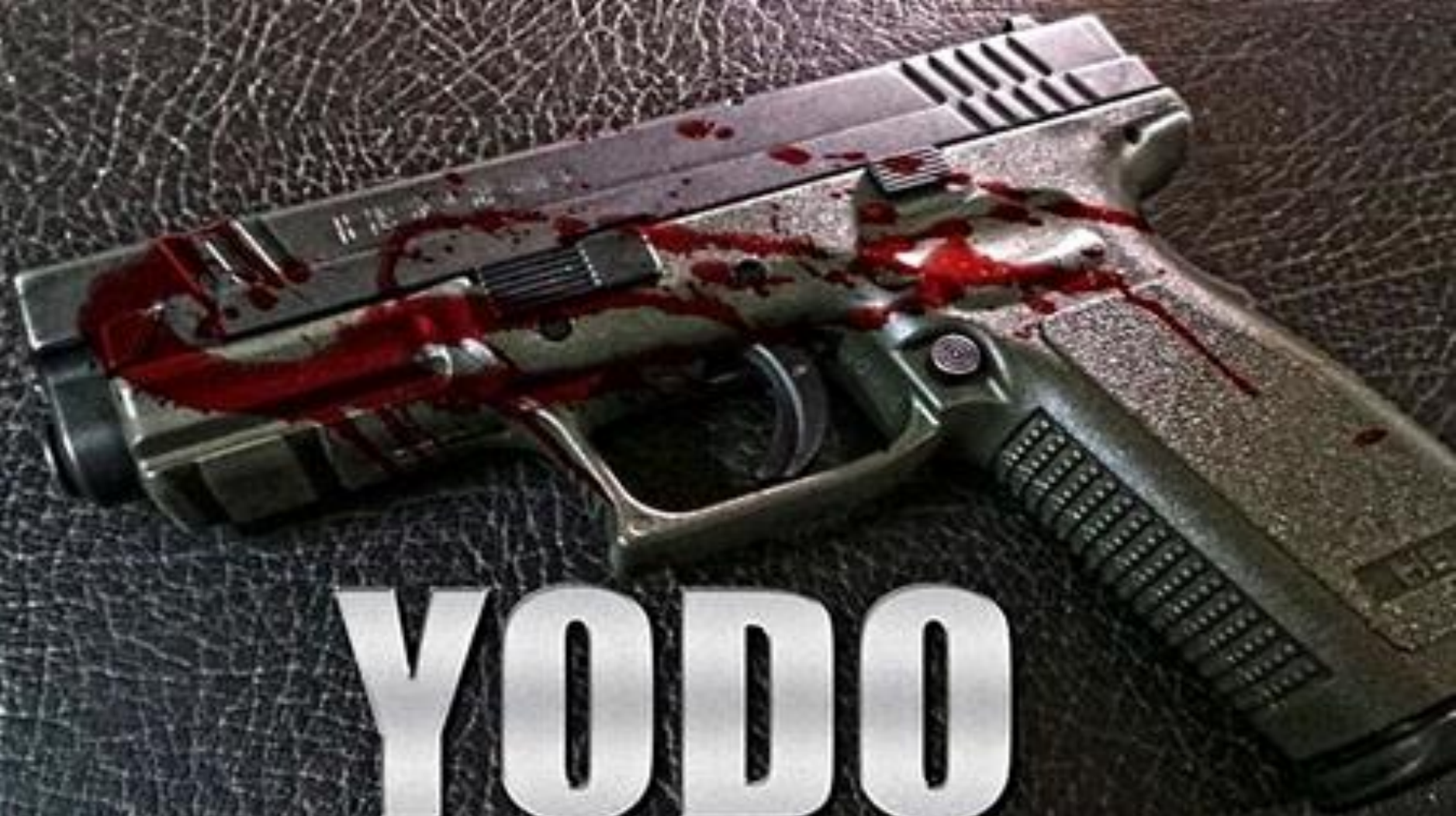


Eve Binks & Neil Ferguson
Liverpool Hope University

Terrorism and Radicalization: Understanding Processes of Conversion



YODO

YOU ONLY DIE ONCE
WHY NOT MAKE IT MARTYRDOM

Common Antecedent Factors



- Perceived injustice
- Age & gender
- Past family involvement
- Community support
- Coercion / conscription
- Incremental process of involvement
- Vengeance / need to right wrongs
- Identification with armed group
- Experience of 'critical incident'
- Trauma and dissociation
- Opportunity

Antecedent Factors in Narratives

- Perceived Injustice

“Repeated detention and interrogation by security services would have ended up making [Mohammed Emwazi] susceptible to radicalisation” (Cage, 2015)

“I could see that there was no justice in this country [South Africa]. So I foresaw the reason for me to be really active, more than before” (Brett & Specht, 2004)

Antecedent Factors in Narratives

- Community Support / Family Involvement

“I was just for supporting a member of my family, and for the sake of kinship relationship I joined to war”
(Brett & Specht, 2004)

“The idols among our community shot up because they stood for something that the working class people could verbalise. As soon as your parents, and the priest at the altar, and your teacher are saying “These men are good men. They are fighting a just thing here,” it filters down quickly that these people are important and whatever they say must be right” (Burgess et al., 2005)

Antecedent Factors in Narratives

- Critical Incident

“And I thought, “That’s my fence-sitting days over” and I joined the UVF. And there’s so many stories like that where you talk to Republicans and Loyalists and you find out there was a moment. There was a moment when they crossed the Rubicon.” (Burgess et al., 2005)

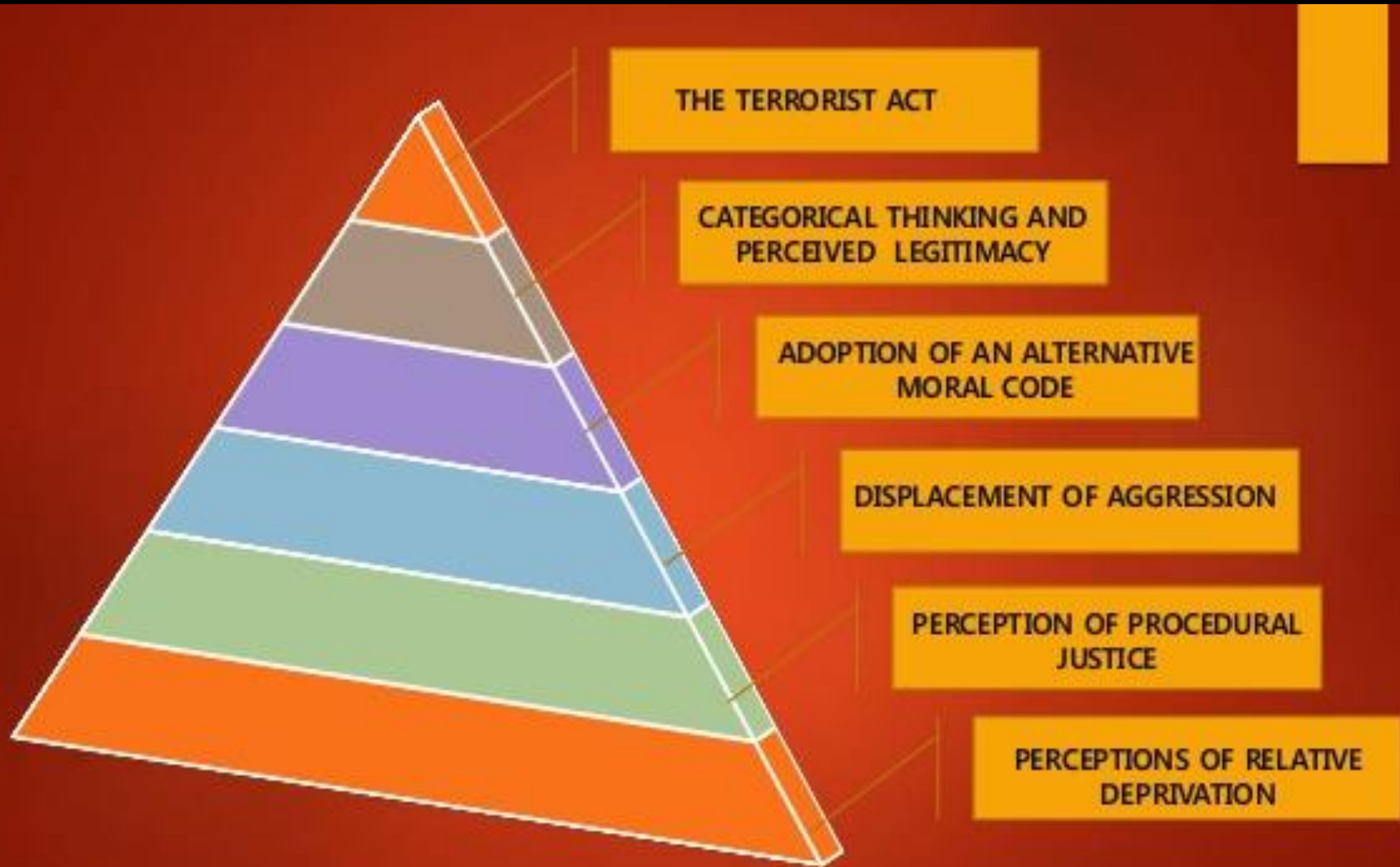
Antecedent Factors in Narratives

- Trauma & Dissociation

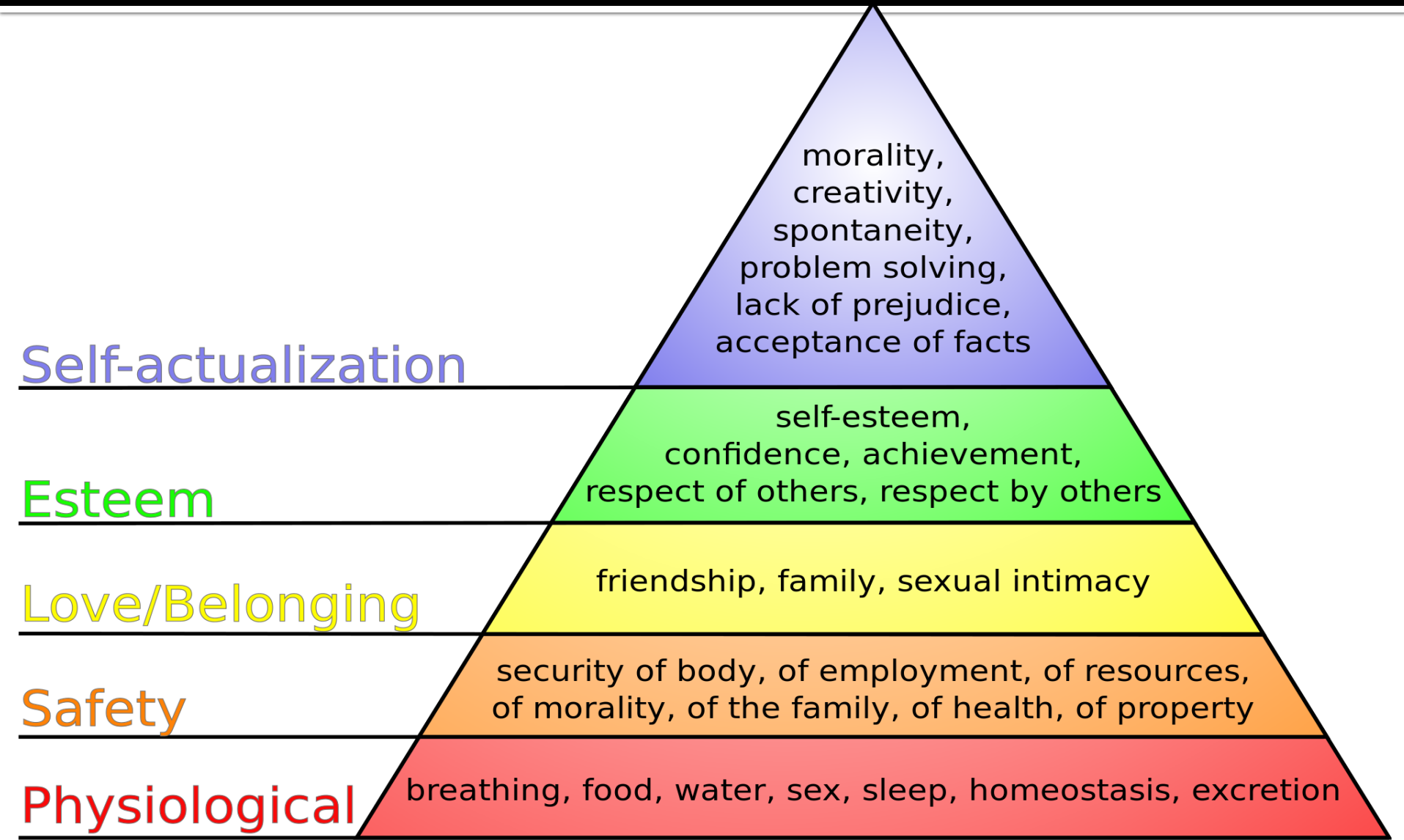
“I should have done something... I should have stopped him. I should go and kill him now.”

“It should be [his Uncle] standing here taking this beating. Yes, I stole some items from a store. But [Uncle] stole something far greater from me and [my cousin]. Yet he will never pay for the terrible violations he did to us.” (Speckhard & Shaikh, 2014)

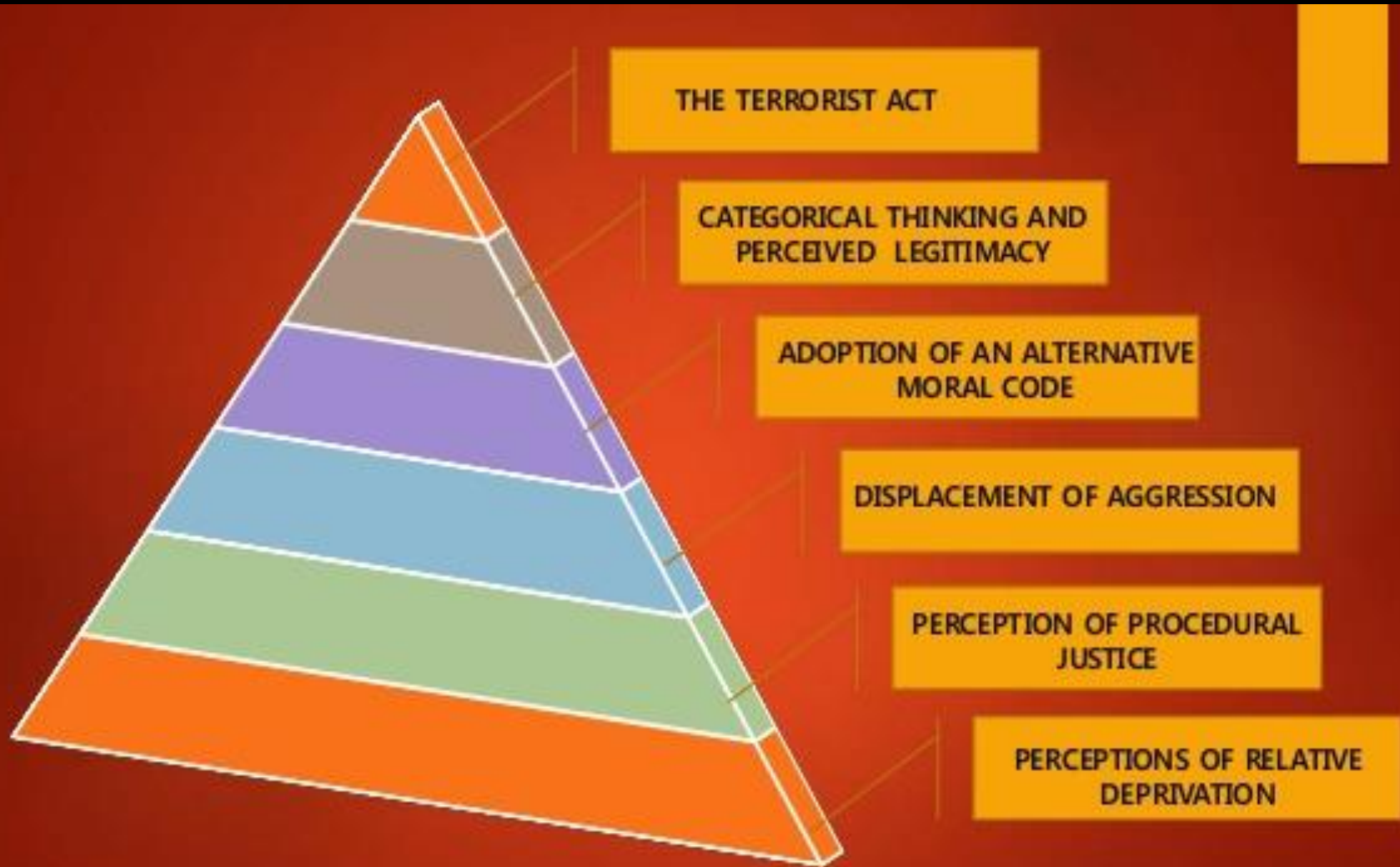
Staircase Models of Terrorism



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Staircase Models of Terrorism



Religious Conversion

- One of the longest studied topics within psychology (James, 1902).
- Complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon (Hood, et al, 1996).
- A transformational process by which a person goes from believing , adhering to, and/or practicing one set of religious teachings or spiritual values to believing, adhering to, and/or practicing a different set (Paloutzian, 2005).
- This change takes place in a 'dynamic force field' of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations and experiences (Paloutzian, et al., 1999).

Religious Conversion

- Research tends to follow social-cognitive or psychoanalytical approaches, employs a mixture of methodologies, but promotes the use of narrative analysis.
- But like research in terrorism the studies suffer usual weaknesses, cross sectional, no systematic program of research and retrospective (Paloutzian, Richardson and Rambo, 1999)
- Research points to a to several major types of conversion experiences (Lofland & Skonovd, 1981).

Conversion Motifs (Lofland & Skonovd, 1981)

- Intellectual
 - Self radicalization. The individual investigates new alternative beliefs initially in isolation, then with social involvement.
- Mystical
 - Road to Damascus. Involves critical moments, seemingly sudden onset, observable change in behaviour post event.
- Experimental
 - Gradual involvement. Genuine conversion (e.g. identity, behaviour, ideological change) develops later post engagement through socialization with the movement.

Conversion Motifs (Lofland & Skonovd, 1981)

- Affectional
 - Interpersonal bonds. Personal attachments play an important role in fuelling participation.
- Revivalist
 - The ideologue and crowd effect. Use of gatherings to facilitate conversion and influence individuals through social pressure, fear, guilt and joy to join.
- Coercive
 - Coercive persuasion. Requires the total control of the 'prisoner' (e.g. Torture, isolation, exhaustion, humiliation) until they see the light, followed by friendship and guidance.

Other Key Factors

- A convert can experience a combination of routes into the movement
 - British Muslim Converts (Köse & Loewenthal, 2000).
- Parental conflict
 - Repressed hostility towards authority (Freud, 1950).
- Identity and identity crisis / conflict
 - Adolescence is a ripe time for conversion.
 - Middle is also related to change (extraverted to introverted).
 - Identity theories and attribution theory are important theoretical lens
- Stress and trauma
 - Converts report more stress and trauma and report events as more traumatic than non-converts (Ullman, 1982, 1989).
- Relative Deprivation Theory
 - Religious conversion could be an egoistic response to relative deprivation.

Integrative Stage Model of Conversion

- Rambo (1993)
 - Context
 - Crisis
 - Quest
 - Encounter
 - Interaction
 - Commitment
 - Consequences

Integrative Model of Conversion (Rambo, 1993)

Stages of Conversion Process	Factors to be Evaluated	Links to Radicalization Process
1. Context	Historical, religious, social, cultural & personal factors which facilitate /constrain conversion	Antecedent factors, history of perceived injustice, familial / community support, trauma, etc.
2. Crisis	Personal +/- social disruption that stimulates quest	Critical incident
3. Quest	Intentional engagement with crisis and its resolution	Critical incident aftermath leads to need for change
4. Encounter	Recognition of new movement	Recognition of alternative to status quo

Integrative Model of Conversion (Rambo, 1993)

Stages of Conversion Process	Factors to be Evaluated	Links to Radicalization Process
5. Interaction	Extended engagement, at many levels, between convert and movement	Meaningful and deliberate interactions with the movement. Often incremental.
6. Commitment	Construct new identity and become a valid member of the movement	Identity construction and (often incremental) assimilation into the movement
7. Consequences	Consolidation of experiences, identities and commitments leads to conversion	Consolidation of identity leads to an intention to act.

Implications

- Researching motifs should allow us to increase our understanding of the phenomena of engagement or radicalization.
- Explore how social-political settings lead to different motif usage.
- Explore how movement ideology influences motif usage.
- Explore if there is a fit between the person and the movement they join.

Relevant Publications / Presentations

- Ferguson, N. & Binks, E. (2015) Understanding Radicalization and engagement in terrorism through religious conversion motifs. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 8, 1, 16-26.
- Ferguson, N. & Binks, E. (2015) Briefing to JIOCEUR (the Joint Intelligence Operations Centre Europe), United States European Command, Defense Intelligence Agency, INTERPOL, EUROPOL and the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre. The briefing took place at RAF Molesworth.
- Binks, E. & Ferguson, N. (2013) Terrorism and radicalisation: Understanding processes of conversion. Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society. Chicago, Il., USA, October.
- Ferguson, N. & Binks, E. (2013) Exploring Radicalization through Religious Conversion Motifs. International Society of Political Psychology, Herzliya, Israel, July.