

Group Dynamics and Group Dangerousness



b6
b7c

Behavioral Science Unit

FBI ACADEMY

Learning Points

- **Structures of Groups**
- **Group Dynamics**
- **Political Violence Matrix**
- **Group Analysis Protocol Exercise**

Determents of behavior

• Social

- Cultural, ethnic, religious groups, political, and other interest groups

• Psychological

- Mental processes and behaviors

Bio/Genetic

- Physical traits we are born with

Group: Definition

A collection of two or more individuals with a stable pattern of relationships between them, who share common goals and who perceive themselves as belonging to a group

Why Join a Group?

- **Goal attainment and task performance**
- **Satisfy social needs**

Defining terrorist behavior

“...the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.”

(28 C.F.R. Section 0.85)

Terrorism as a strategy/tactic

- A strategy is a long term plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal, most often "winning".
- A tactic is a method employed to help achieve a certain goal.

Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategy>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tactic_%28method%29

Terrorism

- Terrorism – is the long term premeditated plan (strategy) for social and/or political change (goal) and...
- ...uses the method of violence (tactic) to achieve this goal.
- Therefore terrorism is a strategy using violence (terrorist acts) as a tactic.

Development of a mindset

- **Personality can be defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions (information processing), motivations, and behaviors in various situations.**

(Ryckman, 2004)

Development of a mindset

- A “mindset”, in decision theory and general systems theory, refers to a set of assumptions, methods or notations held by one or more people or groups of people which is so established that it creates a powerful incentive within these people or groups to continue to adopt or accept prior behaviors, choices, or tools. This phenomenon of cognitive bias is also sometimes described as *mental inertia*, “groupthink”, or a “paradigm”, and it is often difficult to counteract its effects upon analysis and decision making processes.

True believer's attitude

- Attitude represents an individual's like or dislike for an item. Attitudes are positive, negative, ambivalent, or neutral views of an "attitude object."
- Attitudes comes from judgments. Attitudes develop on the ABC model (affect, behavioral change and cognition). Most attitudes in individuals are a result of *observational learning* from their environment.

True believer's behavior

- The link between attitude and behavior exists but depends on cognition and filtering through schemas by humans sometimes having irrational results.
- For example, a person who has a “pro-life” attitude (because all life is sacred) may also be willing to kill another human (abortion doctor). This makes sense if the person believes they are saving unborn lives, which explains this irrationality. Or a person who believes in organ transplants and blood donations can't bring themselves to donate blood.

True believer's behavior

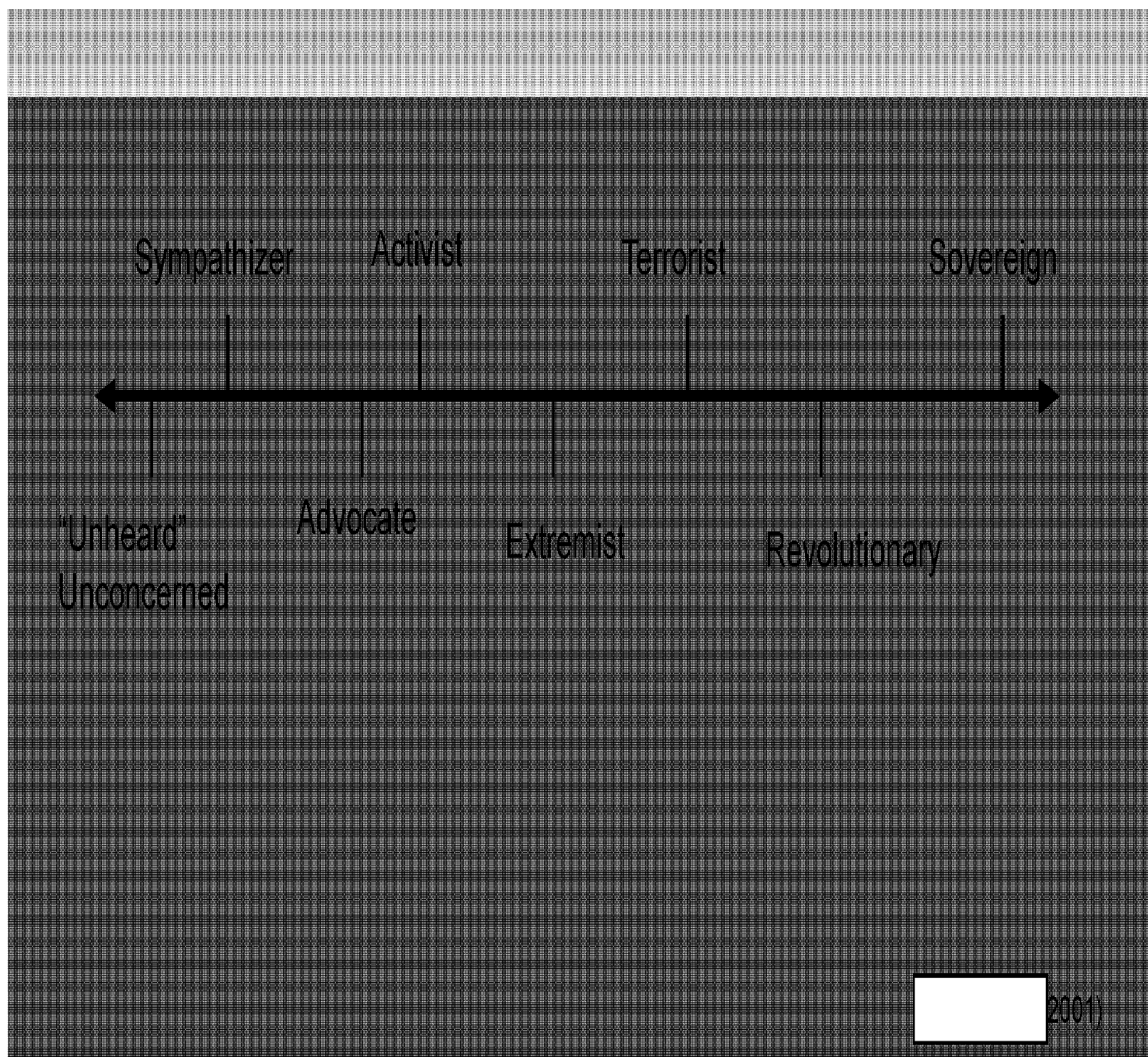
- **Often the calculus is one based off “necessity.”**
- **Common law of necessity and the ticking time bomb scenario...**

Mass movements and fanatics

- **Not all mass movements are violent or criminal but...**
- **All mass movements require:**
 - Self-sacrifice
 - Identification with a collective whole
 - Have an “active phase.”
 - Men of words (Leaders/Ideologies)
 - Practical Men of Action (Activist Operators/Facilitators)
 - Fanatics (Idealists/Soldiers)

Eric Hoffer (1951)

Violent mass movement continuum



b6
b7c

Violent mass movement continuum

- **Unconcerned** – Person that has no opinion (neutral attitude) one way or other regarding issue (s).
- **Sympathizer** – Agrees with elements of the “cause” but not motivated to express support openly.
- **Advocate** – Agrees with elements of the “cause” and is willing to express opinion to others (trusted social network) in private with the intent to gain support or advocate the “cause.”
- **Activist** – Agrees with the “cause” and is willing to demonstrate, organize, recruit, proselytize, or advertise opinion publicly.

[REDACTED] 2001)

b6
b7C

Violent mass movement continuum

- **Extremist** - Agrees with the "cause," and commits acts of civil disobedience, or non-violent criminal behavior in the name of the cause; and/or is willing to support/provide material aid to others who engage in violence in the name of the cause.
- **Terrorist** - Agrees with the "cause" and is willing to commit violent criminal acts against people or property in furtherance of the "cause."
- **Revolutionary** - Has popular support to further the cause, has been recognized by the ruling government or other governments as a rebel group or revolutionary movement .
- **Sovereign** - Has gained control of the political and social systems through popular support, 3rd party intervention, or violent force.

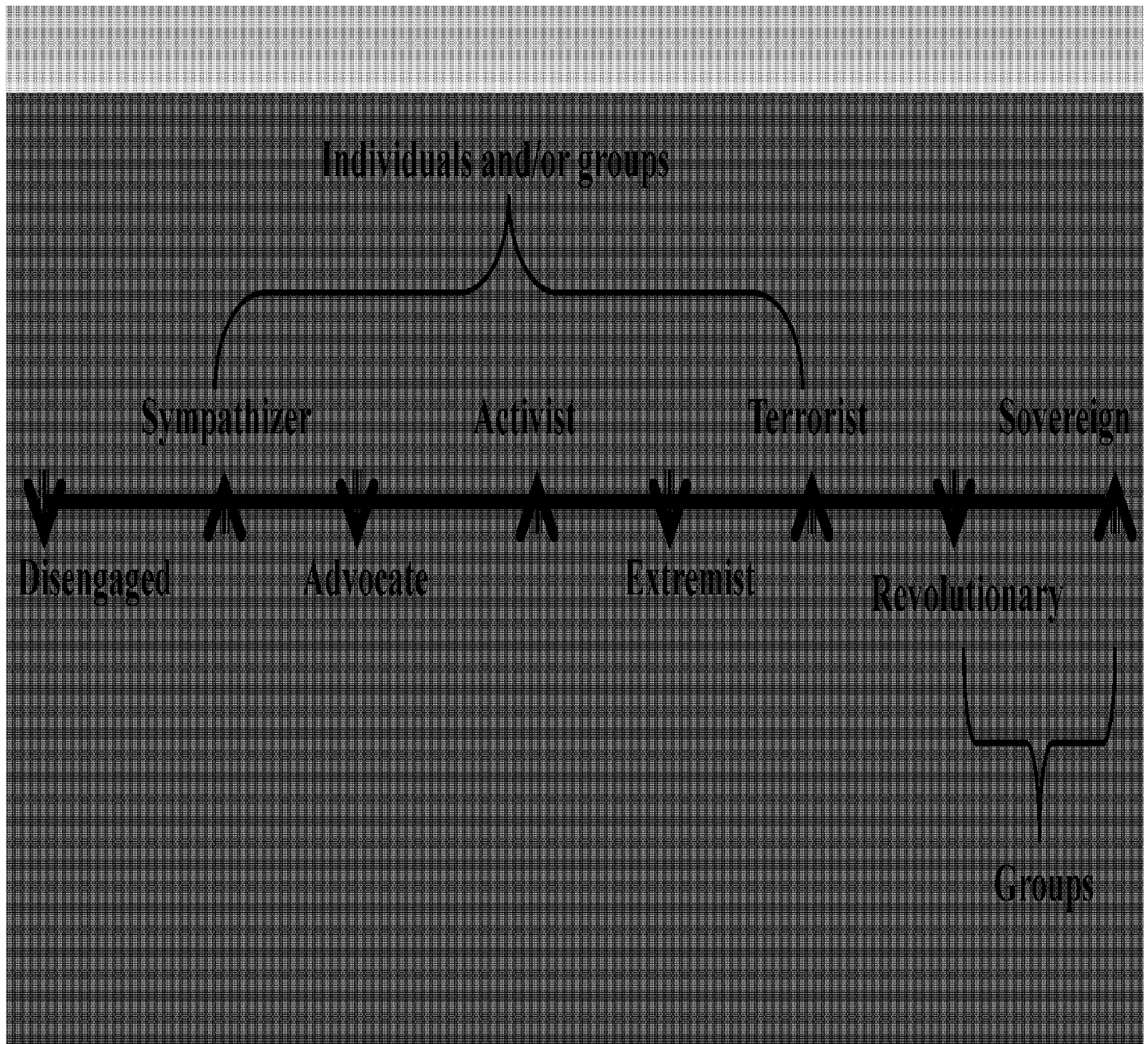
[redacted] 2001)

b6
b7c

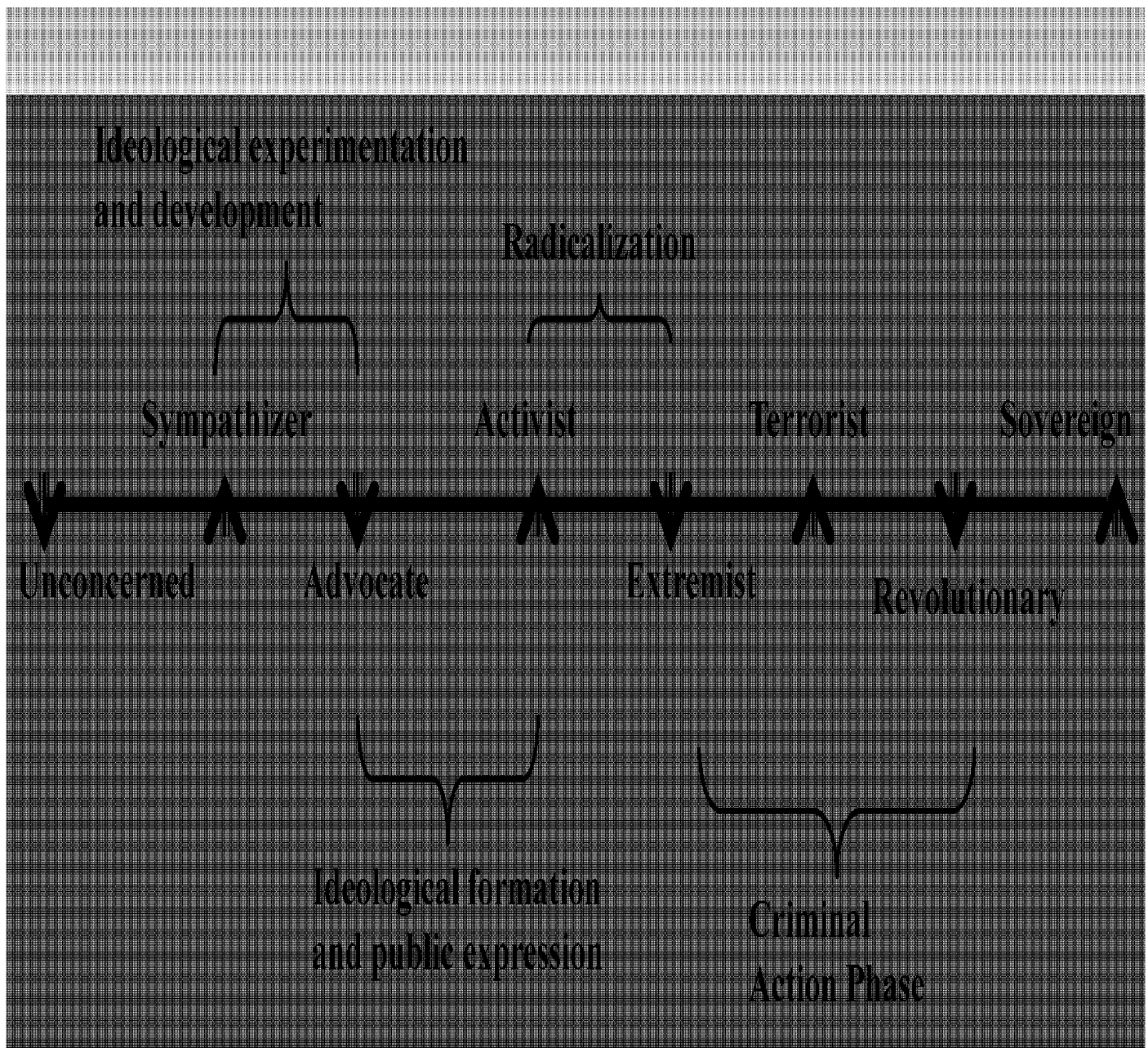
Goals of the violent mass movement

- To change attitudes and recruit and develop violent “true believers...” in order to promote a violent mass movement.
- To provoke the sovereign into restricting liberties and human rights in order to create a state of nature or social vacuum.
- Goals of the terrorist include gaining support from the unconcerned, sympathetic, advocate, activist, and extremist to develop a revolutionary movement in order to change the social contract or replace the sovereign.

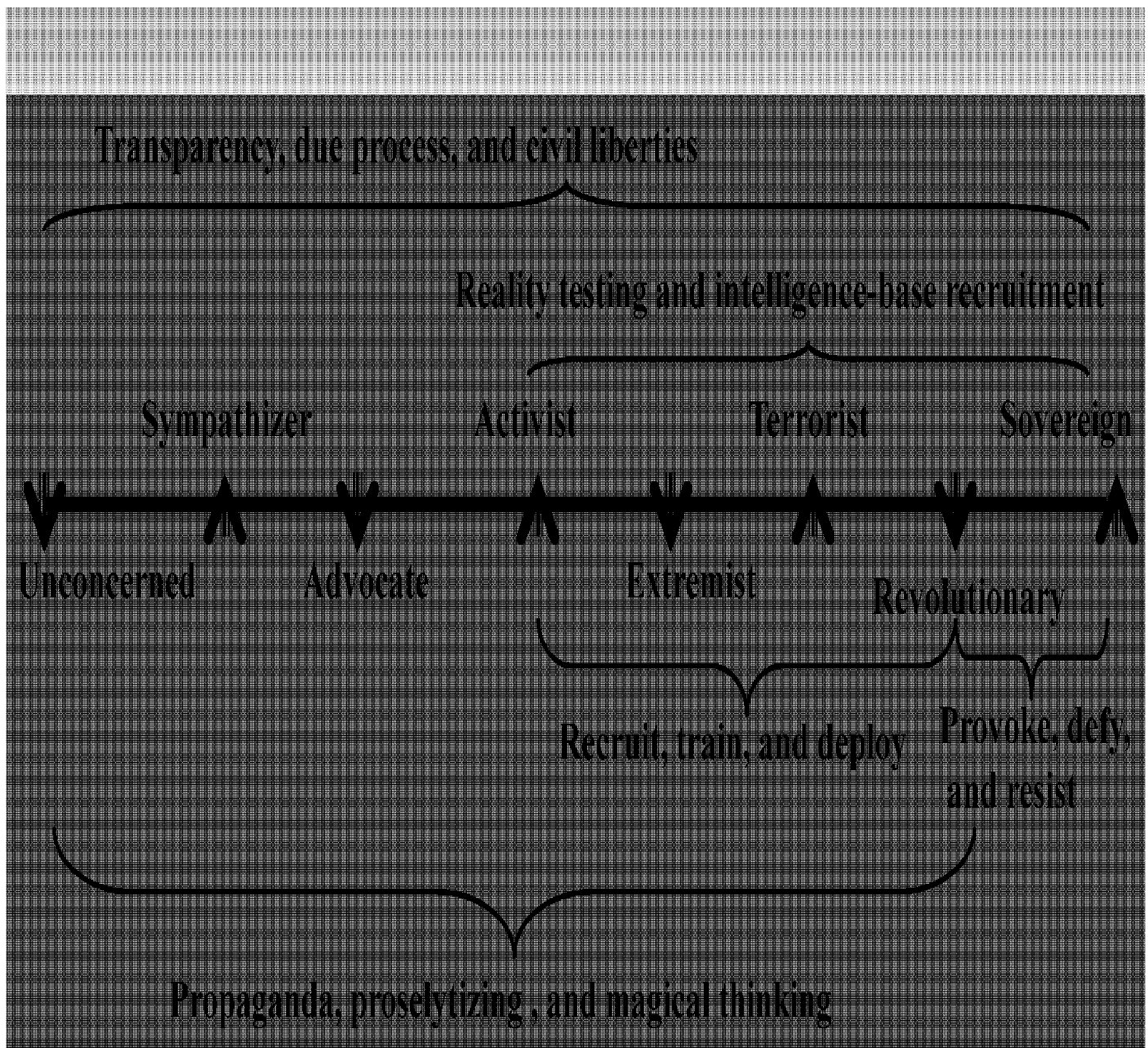
Violent mass movement continuum



Violent mass movement continuum



Violent mass movement continuum



True Believers...

- “It is a truism that many who join a rising revolutionary movement are attracted by the prospect of sudden and spectacular change in their conditions of life.”

- Eric Hoffer (1951)

True Believers...

- Revolutions are rarely sudden or spectacular...
- American Revolution – 1764 to 1783
- IRA/PIRA – Ireland, origins go back as far as 1919 and as recently as 2005 the IRA has stated their “war” is over.
- ETA – Spain, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna or ETA founded in 1959 still struggling.
- LTTE – Sri Lanka, 1983 to present
- FARC – Columbia, 1964 to present

Where do terrorists come from?

- **Often the marginalized are recruited because the way they process outside influences.**
- **Radicalization often begins as individual isolation (psychology of terrorism) and develops into violent criminal behavior through group isolation (group dynamics).**

Developing the mindset

- ... a charismatic leader or positive actions by true believers (positive anchors) and/or overreaching government response that further alienates the population (negative anchors).

Developing the mindset

- Some people are easier to develop as violent true believers than others because they buy into magical thinking, psychological splitting, suffer from pathological emotions, or have maladaptive personalities – sociopathic, borderline personality disorders, or inadequate personalities...

Developing the mindset

- ... magical thinking is the concept that somehow the destruction of your enemy or target of pathological emotions will somehow cure the ills of the world...

(Navarro, 2006)

- ... Eric Hoffer called it “make believe” in that the killing behavior becomes ritualistic, ceremonial, even theatrical ...

(Hoffer, 1951)

Developing the mindset

- often times the leader (“Men of Words”) will use “magical thinking,” and “groupthink” to develop the individual's mind-set.
- ... this particularly effective when the individual's personality allows for “psychological splitting.”

(Post, 1992)

Developing the mindset

- **Psychological splitting is a primitive way to look at the world, much as a predator...**
 - **Dividing the world one minute between what one values and devalues... what is useful then becomes useless... it is where the past has no value and where allegiance can quickly turn.**
 - **Splitting is not that uncommon among criminals where there is little remorse and the world as seen as “with me or against me.”**

(Navarro, 2006)

Developing the mindset

- Other promising individuals for recruitment into terror organizations are those who coupled with psychological splitting also are pathological narcissists.
- According to Post (2001) pathological narcissism or narcissistic personality disorder is often noted in terrorist leaders and is a personality disorder defined as characteristics or traits which are pervasive, inflexible, maladaptive, impair, or cause distress to the individual. Often seeing themselves as special and unique they believe that they alone have a clear understanding of events or issues. Sometimes their grandiose images allows them to believe they are a prophet or God. In any case these are unwavering true believers.

Developing the mindset

- **These people often also have pathologically incomplete personalities. Inadequate personality disorders...**
 - **Insecure**
 - **Incomplete**
 - **Marginalized**
 - **Feelings of being discarded by society**
 - **Eric Hoffer called these people “misfits.”**

These people are particularly susceptible to the idea of becoming a true believer and sacrificing themselves for the greater cause.

7 types of true believers

- 1. Unwavering true believer**
- 2. Affiliative true believer**
- 3. Opportunistic true believer**
- 4. Criminal true believer**
- 5. Betrayer true believer**
- 6. Psychotic true believer**
- 7. Fledgling true believer**

***All could become violent true believer**

J. Reid Meloy, Ph.D. (2002)

Value model

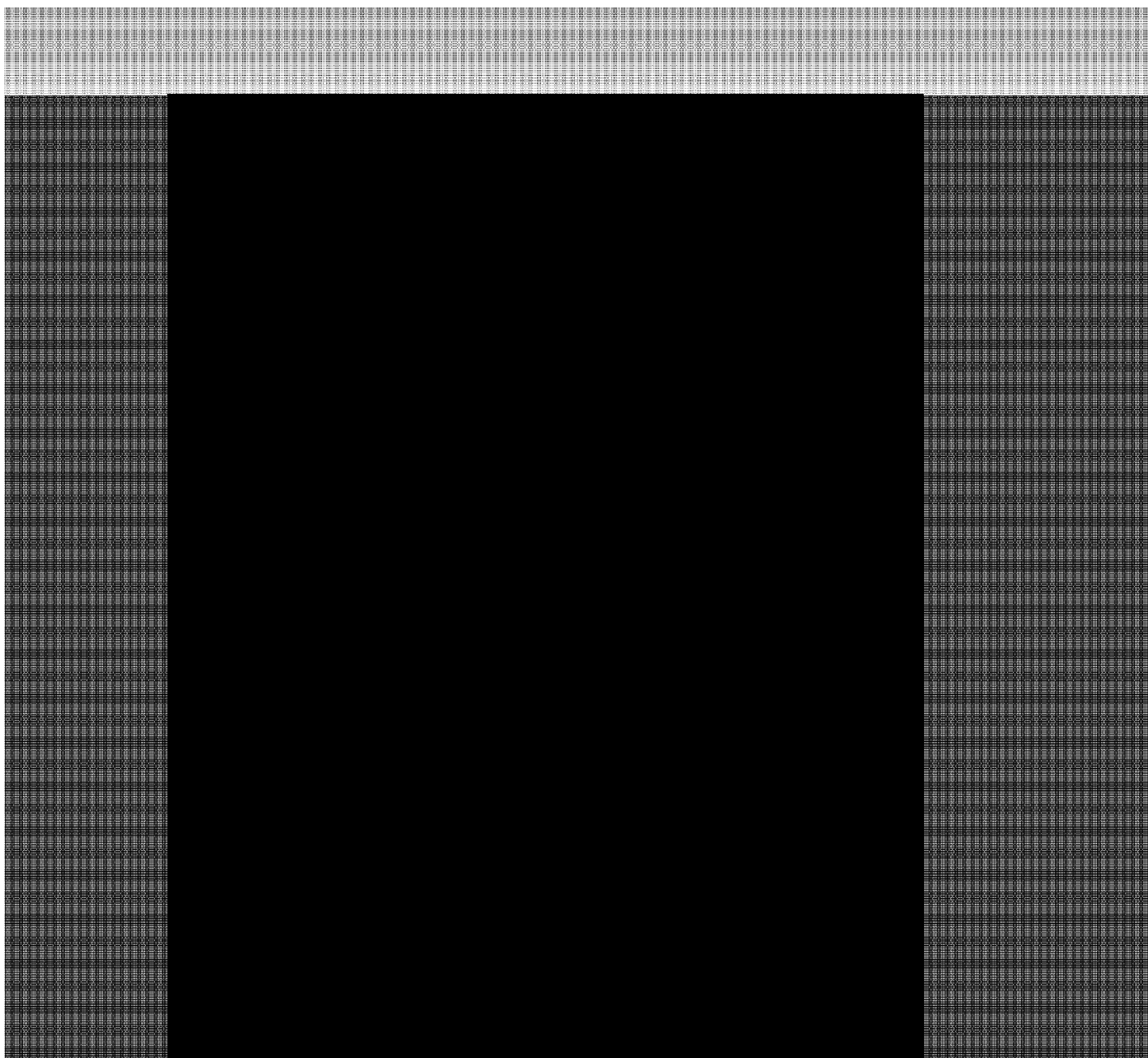
Value Model of Media Theory

“If you wish to change the behavior of a person, you must first change the values of the person.”

That's done through positive or negative anchors.

- Milton Rokeach (1969)

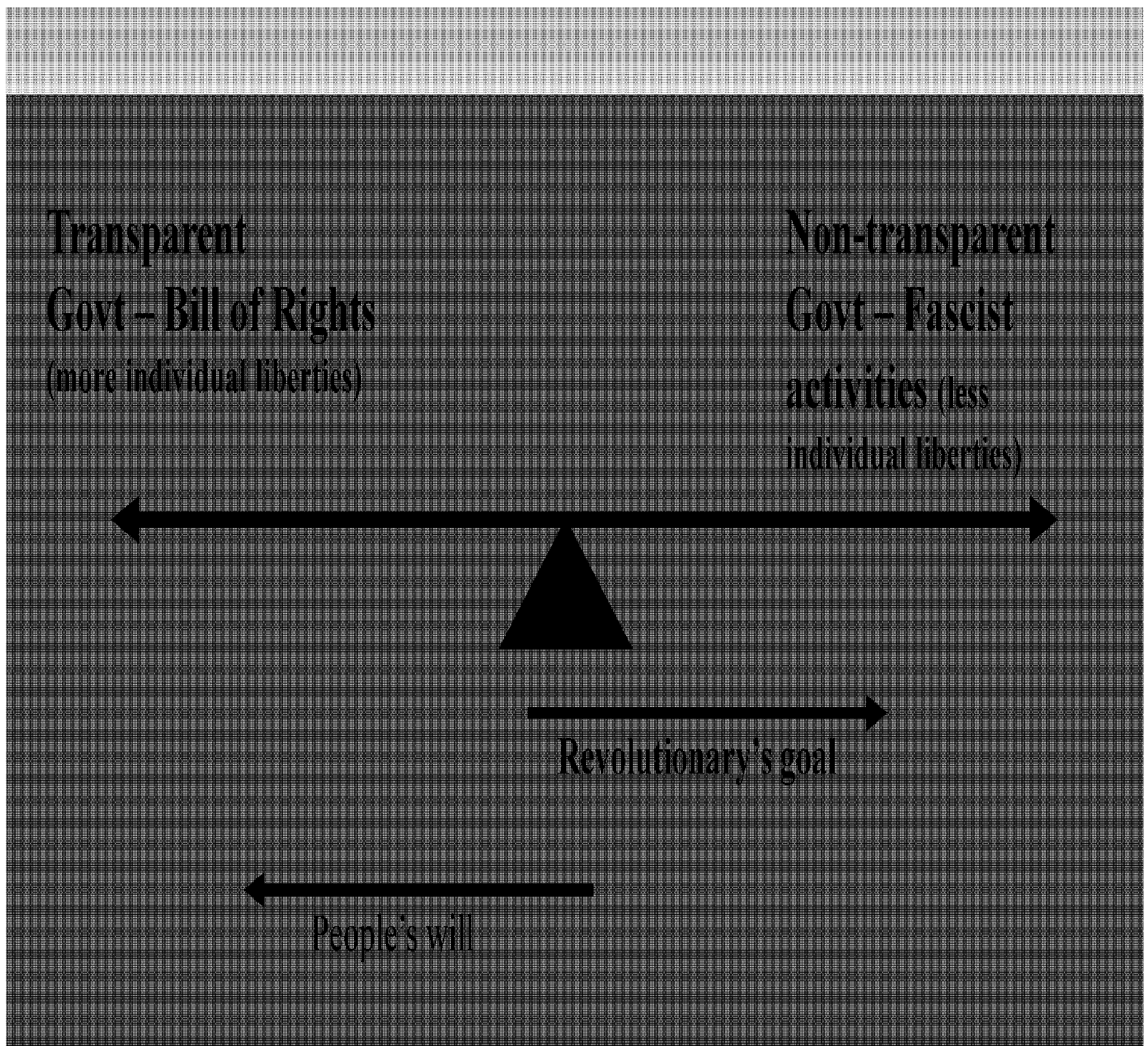
Value modeling for violent True Believers



Where do terrorists come from?

- **The more repressive the ruling government the more likely there will be grievances (political violence matrix).**
- **History shows that repressive governments were the first to use terror to control the population.**
- **It is often the government's response to grievances that becomes the catalyst for terrorist activity or the support of terrorist groups.**

Political Violence Matrix

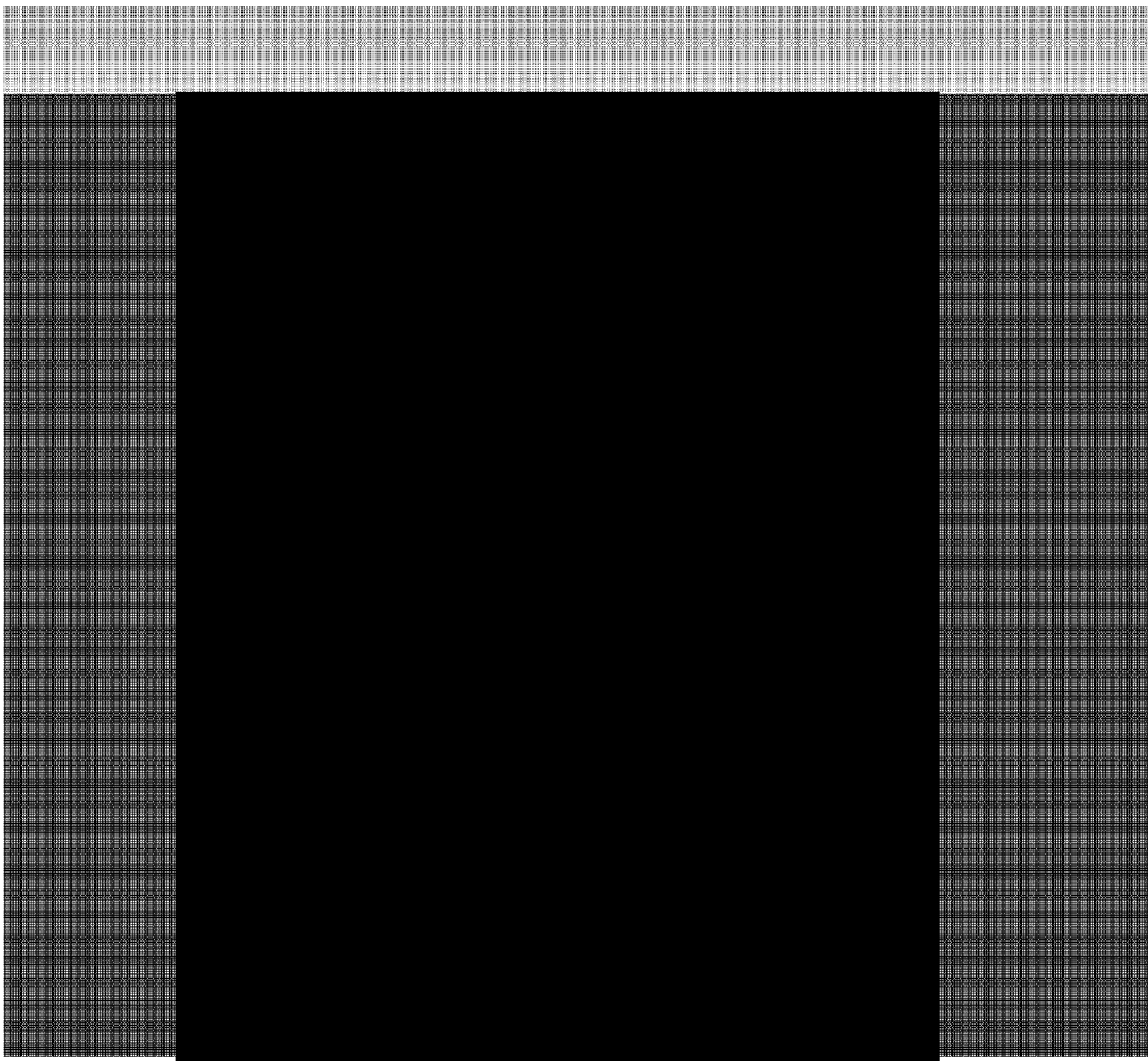


Terrorist characteristics

- Terrorists are generally:
 - Committed to their “cause” but at varying degrees.
 - Willing to commit violent acts in the name of their cause if they are a “violent true believer.”
 - Allow their cause to dictate their logic, sense of right and wrong, and drive their behavior.
 - Willing to work with “like-minded” but possibly diverse people to support their cause.
 - Willing to risk arrest, incarceration, and even death for their cause (violent true believer).
 - Its learned behavior...

William Dyson, Jr.

Recruitment of true believer



Environmental factors

Group Structures

Organizational structure

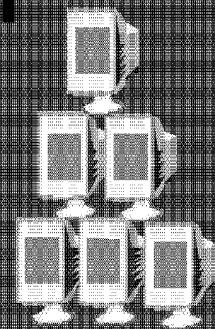
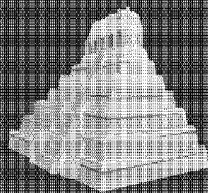
- Terrorist groups are normally structured in one of three ways:
 - Hierarchal or 'pyramid' structure (The Order)
 - Network or 'cellular' structure (Weather Underground)
 - Combination of hierarchy and cell structure (Al Qaeda)
 - * Leaderless resistance or 'Lone-wolf' / 'Berserker'

created by

b6
b7C

Characteristics of Hierarchies

- Well-defined command structure
- Task assignments
- Bureaucracy
- Maximize: Size, strength
- Vulnerabilities: Infiltration

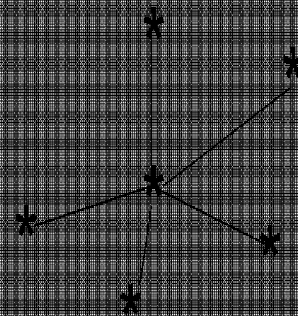
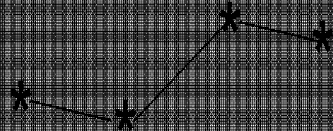


Organizational structure

There are three general structures for networks:

- **Chain Network**

(Drug, gun, human, smugglers)

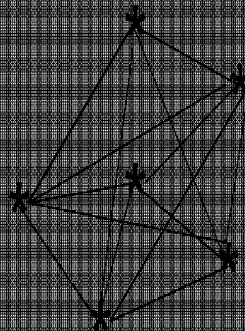


- **Star or Hub Network**

(Common terror network)

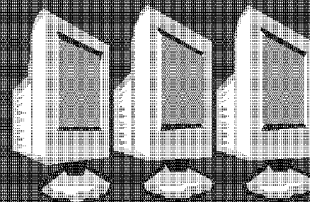
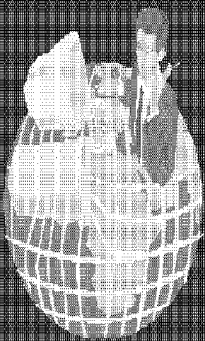
- **All-channel Network**

(Loose affiliation - Earth Liberation Front)



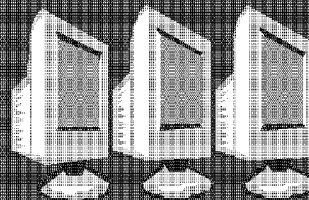
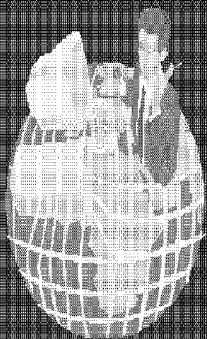
Characteristics of Networks

- Loose command structure
- Temporary relationships
- Maximize: Speed, flexibility, “lone wolf”
- Vulnerabilities: Communications, “interesting” coalitions

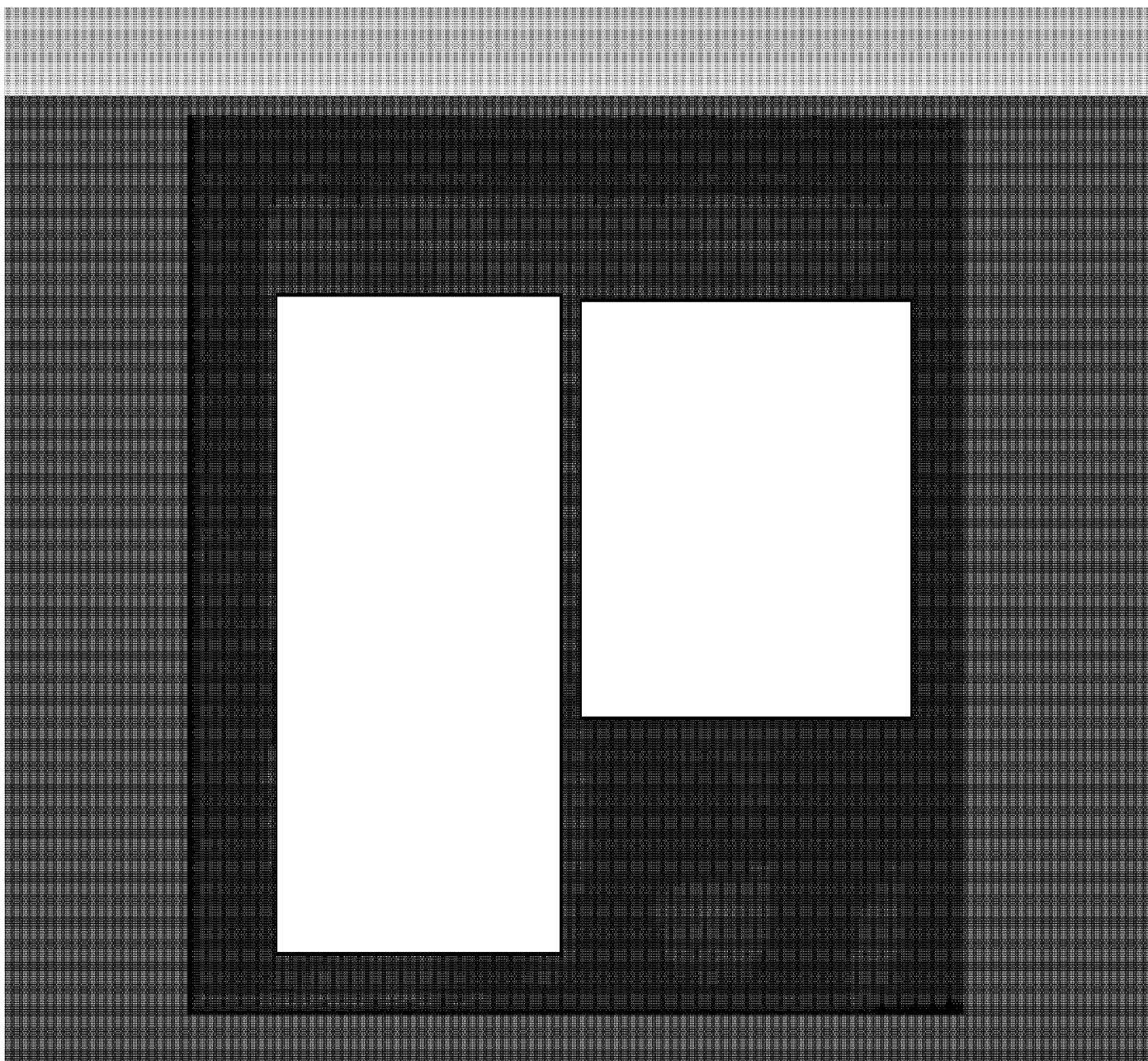


Examples of Networks

- **Animal Liberation Front/Earth Liberation Front**
- **The “new” White Supremacist Movement**



ELF--Network



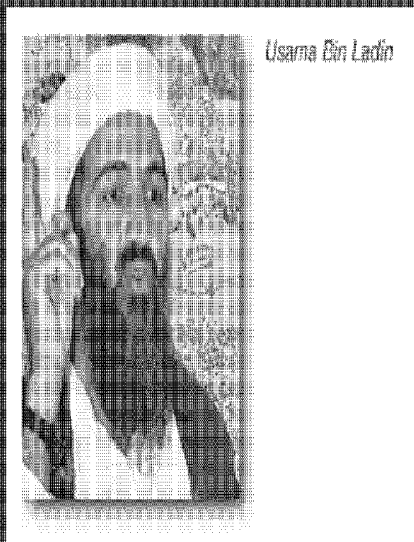
b6
b7C
b7E

Roles people play

Group Dynamics

Group Dynamics

*What roles do
members play in
a group?*



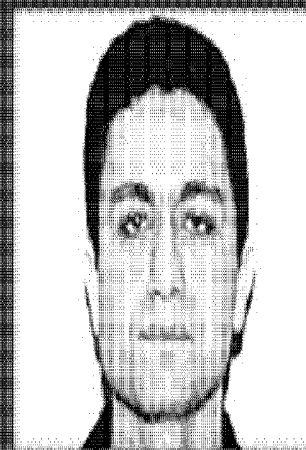
Osama Bin Laden

Groups: Roles

- **Leader/
Ideologue**
- **Activist
Operator/
Facilitator**
- **Idealists/
Soldier**



Usama Bin Laden



Atta

b6
b7C

Group Dynamics: Social Facilitation

Groups Produce

Enhanced Performance

Worringham & Messick: Male runners ran more quickly when observed by females

Group Dynamics: Social Facilitation

- **Indoctrination**
- **New social contract**
- **Surrender Identity**
- **Adopt new language (slang)**
- **Repetitive use of group pledge or oath**
- **Acts of conformity and loyalty**

Social Facilitation: Al Qaeda Training



Group Dynamics: Obedience

*Groups Demand
Obedience*

Milgram Experiments: 65% obeyed the
authority figure

Group Dynamics: Obedience

Omerta

Code of silence; unquestioned obedience to one's leader

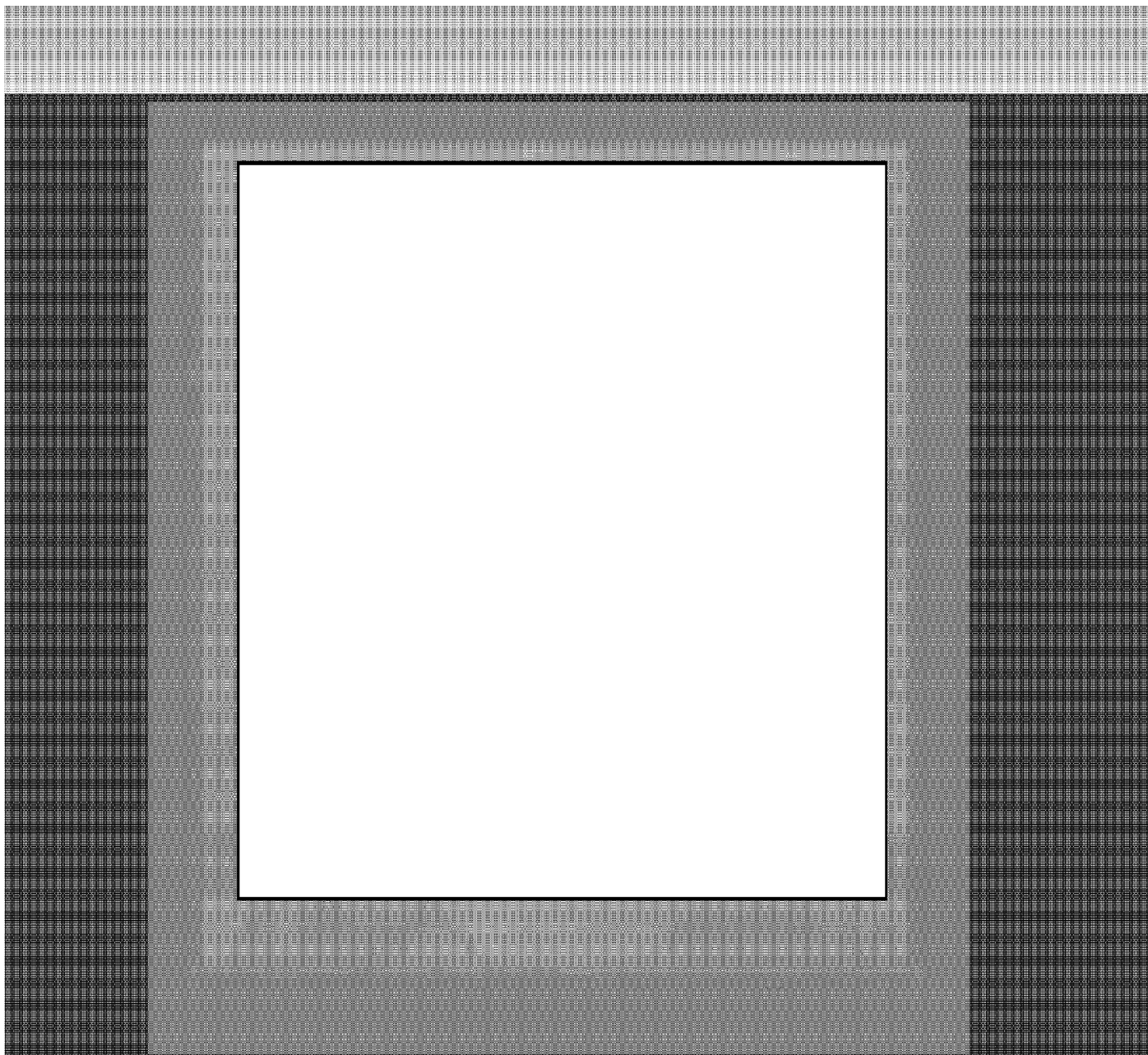
Group Dynamics: Obedience

Law Enforcement Opportunities

*Obedience may be more perceived
than real*

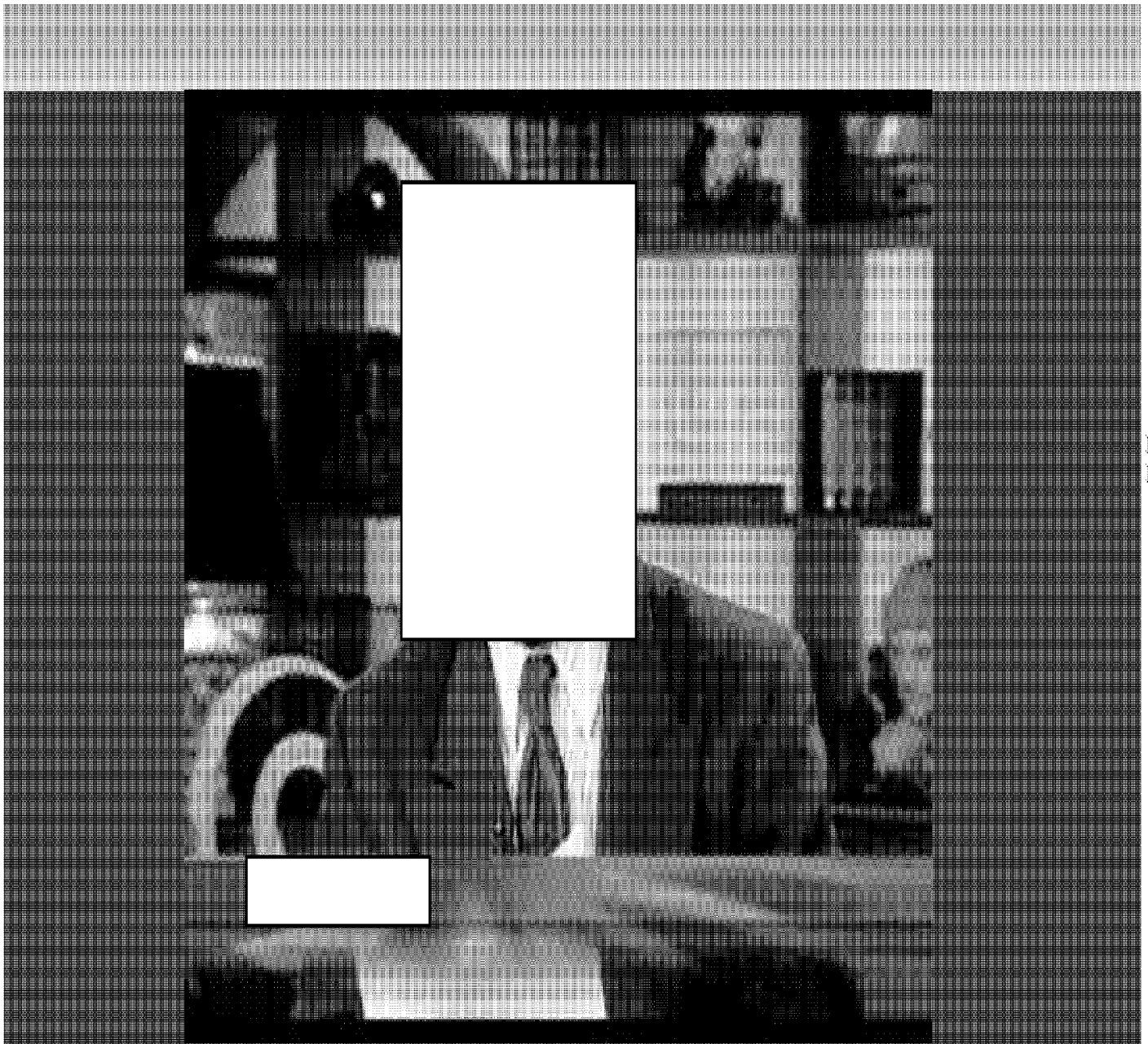
YOU are an authority figure

Roots of Obedience



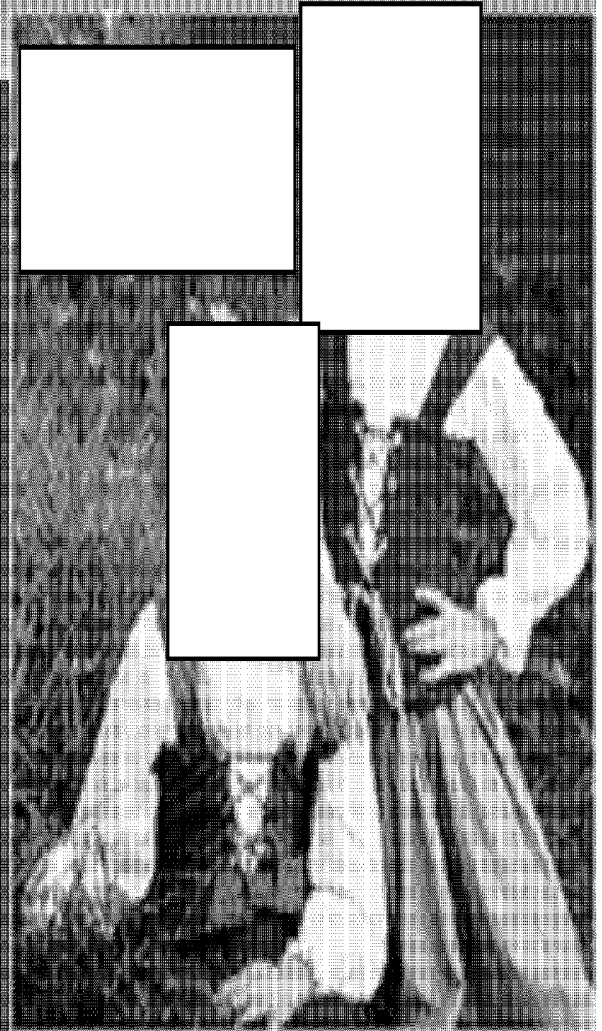
b7E

Roots of Obedience



Changing values

- [REDACTED]
one album out, another on the way, a music video, and lots of fans.
- They may remind you of another famous pair of [REDACTED]
and the girls say they like that. But unlike [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
nationalists and use their talents to preach a message of hate.



Group Dynamics: Conformity

Groups Demand

Conformity

Group Dynamics: Conformity

***Law Enforcement
Opportunity***

***Conformity may not be
as intense as it
appears***

Groupthink

- Social psychologist Clark McCauley's three conditions under which groupthink occurs:
- Directive leadership.
- Homogeneity of members' social background and ideology.
- Isolation of the group from outside sources of information and analysis.

Groupthink

- **Groupthink** is a type of thought exhibited by group members who try to minimize conflict and reach consensus without critically testing, analyzing, and evaluating ideas. During Groupthink, members of the group avoid promoting viewpoints outside the comfort zone of consensus thinking. A variety of motives for this may exist such as a desire to avoid being seen as foolish, or a desire to avoid embarrassing or angering other members of the group. Groupthink may cause groups to make hasty, irrational decisions, where individual doubts are set aside, for fear of upsetting the group's balance. The term is frequently used pejoratively, with hindsight.

Irving L. Janis (26 May 1918 - 15 November 1990)

Groupthink

- Symptoms of groupthink
- In order to make groupthink testable, Irving Janis devised eight symptoms that are indicative of groupthink (1977).
- *Illusions of invulnerability* creating excessive optimism and encouraging risk taking.
- *Rationalizing warnings* that might challenge the group's assumptions.
- *Unquestioned belief* in the morality of the group, causing members to ignore the consequences of their actions.

Groupthink

Stereotyping those who are opposed to the group as weak, evil or stupid.

Direct pressure to conform placed on any member who questions the group, couched in terms of "disloyalty".

Self censorship of ideas that deviate from the apparent group consensus.

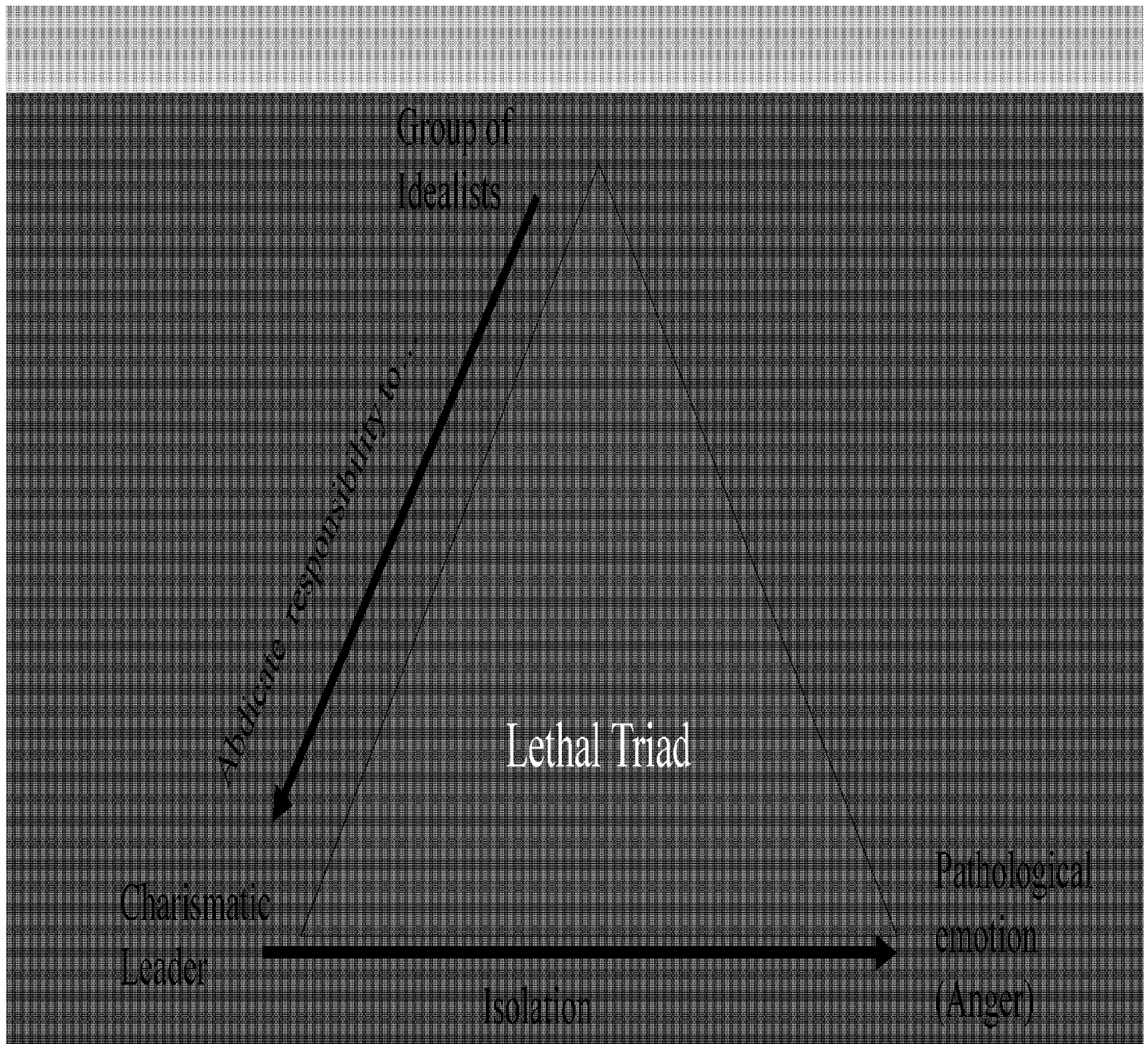
Illusions of unanimity among group members, silence is viewed as agreement.

Mindguards — self-appointed members who shield the group from dissenting information

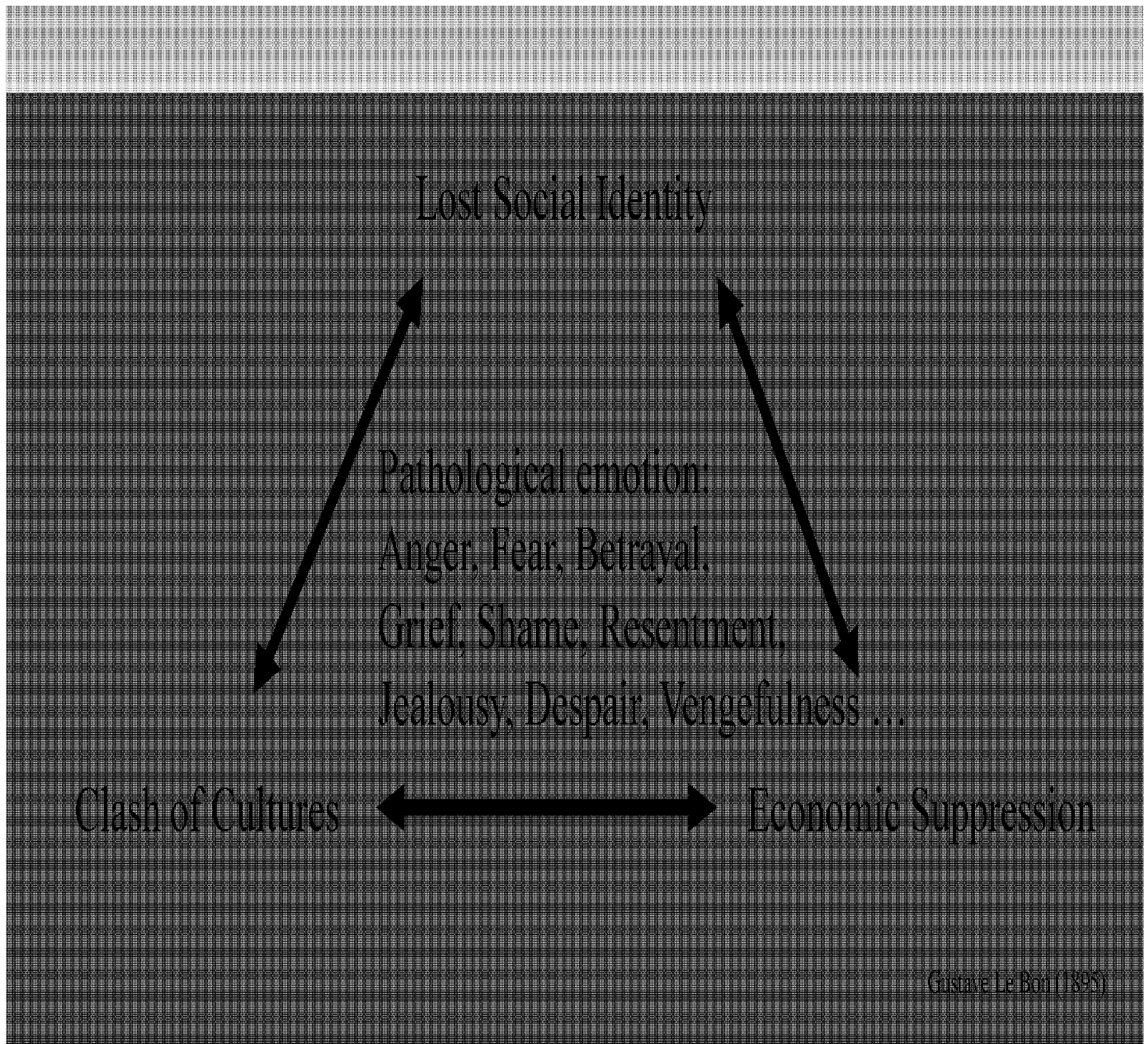
Groupthink

- **Occurs when:**
 - Highly cohesive group
 - Isolation from alternative sources of information
 - Leader clearly favors a particular option
- **Produces**
 - Pressure to uniformity
 - Moral superiority
 - Rationalizing away any information that does not fit with the decision

Groupthink



Excuses for intolerance



Group Dynamics: Conformity



Group Dynamics: Polarization

Groups May Become

Polarized when there are multiple "men of words" or "men of action", and as they do they often fragment...

Gray: Students became more extreme in their attitudes and beliefs

Group Dynamics: Polarization

Evolution of Palestinian Resistance Groups:

Fatah (formed 1957)

Popular Front for the Liberation of
Palestine (formed 1967)

Abu Nidal Organization (formed 1974)

Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS)
(formed 1987)

Group Dynamics: Polarization

***Law Enforcement
Opportunity****

*Groups may turn on each
other*

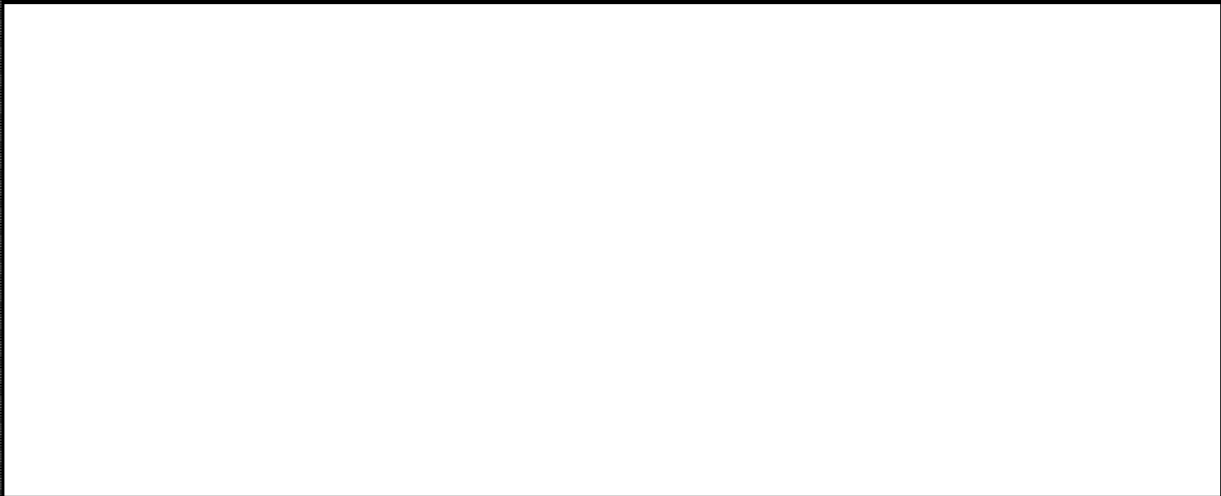
**Government response might be to encourage this action!
Proved effective against the Black Panther Party...*



b7E



b7E



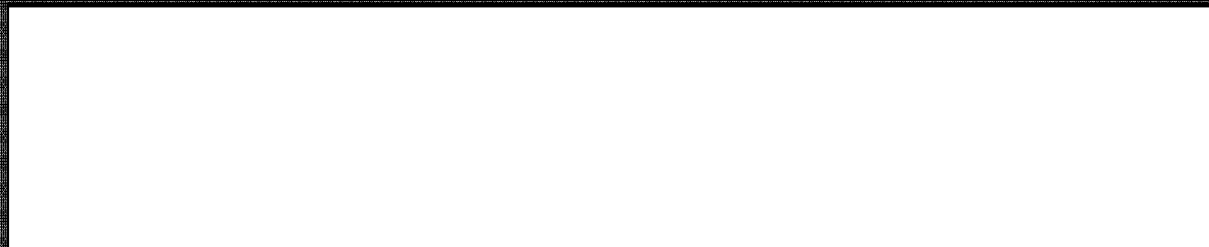
b7E



b7E



b7E



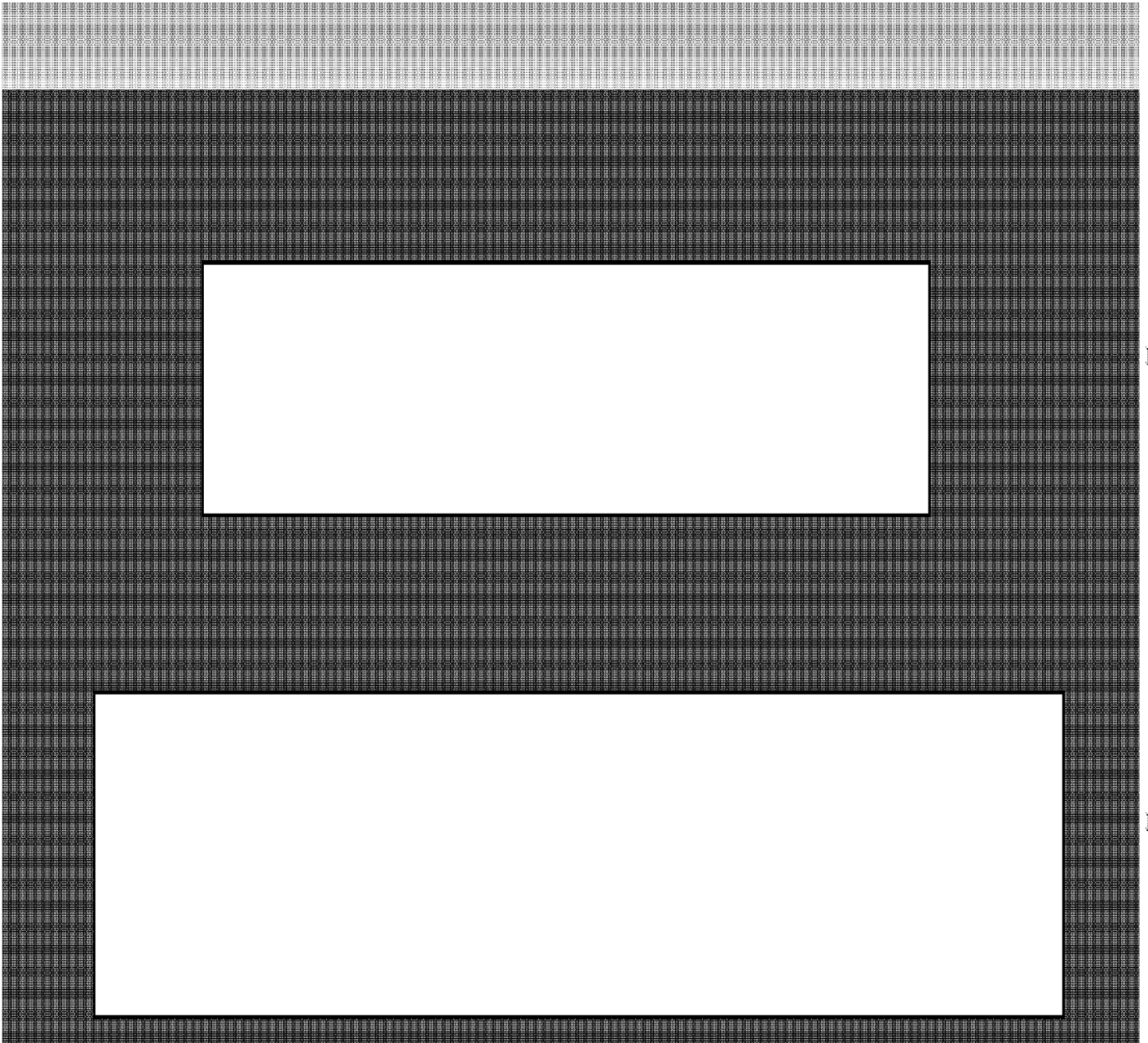
b7E



b7E



b7E



b7E

b7E

Assessment tool

Group Analysis Protocol

Government response strategy (Exploitation)

Understanding Groups: Group Analysis Protocol

“The Group Analysis Protocol provides an analytical tool for group analysis whereby many of the pertinent characteristics of any type of group can be identified in order to maximize understanding, prediction and interpersonal relationships.”

Understanding Groups:

Group Analysis Protocol Exercise



Understanding Groups:

Group Analysis Protocol Exercise



Understanding Groups:

Group Analysis Protocol Exercise



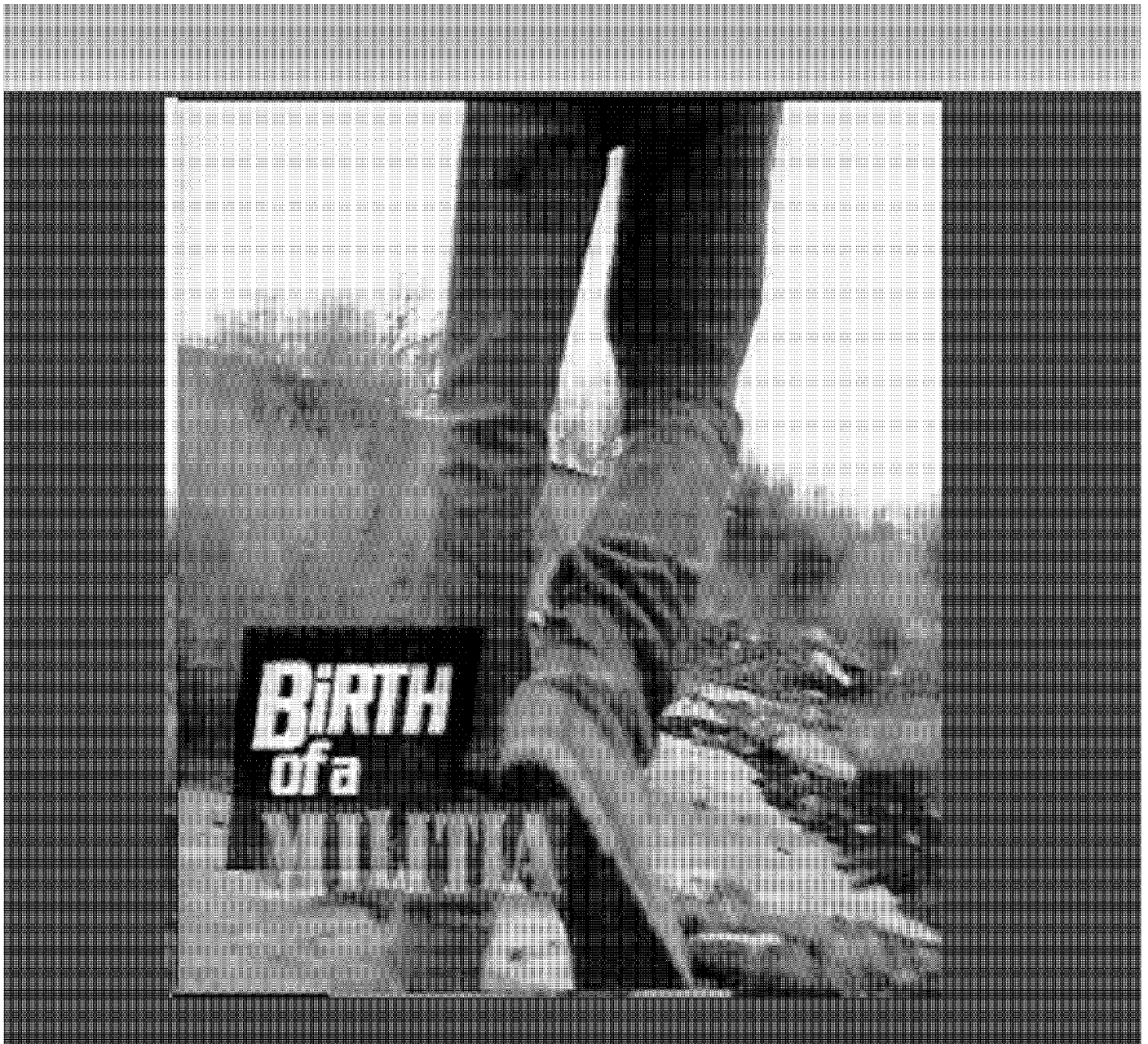
Understanding Groups:

Group Analysis Protocol Exercise



Understanding Groups:

Group Analysis Protocol Exercise



Understanding Groups:

Group Analysis Protocol Exercise



Understanding Groups:

Group Analysis Protocol Exercise



Questions????