, having sex once in a while [...] we never went on holiday together, never did things together, at the most [we] went to a few metal-concerts [...] multiple times we did speed and XTC [...] [also] that we would go visit her friends in [her village] and they would also really do a **fucking** lot of speed and coke and XTC [...] the atmosphere [was] very petty(-bourgeois)⁵², that you would visit with them so to speak, and first drank coffee [...] and then speed was snorted, computer games were played, but people didn't, so to speak.. philosophize about life at all, or err... [they] talked a little about work, or school, and, everybody just had a shitty job, everybody just had a low education, [and] just out of **pure** boredom [...] speed is snorted and XTC is taken [...] [In addition,] I was critical of society [...] and she [his girlfriend] didn't have that at all.”*

In any case, the moment she broke up with him, “she was immediately super-distant,” “even though” they “had been pretty close in those two years,” so that came as quite a blow.⁵³ Living in different villages meant that they “really didn't see each other anymore,” and he felt “rather fucked up” about that. They had met because they went to the same school, and they often skipped classes

“Centrale InlichtingenDienst,” or “Central Intelligence Service.” RID refers to an intelligence service directly linked to the police. A CID did not exist then; it is one of the predecessors of the BVD (predecessor of the current AIVD) at the time. The acronym stands for “Internal Security Agency,” and it was the main national intelligence service. Alternatively, CID could refer to the CRI, which was/is the umbrella under which the various RID’s operate.

52 “Petty-bourgeois” is the literal translation of “kleinburgerlijk.” Probably because of the specificities of the political and counter-culture movements in the late '60's in the Netherlands and the impact this had, in Dutch this word (as well as “burgerlijk” or “bourgeois”) is sometimes used in ways which “petty-bourgeois” would not be used in English, also by people who have not come into contact with something like Marxist class analysis.

53 The literal translation of what here has been translated as “blow” is “raw on the roof” (“rauw op 't dak”), which does not make any sense in English.

together. He spent a lot of time in a coffee-shop in the city⁵⁴ where it was located, just sitting there for “the *entire* day” reading activist magazines. He would also go there a lot with her. When the relationship ended, he still went, but now he just sat there smoking marihuana by himself.

Apart from the break-up of this relationship, finishing his previous school was another reason why he would be at the coffee-shop alone. Since a lot of the people he went to school with did not actually live in the city the school was located, he did not actually know people in that city. Before, “sometimes you would enter a coffee-shop, and then there would just be half of your school just sitting there.” Although he had had a great time at that school, now he was not in contact with anyone who had gone there anymore.

The school he started going to around the same time as his girlfriend broke up with him, moreover, he found to be awful. He had gotten into the school because he had always been good at drawing, but it seems like the first thing he heard there was “clear out your fine-liners and stuff, because it is all going [to be] different [...] a lot of graphic design is on computers, so we will be only working with computers.” Patrick “did not know *anything* about computers,” and even had “a kind of aversion against it.” He soon dropped out, also because he “did not have any click *at all*” with the other people at school, who had “somewhat higher levels of education” whereas he came from an LTS.⁵⁵ Having gotten into the school because of his drawing portfolio, he thought “wow, I [have] accomplished something [...] well, I succeeded at that!” As indicated, this feeling now had turned into “suchhh a disappointment.” Summarizing, Patrick says

“It was, so to speak, [...] a general disappointment. Like, uhh, shit [...] Like during adolescence everything is interesting and wow this is awesome, that is awesome.. that I was something like shit, so this is [...] what life looks like [...] Which really caused a huge disappointment [...] I was really 'like fuck! Hey, what a fucking mess!’”

7.3 Why did it happen?

As for why, Patrick says the context described above has “*everything* to do with the psychosis.” In short, he says the “atmosphere of paranoia” resulting from “[the fact that] *me* and my friends were

⁵⁴ This is the same city as the one in the introduction. He had wound up going to school there because he had been expelled from the one in his village.

⁵⁵ Abbreviation for Lagere Technische School (Lower Technical School), part of the now defunct track in Dutch secondary education specifically dealing with technical education, which also included a Middle and Higher Technical School (MTS/HTS).

[...] subject of [...] investigation” meant that it was hard to separate reality and fantasy, which in combination with “a *depression*, [and] a load of dope on top of that,” is “just [...]a catastrophic combination.”

8. Maikel

Maikel was 27 when he experienced his first psychosis, became psychotic on one other occasion, and was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia. At age 19 he had been diagnosed with ADHD.

8.1 What is Psychosis?

In Maikel's psychosis, which he says is something “which creeps in,” “the biggest nightmares became reality” and he could “no longer separate reality and fantasy.” “Everything falls apart” he says later, “and you lose yourself,” “that is the beginning.” It is also “the falling apart of your [...] expectations,” “you expect something but it comes contrary to your expectations.” In his head “everything was fucked up,” and he thought his grandfather “had been murdered,” which was not the case. He also thought himself to be “a very dangerous person, even though that wasn't [true]” and was “scared to death.”

In addition, he said “all kinds of weird things” about “medieval times,” “that things had already been decided for us in medieval times.” He was awake for whole nights talking to people who were not there, and some new people he had met “became part of my delusions.”

8.2 The Context of the Psychosis

Maikel was bullied in high-school for several years. For instance, classmates would make up “stupid stuff” like someone having seen him “shitting in the bushes.” This would drive him mad, which they would then find funny. In general, all throughout his youth he was the odd one out, but “when I got to *high* school I was *different* again.” Being around people “from the city,” then “you do become a bit smaller,” than when he was in his village. This seems to have had circular, intensifying effect. “At some moment,” he says, “you strive” to act “a bit crazy.” He would act “even more crazy,” because, “you are crazy anyway, you think.”

“Some people were chill,” though. This group was predominantly “a *weed-smoking-group*”, “so

every break we would just chill for a bit.” Although it is unclear whether it is the same group, his main group of friends for years had come into existence “through smoking weed.” “Before the second grade [of high school],” he continues, “I was actually anti-drugs, but when I came in contact with it, I liked it.” Later on, he says that drugs for him were a way to take a “holiday from yourself.”

About two years prior to his psychosis, Maikel lost a job he had had for two and a half years. This was “really the best job of my life.” He had started to feel they were monitoring him, and he later found out they had “all sent emails behind [his] back” about what he was doing wrong. He freaked out and “called people snakes,” and was “shouting.” “And then,” he “wasn't allowed into the building anymore.” The resulting situation had a lot of effects on his life in general. For instance, because he did not have an income anymore, he lost his living space and went to live with his grandmother. And generally

“I couldn't lead my life how I wanted [to] [...] anymore. So I was stuck in my attic [at my grandmother's]. [...] [Traveling around and partying was] the main thing in my life [...] because of that [...] behavior, a lot of people did like me.[...] 'hey maikel what are you going to do?', and [...] then it was always like 'yeah [...] this is tomorrow' or 'I want to check that out' or 'perhaps I will do this,' it was always something like that you know [...] and when I got sicker [prior to psychosis] I was [...] 'hey Maikel what are you going to do?' yeah, I would only shrug and I didn't feel like talking to them anymore [...] I couldn't lead my life the way I wanted [...] and because of that I became [...] socially isolated.”

He used to be around people “every day,” but “at some point” he “really didn't see anyone anymore.” In addition to losing contact with the Moluccan community, his long-time and close-knit group of friends had disintegrated, whom he had visited, partied and hung out with for years. People moved away or went to travel the world. Maikel also mentions that he was “kicking everybody away” from him as well, and there was “annoyances” in the group in general. These were related to drug use inside the group, fights about “nothing” and “perhaps jealousy” because of the women. although he says he was “original” when it came to girlfriends.

“In the end that also led to [...] people filing reports against me [...] A friend of mine [...] said that I threatened her with a knife [...] I did say something like [it] [...] I got into a fight with her boyfriend [...] [and] he had been acting tough. Then I said 'if you act

*like this one more time, then [...] you will need a **knife** to stop me [...] I got two years probation [...] and that is how it started actually. That was I think also a **part** of the run-up in [to my] psychosis. So then I also [...] didn't talk to **anyone**, very few people for a year. [...] [It was] then that I went to live with my grandmother as well. [...] So in the end, from there did it become psychosis.⁵⁶*

In addition, “some things” he does not specify in the longest relationship he had been in had not “been right.” He had broken up with her multiple times, but then she would always come back to him. He “couldn't let her go.” When, finally, the six-year relationship did end, this hit him like a “sledgehammer.” This made him “sad,” and, referring to the disintegration of his group of friends as well, “that [was] all at once, you know.” Moreover, later relationships did not work out because for instance the woman moved away, or because when he professed his love to a girl, she pointed him out the door. His days, then, consisted of him asking for ten euros from his grandmother, walking to the coffee-shop, smoking weed, playing music and spraying graffiti. When he was together with family, he would sit away from them, because he “just didn't feel like talking to people.” “When everything went wrong with that group of friends, with all those groups of friends,” he explains, “that reflected on to my family.” He got into verbal fights with them, as he did with (ex-)girlfriends, and cursed even at pictures of relatives. Furthermore, in this period, Maikel would only hold on to a job for short periods of time. This would be because he would walk out after a fight. These fights would erupt when someone told him to mop the floor, even though he had just done that. He would then refuse to do so and walk out, which felt very “liberating” for him.

Not long before his psychosis, his social isolation seemed to have diminished to an extent, attempts to meet new people seemed to have been (at least partly) successful. In a club he met “a few guys,” and they started “rapping a bit,” and he let them hear the music he had made. The week after they invited him to come to the party again, and he hung out with them backstage. It is these new contacts which became part of his delusions.

8.3 Why did it happen?

Maikel believes “the stress [he] experienced in [his] life,” in addition to his drug use, played a huge role in the onset of his psychosis. In this context, Maikel mentions he had a “hectic life [...] with a

⁵⁶ Sic.

lot of police and stuff like that.” He was also “pressured by [his] parents,” and “unstable⁵⁷” with relationships “with women... I couldn't really count on [them].”

9. Erik

Erik remembers hearing voices since he was six years old, but they only became problematic at age 35. Therefore, the interviews focussed on the period preceding this. In addition, he is diagnosed as having ADHD.

9.1 What is Psychosis?

He hears voices “24/7”, and has “all six” types of hallucinations. The voices can hurt him “physically,” “right down to your bones.” They “generate negative emotions,” for instance when he is having a positive conversation, and regarding girlfriends they always find fault, trying to “pull you apart emotionally.” A major group of voices he calls “De Tegenpartij,” the Counter Party or more literally the Party Against, a reference to a 1980's recurring Dutch TV sketch about a very 'populist' right-wing fictional political party. He calls them this because if he wants “to do left, they [want to do] right,” and if he wants “to do right they do left.” They are “against my girlfriends, against me volunteering” and against the people he has contact with because of that. Unless, he adds, “they are negative contacts, then [...] they do not comment.” The voices do not allow him to have fun, and “if they see” he is “happy [...] [that] is completely destroyed.” This can be taken very literally. For instance, he is “very happy” with a cabinet in his living room, and that means he has “to kick it in.” In other words, they oppose basically everything he wants. They also prevent him from visiting or even contacting his father.

*“Calling my father [...] [is] forbidden. If I want to go see him, in the retirement home across the bridge from here [...] getting [the] bike is out of the question [...] in three seconds they can get you angry. You stand [there] [...] yes really like an idiot [...] throwing the bike against the wall, bang bang, bang bang. [so] I put the bike in the shed again quickly [...] Well, by bike doesn't work, [so I go] by bus. So I have to get bus 12 [...] I have to be at **that** busstop, I was at bus 11's busstop, I only saw that when the bus arrived [...] You are that psychotic at that moment.”*

57 Translation of “wisselvallig.” The exact meaning of this word can be understood if one knows Dutch weather. It is highly “wisselvallig”: it changes a lot and it can go from sunny to rainy almost in the blink of an eye.

Moreover, the voices create “chaos” and de-structure his life. Based on many anecdotes and details he told me about what for instance they oppose, I asked if “everything which might work in an anti-psychotic way [...] the psychosis opposes this?” to which he replied with a definite “yes.” “Assuming” he “produce[s] the voices” himself, he adds, “it is just automutilation: another cuts himself and I [...] hurt myself with emotions.” “In my head [...] it is a war or a nuclear war,” he says, “but it just is war.” He says he always has “an orchestra” with him, so then “you sit on the couch from six tot nine,” and he thinks he “was on the couch for five minutes.” Finally, he also mentions “a psychosis always makes you tired too.”

9.2 The Context of the Voices Getting to Him

It should be noted that, first of all, Erik's first memories of hallucinations seem to coincide chronologically with being bullied heavily.

*“When I walked onto the football field [...] at the flat [...] I was immediately completely beaten up. So then I became incandescent with rage and [...] hold on a second, the voice has to be put in the right⁵⁸ ... I was in the bathtub incandescent with rage and panting, 'woh, I'm going to get them, going to get them' and this and that, but yea what are you to do as [the] only little man against [...] ten other older youths [...] about ten years old, and I was about six, I just got beaten up, bashed [...] and then I [...] [learnt] judo [...] And then my mom didn't allow me to use it for a year [...] I didn't use it for a year [...] and [then] I was beaten up again, my mother said like 'well, get them now.' And I did judo, took one in a stranglehold, they had to **pull** me off, his face got completely blue. **Really** pulled me of [...] I would have killed him. I had gotten him to such an extent, so much aggression from years and years and years.”*

Secondly, Erik's voices are often related to people he interacts with, and people he interacts with can become voices in his head. A specific voice in his head or “actor” is based on the “underlying need” or “way of being” of the related person. The actor's character “is equal to [...] the character which [s]he has on earth, as I perceive it.” But, in his head it is “unpolished,” and they are “often somewhat more rude and less friendly.” This is because in everyday interaction there are certain rules of conduct, which veils the underlying need or way of being of a person. When I asked him if,

58 Here he interrupts his story because one of the voices, translated literally, “has to get his right” (“moet zijn gelijk halen”).

perhaps, someone's true character "seeps through" these rules of conduct he says "that is too much of an accusation," he does "not want to say that." "But", he adds, "it could be a truth." This adds weight to the idea of thought as an 'internalized conversation' which is intimately tied up with social experiences.

Although not all people Erik interacts with become voices in his head, when people "flip-flop"⁵⁹ in their story, "you can be sure" that "there will be an attempt" for them to "suddenly" become an actor in his head. "Those people can be very nice," but when "they flip-flop in their story at some point," they become actors who "have a negative role." Moreover, actors with whom he has a fight with are not necessarily "evil," since he considers friendships to possibly include fights from time to time. Evil (boosaardige) voices, however, do exist. And although he has even asked people to dinner who are very negative in his head, with close friends he has he never seems to have any trouble. Even when they tell a "white lie," there is "little flip-flopping," and they are "sincere."

Important to the context in which Erik's voices got to him is the problematic relationship he had with his girlfriend whom he lived with. "It was more that we shared the house," he explains, "than that we [...] lived together." Although he does mention several occasions where they had some kind argument regarding a minor issue, he says that for his girlfriend one of the problems was she could not have a fight with him. They "had set a year [...] to change," and change mostly himself, because he blamed himself for the state the relationship was in. "She thought" he "should change," and he "thought she had a point." The sixteen-year relationship soon ended, however, in a fight in which his girlfriend said "but I do want to do fun things with you," to which he replied "fun things you can do with everybody, I need your help," after which he slammed the door shut. Following this, Erik's attempt to change himself and his relation to others, seems to have started in earnest, or, in any case continued. This "culture switch" is partly related to his ADHD diagnosis, which was made around this time.

"I did have a culture switch [...] [I] knew what was wrong with me, [what] my diagnosis was [ADHD] [...] And when I got the diagnosis I got a book about [it] [...] and then I read a small part first and those are the positive points. [And] I thought wow, I can do all of that. After that I read the negative points, [and] I thought like yeah, I need to pay attention to that. And [...] in that period I starting finishing things [...] [and I] took hold of [a] change in behavior of the negative points [...] [For instance, before I was]

⁵⁹ Translated from "draaien," literally "turning."

always late for my appointments, now I [...] [came] half an hour early.

Although he loved his work, which he says is “also ADHD,” as he “cannot sit still,” it must be said that this culture switch came in the context of already having a big workload.

“A general [work]day but, it is, I think, an exaggerated day... but that is a day when I felt the best: get up at six, go sit upstairs in the attic [...] typing [...] quotations [...] And then [...] start working. That could be assembling, selling, buying, doing my day, making phone calls [...] And what I also like is when I, but that is not possible in one day [...] is to keep on working at night, until about two or three, and then I would fax stuff [...] yes then I felt in my element [...] I worked a lot there, or a lot, it has always been my hobby.”

This seems to have culminated into a burnout, during a big project in which there was some problems with a co-worker. The transcription however is pretty unclear, which does not appear to be solely due to the quality of the audio recording, as I did not notice this point before transcribing the interview.

*“After that er, during that project I really had to stop it [working]. And err [...] that friend actually [...] did the financial arrangements differently, But err, I did say to him, 'just let me, for the love of **god** (in godsnaam) arrange the finances, on paper, so not er that the money flows into my account, but that err, purely the structure behind it.. Because then you still have that part of the profit, still that part of the profit, the broad profit, the entire day, the profit, because of the profit' I also said then, 'yes the profit [we?] all had [?? very unclear 1.47.01-5] wasn't a point.' Well I'm talking about err, yea the voices are saying it's not true and I'm starting to doubt now...”*

In any case, he “was just exhausted,” he “just... worked too hard.” “That sounds exaggerated, working hard,” he hastens to add, it was either “worked too hard [or] mis-arranged my schedule,” he concludes. Being out of work made this period stressful because he had to keep his household running, and he was worried if he would be able to get his customers back and if he would be able to work again at all. It was in this period that his voices got to him.

Finally, although it is very much possible that he did talk to others about his culture switch, the data neither confirm nor refute this, it is highly unlikely he discussed it in great detail as he “did it

without help,” with a self-help book. In general, in the period preceding his the voices getting to him, he had the feeling he could not count on people, that he had to do it all himself, and that he “was on [his] own⁶⁰.” Asked about where this feeling came from, he says that he has always had an “incredible drive to realize and to make and to create things.” This drive was “greater” than he experienced his social surroundings as capable of handling. He thinks this is because of his ADHD, which he later also links to his emotions being more “volatile, then here and then there and then there and then there.” He “couldn’t sit still,” and “wanted action and activities in life.” In that sense he thinks he is “different than others,” which made him feel he “was on the sidelines.” He has felt “different than others” for all of his life, and he thinks that other people also consider(ed) him to be different.

9.3 Why did it happen?

The “only difference” he could initially think of is that he started smoking cigarettes. But shortly thereafter he mentions that he thought about his life in the period preceding his voices getting to him. “All of the things” he thought he “did wrong,” and what he should “alter” in his “behavior” he started to change, referring to the aforementioned culture switch. “That could have triggered it,” he says. Making sure he was half an hour early for his appointments, for instance, “of course has a negative effect on your normal rhythm,” since this means he had to “make sure I leave an hour [before]” and check if there are traffic jams.

“The subconscious is of course used to doing things differently,” in the subconscious “you still do, like you did [back] then.” This “is not [...] the way of course,” “your whole system must switch, not just your consciousness.” As previously mentioned, he made this switch with a self-help book in hand, and though he knows “for sure” that such books work, he thinks that in his case, it “would have been better” if he “had had help” with that, “for [the] subconscious.” Concluding this point, he says that he “just became like [...] I want left, no no no, that’s [the] pathology⁶¹”, so he went “to the right.” Moreover, a lot later he mentions that finishing things “triggered” his “voices terribly,” causing them to say that he “should not do this, and [that it] was a waste of time.”

In addition, he says that having to organize his agenda himself all of a sudden, following the break-up with his longtime girlfriend whom he had also lived with, “could be a trigger.” The break up

60 Literally “stood alone (be)for(e) it” (“er alleen voor stond”).

61 “Ziektebeeld,” literally “the image of the sickness/disease.”

itself could have also “have been a trigger.” Although he only “became psychotic [...] three months later,” “perhaps,” he adds, “it is very normal that initially after a relationship [you are] like 'yay, free man!'” “Yet,” he continues, “after three months” you think “shit, I come home alone again.” Furthermore, he says the aforementioned big project he was working on “could have been a trigger.” Finally, a bit before he had mentioned being “really psychotic” after exercising at “150%,” in the period just after he had to stop working, which was also the period in which the voices got to him.

10. Analysis I: Social & Psychotic Experiences

In this chapter, the third sub-question will be answered by posing tentative links between respondent explanations of what psychosis is and the social context of its' onset. The idea that this was in fact possible first arose during the transcription of the second round of interviews, and from Patrick's story in particular. At times data which was not discussed earlier is included here, referring specifically to the effects of social aspects of life before psychosis.

10.1 Michelle

Michelle's life prior to psychosis could be considered a condition in which one's brain understandably becomes "super-distressed." This is because her life in that period was very busy, stressful and conflictual, with a lot of "unprocessed" grief on the background. In the context of a very busy social life, a very intense job on the side and doing stressful work for a student association, she had to study for exams and start to do research for her thesis as well. Moreover, she had a very bad relationship with her stepmother, who pressured her and interfered with the relationship she had with her father to the point of making it superficial. This she describes as the "big theme" of her life at the time, as she wanted to stand up against her stepmother, but at the same time hold on to her father. She did not think both were possible. Relatedly, she would have very much liked to talk to her father about the death of her mother which she had not come to terms with, and seems therefore to have always been in the back of her mind. Finally, when she had moved away from the "cosy" place where she felt safe and had found rest in the midst of this "chaotic" and "messy" life in order to focus on finishing her studies, she became psychotic after she had undergone a strange 'treatment' which she had hoped would make her come to terms with this traumatic event. Both this moving to a different place as well as the 'treatment' she considers to be "triggers" of her psychosis.

The "disturbance" in her perception and thinking, in which she interpreted everything "very different than normally," could tentatively be seen as 'mirroring' a drastic change of and disturbance in her social context at the time. After all, her moving to a different place entailed more than just that. This place was very different than what had been normal for her, and in at least some fundamental ways the complete opposite from where she had lived before. Finally and very tentatively, the theme of Michelle's psychosis (God, the Devil and the final struggle) could be related to the "big theme" in her life prior to psychosis: her father, her stepmother, and her struggle

with her stepmother in order to get to her father. Combined, moreover, with the trigger of her psychosis being an attempt to be done with all of this as well.

In short, there does seem to be a relationship between Michelle's description of psychosis and the social context in which it happened. Firstly, a 'super-distressed brain' can be seen to logically follow social conditions which would tend to make one 'super-distressed,' and moving to a different place and the 'treatment' she received are thought of as triggers. Secondly, the big theme of these social conditions led to the occurrence of the social interaction which Michelle says triggered her psychosis. Third, the disturbance in Michelle's perception and thinking arose in a context of a disturbance of her social relations; interpreting everything very differently than normal came in a social context which was very different from what she had been accustomed to. Fourth and final, the big theme of her life could be seen to relate to the theme of her psychosis.

10.2 Sanne

Considering Sanne's description of psychosis as the opposite of 'mindfulness,' which includes consciously experiencing *without* having all sorts of thoughts about what you experience, the perception of threat and deceit described in the previous chapter can be considered highly important. This would logically lead one to attempt to interpret what the other is thinking, and be more on one's guard regarding what one says and does. This also occurred because of the problematisation of contact with her 'best friend,' since she got the idea she had to be “more alert” around her as she “trusted her less and less” and asked herself the question what was really important in life. It could also be considered to imply a going out of the here and now, as she explains that when “thinking about [...] now” you “actually go out of the now as well.”

Considering possible links between social and psychotic experiences, effects Sanne considers to be related to her negative early social experiences seem to be highly important. One effect was “fusing” as this was her response to her (perceived) position in interacting with others. Apart from semantics as well, such “fusing” prior to psychosis bears similarities to her experience during psychosis and is the explanation for the great discrepancy in her image over time.

“ It did feel a bit like I was against- [that it was] me and the world [...] in that sense [I was] alone... and busy with my own things, in that sense [I was] selfish [...] [I was] busy with myself because I was insecure [...] That fusing...and just that behaving in a

socially desirable way like a kind of survival mechanism..[...] [is because] you cannot be close to yourself because you reject yourself, because it has always been rejected by others [...] Yeah, then who are you? Well, then you are, whatever is expected or useful or pleasant at that moment [...] because, that then is what is safe, if you behave as nice, [as] fun as possible.”

Combined with her social surroundings being very different when she was sixteen and when she was 24, this seems to be related led to the identification of an 'inner void' in the context of the assignment she had to do. This, then, lead to looking further for that 'inner voice' and in fact finding it, or, in other words, further thoughts on both counts.

“And then you think, oh! I completely don't have a little voice anymore, hellooo? [...] And then I really sat down, and really like [...] then everything came at me, all of a sudden, then it started rolling [...] that little me, so to speak, came like, 'hello.' ”

Furthermore, the combination of her current positive experiences at work and her previous negative experiences, combined with the same assignment, seems to have led to Sanne, opposite from what she had always thought before, “realizing” people are in fact equal.⁶² While, however, still *feeling* that people were not. Apart from her ‘equality-realisation’ already implying that reflection (thoughts) had preceded this, this also seems to have led to her attempting to figure out why she felt that way, leading to yet more thoughts.

*“[It was] as if for the first time in my life [...] I was woken up [...] and I remember that I [...] said to my brother [...] 'I **thought** about it, and I have figured **out**[...] that you are born, and therefore [...] then there are things which have an influence [...] on how you will be. And [...] therefore [...] we are actually all the **same**, and [...] perhaps [...] you bullying me like that [...] [is why I] am often so insecure, and I [...] thought, that people are **there** and I am **here**, but actually were are all standing next to **each other!**' And that for me was really like 'ooooooooohhhhhhhhh!"Gee.. that I really looked around me and [...] thought, oohh, actually we are all equal to each other, but I could not **feel** like that, so I had understood it in my head, because I had analyzed that, but I couldn't yet [...] **feel** that[...] with people, that we, that they were equal. And [...] I think that made for a very big **conflict** or something in myself, a shift.”*

⁶² She calls this her “equal-theory.”

Moreover, even without the assignment, the combination of her past and present social conditions already led to an inner conflict in which she asked herself who she really was, giving rise to further reflection.

*“All of a sudden, things **did** go [well], even though I always thought, that I was very dumb [...] [and that] I wasn't part of things and then all of a sudden you do things where you.. are someone all of a sudden. And I guess I just couldn't completely deal with that. Because I still couldn't take myself seriously [...] [That was a] kind of an internal conflict, like, 'who am I really?' Like on the one hand you are worthless [...] and dumb, but on the other you are doing your studies with ease and you have a job on the side, and you are actually doing that well too.”*

In addition, around the same time as her 'million realizations' resulting from the many-sided reflection mentioned above, she did in fact find herself and come into her body which she had, before, found “awful.” However, all of this seems to have been too much for her. What seems like all those negative experiences which she had repressed, as she had generally repressed herself, now came to the fore in a context of not being able to talk to someone about it. This, of course, is very interesting considering part of her description of psychosis is no longer having a reality-check regarding one's thoughts, for instance by asking someone else if it is actually the case.

“I felt like a [...] very small little child, in a very big body [...] with a lot of sorrow [...] [from] very very long ago [...] [because of] loneliness.. injustice [...] [a] kind of repression/oppression⁶³ [...] as if... I felt completely bound [...] and as if now [...] I did have that body [...] as if I was in fact there all of a sudden [...] Imagine if [...] psychologically [...] [you] have always been bound, a very small little puppet and stuff like that, and all of a sudden [we] say we take it off, and, tadaa! [...] that's how it felt, [and] very fearful because of that [...] and very alone, and very not understood, because I thought yeah, I cannot [tell] anyone [about] this.. yeah.. [...] actually after that the really unrealistic thoughts came.”

63 The Dutch word “verdrukking” can be seen to take a middle ground between the words “repression” and “oppression.” The verb “drukken” means “to push,” the prefix “ver” indicates the change of a condition, an unintended (negative) consequence or result, the removal of something or the disappearance of something because of an act, or the act of making one thing into another, and the suffix “ing” turns a verb into a noun. It can be seen as referring to either or both psychological repression as well as a form of oppression she experienced “very long ago.”

In short, Sanne's description of the social context in which her psychosis occurred can be related to her descriptions of psychosis in a number of ways. Firstly, the impact of past and present social experiences as well as how they relate to one another led her to think more, which was intensified by the assignment she had to do. Secondly, the position she perceived herself to be in on the basis of prior social experiences led her to 'fuse' with others. Third and final, she did not think she could talk to anyone about the effects of repressed negative social experiences coming to the fore, after which unrealistic thoughts followed, key to which is that she simply assumes they are true without checking these with anyone else.

10.3 Annemiek

Annemiek's central 'path' to psychosis proceeds from the experience she describes regarding the period preceding psychosis of “the *here and now*” to a feeling of complete displacement or 'de-home-ing' and being in a lonely bubble during psychosis. This is intimately tied up with what happened in her life during this period. She was very worried about the situation regarding her husband, as he was an occasionally violent, borderline alcoholic. The thought of leaving him, however, only caused her to worry more. She had become a mother for the first time, and apart from being insecure about whether she would be able to “take care of a child all her life,” she had the specific concern how things were to go financially if she left her husband and where they would live. This is related to her losing her job a few months before, because she wanted to work less so that she could take care of her baby whereas her boss wanted her to work more. In addition, she unsuccessfully attempted over and over again to get her husband to stop drinking. In short, in her general worries and insecurity combined with a continuous concern of 'how to' get her husband to stop drinking and 'what if' she were to leave him, amounting to a going-out-of the here and now.

Moreover, because of the combination of having a newly-born baby and her problematic relationship, and related to this a lack of trust regarding her partner's ability to take care of the child, she felt restricted in her freedom of movement. Specifically, she felt she could no longer go swimming, which she had done avidly before. This would always make her feel very well, “with it” again, and, importantly, “in the here and now.” Instead, she started working out at home, so she would be able to be near the baby and, hopefully, get the same feeling. She would not, however. This did not stop her from working out this way, because

“I thought, probably unconsciously [...] I haven't got control over anything anymore

*[...] I can't just leave the house anymore, with my child, and a husband who does things I do not like, I cannot come to [...] grips with that' [...] and then in desperation [...] I went [...] to work out, because I thought, well at least I can still determine [...] how I look [...] [And] I also had the idea [...] 'if I go work out then I will definitely feel better' [...] **but** [...] it was terrible, wasn't fun at all [...] and if I for instance [thought] in advance, 'now I will hop for forty-five minutes' [...] it became an hour and a half [...] It got more and more absurd, until at some point at night, I would put the alarm clock at three, or four, and then I would hop in the kitchen, and after that I would cook [dinner] [...] And then I would express milk, and then, the little one and [...] [my husband] would wake up, so it got [...] **tighter and tighter** how I felt, and started behaving [...] [I] became **one** big ball of stress."*

Working out in such a “terrible” way could be seen to contribute to at least mild dissociation, that is, going out of the here and now. Tellingly, moreover, after the lost confrontation with her husband discussed in Chapter 6, she went to work out. After this possible trigger, tensions rose among her and her husband, so much so that at some point, during a fight, they said to each other that they hated each other. Following this, the relationship seems to have broken down in every respect. Annemiek “really felt [like] the underdog” and panicked. This situation culminated in her “fleeing” with her child to a close relative, who lived on the other side of the country. She was then soon admitted for depression. When she was released, she went to live with another relative on the other opposite end of the country, again far from where she had lived with her husband. There, she understandably felt “completely displaced,” being in a city she did not know, and missing the city where she used to live.

Unable “to do fun things,” she lay on her bed “for entire days,” thinking about how it was “*possible* that apparently to me my weight was more important than my child.” Overcome with guilt, she considered it “proof” that she was “the worst mother in the world.” Although she was in contact with some of her friends at that point, as already discussed, she did not meet up with them. In other words, at this point in time she was already to a large extent *actually* displaced and out of contact with others, at the same time as she was going more and more out of the here and now. The latter also reinforced the former, since she says it would have felt strange, in light of what she was thinking and feeling at the time, which constituted her being out of the here and now, to, for instance, go “to a little terrace with a friend.”

Having fled back to the house she shared with her husband and child, in part because of fears of

what would happen to her child if she left her alone with him, she realized she had gotten herself into an even worse situation. She was now the underdog to an even greater extent. She had lost the support of her family because she had gone back to her husband, and, at some point, her husband had been told by a physician to check her weight and pressure her to eat more. Here, the excuse for going back to her husband is important, as this physician was going to help them with their relationship, but only if she would gain weight. She was “so broken,” and “the normal wasn't the normal anymore.” She thought that she had now “lost everything,” and also felt that she had no place to go anymore. She could not stay with her husband, because it was “not going well” between them, which might lead to “scary situations.”⁶⁴ Under these conditions, she could not sleep and felt unsafe around her husband. All she could do was sit on the couch. She did not have much contact with her friends either. In other words, although now, in theory, she was no longer displaced or “de-home-d,” the situation was in fact even worse. Her home had nothing 'homely' about it anymore. Contact with others as well as the here and now continued to deteriorate, as the already discussed interaction with a friend at this time illustrates.

When she was admitted, she “really wasn't in contact with anyone anymore,” and it is there she had the experience of being completely displaced and in a lonely bubble. In other words, this was true both in a figurative sense as a metaphorical description of her experience, as well as in a literal sense as a factual description of her social situation, to the extent this can be ascertained on the basis of her narrative alone. When she got admitted, she was not at the home she had in any case lost, nor in contact with anyone on whose support she could not depend anyway. That is, she was completely displaced and in a lonely bubble.

In summary, Annemiek's descriptions of psychosis as being completely displaced and in a lonely bubble is not merely a metaphorical description of her experience. It appears to relate to the social events, interactions and situations she experienced in such a way that they can be seen to accurately describe the position she found herself in. This position can be seen as the end-result of a process of going out of the here and now more and more, which seems to have originated mainly with having become a mother in the midst of a highly problematic relationship. The complete breakdown of this relationship moreover, from the moment of the aforementioned “sort of trigger,” seems to have been the point at which a vicious cycle began in which going out of the here and now both reinforced as well as resulted from displacement and being out of contact with others.

64 Literally she says “enge dingen” (“scary things”).

10.4 Patrick

Years of conflict with local authorities played a central role in the context of Patrick's psychosis. Despite this conflict seemingly ending in victory for Patrick and his friends, this victory did not work out as they had expected. And although they did consider the youth center as a possible platform to radicalize more people, attempts to actually use it as such failed completely. Yet, at the same time, they thought they had no choice but to put a lot of time and energy into the youth center.

“[We said to each other] 'if we fuck this up [...] the municipal council can say, you see, they can't do anything, they can't handle [...] responsibility.' So we were [...] in a kind of clamp, a kind of repressive tolerance.. and [...] we were all conscious of that situation [...] There was no direct trigger [for my depression] it was [...] really [...] like very gradually, that we, that I realised I was in a kind of trap [...] which I saw no way out of, like 'what should I do, what should I do, what should I do?’”

The feeling of having no way out seems to be highly important in Patrick's case. Although the question he continuously posed himself, “what should I do?”, which could perhaps be linked with psychosis as a form of mental exhaustion, was eventually answered, this seems to have coincided with his psychotic break. Having told me that the night he became manic, he jotted down an “incoherent story,” with “ideas about how” they could “do actions and take the youth center to a higher level,” and to create “more unrest,” I asked him if the goal was to escape the “clamp” he was in. He replies:

*Y-y-yesss, [...] t-that will absolutely [...] have been the drive, 'hmm, we must [...] get out of this trap,' or [...] this passive situation, must get out [...] 'yesss! Yesss! I am going to think of all these things I have all these good ideas, yesss!' [...] [I also had] that feeling [...] kind [of] [...] euforic feeling, like 'ha, ah! I can take on the whole world! Yes, we are going to **get** them, hahaha!’”*

Perhaps, tentatively, one might consider the “missing filter” in the brain as related to this as well. In attempting to come up with the solution to an undesirable situation, yet failing again and again, one might actively push one's 'horizon' broader and broader. Since 'thinking inside the box' does not yield a solution, one thinks 'outside of the box.' The box, here, being the filter. Furthermore, even if one considers the “missing filter” as *solely* an effect of Patrick's drug use, the feeling of having no

way out still plays a role in this, as part of the reason of this drug use was escapism in exactly this context.

In any case, the way Patrick's brain attempt to order the resulting “*one big mush*,” is intimately related with his experiences with the authorities, which made for an “atmosphere of paranoia” prior to his psychosis. As discussed at length, there were good reasons for such an atmosphere. Moreover, this also prompted him to read up on the activities of intelligence services, which he considers to have further contributed to his paranoia.

*“For instance [...] the **classic** repressive things [...] of destroying a social movement.. is for instance to get a great amount of drugs into a scene, and to put people up against each other, and to create an atmosphere of paranoia [...] and how many people who have been active [in the extra-parliamentary movement], have gone **crazy**, those are **really alot**, really, **alot** [...] back then, that that friend of mine was approached to become an informant, from that time onwards I became interested, in police and intelligence services, and I started reading things about it [...] at first that [...] only fed my paranoia, and probably will have contributed to my psychoses.”*

In part because of this, he had the idea that his psychosis was exactly what the authorities had wanted, that this is how they beat him. This idea was additionally fed by his realization that, if one has been psychotic in a village, there is a “big stigma.” After all, who would take him seriously now? He would be “the local village idiot,” and for everything he would say, people would just think, “yeah, nice guy, but that guy is just crazy.” It is, moreover, important to keep in mind that his delusion, first of being followed by the police and later that his parents were working together with the secret service, is most likely related to his euphoric experience of coming up with all sorts of great, subversive ideas in the context of having had prior experiences with being followed by and parents actually working together with the police. Finally, even the delusion that he was continuously administered LSD seems not as outlandish when one is open to the possibility that Patrick will have either read or heard about one of the most well-known and infamous CIA projects code-named MKUltra. As part of this project, LSD was administered to prisoners, prostitutes, mental patients and drug addicts as well as government employees and members of the general public, with “varying degrees of knowledge about the tests.” In one case, a mental patient was even administered LSD for 174 days (Weiner 1999).

In short, Patrick's social experiences relate to his descriptions of psychosis in the following ways. Firstly, the trap he perceived himself to be in and his exasperated thinking about how to get out of it could be seen as leading to mental exhaustion. It could, moreover, also be seen as related to psychosis as a missing filter in the brain, especially considering his escapist drug use in this context. In addition, it is hard to imagine how the understandable atmosphere of paranoia he experienced is unrelated to his paranoid delusions, which played a central and intensifying role in his psychosis. Moreover, when this is considered in combination with his reading up on police and intelligence services, his euphoric experience of having found a way to escape the aforementioned trap, and the missing filter as leading to “one big mush” which the brain attempts to order, the resulting 'organizing principle' of his psychosis is not surprising: the centering of his delusions around being watched and even pushed to insanity by the authorities.

10.5 Maikel

Maikel's road to psychosis began with him losing what he describes as “the best job of my life.” This had two important effects. Firstly, because of financial reasons, he lost what he describes as what was central to his life. This, already, points in the direction of “losing oneself,” as a central aspect of what that self was, or at least did, disappears. Maikel's drug use, which for him had always been a way for him to take a holiday from himself, should additionally be kept in mind. Also due to the falling apart of his long-term group of friends, as well as his losing contact with the Moluccan community, Maikel considers losing his job to have contributed to his social isolation as well. This then reflected on the relationship he had with his family as well, which is all that he had left. When he was in the same room with them he would remain apart from them.

*“In this way society really feels like a block of concrete. As if you're not [...] **part** of it [...] I had that feeling a lot [...] Society is like concrete [...] what I had always participated in the past myself, at that point in time just seems to turn to nothing [...] it just seems as if you are falling outside of that.”*

If the self is indeed enacted or constructed through interaction with others, this would imply that . apart from Maikel's drug use and him losing what was central to his life, the lack of interaction with others which emerges from his story, is extremely important. It logically follows from the statement that the self is enacted in interaction with others, that when there is a lack thereof, one tends to lose oneself. The fact that he made new contacts, described at the end of the previous section, seems to

contradict this picture of Maikel's social situation. However, it should be noted that these contacts seem to have been very much in the beginning stages of friendship, and it should be mentioned that these new contacts became part of his delusions. When one considers the psychotic break as a process of repersonalisation it would make sense that a context of a general lack of interaction, the few people he did interact with became part of his delusions as one of the building blocks of his newly constructed person. Talking to people who are not there, moreover, should also be considered in this context. Although extremely tentative, it might even be seen as a more or less 'logical' response of the self to reconstitute itself: since there are no or very few actual others with which one interacts, one pretends that there are.

“Everything falls apart [...] You lose yourself [...] That is the beginning.”

Secondly, because of losing his job, he lost the place where lived, which meant he had to move to his grandmother's attic. Since this period before the onset of Maikel's psychosis, which seems to have lasted for about two years, revolved around being in his grandmother's attic and going out to buy marihuana, it is not surprising he experienced this as a time of stagnation and yearned for change. Considered in such a way, the delusion that how everything went had already been decided in medieval times is not unrelated to the social situation he found himself. Moreover, Maikel's description of psychosis as a falling apart of one's expectations, can be understood both in the context of his life prior to psychosis not proceeding as he had expected, as well as the psychotic break in itself not being how he had expected or at least hoped this period of stagnation would end.

“I had the idea that I wasn't going forward at all [...] and then it was suddenly bam [...] I was in the [mental institution] [...] And then I thought 'yeah, you were continuously asking why, when will there be a change, well, this is it' [...] a huge disappointment.”

In summary, the social context of Maikel's psychosis can be seen to relate to his descriptions of psychosis by leading to him losing himself as well as both following and constituting a break in expectations. They perhaps yield the organizing principle of his delusions as well, as it is in the context of a general lack of interactions that he started to talk to people who were not there and the few new contacts he had made became part of his delusions. His delusion that everything had already been decided in medieval times could be understood in a similar way, as reflecting the stagnation he experienced in his life.

10.6 Erik

Interestingly, considering Erik's description of psychosis as something that creates chaos and de-structures his life, the period preceding the voices getting to him can be considered to consist of several 'de-structuring' events or processes, and, relatedly, a change in his way of being which makes him more susceptible to his voices. The break-up of his longterm relationship with his girlfriend, with whom he shared an apartment, can of course be considered such an event. Moreover, she had also organized his agenda and thereby quite literally structured his life. He now had to do that himself. The culture switch, as described above, also entailed a de-structuring of his life, as did his having to quit working, which seemed to have been a very central aspect of his life. Importantly, he considers all three to have been possible triggers. The culture switch, which seems to have been at least partly induced by aforementioned girlfriend, moreover, also seems to have contributed to a burn-out, which is why he had to stop working.

In the period when he had stopped working, the very same period his voices got to him, he started to work out very hard. This, at some point at least, made him “really psychotic.” This seems to have been part of an attempt to be strong or become stronger, also in a social sense, so that he could start working again. In addition, he says that when he started working out with (inner) bike tires, he became more emotional because he came into his body alot more. His culture switch, moreover, had already made him more emotional. Although at that time he experienced this as something positive, he had also said during the first interview that to quit smoking is dangerous for him, because he becomes “so emotional,” which means that “De Tegenpartij has more of a hold.”

Furthermore, his job involved a lot of flip-flopping from others in negotiations regarding the price of the work he would do. This, however, had not been a problem, because he was “very strong,” the voices did not get to him and he simply confronted people with their flip-flopping and worked his way around it in the very same conversation. Yet, apart from becoming more emotional, in the period when the voices got to him, considering his burn-out and working out very hard, he seems to have gotten at least phsycially tired. This could be important, since he says that if he is tired, he “can become [more] psychotic.” His becoming-weaker, moreover, also went hand in hand with a change in the position he experienced, as he became worried if his customers would want him back. This also seems to be important, since the position he currently finds himself seems to undermine his ability to confront people with their flip-flopping directly.

*I was a lot stronger then, and [...] the voices were shouting in my head too, but [...] then they don't have an emotional hold on you, they cannot hit you [...] They call out like asshole this, asshole that, and you are just talking like 'yeah you might think that, but, he's buying [...] And [...] [...] I say [to the customer] 'no, let's go back to the conversation, **that's** where we were in the conversation just now [...] I want to go back to that part of the conversation [...] And then, ofcourse [...] I wasn't always friendly, during sales' conversations [...] But [...] I did always manage [...] I was very free, I could be very direct and if I'm [like that] now, then I'm found to be antisocial, too direct."*

Finally, the centrality of the culture switch could be seen to be reaffirmed by the similarity in his descriptions of how he went about his culture shift, and the role "De Tegenpartij" plays in his life.

"I just became like [...] 'I want to go left. No, no, no. That is [ADHD-]pathology. I'll go right."

"I call them the Counter-Party. If I want [to go] left, they go right, if I want [to go] right, they go left."

In summary, the context in which Erik's voices got to him can be seen to relate to his descriptions of psychosis in a number of ways. Importantly, several de-structuring events or processes are apparent in his life in this period. Moreover, these events and processes (in)directly impacted on him in such a way that they seem to have made him more susceptible to his voices. Finally, the way he went about his culture switch is strikingly similar to the current role of the Counter Party in his life, perhaps yielding the organizing principle of his psychoticism.

10.7 Conclusion: Pathways to Psychosis?

Taken as a whole, the analysis presented in this chapter clearly shows that some kind of relationship between respondents' descriptions of psychosis and the social interactions, events and situations they experienced prior to psychosis is likely. It indicates, moreover, the possibility that the latter relates to the former in a 'pathway'-like fashion: social experiences can be seen to lead into psychotic experiences. Specifically, as Table 1 shows, respondents' social experiences prior to psychosis can be seen to relate to their description. Most of the categories presented emerged during the writing of this thesis. The first, which refers to social experiences providing the conditions in

which psychotic experiences (as described) understandably arise,⁶⁵ emerged during the writing of Michelle's 'pathway.' The second category is taken directly from several of the respondents' explanations why their psychosis happened, pointing out that certain social experiences can be seen to have functioned as triggers and/or as setting the stage for such triggers. The third category arose from reflection on Annemiek's pathway to psychosis, and refers to social experiences which mirror psychotic experiences. The last category, in which social experiences can be seen to yield the organizing principle for such experiences, emerged first, during transcription and in reflection on Patrick's interview.

65 Or, in Erik's case, the conditions in which such experiences understandably have more impact.

Table 1. Pathways to Psychosis?

	(1) Conditions	(2) Triggers	(3) Mirrors	(4) Org. principles
Michelle	Super-distressed life → Super-distressed brain.	I. Strange 'treatment' ← to be done with problematic relationship with stepmother & father and come to terms with grief. II. Moving to a different place ← finishing her studies.	I. Disturbance of perception/thinking: disturbance of social relations. II. Interpreting very different than normally: very different than normal living situation.	The big theme in her life = the big theme in her psychosis.
Sanne	I. Prior and current social experiences → more thoughts. II. Change in nature of social experiences → more thoughts. III. Change in nature of social experiences, assignment → more thoughts → realization of equality, not matching felt experience → more thoughts. IV. Fusing, change in nature of social experiences, assignment → identification of inner void → more thoughts. V. No one to talk to about overwhelming realizations and feelings as self 'reappears' → assuming one's thoughts are true without checking this with someone else.		Fusing: perceived position based on (prior) social experiences → fusing.	
Annemiek	I. Becoming a mother, problematic relationship, losing one's job → 'how to?' & 'what if?' → out of the here and now. II. Newborn baby, problematic relationship → lack of trust → feeling restricted → no longer going swimming → contributes to out of the here and now → "terrible" new way of working out →	Lost interaction with husband ← attempt to get him to leave the house, inspired by parent.	I. Displaced: losing interaction with husband → tensions rise → relationship breaks down, feels like underdog and panics → flees to close relative → admitted for depression → goes to live with relative. II. Out of contact with others: out of the here and now → unable to do fun things with others, lying on bed,	

	dissociation/out of the here and now.		<p>overcome with guilt, not meeting up with friends.</p> <p>III. Displaced: upon fleeing back home being in the position of the underdog even more, not feeling safe → home is no longer home.</p> <p>IV. Displaced: lost support of family → no place to go.</p> <p>V. Out of contact with others: continuing deterioration of contact with others.</p>	
Patrick	Experience of being in a trap → 'What should I do? What should I do?' etc. plus escapist drug use → mental exhaustion and a missing filter.		The experience of being watched by the police and targeted by intelligence services (idiosyncratic delusion): the experience of being watched by the police and included in the target of intelligence operations (inter-subjective truth).	The atmosphere of paranoia, reading up on police and intelligence services functions as organizing principle of the 'one big mush' resulting from the 'missing filter' in the context of believing to have found a way out of the trap = paranoid delusions.
Maikel	<p>I. Losing the best job of his life → losing the main thing in his life → losing oneself.</p> <p>II. Lack of interaction → losing oneself.</p>			<p>I. New contacts in the context of 2nd Condition = new contacts part of delusions.</p> <p>II. Lack of interaction = talking to people who are not there.</p> <p>III. Stagnation = things have already been decided for us in medieval times.</p>
Erik	<p>I. Culture switch, working out in a certain way → becoming more emotional → voices have more of a hold.</p> <p>II. Burn-out → (at least) physically tired → voices have more of a hold.</p> <p>III. Becoming weaker, change in social position because of burn-out → flip-flopping becomes problematic.</p>	<p>I. Working out very hard ← in order to be able to work again.</p> <p>II. Breaking-up with his girlfriend who organised his agenda.</p> <p>III. Culture switch.</p>	Psychosis de-structures, creates chaos: several de-structuring events/processes.	Going left when he wants to go right → Counter Party going right when he wants to go left

11. Analysis II: Similarities

Six similarities were found in all of the respondents' stories. The first, second, fifth and sixth similarity presented here were identified in a relatively early stage, as part of the analytical steps undertaken following the first round of interviews. Reflection on the first and second similarity, in the context of extensive knowledge regarding the respondents' experienced social context of their, led to the idea that another similarity might exist, which is the fourth presented here. During the writing of the thesis, a final similarity emerged, which is presented third below.

In the following, the similarities will be defined and their role in relation to the onset of psychosis will be explored, answering the fourth sub-question. In doing so, I will refer to Table 1 throughout the chapter. To the extent that, based on the previous chapter, a clear role for specific similar experiences could not be found, their occurrence will be discussed briefly in order to allow the reader to reflect on their (un)importance.

11.1 The Disappearance of (a) Social World(s)

The most striking similarity to be found following the first round of interviews is the disappearance of (a) Social World(s). It can be defined as a process of becoming-excluded from social spheres that were, before, an integral part of one's life. Furthermore, the social world(s) that disappear(s) seem rather important.

Michelle moving to a different place, just three months before her psychosis, as discussed earlier implies the disappearance of a very important social world for her. In relation to the onset of her psychosis, this plays the role of Trigger II, Mirror I and II, and is part of the Condition. In addition, earlier in her life, she had lost her mother. This, of course, led to the disappearance of the social world of the life she had with her family when it included her mother. It also lead, indirectly, to her father finding a new wife, and the whole family moving in with the new wife's family. Considering the problematic relationship she had with her stepmother and the impact this had on her relationship with her father, already discussed at length, perhaps this too can be seen as the disappearance of a social world, that is, the relationship she had with her father. What was lost here, in other words, is not just any social world, but in both cases what could be called a 'social base.'

As already discussed, Sanne considers her parents leaving for a country on the other side of the

world as important “social shifts” which precipitated her psychosis, and could be considered the disappearance of her 'social base' as well. This is especially so when one takes into account what was happening regarding her 'best friend', the previous falling apart of the friend group she was in and the new apartment her parents had bought for her. Based on the previous chapter, however, in this case no direct link can be made between these disappeared or disappearing social worlds and the onset of Sanne's psychosis.

Annemiek lost her job around six months prior to her psychosis, the relationship with her husband was problematic to such an extent that it culminated in her and her husband coming to stand diametrically in opposition to each other (“I hate you!”), and just prior to psychosis she lost the support of her family. Additionally, she had very little contact with friends. All of these could be considered as disappearing or disappeared social worlds. Perhaps the most important of these, the problematic relationship she had with her husband as well as the disappearance of the support she had enjoyed from her family, amount in a similar fashion to the disappearance of a 'social base.' This plays a role in relation to the onset of psychosis by being part of first Condition and Mirror, as well as by being associated with Mirror III and V. In addition, losing the support of her family *is* the fourth Mirror.

The end of Patrick's two-year relationship is a disappearing social world as well, especially since they did not see each other anymore following the break-up. Graduating from the school where he had had a great time, moreover, also meant the disappearance of this social world, as he was no longer in contact with the people he had gone to school there. Finally, his group of friends had fallen apart, and had become two separate worlds, amounting to a kind of “displacement” or “de-home-ing.” Although related to the aforementioned depression that was central to his life before psychosis, a role of these disappearing social worlds is not apparent based on the previous chapter.

Maikel's story also sees the co-occurrence of the break-up of a long-term relationship and the disintegration of a close-knit group of friends. Moreover, he also lost contact with the Moluccan community, and relationships with women following this break-up did not work out either. Additionally, the loss of his job could also be considered the disappearance of a social world. The latter, of course, *is* Condition I. Taken as a whole, it can be considered to have led to Condition II, and it is thereby associated with all parts of the Organizing Principle of his psychosis.

As already discussed above, Erik lost his long-term girlfriend, with whom he had lived together and

who organized his agenda. The loss of his job could be seen to imply the disappearing of a social world as well. As such, in Erik's case disappearing social worlds play a role in relation to his voices getting to him by leading to the first Trigger, resulting from Condition II, being Trigger II and being part of Condition III as well as the Mirror.

11.2 Problematic Contact

Another similarity that emerged from the data is the occurrence of problematic contact with others. To the extent problematic contact is not self-explanatory, what is considered as such will become clear in the following.

Michelle's contact with her stepmother, as already discussed at length, can of course be considered problematic. In addition, the related superficiality of the contact she had with her father could be considered problematic as well, as in any case she considered it a problem. As such, problematic contact can be seen to have played a substantial role in the onset of Michelle's psychosis by being part of the condition in which a super-distressed brain understandably arises, by being part of what led to the occurrence of Trigger I, and by being the big theme in her life which may be related to the Organizing Principle of her psychosis.

In Sanne's case, the changes in her life as well as later on her realization that people were equal, seem to have led, in combination with her finding out that her 'best friend' actually was not, to a becoming-problematic of her relationship with her. In addition, her experiences in the city she lived where often marked by problematic contact with others. This similarity could therefore be considered as being the consequence Condition II as a whole and a part of Condition III respectively, as well as the cause of a part of Condition I. In addition, it is also simply part of Condition I.

As already discussed in depth previously, Annemiek's relationship with her husband was highly problematic. Not only did they fight, he also lied to her, repeatedly promising that he would stop or drastically reduce drinking, which he never actually did. The relationship she had with the two relatives in her story was problematic as well, as they put a lot of pressure on her to eat more and did not believe she was actually eating. It plays a role in relation to the onset of Annemiek's psychosis by being part of Condition I and II, as well as Mirror I and III.

In Patrick's case, previously mentioned highly problematic contact with the drug dealer is the first that comes to mind. Additionally, his interactions with his girlfriend were problematic, in any case regarding her right-wing extremist friends. Moreover, being declared “crazy” by many of his friends because of all the effort he put into the youth center amounts to problematic contact as well. Finally, his contact with both law enforcement as well as intelligence operations could be considered problematic. As such, it is associated with the condition in which the filter went missing and mental exhaustion occurred, *is* the Mirror as well as an important part of the Organizing Principle of his psychosis.

Maikel got into (verbal) fights with his family, as well as with (ex-)girlfriends. Being shown the door after he professed his love to a girlfriend, of course, can also be considered problematic contact. In addition, there were annoyances in his group of friends, and the 'knife-incident' seems to have been an important moment for his becoming socially isolated. In such a way it can be seen to have played a role in relation to the onset of psychosis by being part of what led up to a lack of interaction (Condition II), which means it is thereby also associated with the Organizing Principle of Maikel's psychosis.

Erik had problematic contact with his girlfriend, as the mentioned minor arguments reflect, and the relationship also ended with a fight. Moreover, their living together seemed not to have entailed much apart from sharing the rent. Additionally, a form of problematic contact, as the discussion of 'flip-flopping' points out, nowadays makes his psychosis worse. The problem he had with a co-worker, although it is not clear exactly what happened, could have been an instance of problematic contact as well. As such, it led up to Trigger II, is thereby part of what led up to the Mirror, and is associated with the third Condition as outlined in table 1.

11.3 The Lack of a Mutual Construction of Meaning.

A mutual construction of meaning regarding a specific event, situation or process can be defined as talking about it to someone. The qualification 'lack' is meant to point out that this similarity does not necessarily denote complete absence, but could also imply superficiality of the interactions that do take place in regard of such an event/situation/process. Such a lack is explicitly present in three of the respondents' stories, and is implied in the others.

Michelle's experience of Social Defeat, as described above, implies a lack of a mutual construction

of meaning regarding the death of her mother. The superficiality of her interactions with friends also meant that this life event was rarely discussed, remaining “unprocessed.” This played an important role in the run-up to her psychosis, as it is part of the condition under which part of her description of psychosis understandably arises, as well as what leads up to Trigger I and it is associated with its' organizing principle.

Such superficiality also played an important role in Sanne's life prior to psychosis. Only later in life did she find out there actually exists something like having a connection with someone. There had never been anyone in her life with whom she talked about feelings or problems. This was, moreover, inextricably linked to the way she was brought up. In relation to the onset of her psychosis, it is part of Condition V mentioned in Table 1.

Patrick grew up in a family where feelings were not discussed either. Because he did not know what it was to be depressed, he did not discuss it even when his mother asked him if he was depressed. In addition, he also did “not really” talk about it with his friends. In his case, however, although the experience of depression is a central aspect of his life before psychosis, at present no direct link can be made between this lack of a mutual creation of meaning regarding his depression and the onset of his psychosis.

In Annemiek's story it is clear that she did not have a lot of contact with friends prior to her psychosis. Moreover, the two occasions described in the interviews she did interact with a friend, in one case the topic of conversation was purely instrumental, and in the other her friend completely misinterpreted the state she was in. Furthermore, her husband was not a viable candidate to talk things through with either. Finally, as discussed at length in the preceding chapter, just prior to her admission for psychosis, she essentially did not have contact with anyone anymore. All of this seems to imply, at the very least, a stronger and stronger tendency for a lack, if not a complete absence of a mutual creation of meaning. In relation to the onset of psychosis, such a lack is associated with Mirror II and V.

Maikel's case seems to have been remarkably similar with the exception that he seems to have excluded himself from his family and the lack of contact seems to have been more stable and present for longer which implies an association with the third aspect (III) the Organizing Principle of his psychosis. Moreover, it logically results from the lack of interaction (Condition II) and is thereby also associated with the second part of the organizing principle of his psychosis.

Tentatively, it could be considered the reason why a lack of interaction is related to talking to people who are not there.

Finally, as already mentioned, Erik's culture switch was a solo-project, at least following the break-up with his girlfriend. Although, based on the data, it is very much possible that he did talk to others about his culture switch, as they neither confirm nor refute this, considering the fact that he says he did not have any help with it, it is highly unlikely he discussed it with anyone in great detail. The role this similarity then played for Erik is through its association with his culture switch, implicating the first and possibly also the second Condition, Trigger III, as well as the Organizing Principle and the Mirror mentioned in table 1.

11.4 Social Defeat

Taken together, the previously discussed similarities raise the question whether a significant aspect of respondents' lives before psychosis is Social Defeat, defined as the experience of being in a subordinate position or in the position of the outsider. The disappearance of social worlds implies a becoming-excluded from social spheres which before were an important part in one's life. The lack of a mutual creation of meaning regarding important aspects of one's life can be seen to imply a relative exclusion from the interactions that make such a mutual creation of meaning possible. And, although problematic contact does not necessarily imply a subordinate position in the interactions that can be characterized as such, interactions in which one is subordinated can be considered a form of problematic contact.

In order to investigate this idea, I will now turn to a more detailed discussion of the concept of Social Defeat as outlined by J.P. Selten in his inaugural speech on the hypothesis in 2012, and consider this in light of respondents' experiences prior to psychosis.

11.4.1 A Subjective Experience

Central to the Social Defeat hypothesis is that it is concerned with the *subjective* experience of, as Selten (2012) phrases it in this inaugural speech, being an outsider or a loser. How does the data gathered in the course of this study relate to this aspect of the hypothesis?

First of all, Michelle had the feeling her stepmother came in between her and her dad. Specifically

relating to her attempts to talk to her father about her mother's death, she says that her stepmother would always "stand in between." During the focus group, moreover, she agreed with describing this as Social Defeat. Therefore, in Michelle's case Social Defeat can be seen to play a role as being part of the Condition, part of what led up to Trigger I, and is associated with the Organizing Principle of her psychosis.

Sanne's case is even clearer, as she literally states that she was always the odd one out in her family, and, literally translated, always "completely hung outside of" conversations they had at dinner. Furthermore, this experience seems to have continued throughout her life before her first psychosis, as her experiences in the rowing association illustrates. Relatedly, she considers her "fusing," Sanne's Mirror in Table 1, as a consequence of not being able to be close to herself because she rejected herself, which in turn was caused by always being rejected by others.

Annemiek's narrative clearly indicates her experience of being a loser or in a subordinate position, saying that her husband "got the upper hand" and that she increasingly felt like "the underdog." The "sort of trigger" in which she tried but failed to get her husband to leave seems to exemplify this. As such, Social Defeat is part of her Mirror I, Condition I and II and can be seen to accurately describe her Trigger.

Patrick experienced the youth center as a "trap" set for him by the local authorities, a "clamp" they put him in, "a kind of repressive tolerance." This, although not explicit, can be seen to indicate the experience of being a loser in his conflict with the authorities, especially since he could not find a way out of this trap prior to his psychosis. The "clamp," then, is his experience of the local authorities pushing him into and keeping him in a subordinated position. The experience of this trap or clamp is the Patrick's Condition as outlined in Table 1, and is associated with the Organizing Principle of his psychosis as well.

In Maikel's case, the experience of being an outsider is indicated in a rather straightforward way, by his metaphor of society feeling like concrete. Furthermore, he explains this by saying that it feels like one is not part of society, and that it seemed like he was "falling outside" of what he had always participated in before. This can be associated with his Condition II of a lack of interaction with others, and thereby also with parts I and II of the Organizing Principle of his psychosis.

Finally, Erik also clearly points out the experience of being the outsider, as he says that he felt he

was on the “sidelines” because of personality traits he considers to be related to ADHD. Considering the importance of “weaknesses” associated with ADHD in his culture switch, this experience is therefore associated with part of Condition I, Trigger III and Erik’s Mirror in Table 1.

11.4.2 A General Hypothesis of Specific Findings

The Social Defeat-Hypothesis resulted from the application of the so-called principle of Ockham’s razor to findings relating to five different factors known to be associated with psychosis. This principle aims to cut away all superfluous assumptions, and in this case this implied that these five factors should be reduced to one or two common to all five. The experience of being a loser or outsider seems to be this common factor (Selten 2012). In the following, I will shortly outline several aspects of the five original factors in relation to respondents’ experiences.

The first factor Selten (2012) mentions is migrant status. Because the risk for psychosis is raised to a similar extent for first and second-generation migrants, he reasons that the journey is not the critical factor, but instead, that membership of an ethnic minority is. In this, skin color seems to play a role, and the highest risks of psychosis are found in those groups who have integrated into the host society the least successfully. Although Maikel is part Moluccan, this aspect does not seem to have played a role in his social experiences prior to his psychosis in a Social Defeat-like manner. Patrick’s case, however, although he is of Dutch descent, does show some similarities, as he is part of a political and subcultural, therefore outwardly visible, minority. Furthermore, this minority can in no way be described as having been ‘well-integrated’ in the village.

Another finding Selten (2012) notes regarding ethnic minorities and risk for psychosis is that this risk is less high for those who live in great numbers in the same area. As can be seen in Sanne’s descriptions of being in an area surrounded by a majority of those of other ethnic groups, the protective effect of this ‘ethnic density’ can be seen to imply a tendency for less problematic contact relating to cultural differences. Selten (2012) explains the association between migrant status and a higher risk for psychosis, at least in part, by migrants only having access to less attractive jobs or remaining unemployed. This is reminiscent of Maikel’s situation, who lost “the best job” of his life (Condition I) and whose jobs after this turned out to be such that he did not hold on to them very long. To some extent, it also brings to mind Erik’s case, who lost his job just prior to his psychosis, which led up to Trigger I and is part of his Mirror, as well as Annemiek’s, who lost her job about half a year prior to onset, which is part of Condition I.

In an attempt to explain why growing up in a city is associated with higher risk of psychosis, part of Selten's (2012) argument is that people who live in a city are socially embedded less firmly than those who live in villages. This seems to fit the disappearance of (a) social world(s) found in this study, as this is a process of becoming less socially embedded. Explaining the association of a low IQ with psychosis, Selten (2012) simply states that no employer wants someone with an IQ of 75. This brings Annemiek's case to mind, as her employer did not want her anymore because she refused to work more, and even wanted to work less since she wanted to take care of her child.

A fourth factor associated with psychosis are traumatic experiences, for instance being bullied. Selten (2012) argues bullying is so painful because one is excluded from a social group. Being bullied figures in Annemiek's, Maikel's, Erik's as well as Sanne's narrative. Interestingly, Erik's earliest memories of psychotic symptoms take place in the context of being bullied severely. Furthermore, in Sanne's case, her being bullied throughout her childhood clearly relates to the Mirror, and is an important part of conditions I through IV.

The final factor Selten (2012) discusses as being the basis for the formulation of the Social Defeat hypothesis is drug abuse. Although he does say that drug users are often outsiders and losers, he adds that it is more likely that it is because of the drugs that they become psychotic instead of because of this position. The findings of this study, however, suggest the possibility of a link between Social Defeat and drug use in which the former plays a role in causing the latter (to increase). Patrick explicitly frames (an increase in) his drug use as escapism in the context of the "trap" particular, and his life more generally. In Maikel's case, there are indications that he became part of a social group in which drug use was central because he was bullied by all or most others, and this after initially having been against drugs.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Selten (2012) relates the hypothesis thus formulated to the main neurobiological hypothesis on psychosis. He does this on the basis of animal experiments that show that being (repeatedly) defeated causes a dysregulation of the dopamine system similar to that seen in psychotic patients. Exemplifying such animal experiments is one done with rats, in which a smaller rat is repeatedly put in a cage with a bigger rat and then taken out again. The bigger rat attacks the smaller rat and forces it to surrender.

Tentatively, Michelle could be seen as repeatedly defeated by her stepmother, which means Social Defeat is additionally part of her Condition, part of what leads up to Trigger I and associated with

her Organizing Principle. Annemiek could be seen as repeatedly defeated by her husband prior to psychosis, which means it is part of Condition I and II, epitomized by her Trigger, and part of Mirror I and III. Sanne was repeatedly defeated by being bullied severely in her childhood, and her experience of defeat continued later in her life, which means it is part of Condition I, led up to part of condition IV and is the reason for the Mirror. Erik, finally, was repeatedly defeated through bullying in his childhood as well, which coincides with his earliest memories of psychotic symptoms.

11.5 Attempting to Tackle a Problem

Another similarity that emerges from the data is that all respondents identified a problem in their lives which they attempted to do something about. Furthermore, for four out of six the problem endured. For the two others, Maikel and Erik, the problem does seem to have been solved to some extent, but it is tied up with the (advent of) psychosis or the voices getting to Erik. In Maikel's case, his social isolation prompted him to go out in search of new friends, making it a consequence of Condition II, and he did in fact find a group. They became part of his delusion, which is the first part of the Organizing Principle of his psychosis. In Erik's case, the problem identified was himself and his relation to others. The way he went about solving this was his 'culture switch,' which is likely to have contributed to his burn-out. Because of the centrality of Erik's culture switch in the context of the voices getting a hold on him, this means attempting to tackle problem in this case is part of what led to Condition II, as well as a part of Condition I which thereby makes it a part of the Mirror as well and associates it with the Organizing Principle. Moreover, it *is* Trigger III.

Because of the lack of a mutual creation of meaning, thereby associating it with Condition V, the way Sanne would tackle problems was by “just doing whatever crossed [her] mind.” This would, moreover, not work out well, leading either to the problem persisting as was the case regarding her best friend, or others not understanding her. In Annemiek's case the main problem she tried to tackle was her relationship with her husband in general, and his problematic drinking in specific, which means it is part of Condition I and led up to the Trigger. As mentioned before, this problem persisted nonetheless. For Patrick the problem was how to get out of the “trap” set by local authorities. It is thereby part of the Condition outlined in Table 1, forming a 'bridge' between the experience of being in a trap and psychotic experiences. This culminated when, coinciding with what seems to have been the onset of his psychosis, he thought he had finally figured out how, making it part of the Organizing Principle. Michelle attempted to talk things through with her

stepmother, to no avail, and although she did sometimes talk to others about the situation with her father, that would not solve anything either. It is therefore part of the Condition and associated with the Organizing Principle. In addition, as will have already become clear, the strange 'treatment' she received which she considers a Trigger, was of course also an attempt to tackle a problem.

11.6 Stress

Most of what was previously addressed in this chapter could be considered as stressful in and of itself. Moreover, when asked whether the period preceding psychosis was stressful, all respondents confirmed this. Additionally, five of the six respondents consider this a reason why their psychosis happened. The definition of 'stress', here, is the subjective experience thereof.

As for why, Michelle says she thinks the exams and the research she had to do was “the most stressful,” on top of everything else. The work she had to do for her study association and her job on the side, as she continuously had to know “exactly what was going on” in the area of the café which was her responsibility, meant a lot of stress for her as well. In other words, it is associated with her Condition. Sanne also mentions work-related stress as well as the tension in the city she lived, associating it with Condition I. Annemiek became stressed out specifically because she thought she had to break up with her husband, but did not know what to do then, making it a consequence of part of Condition I. Patrick emphasizes “that youth centre [...] was *fucking* stressful,” associating it with the Condition in which he found himself, and says his depression was “a sort of stress.” Maikel talks about “pressure from [his] parents,” and a “hectic life” in general with “a lot of police,” which cannot presently be related to the onset of his psychosis. Finally, Erik says that not having a job was stressful because his household had to keep on going, and because of the tension relating to whether he would be able to make a comeback or not, making it a consequence of condition II and associating it with Trigger I.

11.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the question whether there are similarities between the various stories respondents told regarding their lives prior to psychosis can be answered with a definite yes. Six similarities were found: (1) The Disappearance of (a) Social World(s), (2) Problematic Contact, (3) the Lack of a Mutual Construction of Meaning, (4) Social Defeat, (5) Attempting to Tackle a Problem and (6) Stress. Moreover, as discussed above and summarized in Table 2 below, these similarities seem to

play a role relating to the respondents' descriptions of psychosis, as they are (part of), lead to, result from, or are otherwise associated with the Conditions, Triggers, Mirrors and Organizing Principles of psychosis which emerged in the previous chapter.

Table 2. The role of the Six Similarities in Relation to the Descriptions of Psychosis

	(1) Condition	(2) Trigger	(3) Mirror	(4) Org. Principle
(1) The Disappearance of (a) Social World(s)	= Maikel I [] Michelle, Annemiek I, Erik III → Maikel II ← Erik II	= Michelle II, Erik II → Erik I	= Michelle I-II, Annemiek IV [] Annemiek I, Erik ↔ Annemiek III-V	↔ Maikel I-II-III
(2) Problematic Contact	[] Michelle, Annemiek I-II, Sanne I → Sanne I [], Maikel II [] ← Sanne II-III [] ↔ Patrick, Erik III	→ Michelle I [], Erik II	= Patrick [] Annemiek I-III → Erik []	= Michelle [] Patrick
(3) The Lack of a Mutual Creation of Meaning	[] Michelle, Sanne V ← Maikel II ↔ Erik I-II	→ Michelle I [] ↔ Erik III	↔ Annemiek II-V, Erik	[] Maikel III ↔ Michelle, Maikel II, Erik
(4) Social Defeat	= Maikel I, Patrick [] Michelle, Sanne I-II-III-IV, Annemiek I-II, Erik I → Sanne [] IV ↔ Maikel II	= Annemiek → Michelle [] I, Erik I ↔ Erik []	[] Annemiek I- III, Erik → Sanne	↔ Michelle, Patrick, Maikel I-II
(5) Attempting to Tackle a Problem	[] Michelle, Annemiek I, Patrick, Erik I → Erik II [] ← Maikel II ↔ Sanne V	= Michelle I, Erik III → Annemiek	[] Erik	[] Patrick ↔ Michelle, Erik, Maikel I
(6) Stress	→ Annemiek I [], Erik II ↔ Michelle, Sanne I, Patrick	↔ Erik I		

Legend: being = ; being part of [] ; leading to → ; resulting from ← ; associated with ↔. When [] occurs not as the first symbol in a line, this is meant to denote that the relationship is partial, e.g problematic contact is part of what leads up to Condition II or problematic contact led to part of a Mirror

Part III: Conclusions

In this final part of the paper, the findings previously discussed will be integrated with important elements of the already existing body of knowledge regarding psychosis. Before concluding the thesis, the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research will then be discussed.

12. Discussion

The research findings support the idea that the experience of Social Defeat increases the risk of schizophrenia. Moreover, they seem to suggest that this is also the case for those who became psychotic but were diagnosed differently. The results additionally support the idea that Social Defeat relates to drug abuse and shows ways in which this might be so, as Patrick's case shows quite clearly and Maikel's case could be seen to imply. The question of urban upbringing is less clear, as many of the respondents grew up in villages.

Furthermore, the research findings show possible dynamics of the relation of Social Defeat to the onset of psychosis. For instance, in Sanne's case, experiences of social defeat during childhood had important effects later in life, through which the experience of social defeat continued even without it actually occurring in hindsight. This, moreover, points out that one's definitions of situations are indeed linked to one's interactions with others, in this case those that occurred in the past.

Furthermore, internal conflict resulted from the contradiction between the psychological consequences of prior Social Defeat and current social events, interactions and situations. Additionally, Sanne's difficulty in demarcating self from not-self or "fusing" also seems to be related to her experiences of Social Defeat. Moreover, Patrick's and Maikel's narratives show a possible way in which Social Defeat can lead to a sense of impasse, a drive to make sense of the situation and a related expansion of the horizon of meaning culminating in a new awareness.

The lack of a mutual construction of meaning found in the stories of all six respondents logically corresponds with idiosyncratic ideas or delusions, which is a core symptom of psychosis. In a situation characterized by such a lack, the webs of meaning an individual spins might invariably tend to be highly idiosyncratic ones. The intimate relationship between salience and meaning, moreover, would then implicate psychosis as a state of aberrant salience in this as well.

Furthermore, the finding matches with the strong association found between having no close

confidants and psychosis (Sündermann et al. 2014; Morgan et al. 2008).

Matching the disappearance of (a) social world(s), moreover, the same studies report poor perceived social support and general social isolation to be associated with psychosis. The research findings presented in this paper would, however, add to this that there is a process involved here, (in the perception) of *diminishing* social support and *becoming* less socially connected. Importantly, since it is related to “biopsychological processes aimed at convergence of emotions and moods between people” (Pepping & Timmermans 2012, 1) this similarity as well as the aforementioned could be related to the hormone and neurotransmitter oxytocin discussed in the introduction. More concretely, it has been shown that levels of oxytocin rise in response to social signals of trust (Pepping & Timmermans 2012) and when empathy is experienced (Barraza & Zak 2009). Furthermore, the implication of the part Dorso-Lateral PreFrontalCortex located in the right hemisphere of the brain in the ability to take the perspective of others (Van den Bos et al. 2011), might lead one to yet another, though rather tentative idea. As the disappearance of social worlds and the lack of a mutual construction of meaning implies that there are simply less others whose perspective one takes or is likely to take, the lack of activity found in the DLPFC in the context of the dopamine hypothesis could be seen as related to this.

Additionally, the experience of a lack of immersion in or imposed detachment from could be related to the disappearance of (a) social world(s), as Annemiek's story and the analysis thereof clearly point out. Such an experience, which could be seen to be implied in Annemiek's feeling of displacement and no longer feeling part of or belonging to this world, is mirrored in her actually being displaced and out of contact with people. As such, the idea that can be seen to follow from the statement that being-in-the-world is always being-with, that being-out-of-the-world implies a (relative) being *without*, finds support in the data as presented.

Problematic contact does not seem to be conducive of oxytocin and taking others' perspective either. In the former case this is because signals of trust or empathy are less likely to be involved in such contact. Regarding the latter, one may be less likely to take the perspective of someone one has a problematic relationship with. Moreover, if one considers the underlying issue in problematic contact as a problem in becoming entrained in one another's bodily rhythms, this finding corresponds with the idea of psychosis as a disorder of attunement. Furthermore, this particular finding matches results of research done by Salokangas et al. (2009, 2012) which indicate that the experience of others' negative attitude is an indicator of a developing psychosis. Returning to the

realm of neuroscience, as the head of the caudate processes negative feedback (Seger & Cincotta 2005) hyperactivity there might be related to problematic contact, considered as either in itself or implying such feedback.

A similar statement could be made regarding the unsuccessful attempt to tackle a problem in four of the cases presented here. In addition, the attempt to tackle a problem might relate to a hyperactivity of the left hemisphere of the brain as such, as it seems to be the hemisphere of utility and the instrumental. The explicit rationality with which Sanne, Patrick, Erik and Annemiek made the attempt also seems to point toward activation of the left hemisphere (McGilchrist 2009). All of this, however, remains very tentative and there is, to my knowledge, no research in which this specific finding has surfaced before, let alone interpreted.

In stark contrast, many studies have already indicated the role of stressful events in psychosis, whether early in life (e.g Larkin & Read 2008) or closer to onset (e.g Beards et al. 2013; Day et al. 1986). Moreover, stressful experiences make people more sensitive to stress, so that stressful events early in life increase the impact of such events later in life (Morgan et al. 2008). The research findings presented in this paper only add to this, and provide a detailed description of different contexts which were experienced as stressful. In general, the findings point out that what makes a stressful context is not just one event, interaction or situation, but their experience taken as a whole.

Neurobiologically speaking, chronic stress leads to a lack of dopamine in the prefrontal cortex (Mizoguchi et al. 2000), which the DLPFC is a part of, thereby matching ‘the dopamine hypothesis.’ The social context of stress, finally, seems to be highly important in this regard as there is some evidence which seems to suggest that social isolation undermines the production of dopamine in the prefrontal cortex (Joseph & Dyer 2003; Liu et al. 2012) and it has been shown that both social support as well as oxytocin protect against the harmful effects of stress (Heinrichs et al. 2003).

In summary, the findings of this study relate to what was already known about psychosis by supporting, matching and/or adding to earlier research regarding the social correlates of psychosis, at times linking these to descriptions found in phenomenological literature as well as core sociological and anthropological ideas. In addition, a number of findings can be seen to relate to neurobiological findings regarding psychosis.

13. Research Limitations & Further Research Suggestions

Taken alone, however, the research which lies at the basis of these findings has several important limitations. First and foremost, of course, is the small sample which makes generalizing the findings impossible. Secondly, although it provides a unique document regarding the social context prior to psychosis as experienced by those who became psychotic, since they are the only ones who were interviewed regarding this social context, what results is a rather one-sided view of the social events, interactions and situations that occurred. In fact, the only evidence in the context of this study for them having occurred at all are respondents' narratives. In addition, the retrospective nature of the interviews does not add to the reliability of the findings either, especially considering the fact that an attempt to increase the reliability proved rather problematic. Moreover, intrinsic in the research question is the idea of the possibility of a role of social interactions, events and situations in the onset of psychosis. One could also consider the possibility of (pre-)psychotic experiences playing a role in the occurrence of these social interactions, events and situations. Finally, the great wealth of information gathered in the course of this study made a full discussion of the data impossible in light of this thesis already greatly exceeding the length initially allowed. For instance, how the different similarities found relate to one another in the specificity of each respondent's story could have formed the basis of yet another chapter.

Further research could therefore focus on repeating the same approach with other subjects and/or by including family, friends and even co-workers in the study. Additionally, in a longitudinal research design, people at high risk for psychosis could be interviewed regarding the social events, interactions and situations they are currently experiencing. In the latter case, however, based on the results of this study as well as other research, results may become skewed as the interviewer would, at least temporarily, be someone one can confide in. A similar research project could also focus on the possible role of (pre-)psychotic experiences in the occurrence of the social experiences here considered to play a role in their onset. So doing, in combination with the findings presented here, the 'dialectics' of psychosis could be uncovered.

Alternatively, research could be more theory-driven than was the case in this project. Questions asked could be particularly related to, for instance, what 'city' means to people who have become psychotic. Towards the quantitative side of the research spectrum, questionnaires could be specifically tailored to falsify and/or verify the findings presented. Regarding meta-studies, other research findings could be approached with the results of this study in mind. Finally,

neurobiologists as well as phenomenologists could explicitly consider the embeddedness of the biological body and the individual mind in social groups and the social events, interactions and situations that occur in such contexts.

Finally, the same data could be used again. Apart from what was already mentioned, one could look for additional ways in which social experiences contribute in a 'pathway'-like fashion to psychotic experiences, revisit those similarities which as of yet could not be linked to such ways in the specificity of a particular respondent's story, or, tentatively, look for links between one respondent's descriptions of psychosis and the social experiences of another.

14. Conclusion

In an attempt to answer the main research question (*how could social events, interactions and situations play a role in the onset of psychosis?*), five sub-questions were investigated and answered in this paper. Despite the lack of prior anthropological and sociological research regarding the research question, the first sub-question embedded the topic in already existing theory, by introducing the well-known Social Defeat hypothesis and its' relatedness to the so-called dopamine hypothesis. The latter, in turn, has been linked to the phenomenology of psychosis, which could be argued to be directly related to Social Defeat. In addition, valuable insights from the anthropological and sociological traditions were mentioned, broadly indicating the social nature of all experience.

The second sub-question investigated the point of view of those who experienced psychosis, regarding its' 'what,' 'why' and broader social context. Respondent explanations of why psychosis occurred already provided valuable insights in relation to the main research question. Stress, always related to social events, interactions or situations, was mentioned by five of the six respondents as a reason for the occurrence of their psychosis. Moreover, on a number of occasions respondents indicate the social context of their psychosis to have, in fact, contained (possible) triggers for their psychosis. In a general sense, all respondents consider the social context of their psychosis to have been implicated in its' onset in some way.

Answering the third sub-question, whether there is a relationship between respondents' descriptions of psychosis and the social interactions, events and situations they experienced prior to it, and if so, how they relate, combined respondents' 'what' with their 'why' and their descriptions of the social

context of their psychotic break. So doing, relationships did in fact emerge. How they relate could be categorized in four different ways: (1) as providing the condition(s) in which psychotic experiences understandably arise, (2) by functioning as and/or setting the stage for 'triggers', (3) by mirroring psychotic experiences and (4) by yielding the organizing principle for such experiences.

The fourth sub-question, investigating whether there are any similarities between the various stories respondents told and, if so, what role they play in respondents' lives prior to psychosis in relation to its' onset yielded further interesting results. Six similarities were in fact found, being (1) The Disappearance of (a) Social World(s), (2) Problematic Contact, (3) the Lack of a Mutual Construction of Meaning, (4) Social Defeat, (5) Attempting to Tackle a Problem and (6) Stress. The role they played in relation to its' onset was by being (part of), leading to, resulting from, or being otherwise associated with the four categories in which respondents' descriptions of life before psychosis could be seen to relate to their descriptions of it.

The answer to the final sub-question, regarding the way the findings of this study relate to what was already known about psychosis, shows first of all that the findings support, match and/or add to earlier research regarding the social correlates of psychosis. In addition, it at times links these social correlates to descriptions of psychotic experiences found in the phenomenological literature and core theoretical ideas from the sociology and anthropology. Moreover, a number of the findings of this study can be seen to relate to neurobiological findings regarding psychosis.

In conclusion, the findings presented in this thesis combined with what was already known regarding psychosis suggest that social events, interactions and situations could play a role in the onset of psychosis by implying and/or being related to (1) The Disappearance of (a) Social World(s), (2) Problematic Contact, (3) the Lack of a Mutual Construction of Meaning, (4) Social Defeat, (5) Attempting to Tackle a Problem and (6) Stress. The way in which they can be seen to do so is through their being (part of), leading to, resulting from or being otherwise associated with (1) the conditions in which psychotic experiences understandably arise, (2) the setting of the stage for and/or their function as triggers, (3) the mirroring of psychotic experiences and (4) the organizing principle for such experiences. In addition, their impact on the (neuro)biology of an individual could be seen to add to their role in the onset of psychosis.

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Annex

1. Interview Questions of the 1st Round (Translated)

1. How old were you when you had your (first) psychosis?
2. How would you describe that, a psychosis?
3. Why do you think it happened?

4. How would you describe the period preceding (that) psychosis? (how come/why?)
5. How would you describe your life prior to psychosis in general? And the year before? (how come/why?)
6. And your social life specifically? And the year before? (how come/why?)
7. Would you call your life prior to psychosis stressful? (how come/why?)

Questions relating to the LifeGrid:

1. Where did you live? What kind of place was that? How long had you been living there? Where did you live before that? Did you move in the year prior to your psychosis?
2. Were you working or studying? (if neither, what filled your days?) What kind of work/study? What was its' content? Did you do this the whole year or did that change?
3. Did you have friends or acquaintances there? Did you have friends/acquaintances apart from that? Did that change? Important events?
4. How was your relationship with your family? Did that change?
5. Any hobbies? Financial issues? Drugs? Important events?

2. Example of 2nd Round Interview Questions (Anonymized).

1. Wat weet je nog van ons gesprek? Is je sindsdien nog iets te binnen geschoten?
2. Wat mij opviel in de periode voor je psychose was dat gedoe rond dat jongerencentrum en daarmee samenhangend een verandering in je sociale relaties en het deels uiteenvallen van je hele hechte vriendengroep wat je een soort ontheemding noemde, dat een soort product was van de jaren '90, dat je betrokken was bij activisme en dat dat ook een rol speelde, dat je met een nieuwe studie begon en dat die zwaar tegenviel, en dat het uit ging met je vriendin. Over dat laatste hebben we het eigenlijk niet zoveel gehad de vorige keer. Hoe begon die relatie? Hoe ging die relatie? Wat deden jullie zoal samen? Waar hadden jullie t over? Jullie gingen samen naar die coffeeshop[...], wat deden jullie dan? Wat was het voor een meid? Hoe ging het uit? Wanneer was dat? Wat voor invloed had dat, dat het uitging? Jullie zaten heel veel samen bij die coffeeshop, nu ging je alleen? Toen zat je daar gewoon te lezen, ipv met haar te praten ofzo?
3. Over het jongerencentrum, wanneer hadden jullie dat precies gekregen? Je had het over gedoe met dealers, 'hele nasty lui', hoe ging dat? Kan je daar een voorbeeld van geven? Je vertelde dat er nieuwe, christelijke vrijwilligers kwamen, die de boel probeerden te coupen. Hoe ging dat? Kan je daar een voorbeeld van geven? Hoe vaak was je in het jongerencentrum? Hoe relateerde dit aan de rest van je leven? [vreemde vraag..]
4. Die vriendengroep/scene, daar begon je mee te blowen rond je 14e-15e. Was je daarvoor al vrienden met hen? Ontstond de groep door het blowen? Door het gezamenlijk voor een jongerencentrum gaan? Wat deden jullie samen, op

een gemiddelde dag? Jullie waren een hechte vriendengroep/scene, waaruit bleek dat? Hoe veranderde dit toen jullie het jongeren centrum kregen?

5. Je vertelde ook dat je bezig was met activisme. Was dat met diezelfde groep? Hoe ging dat? Je vertelde dat stressvolle dingen daarin ook een rol speelden, en je noemde als voorbeeld dat een vriend van je was benaderd door een inlichtingendienst. Waren er ook andere dingen stressvol? Zoals?

6. Je noemt jezelf een product van de jaren '90. Kan je daar wat meer over vertellen? Wat voor invloed had dat op je?

7. In mei of juni van dat jaar was je klaar met de school? Wat heb je in de zomer gedaan? We hebben het al vrij veel er over gehad wat voor teleurstelling de nieuwe studie was en dat je geen klik had met de mensen daar. Ik meen me wel te herinneren dat je wel met één iemand kon opschieten. Hoe ging dat? Had je indertijd nog contact met mensen van je LTS? Hoe was je omgang met mensen daar geweest, indertijd? Ook omdat je flink ouder was? Dat spijbelen in de tijd van die nieuwe studie, door [grote stad] lopen en naar de coffeeshop, deed je dat in je eentje? En daarvoor vaker met die vriendin? Of ook nog anderen?

8. Dat spijbelen, rondzwerven en blowen, wisten je ouders dat? Hoe reageerden ze daarop? En je vrienden?

9. Je vertelt dat je flink depressief werd. Wanneer begon dat? Was daar een directe aanleiding voor? Wisten je vrienden dat je depressief was? Had je het met hen daarover? Hoe reageerden ze? En je ouders?

10. Je vertelde dat je op een gegeven moment naar feestjes ging maar daar gewoon op de bank in slaap viel terwijl het nog gaande was, om aan de ene kant nder de mensen te zijn maar aan de andere je te onttrekken van het sociale gebeuren. Hoe reageerden mensen daarop? Je vertelde dat je het deed omdat je toch niks had te zeggen, niks interessant vond. Waar hadden jullie het voor die tijd dan over, wat je wel interessant vond, waar je wel iets op had te zeggen? Vanwaar die verandering? Kan je je nog een beetje je gedachtes/gevoelens van die tijd herinneren? Was er iets waar je het wél over wilde hebben, maar anderen niet? Wat je wel interessant had gevonden? (ook in het algemeen)

11. Hoe zag een gemiddelde dag net voor je psychose eruit?

12. De avond voordat je echt psychotisch werd, zeg je dat je manisch werd tijdens blowen met vrienden, kan je je die avond nog herinneren? Wie waren die vrienden? Die meededen met het jongeren centrum, of die dat niet deden? wat gebeurde er? waar hadden jullie t over? hoe was de sfeer?

13. Je vertelde dat je die avond, later, toen je thuis was, nog een onsamenhangend verhaal op papier hebt willen zetten. Kan je je herinneren waar het over ging? Wat het doel was van het op te schrijven? Had je een soort 'eureka!'-moment?

Overig:

- zou je zeggen dat je voor je psychose anders naar de wereld, jezelf, de mensen om je heen ging kijken? Waardoor kwam dat?

- Was je eenzaam in de periode voor je psychose? Voelde je je eenzaam?

- Had je het gevoel dat je geen kant meer op kon?

- Ben je in aanraking gekomen met fysiek geweld?

- Werd je gepest als kind?

- Ervaarde je een obstakel tussen jezelf en iets wat je wilde?

- Had je ergens een schuldgevoel of spijt over?

- Je vertelde dat de strijd voor het jongeren centrum echt kicken was. Toen jullie het jongeren centrum hadden, was er toen iets anders waar je een kick uit kreeg?

- Je vertelde dat het dorp waar je woonde, er een grote sociale controle was. Waarin merkte je dat? Hoe verschilde met dat je in [grote stad] was?

- Je legde uit dat er in de stad meer prikkels zijn, en dat dat ook wel meespeelde. Wat voor prikkels zijn dat? Hoe spelen ze mee?

LifeGrid:

- wanneer jongerencentrum
wanneer uit met vriendin

3. Overview of Types of Data

First Round

Semi-structured retrospective interview (recorded & transcribed)	February 7	'Sanne'	At respondent's home
"	February 11	'Annemiek'	"
"	February 17	'Erik'	"
"	February 18	'Maikel'	"
"	February 21	'Michelle'	"
"	February 26	'Patrick'	At office (no others present)

Second Round

Semi-structured retrospective interview (recorded & transcribed)	March 19	'Maikel'	At respondent's home
"	March 21	'Michelle'	"
"	March 24	'Erik'	"
"	April 1	'Mirjam'	"
"	April 8	'Patrick'	"
"	April 9	'Sanne'	"

Third Round

Focus-group (minutes taken by supervisor)	May 3	'Annemiek', 'Michelle', 'Erik'	At Steunpunt GGZ (Utrecht), supervisor also present
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During the first and second round it was also attempted to construct a 'life-grid' about the year prior to psychosis.

4. Tables

Table 1. Pathways to Psychosis?

	(1) Conditions	(2) Triggers	(3) Mirrors	(4) Org. principles
Michelle	Super-distressed life → Super-distressed brain.	I. Strange 'treatment' ← to be done with problematic relationship with stepmother & father	I. Disturbance of perception/thinking: disturbance of social relations. II. Interpreting very	The big theme in her life = the big theme in her psychosis.

		and come to terms with grief. II. Moving to a different place ← finishing her studies.	different than normally: very different than normal living situation.	
Sanne	I. Prior and current social experiences → more thoughts. II. Change in nature of social experiences → more thoughts. III. Change in nature of social experiences, assignment → more thoughts → realization of equality, not matching felt experience → more thoughts. IV. Fusing, change in nature of social experiences, assignment → identification of inner void → more thoughts. V. No one to talk to about overwhelming realizations and feelings as self 'reappears' → assuming one's thoughts are true without checking this with someone else.		Fusing: perceived position based on (prior) social experiences → fusing.	
Annemiek	I. Becoming a mother, problematic relationship, losing one's job → 'how to?' & 'what if?' → out of the here and now. II. Newborn baby, problematic relationship → lack of trust → feeling restricted → no longer going swimming → contributes to out of the here and now → "terrible" new way of working out → dissociation/out of the here and now.	Lost interaction with husband ← attempt to get him to leave the house, inspired by parent.	I. Displaced: losing interaction with husband → tensions rise → relationship breaks down, feels like underdog and panics → flees to close relative → admitted for depression → goes to live with relative. II. Out of contact with others: out of the here and now → unable to do fun things with others, lying on bed, overcome with guilt, not meeting up with friends. III. Displaced: upon fleeing back home being in the position of the underdog even more, not feeling safe	

			→ home is no longer home. IV. Displaced: lost support of family → no place to go. V. Out of contact with others: continuing deterioration of contact with others.	
Patrick	Experience of being in a trap → 'What should I do? What should I do?' etc. plus escapist drug use → mental exhaustion and a missing filter.		The experience of being watched by the police and targeted by intelligence services (idiosyncratic delusion): the experience of being watched by the police and included in the target of intelligence operations (inter-subjective truth).	The atmosphere of paranoia, reading up on police and intelligence services functions as organizing principle of the 'one big mush' resulting from the 'missing filter' in the context of believing to have found a way out of the trap = paranoid delusions.
Maikel	I. Losing the best job of his life → losing the main thing in his life → losing oneself. II. Lack of interaction → losing oneself.			I. New contacts in the context of 2 nd Condition = new contacts part of delusions. II. Lack of interaction = talking to people who are not there. III. Stagnation = things have already been decided for us in medieval times.
Erik	I. Culture switch, working out in a certain way → becoming more emotional → voices have more of a hold. II. Burn-out → (at least) physically tired → voices have more of a hold. III. Becoming weaker, change in social position because of burn-out → flip-flopping becomes problematic.	I. Working out very hard ← in order to be able to work again. II. Breaking-up with his girlfriend who organised his agenda. III. Culture switch.	Psychosis de-structures, creates chaos: several de-structuring events/processes.	Going left when he wants to go right → Counter Party going right when he wants to go left

Table 2. The role of the Six Similarities in Relation to the Descriptions of Psychosis

	(1) Condition	(2) Trigger	(3) Mirror	(4) Org. Principle
(1) The Disappearance of (a)	= Maikel I	= Michelle II, Erik II	= Michelle I-II, Annemiek IV	

Social World(s)	[] Michelle, Annemiek I, Erik III → Maikel II ← Erik II	→ Erik I	[] Annemiek I, Erik ↔ Annemiek III-V	↔ Maikel I-II-III
(2) Problematic Contact	[] Michelle, Annemiek I-II, Sanne I → Sanne I [], Maikel II [] ← Sanne II-III [] ↔ Patrick, Erik III	→ Michelle I [], Erik II	= Patrick [] Annemiek I-III → Erik []	= Michelle [] Patrick
(3) The Lack of a Mutual Creation of Meaning	[] Michelle, Sanne V ← Maikel II ↔ Erik I-II	→ Michelle I [] ↔ Erik III	↔ Annemiek II-V, Erik	[] Maikel III ↔ Michelle, Maikel II, Erik
(4) Social Defeat	= Maikel I, Patrick [] Michelle, Sanne I-II-III-IV, Annemiek I-II, Erik I → Sanne [] IV ↔ Maikel II	= Annemiek → Michelle [] I, Erik I ↔ Erik []	[] Annemiek I- III, Erik → Sanne	↔ Michelle, Patrick, Maikel I-II
(5) Attempting to Tackle a Problem	[] Michelle, Annemiek I, Patrick, Erik I → Erik II [] ← Maikel II ↔ Sanne V	= Michelle I, Erik III → Annemiek	[] Erik	[] Patrick ↔ Michelle, Erik, Maikel I
(6) Stress	→ Annemiek I [], Erik II ↔ Michelle, Sanne I, Patrick	↔ Erik I		

Legend: being = ; being part of [] ; leading to → ; resulting from ← ; associated with ↔. When [] occurs not as the first symbol in a line, this is meant to denote that the relationship is partial, e.g problematic contact is part of what leads up to Condition II or problematic contact led to part of a Mirror

5. (Approximate) translation of poem by Toon Hermans.

We all know it, it's a mess
It's too scary, too hostile, and too full
In the main it's big mayhem and misery
On our green, blue, grey ball
It's hatred and envy, cutting one another off
And through the cities a ruthless violence rages
But whether we swear, fight, fall, laugh, suffer
There are always buttercups in the field again

Even though that little ball seems so negative
Amidst the rubble the emotion still shines through
Of people who still softly say:
“I love you.”

6. Informed Consent Form (Dutch)

Informatiebrief onderzoek:
Sociale Gebeurtenissen, Situaties, Interacties & Psychose

Geachte heer/mevrouw,
Wij vragen u vriendelijk om mee te doen aan een onderzoek naar de invloed van sociale gebeurtenissen, situaties en interacties in het ontstaan van een psychose. U beslist zelf of u wilt meedoen. Om die beslissing goed te kunnen nemen wil ik u informeren over het onderzoek.

[...]

1. Wat is het doel van het onderzoek?

Het doel van het onderzoek is er achter te komen of en hoe sociale gebeurtenissen kunnen bijdragen aan het ontstaan van een psychose. Als we hier meer over weten, kunnen mensen die gevoelig zijn voor psychose aan hun omgeving hier rekening mee houden. Voor het onderzoek heb ik in totaal 7 mensen benaderd die ooit een psychose hebben gehad. Bij de uitvoering van dit onderzoek heb ik samenwerking gezocht met Steunpunt GGZ. Huub Beijers, die is verbonden aan die organisatie, begeleidt het onderzoek.

2. Hoe wordt het onderzoek uitgevoerd?

Het onderzoek bestaat uit twee gesprekken met u in de periode begin februari-eind april 2014. In het eerste gesprek wil ik een algemene indruk krijgen van het (sociale) leven voorafgaand aan een psychose. De nadruk zal liggen op het jaar voorafgaand aan de psychose.

Tussen de eerste en tweede ronde van de gesprekken ga ik op zoek naar de overeenkomsten en verschillen in de verhalen van de verschillende deelnemers. Op grond daarvan ga ik in het tweede gesprek dieper in op wat u in het eerste gesprek heeft verteld.

Na afloop van deze tweede ronde vat ik de voorlopige uitkomsten van het onderzoek samen en nodig ik alle deelnemers uit voor een groepsgesprek over de resultaten. Dan is uw mening en uw visie van belang. Naast inhoudelijke discussie is dit gesprek ook een gelegenheid om het onderzoek zelf (hoe de gesprekken zijn verlopen etc.) te evalueren.

3. Mogelijke gevolgen van het onderzoek

Het bespreken van uw situatie voorafgaand aan een psychose kan stressvol zijn. Tijdens het gesprek zullen wij daar samen op letten. Indien er psychische nood ontstaat, neemt u dan contact op met de onderzoeker [...] of Huub Beijers [...]. Na afloop van een gesprek zal u gevraagd worden hoe u zich voelt. De dag na een gesprek zal hierover nog contact met u worden opgenomen.

Zo'n gesprek kan ook een positief effect hebben. Door het over uw situatie te hebben, meer zelfkennis en contact met mensen die hetzelfde hebben meegemaakt, krijgt u wellicht meer greep op uw situatie.

4. Vrijwilligheid

Deelname is geheel vrijwillig. U kan op elk moment uw medewerking stopzetten. Daar hoeft u geen reden voor te geven. Uw deelname kan ook worden stopgezet door de onderzoeker, in samenspraak met Huub Beijers, indien daar reden voor is (bijvoorbeeld zorgen over negatieve invloed van deelname aan het onderzoek).

5. Wat gebeurt er als het onderzoek is afgelopen?

Wanneer het onderzoek is afgelopen krijgt u het resultaat (de scriptie) toegestuurd zodra deze is voltooid, waarschijnlijk eind juni.

6. Uw gegevens

Uw gegevens worden uitsluitend gebruikt in het kader van dit onderzoek en zijn uiteindelijk in de beschrijving niet herleidbaar tot uw persoon.

7. Wilt u verder nog iets weten?

Heeft u nog vragen of opmerkingen? Neem dan gerust contact op met de onderzoeker Dylan Paauwe via d.paauwe1988@gmail.com of [...]. Heeft u het liever over het onderzoek met een onafhankelijk persoon? Dan kunt u contact opnemen met Huub Beijers via [...]

Ik heb de informatiebrief gelezen en begrijp wat daar in staat.

Ik weet dat meedoen helemaal vrijwillig is en dat ik op ieder moment kan beslissen om niet mee te doen. Daarvoor hoef ik geen reden te geven.

Ik geef toestemming om mijn gegevens te gebruiken, voor de doelen die in de informatiebrief staan.

Ik wil meedoen aan dit onderzoek.

Naam:

Handtekening:

Datum : __ / __ / __

Ik verklaar hierbij dat ik deze persoon volledig heb geïnformeerd over het genoemde onderzoek.

Als er tijdens het onderzoek informatie bekend wordt die de toestemming van deze persoon zou kunnen beïnvloeden, dan breng ik hem/haar daarvan tijdig op de hoogte.

Naam onderzoeker: D.A. Paauwe

Handtekening:

Datum: __ / __ / __