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Understanding the Mindset & Dynamics of Violent Mass Movements




Behavioral Science Unit

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DATE: 05-24-2012
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Where do terrorists come from?

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Learning Points



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Use of media and media theory to
develop the fledgling true believer

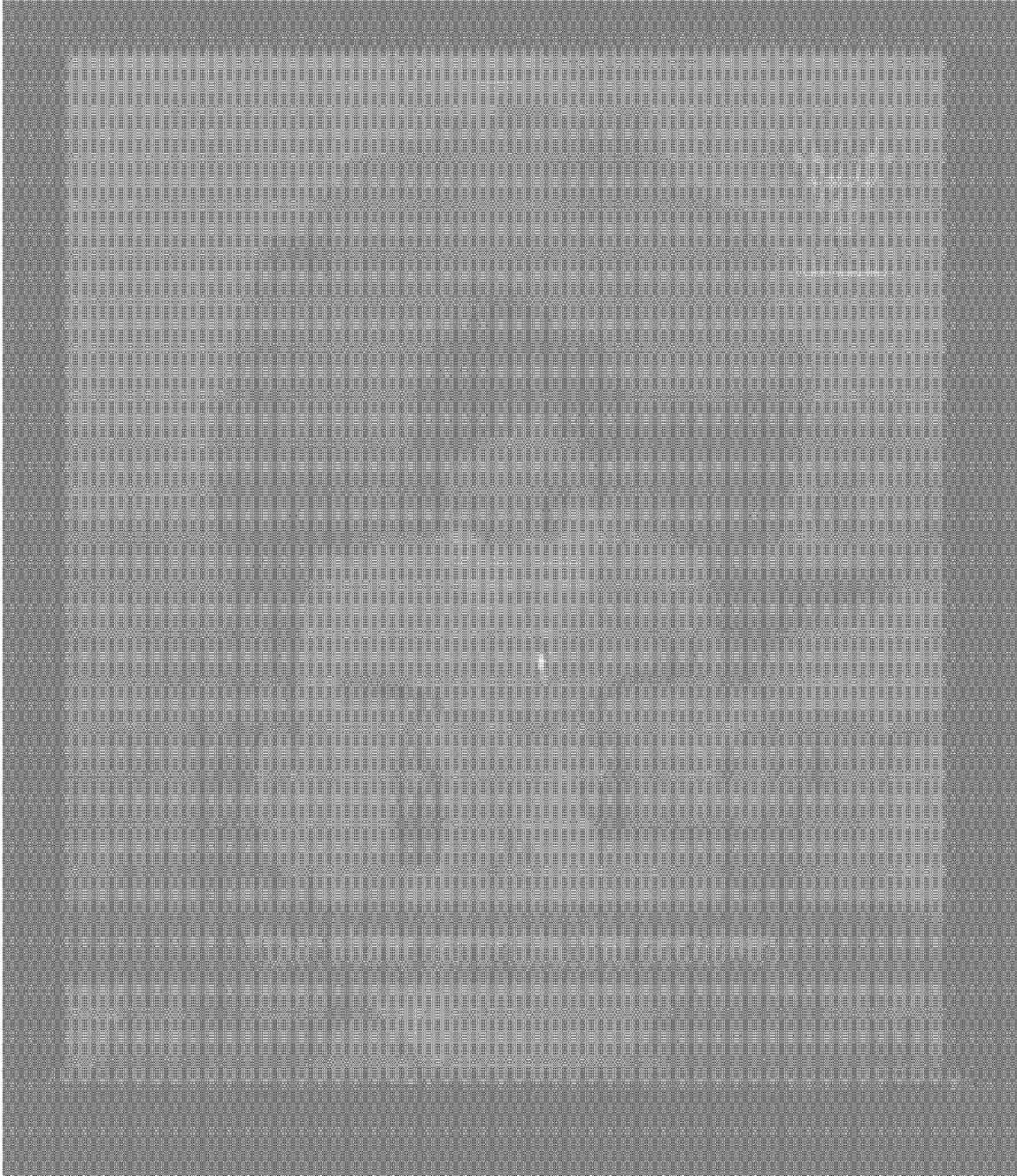
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Social/cultural model

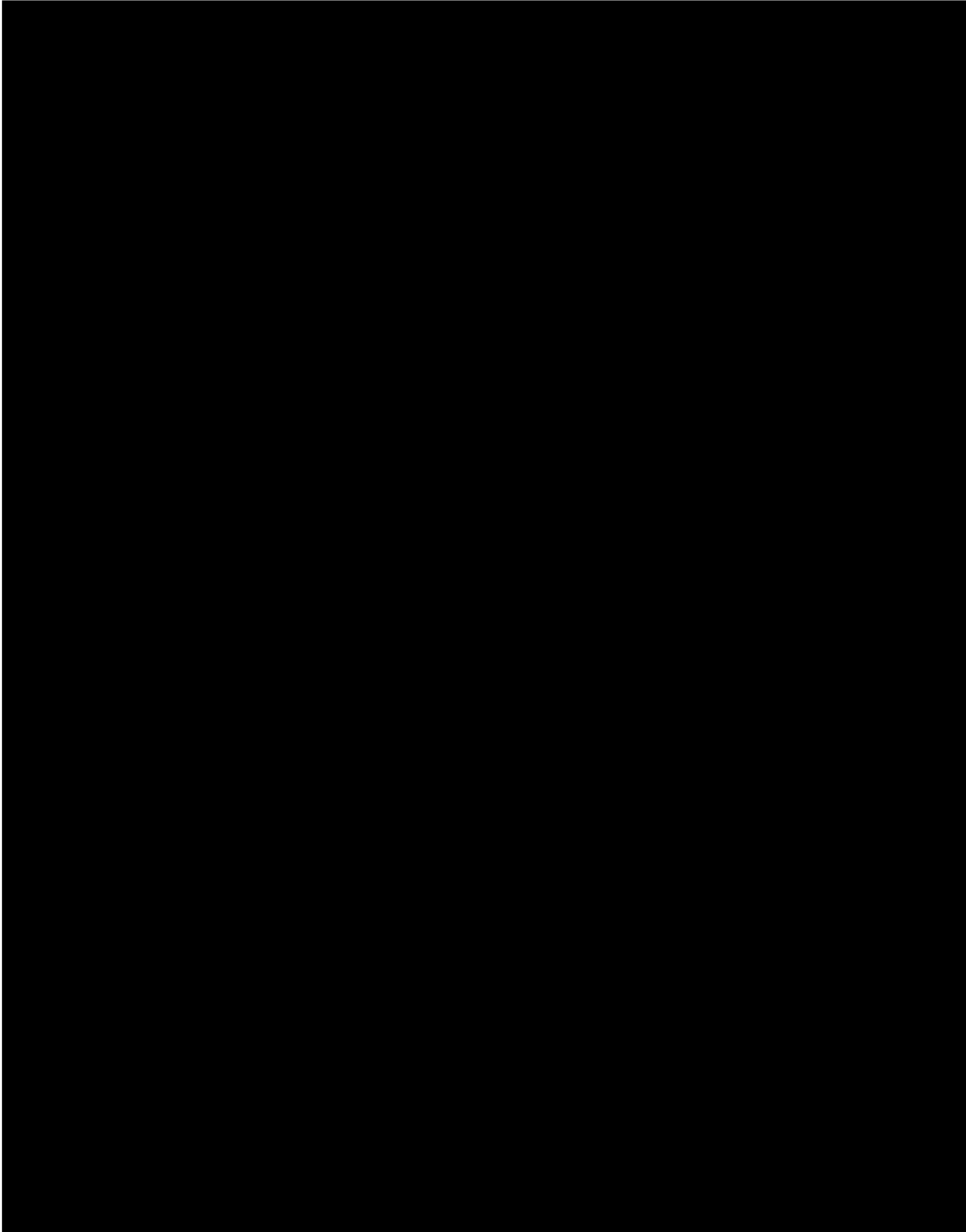


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Psychodynamic and social/cultural models

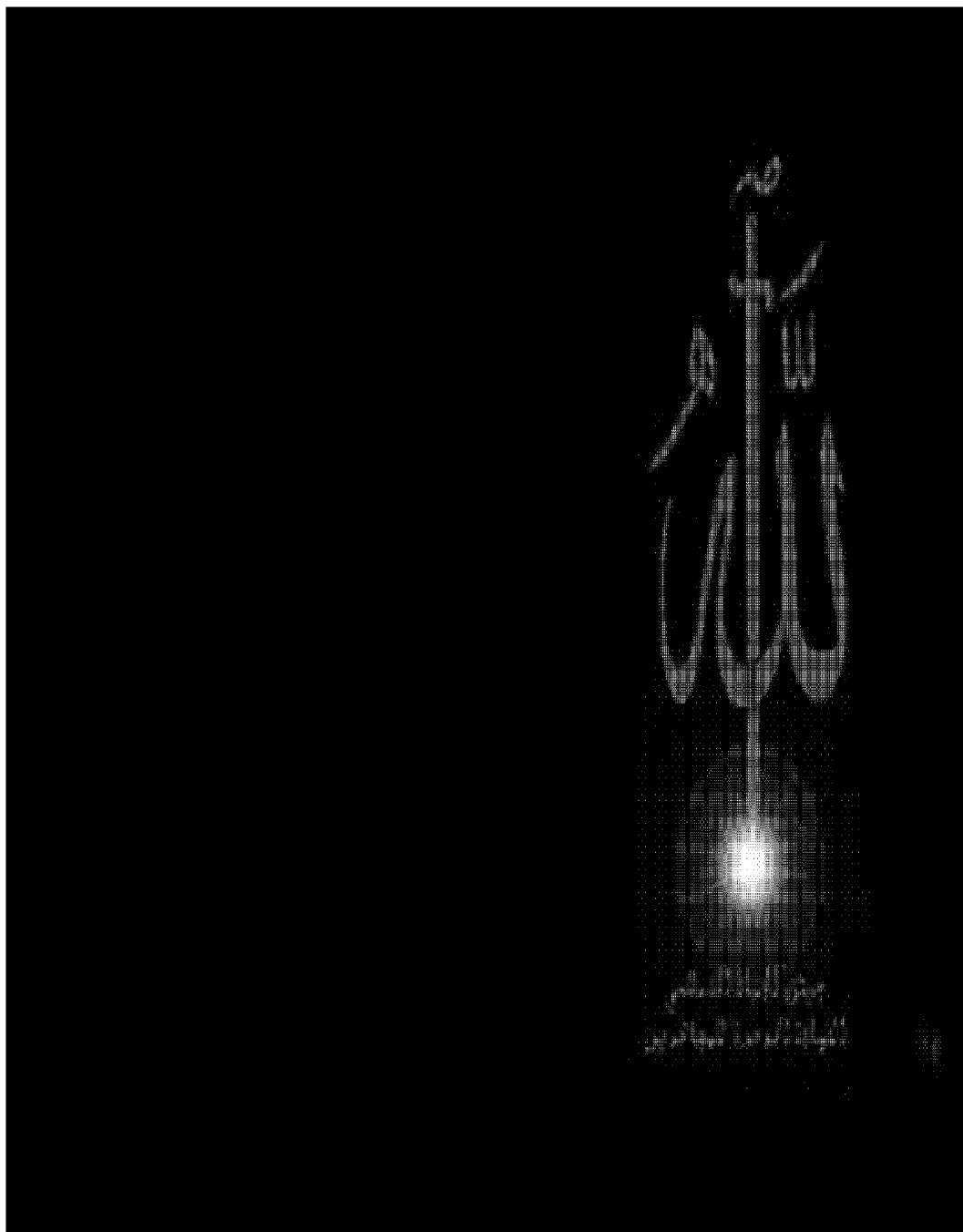


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Value Model



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Violent Mass Movements, group dynamics and isolation (group think)

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Group think and isolation



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Mindset of a terrorist and violent true believers

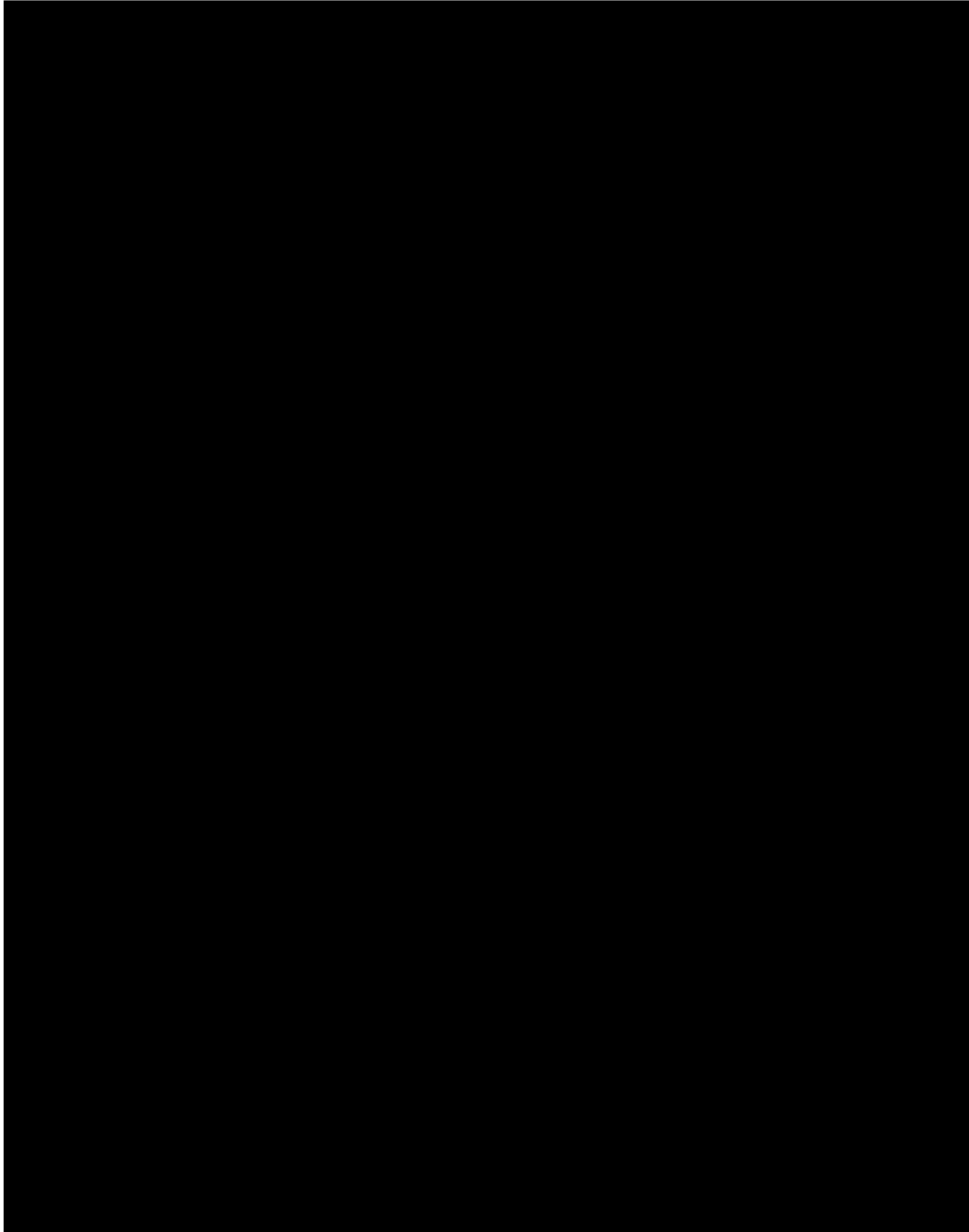
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If “learned” can behavior be “un-learned?”



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Briefing Points

- Individual Radicalization
 - Personality
 - Mind-set
 - Attitude
 - Behavior
- Structures of Groups
 - Social Networks
 - Hierarchies
- Group Dynamics
 - Roles of Leader, Activist Operators, Idealists
 - Obedience
 - Loyalty
 - Isolation
 - Levels of belief

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Learning Points

- Government Response – maintaining the Social Contract
 - Strategy – Identify, infiltrate, neutralize and/or disrupt
 - Good policing = good analysis
 - Domain assessments
 - Intuitive led policing
 - Intelligence led policing
 - Categories of methods
 - Assimilation
 - Exploitation
 - Suppression and Containment
 - Political Violence Matrix

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Terrorist paradox

- In order to fund their “cause” they often have to engage in criminal acts that would cause them to hide their identity and location but they also must be “known” to their supporters and recruits.
- Often the group will operate as a political arm for recruitment, peaceful protest, fund raising, and political leverage, and a “military arm” for intimidation, criminal fund raising, and to provoke a government response.

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Individual Radicalization

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Individual Radicalization Determinants 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, flight or fight...

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Development of a an individual mindset

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- **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.

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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.
- Influenced by one's "capacity of knowledge" or the training (formal and informal), experiences, and education... can feed since of "absolute truth" or cognitive bias.

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Attitude

- Attitudes are either:
 - ❖ Positive – favorable towards an attitude issue or object
 - ❖ Negative – unfavorable towards an attitude issue or object
 - ❖ Ambivalent - simultaneously possess a positive and a negative bias towards the attitude issue or object in question.
 - ❖ Neutral – has no feelings at all toward the attitude issue or object

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True believer's attitude

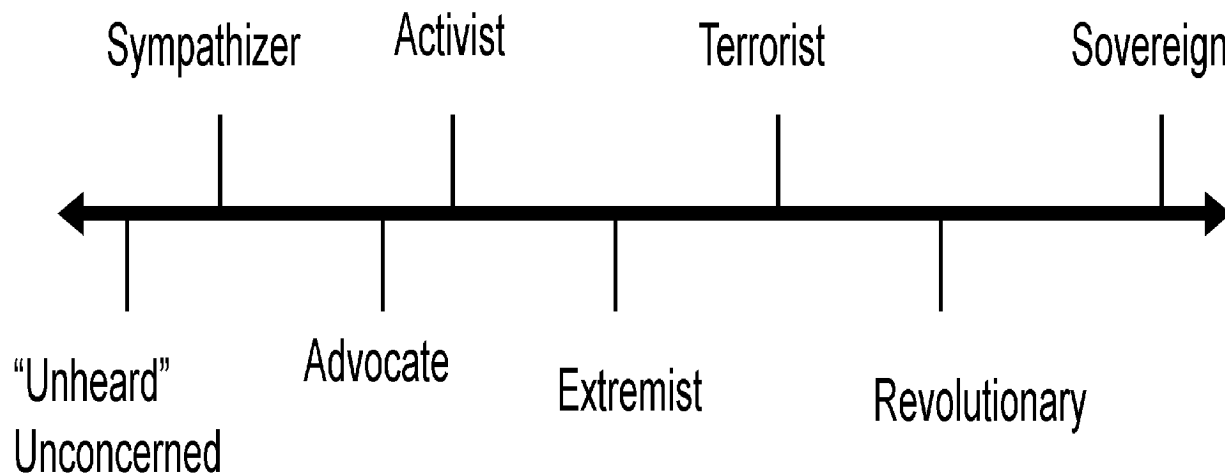
- **Attitude** represents an individual's like or dislike for an item. Attitudes are positive, negative, ambivalent, or neutral views of an "attitude object."
- Attitudes comes from judgments. Attitudes develop on the **ABC** model (affect, behavioral change and cognition). Most attitudes in individuals are a result of *observational learning* from their environment. The link between attitude and behavior exists but depends on human behavior, some of which is irrational. For example, a person who has a "pro-life" attitude may also be willing to kill an 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.

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Violent mass movement continuum



(A. Bringuel, 2001)

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Developing the mindset

- ...so in order to maintain the “true believer mindset” the movement requires either positive or negative anchors.
- A charismatic leader who provides constant positive/negative emotional anchors, positive actions by true believers (positive anchors), and/or overreaching government response that further alienates the population (negative anchors).

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Developing the mindset

- often times the leader (“Men of Words”) will use “magical thinking,” and “groupthink” to develop the individual's mind-set.
- ... 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... [redacted] 2006) ... Eric Hoffer called it “make believe” in that the killing behavior becomes ritualistic, ceremonial, even theatrical ... (Hoffer, 1951)
- ... this particularly effective when the individual's personality allows for “psychological splitting.” [redacted]

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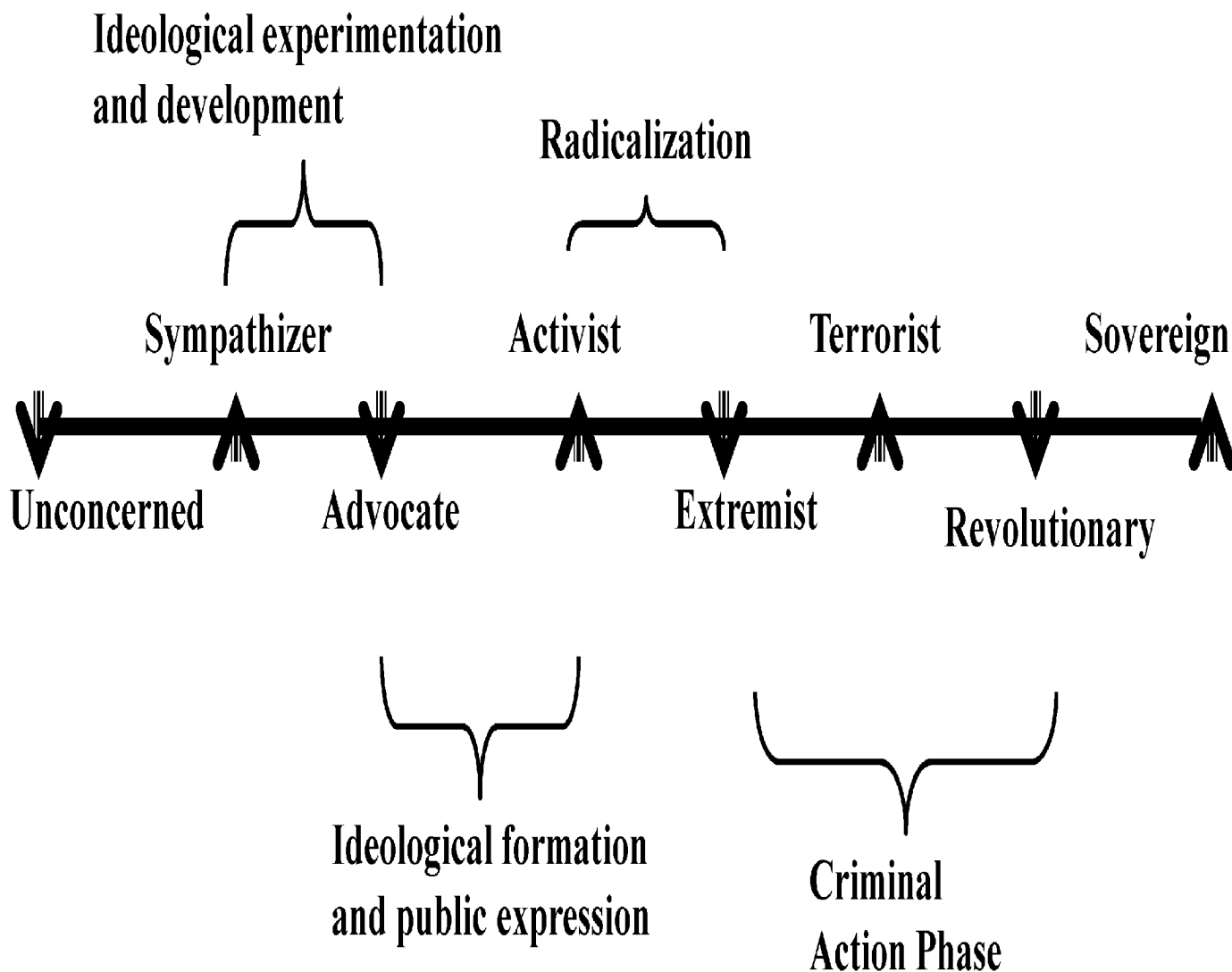
1992)

Developing the mindset

- Processes – Biographical triggers...
 - External influences
 - Social Groups
 - Individuals
 - Events
 - Internal processes
 - Personality/Biology
 - Mindset/Schemas
 - Attitudes

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Violent mass movement continuum individual radicalization



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Environmental factors

Group Structures and Dynamics

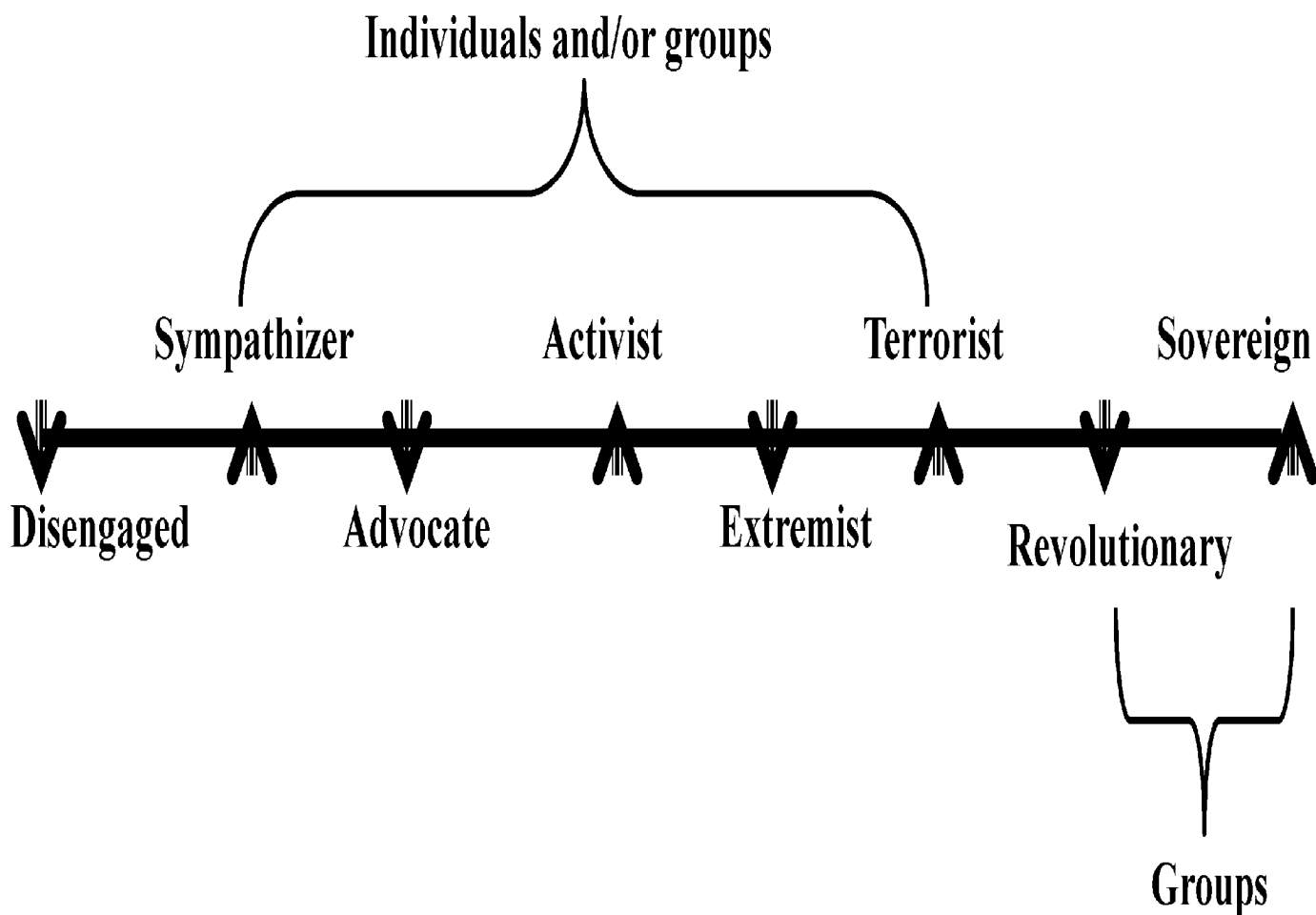
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Violent mass movement continuum

Individuals/groups



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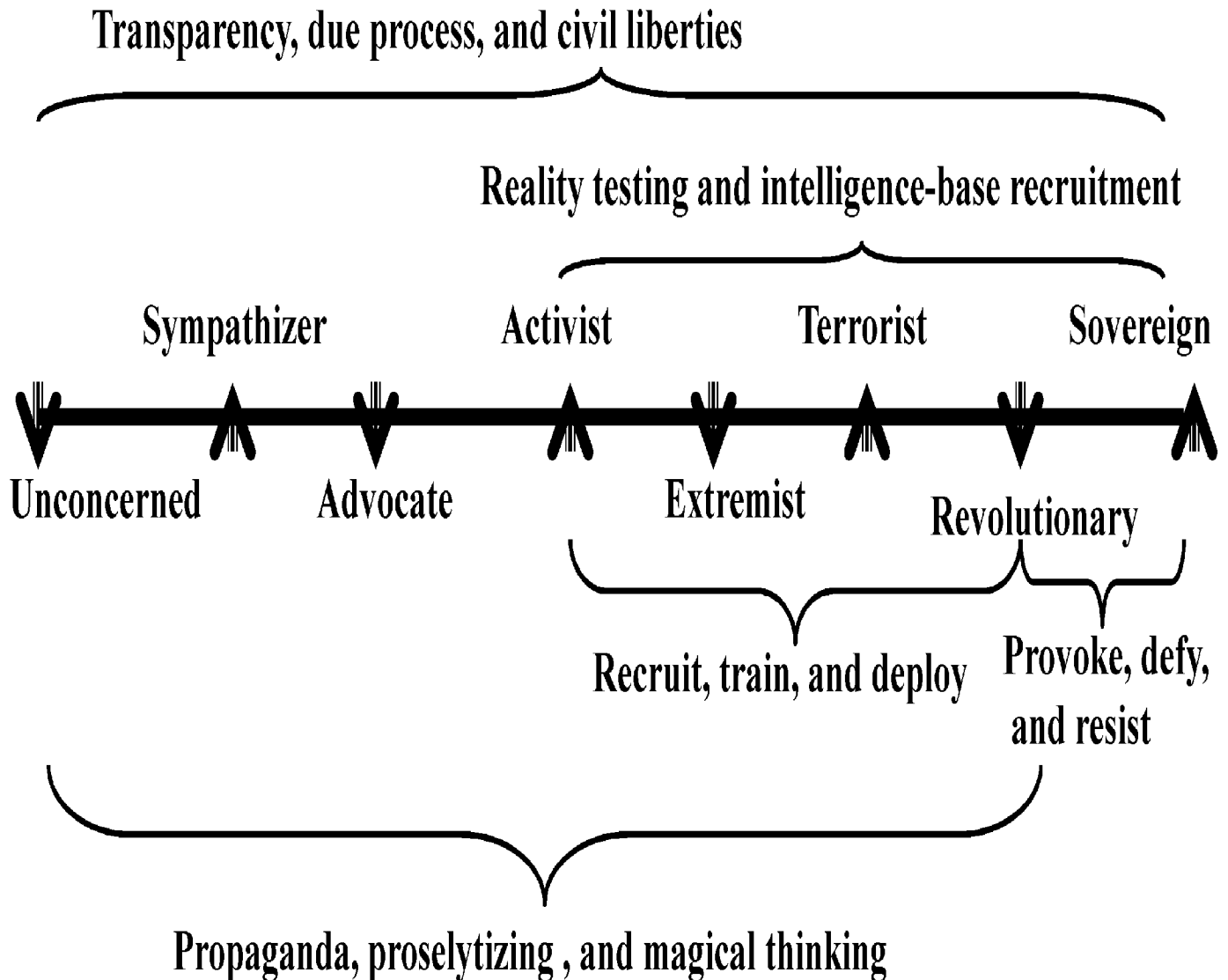
Why Join a Group?

- Goal attainment and task performance
- Satisfy social needs

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Violent mass movement continuum recruitment and action

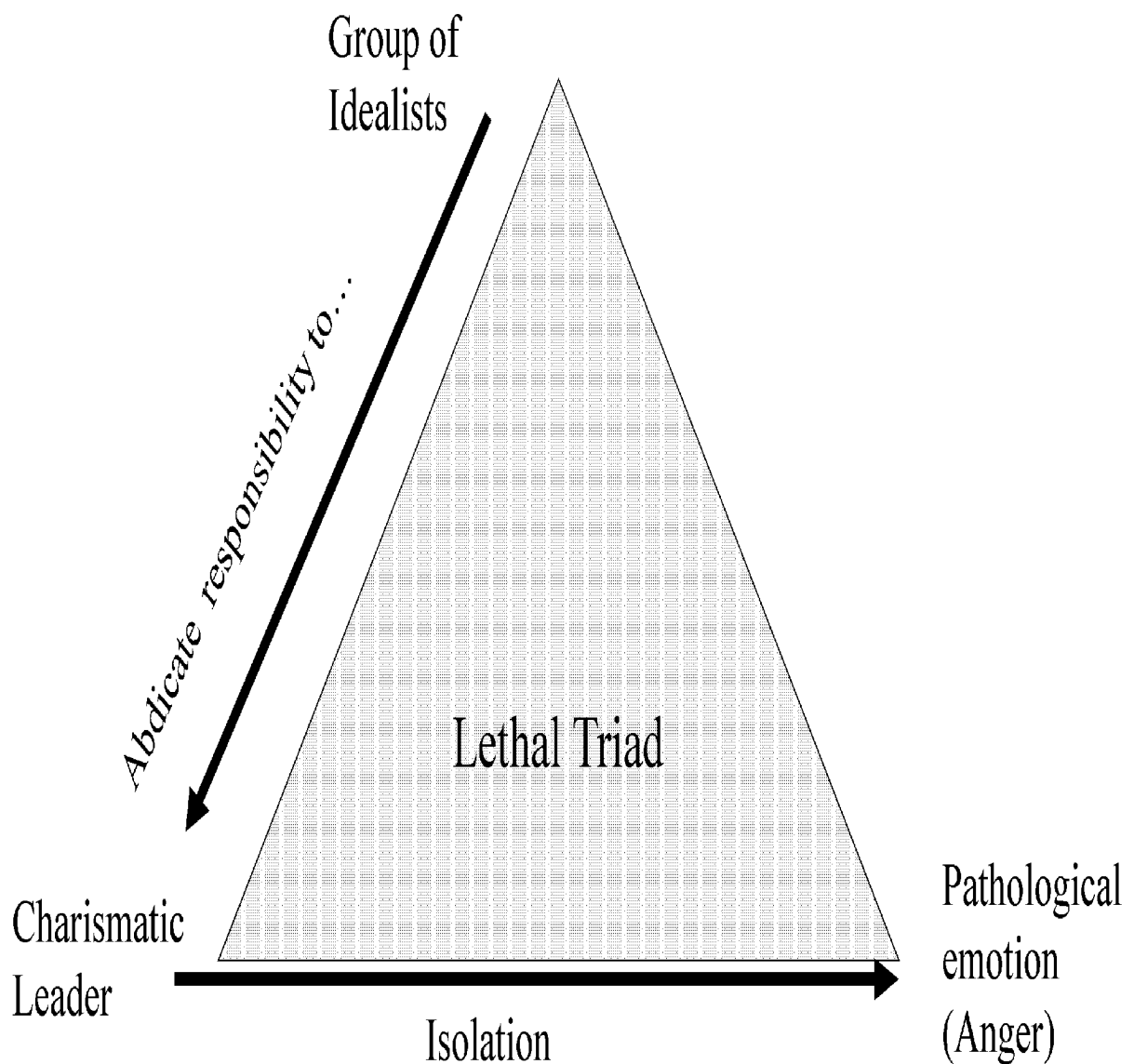


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Groupthink



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Group Dynamics: Polarization

Groups May Become

***polarized as they
become extreme &
paranoid***

**Gray: Students became more extreme in their
attitudes and beliefs**

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Government Response

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Governments' response tactics -

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Governments' response tactics -



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- Freedom of press use of media
- Free (multi-party) democratically held elections
 - Opposition party running for political office
- Unrestricted use of Internet
- Free press and right to publish and own books
- Freedom of expression in movies
- Freedom of expression in music
- Free of assembly for peaceful march
- Meetings between law enforcement and activists
- Prosecutor negotiates plea agreement.

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Attorney General Guidelines on General Crimes, Racketeering Enterprise, and Domestic Security/ Terrorism Investigations

- Guidelines for initiating FBI DT investigation.
- Policy to insure the protection of individual rights and that investigations are confined to matters of legitimate law enforcement interests.

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