



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

UPPSALA University
Department of theology
Psychology of Religion, Master thesis, 30 ECTS-credits
Autumn semester, 2016
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The Army of God

– An examination of religiously motivated violence from a psychology of religion perspective.

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine psychological processes that can contribute to religiously motivated violence from a psychology of religion perspective in relation to the collective meaning-system of the Christian militant anti-abortion movement the Army of God. The study applied a single-case design and the data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 3 prominent figures within Army of God, as well as through 43 qualitative documents and 4 autobiographical books. The collected data was analyzed through a deductive approach, implementing the concept of sanctification, social identity theory, selective moral disengagement, and the Staircase to Terrorism model. The results show that the collective meaning-system of the Army of God can be understood as a form of religious fundamentalism that acts as a frame that binds the members together, and from which social categorization and group identification can induce acts of violence. The results also demonstrate that abortion is perceived as a grave injustice and destruction of something sacred, and how it leads to a moral outrage and aggression by constituting a threat towards one's social identity. This threat moves the individuals towards a 'black-and-white' and 'the ends justify the means' mentality. The act of violence is further prompted by a perceived duty from God and facilitated by a dehumanization of the perceived enemy. The findings of the study address the need of primary empirical data in the psychological research of violent extremism. Furthermore, it brings further knowledge regarding religiously motivated violence and leaderless resistance by taking into account the search for significance and sacred values. In contrast to previous research the current study also demonstrates that a leader or a well-structured group is not necessarily a key factor when explaining religiously motivated violence from a social psychological perspective. This can contribute to the theoretical understanding regarding social identity and a collective meaning-making in relation to violent extremism and lone-wolf terrorism.

Key words: religiously motivated violence, social identity, sacred values, meaning-system, anti-abortion, religious fundamentalism, selective moral disengagement, staircase to terrorism

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Background

Religions are a significant feature of human life, both historically and in the contemporary world. They are an integral part of numerous aspects of the human existence, and many behaviors are performed in the name of religion. They constantly capture our attention through reports of conflicts between religious groups or secular and religious traditions. Religions are also an influential factor in shaping different aspects of people's lives by acting as a powerful social and political force in debates ranging from abortions and contraception, to the decision to wage wars. In short, religions continue to hold a powerful influence and importance over a great number of people in the contemporary world (Hood, Hill & Spilka, 2009; Pargament, Mahoney, Exline, Jones & Shafranske, 2013; Sander & Andersson, 2015; Silberman 2005a). Throughout history, religions have inspired people to an altruistic behaviour and furthered social justice. Simultaneously, religions have been involved in various acts of terrorism and wars throughout the world (Juergensmeyer, Kitts & Jerryson, 2013; Lindgren, 2009; Silberman, 2005b). Why do people commit these acts of violence in the name of religion? How can we understand the psychological processes behind their behavior? These questions are ever-present as we witness news of religiously motivated violence on a daily basis. This thesis will examine this issue from a psychological perspective in order to grasp the processes that may motivate one to commit these acts of violence.

Before we continue, it must be emphasized that religions do not have an inherent tendency towards violence. The discussion about religion and violence often implies a theoretical distinction between a 'secular' and 'religious' violence, which is often inconsistent and fruitless (Cavanaugh, 2007). It presupposes not only a Western religious-secular dichotomy created during the modern era (Cavanaugh, 2007; Fitzgerald, 2007; King, 2007), but it also distracts our attention from violence carried out by, for instance, secular nation-states (Carlson, 2011, Cavanaugh, 2007). Furthermore, the notion that religions are prone to violence rests on an essentialization of religions that ignores how historical, economic, political and social conditions affect the behaviour of religious people (Lindgren, 2009). Ultimately, the discussion about religion as something violent or peaceful rests on the assumption that there exists an all-or-nothing answer. Contrary to this notion, religion is a multivalent phenomenon that can be both harmful and helpful. The critical question is thus how and when religions takes a destructive form, and not whether it is violent or peaceful (Pargament, Mahoney, Exline, Jones & Shafranske, 2013). That said, those forms that are destructive need to be examined so we can understand the psychological processes behind the violent acts in order to prevent them.

It is also important to keep in mind that religiously motivated violence and terrorism is a multidetermined and multidimensional phenomenon. The psychology and

motivations differ from group-to-group and amongst individuals, dependent upon context (Jones, 2008). Since no theoretical lens in itself can reveal the whole picture, this thesis should be viewed as one piece of a much greater puzzle.

Religious acts of violence and terrorism have previously been explored from a variety of psychological perspectives (see e.g. Jones, 2013a; 2008; Victoroff 2005 for a brief overview). However, no psychopathology or psychological characteristics have been found which separate the people committing these acts from the general population (Horgan, 2014; Jones, 2013a; Post, 2007; Sageman, 2008; Victoroff, 2005). Rather, it is the group processes and the emphasis on a collective identity that most adequately helps us understand the psychology behind these acts (Atran, 2010; Horgan, 2014; Kruglanski, Crenshaw, Post and Victoroff, 2007; Lindgren, 2009; Moghaddam, 2006; Moghaddam, Warren & Love, 2013; Post, 2007; Sageman 2008).

In this thesis I will examine the Christian terrorist and anti-abortion movement the Army of God. The movement is based in the U.S. and has carried out several bombings and shootings in their fight against abortion. Even though the movement has been active since the early 1980s, very little has been written about it (Jefferis, 2011). The movement is of importance since its ambiguous nature offers an insight into leaderless resistance and lone-wolf terrorism, which is a growing trend in contemporary terrorism (Sageman, 2008; Simon, 2013; Weimann, 2015). Moreover, it provides an opportunity to touch upon the dimension of sacred values that appears to be an important psychological factor in intergroup conflicts (Atran & Ginges, 2012; Ginges, Atran, Sachdeva & Medin, 2011; Sheikh, Ginges & Atran, 2013), but which has been often overlooked in previous research concerning violent extremism (Pargament, Mahoney, Shafranske, Exline & Jones, 2013). Finally, it is of further importance since religious acts of terrorism and armed conflicts have rapidly increased over the past decades (Philpott, 2013; Svensson, 2012).

1.1. Purpose and goal

The purpose of this case study is to examine how social psychological processes as well as processes of sacred values can contribute to religiously motivated violence. The aim is to identify and understand these psychological processes from a psychology of religion perspective in relation to the collective meaning-system of the Army of God.

1.2. Research question

How can we understand psychological processes that contribute to a religiously motivated violence from a psychology of religion perspective in the case of the Army of God? This research question is operationalized in the following sub questions:

- How can we understand the processes of sanctification and sacred values regarding religiously motivated violence in relation to the Army of God?

- How can we understand the social psychological processes that contribute to religiously motivated violence in relation to the Army of God?
- How can we understand the collective meaning-system of the Army of God in relation to religiously motivated violence?

1.3. Demarcation

This thesis will examine religiously motivated violence from a psychology of religion perspective. The discipline of psychology of religion is the scientific study of religious people's motivation, cognition and behavior. More specifically, its goal is to understand the mental processes involved in religious experiences, religious motivations, and religious behaviors applying methods and theories developed within general psychology (Hood, Hill & Spilka, 2009; Lindgren, 2009). Accordingly, psychology of religion is a relevant approach in understanding how religions can inspire acts of violence.

Since social influence and collective meaning-making is important in understanding religiously motivated violence (Moghaddam, Warren & Love, 2013; Rogers et al, 2007; Savage & Liht, 2008), I will apply social identity theory (Herriot, 2007) and Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism model (Moghaddam, 2005) to answer my research questions. Both have a social psychological approach and are supported by substantial empirical evidence (Herriot, 2007; Lygre, Eid, Larsson, & Ranstorp, 2011). As the collective meaning is important in understanding religiously motivated violence, I also intend to relate this study to a meaning-system approach which has been proposed as a promising starting point and overarching framework for the psychology of religion (Hood, Hill & Spilka, 2009; Paloutzian & Park, 2013). To examine the moral justifications used by the Army of God I will draw from Albert Bandura's theory of selective moral disengagement (Bandura, 2003). This theory is useful when investigating terrorist groups that make use of the Internet and publish online material (Weimann, 2006). In addition, there exists empirical evidence that support Bandura's theory (e.g., McAlister, Bandura & Owen, 2006; Osofsky, Bandura & Zimbardo, 2005). In order to touch upon the dimension of sacred values in conflicts, the thesis will relate to the process of sanctification (Jones 2013; Pargament & Mahoney, 2005).

This study is delimited to psychological processes related to the collective meaning-system of the Army of God. To get a picture of the collective meaning-system this thesis will examine texts and interviews from individuals that frequently articulate the ideology of the Army of God and/or are presented as "Anti-abortion Heroes of the Faith" or "Prisoners of Christ" on the Army of God website. These individuals can be viewed as prototypical (see 2.2.4. for more information) of the movement and thus express its core beliefs and values as well as represent its collective meaning-system.

1.4. Definition of terms

Before we proceed, key terms need to be clarified. Religion is for obvious reasons the most fundamental concept. In this thesis religion will be operationally defined

as a meaning-system focused on the “*search for significance in ways related to the sacred*” (Pargament, 1997, p. 32). Pargament’s definition of religion has important strengths. For example, it is relevant in relation to the Army of God since followers of different Western traditions, such as Christianity, easily understand the term sacred (Oman, 2013). In addition, the definition of religion as a search process is beneficial as it includes both a functional (i.e., what it does) and substantive (i.e., what it contains) approach. The functional component is the search for significance while the substantial component is the sacred (Pargament, 1997). Furthermore, the definition has the ability to differentiate between various degrees of internalization of quests for the sacred and avoids a polarization of religion as extrinsic versus intrinsic (Oman, 2013).

Another concept that needs to be clarified is *meaning-systems*. This will be understood as the:

Idiosyncratic system of beliefs that individuals construct about themselves, about others, about the world, and about their relation to the world. These beliefs or theories allow individuals to give meaning to the world around them and to their experiences, as well as to set goals, plan activities, and order their behaviour. (Silberman, 2005b, p. 530)

The advantage of this definition is that it highlights the individual's construction of the self as well as others while also emphasizing the meaning-making function of one’s belief system. The definition can therefore be related to the meaning-making framework and the social identity theory used in this thesis.

Besides meaning-systems there are also *collective meaning-systems* that can be described as the collective world-view relevant to a specific group. In this thesis the collective meaning-system is defined as meaning-systems that compose:

The “shared reality” of each group and can define the group’s very essence. More specifically, these collective meaning systems enable groups and group members to interpret their shared experiences including their historical and recent relations with other groups. [...] They can develop in both conscious and subconscious ways from culturally determined common experiences and through a variety of socialization processes. However, like individual meaning systems, and perhaps even more than them, once they are constructed collective meaning systems tend to be viewed within a given group as basic undisputable truths. (Silberman, 2005a, p. 649)

This definition provides a way to capture and analyze the material related to the ambiguous Army of God (see 1.6. for more information). In addition, it emphasizes a collective identity and can accordingly be integrated with Moghaddam’s Staircase to Terrorism and social identity theory. Moreover, it can be combined with the definition of *religion* and *religiously motivated violence* used in this thesis in order to touch upon the dimension of sacred values in conflicts.

Religious fundamentalism is also a key term in this thesis. This will be defined as: *a collective meaning-system focused on the search for significance in ways related to the sacred, featuring the characteristics of reactivity, selectivity, dualistic thinking and absolutism* (see 2.2.3. for more information).

These features (reactivity, selectivity, dualistic thinking, absolutism) will be understood in terms of family resemblance, i.e., they do not need to be present in all forms of religious fundamentalism but they are characteristic for most of them. By

extension, religious fundamentalism can also coincide with the broader category of violent extremism (see 2.2.3).

By building on the definition of religion this conceptualization of religious fundamentalism can include the process of sanctification. It can also be integrated with Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism and social identity theory since a collective meaning-system acts as a source of collective identity.

Another central concept is *religiously motivated violence*. I have chosen to use this term instead of religious terrorism, as the latter is a problematic concept. As James Jones (2008) points out, the usual cliché that 'one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter' highlights its contextual nature. It can be viewed as much as a subjective judgment as a descriptive statement about certain violent acts (Juergensmeyer, 2003). Moreover, it often functions as a depreciatory label that expresses condemnation, which can then be used to legitimize questionable state responses (Horgan, 2014). In addition, it is often difficult to distinguish terrorism from warfare conducted by states, as states have more frequently used terrorist tactics than small covert anti-state movements usually labeled terrorists (Horgan, 2014). While some general themes can be suggested (e.g. acts that inspire fear, are symbolic, directed against non-combatants, politically motivated), religion tends to further complicate the picture, blurring the distinction between combatants and non-combatants while not always emphasizing a political motive (Jones, 2008). This is also highlighted by Ginges, Atran, Sachdeva and Medin (2011), who point out that research about sacred values in intergroup conflicts challenge the usual assumption that terrorism and violent extremism is largely and often driven in an instrumentally rational manner (i.e., politics by other means). Jones himself suggests that religious terrorism can be defined as the "use of violence, often in symbolic but deadly actions, in the service of sacred goals or values" (Jones, 2008, p. 27). Although I consider this working definition of religious terrorism useful, I believe that it is better suited as a definition of religiously motivated violence since it does not include the features that are usually related to terrorism (see Horgan, 2014). However, by focusing on a "deadly action" the definition overlooks religious violence that is not primarily intended to be fatal. The definition used in this thesis will thus incorporate Lindgren's (2009) view that an act of violence can be characterized as religious when it is legitimized by an individual or group based on a religious meaning-system. Furthermore, in this thesis the word *violence* is limited to the deliberate and direct infliction of serious psychological or mental injury on another person, individuals, and/or objects. Hence I will draw from Jones (2008) and Lindgren (2009) and use my own operational definition of religiously motivated violence, which defines it as: *the use of hostile violence, often in symbolic and deadly action, motivated or legitimized by individual(s) and/or group(s) based on a meaning-system focused on the search for significance in ways related to the sacred*. By using this definition this thesis can examine violence that is perpetrated in the defense of sacred values. Furthermore, it is compatible with the definition of religious fundamentalism, and by extension can be viewed as an act of violent extremism (see e.g., Pratt, 2010).

1.5. Cultural description

To gain a better understanding of the Army of God, it is important to account for its cultural and social context. In industrialized societies such as the U.S. there is an unprecedented degree of freedom from previous prescribed responsibilities and roles due to increasing economic prosperity. The later stages of modernization, such as the welfare state as well as IT and communication technologies, have also brought autonomy and social flexibility, resulting in relationships of choice. Along with this there has been a ‘*subjective turn*’ where traditional sources of truth and authority have been perceived to be in conflict with the individual’s subjective experiences, resulting in a decline of institutional religions. This transformation can be described as a successive change in values along two dimensions: from the more traditional to secular, rational values and from a focus on survival to values of self-expression (Savage & Liht, 2008).

According to Savage and Liht (2008) these two consecutive phases of modernization correspond to two noticeable phases in the advance of fundamentalist movements in the U.S.:

The first wave came about as a reaction to the critical examination of sacred texts in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (and coincides with widespread elimination of the fear of starvation). This first wave of fundamentalism was preoccupied mainly with the Darwinian theory and with Biblical criticism. The second wave has been, until now, an unexplained resurgence in the 1970’s and 80’s in which Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, and other fundamentalisms exploded onto the world stage, much to the surprise of secularization theorists. This we now understand as a reaction to the ‘subjective turn’: the loss of status enjoyed by religious authority, the increase of choice within post-industrial lifestyles, and the secular humanist morality that underpins it. This second wave of fundamentalism also coincides with the rise in the service sector and information technologies that are foundational to the self-expression values of post-industrial, post-material society. These technologies also, ironically, enabled fundamentalisms to go ‘global’ on limited budgets. (Savage & Liht, 2008, p. 78)

This relates to the emergence of the anti-abortion movement and by extension the Army of God. After the first wave at the turn of the 20th century, fundamentalist Christians began to withdraw from the political debate and instead wait for the impending rapture (Jefferis, 2011). However, this changed with the decision of *Roe V Wade* in 1973, when the Supreme Court ruled that no state could legally restrict a woman’s right to an abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy. According to Jefferis (2011), the decision shocked many contemporary abortion opponents and pushed the Protestant Fundamentalists back to the political arena:

Leaders of the movement linked the critical element of life with the protection of Christianity. In Christianity, the death of Jesus Christ is paramount because it was completed in the defense of the life of God’s children. Thus abortion – and the murder of defenseless children can be seen as the ultimate antithesis of God’s gracious plan for humanity. It is for this reason that the Christian pro-life movement places such emphasis on life in the attack against abortion. Destruction of life is tantamount to the attempted destruction of God - and this raises the stakes far higher than most other political issues. (Jefferis, 2011, p. 14)

Fundamentalists across the U.S. then began organizing a political fight to end abortion. One of these was Operation Rescue, which took inspiration from the non-violent civil disobedience of Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. Another prominent actor was the organization The Moral Majority who mobilized Christians as a political force and tied the fight against abortion to the Republic

Party. However, when attempts to politicize abortion as an illegal act failed, new elements of the anti-abortion movement emerged. In 1982 the Army of God prominently entered the debate when two men kidnapped abortion doctor Hector Zevallos and his wife Rosalee Jean (Jefferis, 2011). These men identified as soldiers of the Army of God.

1.6. The Army of God

Because of its ambiguity, the Army of God is difficult to define. It is not an organization because it lacks a hierarchy or structure. A more fitting description would be that of a loose network or a form of leaderless resistance. However, even these descriptions are limited in portraying the Army of God. Similar to leaderless resistance, the Army of God has a unity in purpose. Yet, unlike leaderless resistance, individuals affiliated with the Army of God sometimes interact with one another (see e.g. Stern, 2003). Conversely the Army of God is not set up in a network manner with different nodes that share a strategic direction (Jefferis, 2011). Consequently, it is difficult to use the term “members” in relation to the Army of God since there is no recruitment incentive or induction ceremony. Rather, the relationship between individuals is based on a shared commitment to a specific set of beliefs. This distinct and unified set of beliefs can be described in the following way:

First, members of the Army of God believe that God calls his followers to act toward the preservation of His laws. [...] Second, it is clear that members of the Army of God believe that abortion is murder. [...] These first two beliefs are linked to form the third and most distinctive element of the Army of God’s ideology. If good Christians are called to prevent others from committing murder, and if abortion is murder, then good Christians are called by God to prevent abortion by any means necessary. (Jefferis, 2011, p. 135)

Ultimately, the Army of God promotes the use of violence in order to stop abortions from occurring. The killing of an abortion doctor is seen as a virtuous act and not as a sin. Moreover, these acts are not performed out of vengeance but as a “defense” for unborn children (Jefferis, 2011). Individuals join the Army of God in an abstract sense by internalizing the ideology of the Army of God, largely over the Internet. The link amongst these individuals is thus measured by the resonance between one’s worldview and the distinct set of beliefs of the Army of God. Consequently, the acts of violence are made through encouragement rather than directives and are performed by self-radicalized and self-activating individuals (Jefferis, 2011). The Army of God therefore also resembles a form of lone-wolf terrorism (Simon, 2013; Weimann 2015). Because individuals join in an abstract sense there is an unknown number of members, however, during the 30 years that it has been known to exist there have appeared about 20 fully committed individuals from various Christian denominations and demographic backgrounds (Jefferis, 2011). Since its start in the 1980s the Army of God has carried out numerous bombings of abortion clinics and killed several abortion doctors in the U.S. (Jefferis, 2011; Juergensmeyer, 2003; Kressel, 2007; Stern, 2003). In this thesis the Army of God will be understood as a violent Christian extremist and militant anti-abortion movement that constitutes a form of leaderless resistance. Although the term “member” is misleading it will still be used since there are no adequate alternative to describe the relationship between the individual and the Army of God.

Chapter 2 Research review and Theory

2.1. Research review

Hood, Hill and Spilka (2009) point out that there exists a general need to empirically comprehend the psychology of religious extremism. They stress that the extremism-religion association is not well understood and that it warrants the undertaking of research within the psychology of religion. The need of actual empirical data in the psychological research of extremism and terrorism has also been highlighted by Horgan (2014). Moreover, studies relating specifically to the Army of God are relatively scarce. The movement has existed since the early 1980s but little has been written about it (Jefferis, 2011). This is also supported by this thesis's research review of past studies in which few psychological studies explicitly investigated the Army of God. Of these, none did so from a meaning-system approach or in relation to the process of sanctification.

Several computer searches were conducted between 2015-03-25 and 2015-03-30 using combinations such as "*violence AND sacred values*", "*religious violence*", "*sacred violence*", "*religious terrorism*", "*Army of God*", "*Christian extremism violence*", "*Christian violence abortion*" and "*religiously motivated violence*". The searches were conducted through the databases Google Scholar, ATLA religion database, PsychINFO, and Uppsala University's online library.

Google Scholar provides a broad search for literature that covers many sources and disciplines. ATLA is also a broad database, produced by The American Theological Library Association and contains references and peer-reviewed articles primarily within religion and theology. PsychINFO has a database index of over 2,000 books, journal titles, and dissertations within the field of psychology as well as related disciplines such as medicine, sociology, and anthropology. Uppsala University's online library (www.uu.se) uses the search engine *summon*, which spans over 97 million journal articles, 3.5 million dissertations/theses, 4 million books/e-books and 6.5 million conference reports.

At most, the search (*psychology and "Army of God"*) yielded 966 hits on Google Scholar, 313 on ATLA (with the search words *Christian terrorism*) and 718 hits (*Christian sacred violence*) on Uppsala University's online library database (www.uu.se). On PsychINFO the search gave 608 hits at most (*Christian motivated violence*). To update the research review, additional searches were made 2015-08-01 and 2016-05-24 on [uu.se](http://www.uu.se) and PsychINFO. All the scans were limited to peer-reviewed material. The scans on PsychINFO and Uppsala University's library database were restricted to the discipline *psychology*. All the searches were sorted by relevance. The inclusion criterion was studies that analyze different forms of engagement in religious terrorism, violence, conflicts or radicalization, in particular Christian terrorism/violence in relation to abortion. The exclusion criterion was any paper that explicitly did not employ an analysis on some

kind of empirical data. The searches also excluded any study that could not be placed within the subject areas of psychology and religion. For practical reasons the search additionally excluded any study not written in Swedish or English, as these are the only languages I can read fluently.

After having skimmed through the results the relevant literature could be structured around two main themes. These are *Religious terrorism and violence*, and *The Army of God and terrorism/violence*. I will make a brief presentation of the studies found during the searches under the heading of both themes. The presentations will address the problem formulation, purpose, method, research data, and results of each study. Finally, after the presentation of each theme there will be a short discussion reflecting on the studies and clarifying their relation to the current thesis.

2.1.1. Religious terrorism and violence

Three relevant studies were found in a special section of the *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, Volume 16, Issue 2. The three papers illuminate several aspects of religious terrorism and violence in Indonesia. Putra and Sukabdi (2013) conducted a qualitative study to examine the motives and causes behind violent attacks perpetrated by Islamist activists. The authors point out that previous research has revealed a number of factors that contribute to the rise of Islamic terrorism, such as the failures of the modern global economy and perceived competition between Muslims and non-Muslims, provoking feelings of humiliation and the notion that Islam is under threat. The authors further highlight that Islamist activist action in Indonesia lacks the support from major Muslim organizations and family members in contrast to parts of the Middle East such as Lebanon and Palestine. Previous research also indicates that conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims are rather related to local cultural and ethnic tensions in Indonesia. The authors thus stress the need to identify the causes of the terrorist acts of Islamist activists in Indonesia. The purpose of the study was therefore to understand the primary reasons and concepts behind the rise of religious terror activities in Indonesia by providing an inside rather than outside account of these actions. The study utilized focused group discussions with 40 current or former Islamist terror activists and one in-depth interview with a participant who had extraordinary expertise and experience, i.e. a bomb-maker, suicide bomber recruiter and tactician, who had participated in a number of attacks in Indonesia. All of the participants were males in their mid 20s to late 40s. 27 of these were prisoners, while the rest had been released or not found guilty to have supported terrorist actions in a court of law. The data was analyzed through a qualitative thematic analysis. Results showed that participants interpretation of four key conditions and concepts are the most important factors in explaining their violent actions. These are: a state of war, jihad fisabilillah (struggle in the path of God), suicide bombings, the perception that the West is accountable for the state of war due to their support of Israel in torturing Palestinians, and their intervention in Muslim affairs internationally. Based on the findings the authors conclude that these basic concepts and conditions are the primary reason and logic for the violent attacks in Indonesia.

In the second paper, Milla, Faturochman and Ancok (2013) conducted a qualitative study focused on the process of radicalization. The authors point out that rad-

icalization is an important factor contributing to terrorism, but that there exists no necessary relationship between the two. They argue that it is the role of the leader that plays a critical factor in the transition from radicalism to terrorism. The purpose of the study was therefore to investigate the role of the leader-follower relationship in the process of violent radicalization, focusing on how these processes operated in the case of the Indonesian Bali bombers of the 12 of October, 2002. The study was based on 5 individuals who were charged with the planning and execution of the bombings. The data consisted of interviews, observations, and readings of documents produced by or written about these individuals. All the data was transcribed and ordered through open coding. The data was analyzed through a narrative analysis combined with thematic analysis based on Silber and Bhatt's four-phase model of radicalization. The result showed that the start of the radicalization began with environmental conditions, where all of the Bali bombers had a socialization through parents and school into a specific interpretation of Islam that emphasized certain values such as exclusivism and the centrality of a struggle in the path of God (jihad fisabilillah). According to the authors this phase could be motivated by the need for a cognitive closure. In the next phase the particular interpretation of Islam took on a defining and central role in the identity of the informants. This transition encouraged further acquisition of Islamic knowledge and the identification of a trustworthy mentor and community that shared the same values. In the following phase the informants were indoctrinated into tightly organized jihadist groups by their mentors who could mobilize the in-group love and out-group hate. In the final phase the informants embraced the ideology of violent jihad (lesser jihad) through intensive mentoring and transference of information from the leader. The informants expressed how they had a duty to God to carry out violent jihad and how it was a necessity due to a perceived injustice or vicarious form of humiliation. According to the authors this strong sense of solidarity towards fellow Muslims can be explained through a perceived joint group identity that had been strongly internalized, as well as a high need for cognitive closure, which has been shown in previous research to facilitate empathy and perspective taking among individuals. The authors conclude that the leader is an important factor in the radicalization process by guiding the followers towards an ambiguity intolerance that is caused by the surrounding environment.

In the third and last study from Indonesia, Muluk, Sumaktoyo and Ruth (2013) offer a mix-method account of the causes of sacred violence. The authors argue that two issues are lacking in the research concerning sacred violence: nation-level evidence and the attention to the justification factor for the violence. They hypothesize that there is a mediating factor between predictors and sacred violence in Indonesia. According to the authors the predictors are religious fundamentalism, the perception of unfairness, religiosity, and support for Islamic law. The mediating factor is a particular conception of jihadi ideology (lesser jihad) that serves as a justification for would-be violence. The purpose of the study was to test this hypothesis and address the lack of previous research by examining interviews with radical groups to get insight on how they justify violence in relation to the concept of jihad and by using structural equation modelling based on a representative national survey. The interviews were conducted with 6 participants from the Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid and 3 from the Islamic Defender Front. The conversations were unstructured, and lasted between 60-120 minutes. They were also recorded and transcribed. The coding and analysis was carried out from a bottom-

up approach, i.e., no *a priori* coding scheme was applied. The result of the interviews showed an interconnected relationship between the aspects, where the perception of unfairness and the belief in violent jihad had a direct connection to the use of sacred violence. Based on the interviews the authors took a quantitative step by making a structural equation model with the latent variables of intratextual fundamentalism, religiosity, perception of unfairness, support for Islamic law, belief in violent jihad, and sacred violence. They further included monthly income and education. The survey was conducted in March 2010 by the Indonesian Survey Institute. The data was analyzed based on 934 of the 1320 participants in the sample, excluding non-Muslims and any case with more than three missing answers. The mean age was 39.9 years (SD 13,4), where the youngest was 16 and the oldest 97 years old. 52 percent of these self-identified as men. The sampling technique was a multi-stage random sampling. Each participant was interviewed by a trained interviewer and quality control was done by revisiting 20 percent of the participants, in which no significant error was found. The result of the quantitative analysis revealed that none of the predictors (including income and education) had significant correlations with sacred violence except the aspect of belief in violent jihad. All the other variables had to go through the belief in violent jihad in order to reach sacred violence. Based on the result the authors conclude that violent jihad is an important and mediating factor in religiously motivated violence in Indonesia. They argue that it functions as a justification that corresponds with the third floor in Moghaddam's (2006) staircase to terrorism (see section 2.2.6 in this thesis), in which a moral shift for violence and terrorism occur. They further point out that it seems to work as a justification for violence based on the socio-political context while the logical underpinning and theological root of this factor had a significant and direct relationship with religious fundamentalism.

These three papers from the *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* offer an insider account of religious terrorism and violence in Indonesia. All of them highlight the concept of jihad and the justifications for violence as important factors in understanding religiously motivated violence. This stands in contrast to Aly and Striegher (2012) who investigated the process of radicalization. The authors point out that policy responses to terrorism usually give primacy to religion as the core driving force of radicalization. They argue that this primacy conflates the important distinction between cognitive radicalization and behavioral radicalization. The purpose of the study was thus to investigate this distinction based on actual empirical evidence and critically examine the role of religion in each of these two dimensions. This was done by utilizing a case study of Australia's first convicted terrorist (i.e. Jack Roche) based on Silber and Bhatt's four-phase model of radicalization. Based on a qualitative analysis of Roche's trial and numerous interviews and personal communications with him after his trial, the authors argue that religious ideas in themselves play a far lesser role in the radicalization process than proposed by the Silber and Bhatt's model. The case study suggests that individuals can adopt a justification for violence through the interpretation of certain religious beliefs, such as lesser jihad, but without implementing this in a violent behavior by distinguishing between unjustifiable and justifiable theatres of jihad. In the case of Roche, he morally rejected acts that would target civilians in Australia.

According to the authors this rejection was, however, made without any significant changes in his religious beliefs. Furthermore, the religious beliefs did not seem to sustain and promote Roche's involvement in the militant Islamist group Jamaah Islameeah. It was rather a sense of belonging, and the search for ontological security that drove the involvement. The authors conclude that the role of religion in the radicalization process functioned primary as a vehicle for group bonding and collective identity, addressing significant psychological needs.

The role of religion in intergroup conflicts was also investigated in a quantitative study by Neuberg et al (2014). The authors point out that there is a lack of empirical knowledge on how religion might shape conflicts. The purpose of the study was to address this issue by examining how religious infusion (i.e., the extent to which religious discourse and rituals imbue the daily life for groups and their members) relates to two key factors that can facilitate conflicts: an incompatibility of values and a competition for limited resources. According to the authors, religious infusion is of special interest since it has a potential to engage powerful group processes that can promote a collective motivation and action that is relevant in relation to these two factors. To test this relation, the study made use of data from the Global Group Relations Project, which covered 194 groups of various kind (e.g., religious and ethnic) at 97 different sites around the world. Each site had a designated expert informant that provided data on two groups on a wide range of social, religious, political and psychological variables within the assigned site. By using a structural equation modeling the result showed that religious infusion increased the extent to which incompatible values predict intergroup conflicts. Religious infusion also appeared to enhance the willingness of otherwise weak groups to tolerate costly confrontations. The authors conclude that groups with a high level of religious infusion might be more likely to view their values as sacred. This would support previous research that highlights sacred values as important factors in interpersonal conflict.

In another quantitative study by Moyano and Trujillo (2012) the relation between psychosocial factors and religious activism and radicalization was investigated. The authors point out that few empirical studies have systematically examined the multitude of factors that potentially contribute to political-religious mobilization. In order to address this, the authors studied cognitive, behavioral, and emotional factors together with social, ethnic, and cultural factors, modulated through contextual influence and group dynamic. The sample consisted of 115 (53 girls and 62 boys) Muslim and Christian secondary school students between the ages of 13 and 17 (an average age of 14,7) living in a marginalized neighborhood in a Spanish city in the southern part of the country. Of the 63 boys, 50% viewed themselves as Muslims and 50% as Christians. Among the girls, 66% viewed themselves as Muslims and 34% as Christians. The survey utilized instruments that measured intention of activism and radicalization, self-esteem, violent disinhibition, religious extremism, perceived oppression, group identification and socio-demographic variables. The data was organized through a bifactorial design and applied a variation analysis model. Different comparisons between the two groups were made with the help of dependent variables. A correlation and linear regres-

sion model was also performed. The result demonstrated that a perceived oppression (e.g. injustice or humiliation), religious extremism and indicators of violent disinhibition all had a high correlation with intentions of radicalization among the Muslims participants. This result was not present in the Christian group. The authors argue that this might be due to a greater identity heterogeneity found in the Christian sample. The authors further point out that outgroup threats and acculturation factors (e.g., integration), which might be more present among the Muslim participants compared to the Christians, can influence the results. The authors conclude that a perceived oppression and a uniform social identity anchored in religion might contribute to radicalization, and by extension violence.

In contrast to the previously mentioned studies, Adam, De Cordier, Titeca and Vlassenroot (2007) qualitatively investigated violence motivated by Christian beliefs. The authors point out that previous research has increasingly focused on armed groups and violence referring to Islam, even though faith-based violence occurs across the globe, with perpetrators adhering to all of the major world religions. The purpose of the study was therefore to examine the use of Christian beliefs in three non-state armed groups: The National Liberation Front of Tripura in Northeast India, the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda, and the Ambonese Christian militias in Ambon, Indonesia. Through field observations and interviews, the authors present detailed context and origin descriptions of each group, and the relation between religion, identity and political mobilization. Based on the case studies the authors argue that the various forms of Christianity became a mobilizing vehicle that was able to give meaning to social crises caused by factors such as marginalization and exclusion, migration, land seizures and the loss of socioeconomic status. It also served a central function in the process of self-definition, informing the out-group relationship and the in-group cohesion. The more the in-group identity was strengthened the greater the rift with the out-group became. In the case of the National Liberation Front of Tripura it also established an ideological framework for ethnic cleansing and a separatist agenda. The authors conclude that the study shed light on the rather unknown phenomenon of militant Christians groups and the contexts in which they operate.

2.1.2. The Army of God and terrorism/violence

Connelly et al (2015) conducted a quantitative study of non-violent ideological, violent ideological and non-ideological groups' websites, of which the Army of God was one of the violent ideological groups. The authors point out that the increasing online presence of ideological groups has made it possible to spread group beliefs and ideas in a variety of new ways, and to create a sense of shared identity. However, little empirical research has previously investigated this online presence. The purpose of the study was to compare the different group websites with regard to social psychological processes and website credibility, and the relationship between these aspects. A content analysis approach was used to examine 105 websites in total, of which 32 were violent, 36 non-violent, and 37 non-ideological. These were examined in respect to social categorization, outgrouping, moral disengagement, and content as well as structural features of credibility. The data was analyzed through t-tests, correlations, and hierarchical multiple regression

analyses. The overall result revealed that websites belonging to violent ideological groups manifest a higher degree of social categorization, outgrouping and moral disengagement than the websites belonging to both non-violent ideological and non-ideological groups. It further demonstrated that these aspects negatively predicted content and structural website credibility for non-violent ideological groups, while having no significant prediction value for violent or non-ideological groups. The authors conclude that the study supports the suggestion from previous research that psychological processes important to the formation of a social identity and a moral behaviour are embedded within websites. The study further indicates that ideological websites can act as an important source for a social identity, especially the websites belonging to violent ideological groups.

In a somewhat similar study, Smith (2004) conducted a structured comparison of documents issued by terrorist and non-terrorist groups that share a similar ideology. The purpose was to formulate an explanation for the differences by using psychological variables concerning values that the groups attribute to their opponents and themselves. The study explored this dynamic through a quantitative content analysis of 13 contexts, with two matched groups in each site. The sample consisted of left-wing, right-wing, ethno-nationalist and religious groups. The Army of God was one of these groups compared with Operation Save America (formerly known as Operation Rescue). The material included documents that represented the values and goals of the groups, such as group manifestos or statements of purpose (in total 160 documents). The material that concerned the Army of God and Operation Save America involved 30 documents (41,124 words in total). All of the data was randomized and coded by trained scorers who were blind to the purpose of the study. The scorers achieved respectable levels of inter-rater agreement. The coding was utilized through a modified version of value analysis that incorporated four broad value categories attributed to opponents and to the own group: dominance, morality, justice and culture. The data was analyzed through t-tests to examine whether there were any differences in the means between the groups in each context. The results from each context were then used to investigate if any variables were significantly related to engagement in terrorism across the comparisons of all the given contexts. The study showed that most terrorist groups (including the Army of God) attributed higher dominance values to their opponents compared to the control groups (i.e., the enemy is considered both dangerous and aggressive). Relative to the control groups, the terrorist groups attributed a significantly higher degree of dominance to themselves (i.e., emphasis on one's own strength). The data further showed that the terrorist groups attributed significantly lower morality values to their opponents (i.e., deserving of whatever they get) and that they attributed a significant higher morality values to themselves. The study also showed terrorist groups attributed significantly lower justice values to its opponents (e.g., not valuing fairness). Furthermore, there were no significant differences in how terrorist and control groups described themselves in relation to justice values in either sample. Finally, there were no significant differences in how non-terrorist and terrorist groups viewed their opponents in terms of cultural values (e.g., as sinners or apostates). The overall result indicated that the in-group description might be more important in predicting terrorism than how the group describes its opponents. This might, however, not be consistent with the Army of God, who had a difference compared to Operation Save

America across the categories, but largely in a non or near statistically significant manner.

In a subsequent study, Smith (2008) points out that both social identity theory and Freud's theory of group psychology stress the importance of identification in the formation of groups, and the tendency to favor in-group members while expressing hostility to outsiders. Since previous research has highlighted the critical role of group processes in terrorist activities, the purpose of the study was to investigate whether this group dynamic was more evident in the rhetoric of terrorist groups compared to similar non-terrorist groups. Smith hypothesized that terrorist groups would express higher levels of affiliation motive imagery (i.e., creating and maintaining friendly relations) to the in-group members and lower levels of affiliation motive imagery towards out-groups. The author further expected that terrorist-groups would express higher levels of power motive imagery (i.e., the need of having influence and control over others) than the control groups. This hypothesis was based on previous research that has shown an association between power motive imagery and aggression. The material was the same as in Smith (2004). The data was also coded and analyzed in a similar fashion as in the previous study, but through a quantitative content analysis based on in-group and out-group affiliation motive imagery as well as power motive imagery. As hypothesized, the results showed that terrorist groups were significantly higher in in-group affiliation motive imagery and significantly lower in outgroup affiliation motive imagery when compared with the non-terrorist groups as a whole across the contexts. Terrorist groups were also significantly higher in power motive imagery compared to the control groups. These differences were also found in the case of the Army of God, but largely in a statistically non-significant manner. The author concluded that the study highlights the important role of group processes in understanding terrorist groups and their actions.

Another quantitative study involving the Army of God was conducted by Saucier, Akers, Shen-Miller, Knežević and Stankov (2009). In the study Saucier and his colleagues suggest that violent extremism might entail a mindset that can arise from a multitude of contexts and religious or political orientations. To test this hypothesis, the authors investigated extremist groups from a diverse range of forms and backgrounds. The groups included secular leftist, secular ethno-nationalist and religious orientations from seven major regions: North America, Latin America, Europe, Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, and South Asia. The North American sample comprised some of the most dramatic examples of homegrown militant extremism, including the Olympic Park bomber Eric Rudolph who is associated with the Army of God. The material consisted of data concerning motivations and thinking, drawn from websites, documents and books belonging to the groups, and reports and observations made by journalists and other writers. The collected material was then compared and inductively coded in search of key unifying themes. Through this procedure a total of 16 themes common to the groups emerged in repeated reviews of the data. The themes included perceptions of a crisis, such as violations of something sacred (which may or may not be explicitly religiously in nature), along with moral justifications for the use of violence in order to address such problems. In the case of Eric Rudolph, six themes were present: extreme measures (e.g., violence is necessary), a military terminology (e.g., holy war), killing as a duty (e.g., duty to engage in a holy war),

Machiavellianism serving sacred values (i.e., immoral ends are justified on behalf of something sacred), valuing intolerance and vengeance (e.g., ascribing intolerance and vengeance to God, making it favorable), and finally a perception of the government as illegitimate (in which violence becomes a method to punish moral oversteps enacted by the government). The result suggested that the themes can form coherent and compelling narratives, which can move and persuade individuals by framing important events. This suggestion was tested by distributing a Likert-type 1-5 scale survey that tapped into the 16 themes among 215 (61 percent females, average age 20 years) American undergraduates and 297 (42 percent females, average age 18 years) advanced high-school student in Serbia. In both samples the participants failed to strongly distance themselves from the framings found in the questionnaire items that tapped into the themes. According to the authors this undercuts the notion that a militant-extremist thinking represents a bizarre formation of ideas. The authors conclude that a key part of the narratives might be sacred values, which can comprise the cultural morality and social identity of an individual.

2.1.3. Conclusions of previous research

Previous research studies have highlighted the importance of group processes in understanding religiously motivated violence, particularly in relation to a social identity (Adam et al, 2007; Aly and Striegheer, 2012; Moyano & Trujillo, 2012; Muluk, Sumaktoyo & Ruth, 2013). They have also stressed the significance of a perceived injustice and vicarious humiliation as a precondition for conflicts (Adam et al, 2007; Milla, Faturochman & Ancok, 2013; Moyano & Trujillo, 2012; Putra & Sukabdi, 2013), and the moral justifications for violence (Milla, Faturochman & Ancok, 2013; Putra & Sukabdi, 2013), especially in relation to religious fundamentalism (Muluk, Sumaktoyo & Ruth; 2013). In addition, sacred values appear to be an important factor, as indicated in Neuberg et al (2014). All of these studies supported the choice of using a social psychological approach in this thesis. It further indicates the importance of including a perspective that can touch upon moral justifications and sacred values. This can be met by utilizing Albert Bandura's theory of selective moral disengagement and the process of sanctification. The perception of injustice and vicarious humiliation can also be included by using Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism model.

As pointed out by Adam et al (2007), militant Christian groups appear to be a rather unknown phenomenon. This was evident in the few studies that empirically analyzed the Army of God. Most of the studies that included the Army of God utilized a quantitative approach. Connelly et al (2015) suggest that the material on the Army of God website can act as an important source for a social identity. Smith (2004) suggest that morality values and in-group descriptions might be especially important factors in terrorism while Smith (2008) highlights the importance of group processes. This is also emphasized by Saucier et al (2009) who in addition stress the significance of sacred values in relation to the Army of God.

The statistically non-significantly differences between the Army of God and Operation Save America indicated by Smith (2004; 2008) highlights the need for a qualitative study of the Army of God. The findings presented in Connelly et al (2015) provides further evidence for why it is necessary to improve our under-

standing of how the collective meaning-system can act as a source for a social identity and promote violence.

Finally, none of these studies provided a thorough discussion and definition of the key term *religion* (or other important religious concepts). This obscures the analysis of religiously motivated violence by presupposing a self-evident connotation of the concept, as well as a natural religion-secular dichotomy. The next part of this thesis will thus begin by clarifying this key term in order to provide a stronger structure for understanding religiously motivated violence.

2.2. Presentation of Theory

This section will present the theories and concepts that will be used in order to understand the violence perpetrated by the Army of God. The presentation will begin with the concept of religion followed by the psychological process of sanctification (Jones 2013; Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). It will then present the concept *religious fundamentalism*, followed by Peter Herriot's presentation of social identity theory (2007). Next will be a presentation of Albert Bandura's theory of selective moral disengagement (2003). The section then ends with a presentation of Fathali M. Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism metaphor (Moghaddam, Warren & Love, 2013; Moghaddam, 2006; Moghaddam, 2005), which will serve as a framework and the basis for the working-model in this thesis.

2.2.1. Religion and the sacred

Paloutzian and Park (2013) argue that religion should not be seen as a unique psychological process. What characterizes the unique and distinctive features of religion are rather a cluster of attributes that in themselves are not distinctively religious. This is also emphasized by Oman (2013), who suggests that it is more fruitful to consider the concept of religion in terms of family resemblance. There is no single feature that is relevant in all contexts but combinations of these (e.g. the sacred or transcendence) are often perceived as religious. Hence, religion can be operationalized in different ways depending on the nature of the research.

In this thesis religion is conceptualized as a meaning-system focused on the "*search for significance in ways related to the sacred*" (Pargament, 1997, p. 32). This conceptualization is important if we are to understand what is at stake religiously for groups involved in interpersonal conflicts and terrorism. Since these conflicts are partly about sacred matters, Jones (2008) argues that we are unlikely to arrive at an efficient response to these issues unless we pay attention to this dimension. This has also been highlighted by recent research which suggests that the perceived threat to a group's sacred values are an important psychological factor in interpersonal conflicts and violence (Ginges, Atran, Sachdeva & Medin, 2011; Sheikh, Ginges & Atran, 2013).

According to Pargament, the most prototypical element of the sacred are concepts such as a transcendent reality, God or divine beings (Pargament, 1997). By extension the sacred can be understood in terms of something (anything) special being set apart from the ordinary (Taves, 2011). The sacred is therefore perceived with respect and veneration, which provides it with the ability to function as a particu-

lar source of significance in people's lives (Silberman, 2005b). As people search for significance in relation to the sacred, groups and individuals become more psychologically invested in protecting that which is perceived as sacred. This can be done in many ways including violence and terror (Jones, 2013a). This also corresponds with current research that suggests that a sense of threat or loss to significance (e.g., through a perceived injustice, various forms of humiliation or trampling of sacred values) and a search for significance are an underlying and powerful force behind violent extremism (Kruglanski, 2013; Kruglanski et al, 2014). This leads us to the process of sanctification.

2.2.2. Sanctification

Sanctification is the psychological process through which aspects of life are perceived as having divine significance and character (i.e. perceiving something as sacred). According to Pargament and Mahoney (2005) the process of sanctification has a profound implication for key aspects of human functioning. For instance, it appears to affect the ways people prioritize and invest their resources, it elicits strong spiritual emotions and it functions as a powerful source of meaning.

Sanctification occurs when an object is perceived as a direct manifestation of one's beliefs, image or experience of God and/or is ascribed with qualities associated with the divine. Although various aspects of life can be perceived as sacred, it always points to something set apart from the ordinary representing a higher and more ultimate reality. The sanctification of an object makes it gain an important psychological significance, and it becomes part of the devotee's identity and sense of self. Once something is perceived as sacred it elicits strong behavioral, cognitive, motivational and emotional responses (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005; Jones 2013).

One aspect of the sanctification process is that people seek to protect those objects that they perceive as sacred. The loss of something sacred usually results in depression while the desecration of the sacred often leads to rage (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). Since a person's identity and sense of self are bound to the sacred, the threat to the sacred implies a perceived threat to the most fundamental level of one's being. The desecration of the sacred can thus feel like as much of a threat as a direct physical one. The violent response when a sacred object is perceived as desecrated or threatened is thus motivated by an injury to the self (Jones, 2013a).

However, the threat or desecration of something sacred does not necessarily result in violence. The difference can be understood in a number of psychological processes that can be explained through a social psychological perspective, especially since sacred values are strongly tied to a social identity (Atran, 2010; Ginges, Atran, Sachdeva & Medin, 2011). Therefore, this thesis will correspondingly make use of social psychological theories. These theories often relate to religious fundamentalism when explaining religious violence and conflicts. It is thus important to clarify the relationship between religion and sanctification as well as the concept of religious fundamentalism and the social psychological theories implemented in this thesis.

2.2.3. Religious fundamentalism

The term fundamentalism originates from American Protestants in the early 20th century, who used it as a self-designated term when defending the fundamentals of their faith against the liberal religious establishment (Hood, Hill & Williamson, 2005). Religious fundamentalism has later been used to designate different religious movements across the globe that seeks to change the social order and/or challenge a secular landscape in order to bring about an idealized past. As such, it is a modern phenomenon that is both a result and reaction to processes of globalization, modernization and secularization, which it perceives as threatening (Herriot, 2009; Lindgren, 2009; Sander & Andersson, 2015). It is important to note that fundamentalism is not restricted only to religion. It can also be found within secular and atheistic ideologies (Strozier & Terman, 2010). Furthermore, it has to be stressed that religious fundamentalism is not inherently associated with violence (Herriot, 2007; Lindgren, 2009). Finally, research has not been able to find any reliable psychological characteristics of personality that separate fundamentalists from the general population (Herriot, 2007; Hood et al, 2005; Sander & Andersson, 2015). Instead, religious fundamentalism is often identified with certain features that distinguish it from other religious groups and movements (Herriot, 2009; Hood et al, 2005). These features can, however, sometimes contribute to conflicts or create a potential for violence (Herriot 2007; Lindgren, 2009; Strozier & Boyd, 2010). As such, if religious fundamentalism becomes violent it can be viewed as a form of violent extremism (Pratt, 2010), which tends to be non-compromising, black-and-white, and value monistic ideologies that justify the use of violence to further an ideological goal or belief (Hogg, 2012; Kruglanski & Orehek, 2012; Savage, 2011; Schmid, 2013).

Hood et al (2005) offers a social psychological understanding of religious fundamentalism based on the notion of intratextuality. According to the authors, religious fundamentalism is a meaning-system in which a sacred text is of supreme authority. This principle is called intratextuality by the authors and implies a tautological approach to a text where the text itself determines both its sacredness and absolute truth. The text becomes the supreme authority that subordinates anything outside itself. It becomes the base from which the individual attributes meaning to all other aspects of life and the ultimate framework through which everything must be judged. Religious fundamentalism thus has a psychological power in its ability to create a unifying framework and sense of coherence that meets personal needs for meaning.

Herriot (2007) offers another conceptualization of religious fundamentalism where he draws from sociological research. He suggests that it can be distinguished by five features. The first and primary feature is *reactivity*, which refers to a hostile reaction to the modern and secular world that is perceived as threatening. This aspect is central to the remaining features and a psychological understanding of religious fundamentalism since it constitutes an opportunity for an “us versus them” way of thinking (Herriot, 2007, p. 6-9). The second feature is *dualism*, which refers to the tendency to perceive the world in terms of binary and opposed categories. The third aspect is *authority*, which relates to supreme authority of a sacred source and/or leader. The fourth feature is *selectivity*, which refers to the selection and emphasis of specific ideas from the sacred source in preference to others. The fifth and last feature is *millennialism*, which refers to the belief in the

expected triumph of the forces of good in the ultimate battle with chaos and evil.

Herriot's view of religious fundamentalism overlaps with Lindgren (2009) who suggests that it can be understood as a religious meaning-system with four features: *reactivity*, *selectivity*, *dualistic thinking* and *absolutism* (Lindgren, 2009, p. 74). Reactivity refers to the reaction towards secularization and modernization processes. Religion is viewed as marginalized and threatened, and the faith tradition to which one is affiliated with is often perceived as corrupted and in need of restoration. The second characteristic, selectivity, refers to the selection of particular religious issues that are emphasized in preference of others. Dualistic thinking relates to the dichotomizing of the world into binary camps such as evil and good, light and darkness, saved and damned. The fourth feature refers to the emphasis of an absolute truth and an intratextual approach to a sacred source. This does not necessarily imply a literal interpretation of a holy text, but rather a safeguarding of its supreme authority and sacredness to which everything else must be subordinated.

This thesis draws from Lindgren's view of religious fundamentalism and defines it as: *a collective meaning-system focused on the search for significance in ways related to the sacred, featuring the characteristics of reactivity, selectivity, dualistic thinking and absolutism.*

By building on the definition of religion this conceptualization of religious fundamentalism can include the process of sanctification. It can also be integrated with Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism and social identity theory since a collective meaning-system acts as a source for a social identity. Herriot also emphasizes the meaning-system function of religious fundamentalism by pointing out that it provides clear and simple answers about the world and the self that can counteract the experience of uncertainty caused by modernization and globalization (Herriot, 2009; 2007). Moreover, the four characteristics relate to psychological processes in both Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism and social identity theory as well as Bandura's selective moral disengagement theory. These theories will be used in the next section to explain how religious fundamentalism can contribute to religiously motivated violence.

2.2.4. Social Identity Theory

In his book *Religious Fundamentalism and Social identity*, Peter Herriot (2007) applies social identity theory in order to provide a psychological explanation for religious fundamentalism and conflicts. The book draws from theories originally developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to explain how the relationship between the individual and group functions. Tajfel examined how group membership leads to the development of social identities and how it enhances self-esteem while Turner focused on the ways in which social identities can act as social categories (Herriot, 2007).

According to Herriot (2007), social identity theory assumes that people define and evaluate themselves in relation to the group to which they belong. The individual has two identities, a social and a personal. An individual's actions can be largely directed by one of these two types of identity. Several factors determine which becomes most prominent, such as whether the individual lives in an individualistic

or collective society. The social identity is derived from group memberships and regulates our group behavior while the personal identity derives from the individual's unique combination of characteristics and experience, and directs our interpersonal behavior. A person's identity is different from the individual's 'self'. The self is developed due to our reflexive thinking and is shaped by social interactions with others. It directs our behaviour towards others while monitoring itself. The self is, in other words, in a constant dynamic relationship with the individual's social environment, where it both affects and becomes affected. Similar to the self, the social identity is not static; it can shift as the individual has new experiences. The social identity becomes integrated with the self as the individual internalizes identification with a particular group. Consequently, the social identity can direct our behavior since the self has a directive function. Instead of acting as a single person, the individual acts on the basis of a membership to a particular category to which they perceive themselves to belong. These categories or groups are not necessarily physical entities. They can likewise be categories existing only within the mind of individuals sharing a collective self-definition.

Self-esteem and conflict

One's social and personal identity is important as they affect human behavior. Social identity directs and motivates an individual's behavior as a group member. This behavior may consist of favouring members of one's own group and discriminating against members of other groups. Such behavior is related to the relationship between social identity and the self. By elevating one's own group and downgrading another, the individual's own self-esteem is enhanced since group membership is part of the self. The greater the positive distinctions of the own group are in relation to other groups, the greater the self-esteem can increase. This also implies that if the group is perceived as threatened then one's self-esteem and social identity is threatened. The threat may be against one's own group category, its values, the group's distinctiveness or its acceptance. This may create conflicts because a threat to the self may cause fear, and this in turn can lead to aggression. For conflicts to arise as a result, however, certain conditions have to be met.

Conditions for conflicts

According to Herriot (2007), the social identity has to be in such a position that it can direct an individual's behavior towards a possible conflict. A social identity has to, in other words, be salient for it to ensure a conflict. Since we believe ourselves to belong to several different social categories and groups, it follows that we have several different social identities. Which social identity becomes most salient is determined by three main conditions. The first condition is whether the social identity is strongly internalized into the self. The most central and important social identity, which frequently directs one's behaviour, will be the dominant and thus most strongly internalized social identity.

The second condition mentioned by Herriot (2007) is the social context, which must provide opportunities for competition and comparison between different groups. The individual has to perceive other groups in the social context that s/he must relate to. How the out-group is perceived and what relevance it has is both derived from and affects the social identity. Comparing and categorizing others into different groups reinforces one's own group membership and social identity.

In relation to this, Herriot mentions the so-called *meta-contrast principle* (Herriot, 2007, p. 32) which states that the salience of a particular social identity is accentuated when the differences within an individual's own category are less than the differences between the individual's own and another category. A certain social identity thus becomes especially salient if the similarities within one's own category and the differences with an out-group are maximized.

In relation to this process, there are certain cognitive processes that help to maximize the similarities within and differences between social categories. These processes can be jointly referred to with the term *depersonalisation* (Herriot, 2007, p. 32). This relates to our tendency to pay attention to those qualities that represent one's social identity and the tendency to ignore those which represent one's personal identity. By assigning a set of characteristics, norms and values to all of one's group members a *prototype* is created that helps to minimize the differences between the members. This also applies to an out-group, which in turn results in a *stereotype* that contributes to a greater differentiation between the in and the out-group. The prototype is a way to describe the group members while also representing an ideal for the own group. It becomes a way in which one's own group can distinguish itself against out-groups. The prototype might also be reflected in the group leader's behavior since s/he has achieved the position by living up to and exemplifying the ideal within the in-group. Similar to an individual's identity, the prototype is not inherently static but changes along with the social context. Furthermore, the more inclusive and general the out-groups are the more extreme the in-group prototype becomes. Since the out-group has such variation within itself, only a more extreme prototype can discern the in-group from the out-group. Stereotypes have a similar function because they let the in-group become more distinct from an out-group. Stereotypes are shared generalizations and simplified views of others that hide the personal identities belonging to the out-group members. They tend to attribute a set of unfavourable and dispositional features to the out-group membership. The assigning of dispositional attributes as opposed to situational also enables the out-group to be scapegoated.

The third condition mentioned by Herriot (2007) is a relevant out-group. The choice of a relevant out-group is determined by two factors: the degree of *security* perceived by the in-group and the degree of *permeability* of the out-group and the in-group (Herriot, 2007, p. 34-35). When there is a threat to the social identity an in-group insecurity ensues. Furthermore, if the group has impermeable boundaries the individual cannot leave the threatening situation. The boundaries may be self-imposed in an effort to distinguish the in-group from others and to maintain its own prototype. A combination of insecurity and impermeability is therefore likely to cause the selection of an out-group that can serve as a scapegoat and projection for one's aggression.

The internalization of a collective meaning-system

Why then do individuals join groups and internalize their beliefs, norms and values? Or rather, why do individuals internalize certain collective meaning-systems and integrate them with the self? According to Herriot (2007) it's because of two fundamental psychological needs: the need for self-esteem and the need to reduce uncertainty.

Self-esteem can be gained simply by a perceived belonging to a group, as we feel accepted as one of them, provided that we feel, think, speak and act as the perceived group. Since the social identity is part of ourselves, our self-esteem is also enhanced by an achieved victory for our group or an increase of its status. According to Herriot (2007), fundamentalists tend to increase their self-esteem through victories since the achievement of status in the eyes of the secular world implies that one is failing in fighting the just fight. It is only the status in God's eyes that matters and the persecution by the secular world proves one's faithfulness. Self-esteem can thus also be gained by joining a group whose beliefs and values are perceived as holier and more righteous than fellow congregations. In short, belonging to a group provides self-esteem through group acceptance, perceived victories, the content of the group beliefs and values, and the comparison between one's own group and others.

The need to reduce uncertainty can be met by internalizing a social identity that provides a clear account of who we are. According to Herriot (2007) religious fundamentalists often provide such social identities as they have worldviews with clear and explicit sets of beliefs and values about the world, themselves and others. The internalization of a social identity associated with a certain worldview thus reduces the uncertainty about oneself and the world. This worldview is further reinforced when one sees that fellow adherents agree with what is considered the right values and beliefs to hold and when out-group members disagree. The need for certainty is also more likely to be greater if one perceives uncertainty to be high, such as when there are threats to our social identities and values. This is also supported by Hogg, Kruglanski and Van den Bos (2013), who suggests that violent extremism is strongly correlated to a perceived uncertainty. Numerous studies further support the notion that religious fundamentalism is a powerful way of resolving a perceived uncertainty through group identification and social categorization (Hogg, Adelman & Blagg, 2010; Hogg, 2014). In sum, the internalization of a certain collective meaning-system and its social identity meets fundamental psychological needs, especially when experiencing different forms of uncertainty.

2.2.5. Selective Moral Disengagement

Today, terrorists use the Internet as a means to reach a vast audience in uncensored and direct ways. By maintaining a presence on the Internet, terrorist groups can spread propaganda, coordinate attack, share information, recruit followers and supporters while also sourcing funds and establishing themselves on the international stage. However, despite these trends, policymakers, academics and journalists have often ignored the importance of how terrorists make use of the Internet (Weimann, 2015; 2006). It is therefore important to examine how terrorists use the Internet to communicate their message, especially when this can be seen as a vital part of the internalization of a terrorist group's collective meaning-system. A useful theory to examine a terrorist group's rhetoric and moral justifications is Albert Bandura's theory of selective moral disengagement (Weimann, 2006). Moreover, this theory is also relevant in relation to the search for significance. By making the violent response morally warranted and justifiable it can address a perceived injustice and threat to scared values, thus promoting and conferring significance to the individuals (Kruglanski et al, 2014).

According to Bandura (2003), people generally tend to abstain from behaviour that violates their moral standards. When one's behaviour is regulated by self-imposed sanctions, self-worth and self-satisfaction are enhanced. However, if one's behaviour violates the self-imposed moral standards their self-worth is threatened. People therefore do not usually engage in violent conduct unless the morality of their actions has been justified. If harmful conduct is to be justified, it must be viewed as something benign or worthy through a cognitive restructuring. Bandura (2003) points out that there are several tactics that can be employed to achieve this end:

Euphemistic language

Many of our actions are based on our thought patterns, which are shaped by our language. The character of our actions can therefore take on markedly different forms depending on what they are called. Violent acts can be made respectable and our personal responsibility reduced through the use of euphemistic language. Aggression then becomes tolerable and the harmful conduct is masked. People can thus behave much more cruelly in these situations than if their actions were not given a sanitized label (Bandura, 2003)

Displacement of responsibility

By blaming others, authorities, circumstances or victims, the relation between one's behaviour and responsibility is distorted. Minimizing or obscuring one's own role in the harm created displaces the responsibility for the action and thus one is spared from self-condemning reactions (Bandura, 2003). In extremist religious groups this can be achieved by displacing the responsibility onto supernatural agents such as God (Lindgren, 2009).

Diffusion of responsibility

Another way to minimize personal responsibility is by dividing responsibility. Distributing duties and attributing the harm done to the whole group diffuses individual responsibility. The violent acts are then perceived as collective actions, where everyone is held responsible but no one feels accountable (Bandura, 2003).

Distortion of sequence of events

Another tactic is to distort the sequence of the events, such as arguing that the violence is only a reaction to a previous action of the out-group (Weimann, 2006; Bandura 2003).

Advantageous comparison

The harmful conduct can also be justified by comparing it with greater and more comprehensive violence perpetrated by the out-group. The greater the contrast, the more likely is it that their own violence appears as acceptable or even benevolent. This tactic is also facilitated by two sets of judgments: that nonviolent options are perceived as ineffective to achieve desired goals and the perception that one's own violent actions may prevent further suffering (Bandura, 2003).

Attribution of blame

Violence can sometimes be justified by blaming one's victims for bringing the suffering on themselves. Those who are victimized are perceived as responsible or

at fault for the violence perpetrated against them because of their behaviour (Bandura, 2003).

Dehumanization

Violence tends to be easier to commit if the victim is stripped of human qualities. By perceiving the victim as an object, his or her humanness is denied, making the violence acceptable. Dehumanization can occur in two different ways: a mechanistic dehumanization and an animalistic dehumanization. The first is the denial of human nature while the other is the denial of uniquely human characteristics. The mechanistic form of dehumanization involves an emotional distancing and a horizontal comparison. The person is seen as a nonhuman or an object rather than subhuman. It implies indifference and represents a view of others as lacking in agency. The animalistic form invokes a vertical comparison, characterized by disgust, contempt, and revulsion. The other is perceived as a subhuman and seen as lacking a civil or moral dimension. In short, the other is perceived as lacking the characteristics that distinguish humans from animals (Haslam, 2006). The victim can be further stripped of humanity by having bestial or demonic qualities attributed to them, making the violence desirable or even necessary (Bandura, 2003). Furthermore, this can be related to one's social identity, which powerfully influences how one evaluates others, including how much humanity one ascribes them (see e.g. Hackel, Looser & Van Bavel, 2014).

2.2.6. The Staircase to Terrorism

Moghaddam, Warren and Love (2013) argue that the collective identity is a key factor in psychological processes behind religiously motivated violence. To understand these processes, we must first understand why the collective identity of certain groups is perceived as threatened. We can do this by looking to today's macro context where the accelerated change and increased exposure to differences caused by globalization represents a threat to many collective identities. However, not all threats to collective identities result in violence. The difference is in a number of psychological steps that gradually reduce the degree of freedom for those who perceive themselves as threatened. To understand this, Moghaddam (2005; 2006; Moghaddam, Warren & Love, 2013) visualize a staircase where each floor is characterized by specific psychological processes. While each floor has different processes, the common theme for all floors is the threat to the collective identity.

According to Moghaddam (2006) the staircase metaphor is the same for all cultures. Nonetheless, differences may exist in terms of the distance between the floors and the importance of each one. The amount of time between the floors and the importance of each floor can also change within the same context and differ between individuals. Moghaddam (2005) further stresses that the metaphor is “intended to provide a general framework within which to organize current psychological knowledge and to help direct future research” (p.162) and not as a theoretical model to be tested against other alternatives.

The metaphor involves one ground floor and five higher floors. The ground floor concerns the individual's experiences of a perceived injustice and/or threat to the identity. This is of central importance in regard to religious fundamentalists, who often feel particularly threatened by globalization, modernization and seculariza-

tion (Moghaddam, 2005; Moghaddam, Warren & Love, 2013).

On the first floor, individuals are looking for solutions to what they perceive as unfair or threatening. According to Moghaddam, there are two psychological factors that are important in shaping the behavior at this floor: the perceived possibility of social mobility and the possibility of participation in the decision making process (Moghaddam, 2005). If the possibility of social mobility or procedural justice is perceived as closed and/or if the threat to one's social identity persists, a frustration is created that moves the individual to the next floor (Moghaddam, 2005; Moghaddam, Warren & Love, 2013).

On the second floor individuals begin to vent their frustration and aggression through displacement onto an external enemy or out-group that is perceived as responsible for the injustice or threat to their identity (Moghaddam 2005; Moghaddam, Warren & Love, 2013). If individuals develop a readiness to physically displace the frustration and actively pursue opportunities to do so, they move on to the next stage.

On the third floor individuals begin to detach themselves from the morality in the mainstream society and gradually adopt a "the ends justify the means" mentality. According to Moghaddam (2005), this process often takes place within different terrorist groups since it is seen as the only remaining option to address the perceived injustice and/or threat, while also providing a distinct group affiliation and identity. Those who continue to the fourth floor have embraced a moral position where any mean can be used in the war against the perceived evil.

On the fourth floor the individual undertakes a more rigorous categorical way of thinking in which the world is divided into a clear 'them' and 'us', which moves the individual closer to acts of violence (Moghaddam, Warren & Love, 2013). At this floor there are also high demands for obedience and conformity from an authoritarian figure, which further reduces the individual's freedom of action while making it difficult to leave the group (Moghaddam, 2005).

On the last floor the psychological mechanisms that normally inhibit someone from killing another are sidestepped through social categorization and a psychological distancing in the form of dehumanization (Moghaddam, Warren & Love, 2013). Below is an illustration of the staircase based on the original model (Moghaddam, Warren & Love, 2013, p. 638).

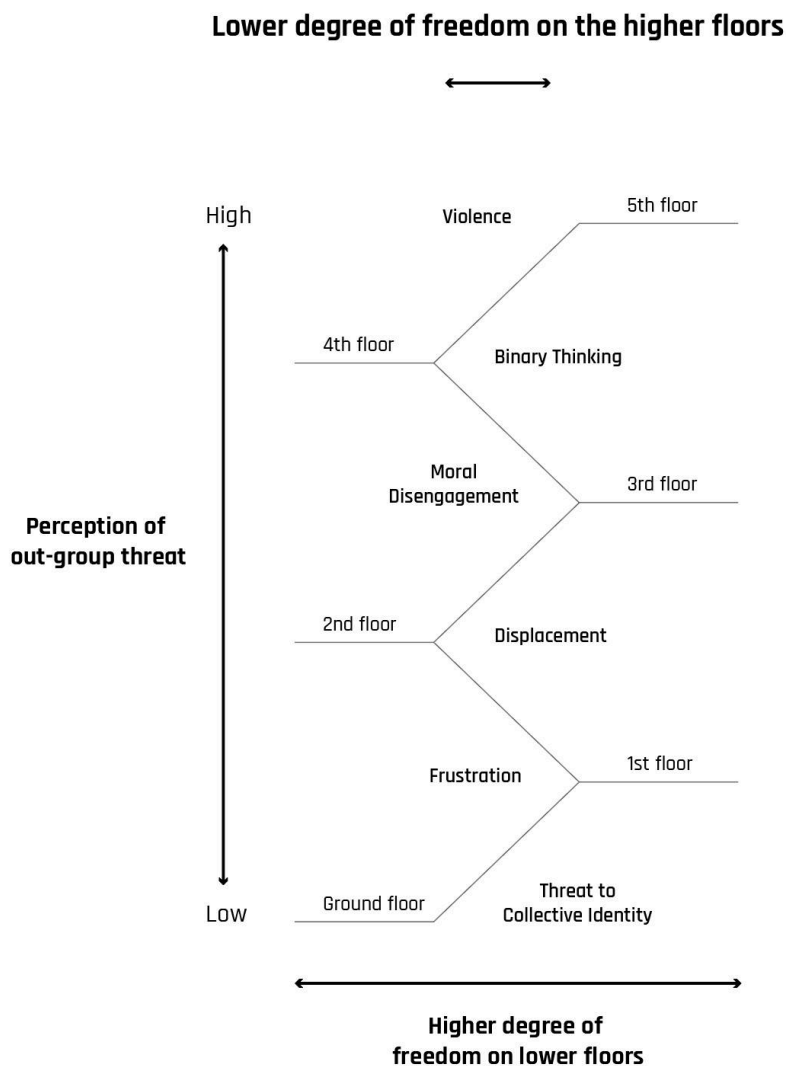


Figure 2.1 Staircase to Terrorism model (based on original illustration in Moghaddam, Warren & Love, 2013, p. 638)

2.3. Working-model

In the report of the results (see chapter 4), this thesis will draw from the central theoretical concepts presented in the theory chapter (see 2.2.). The four features that distinguish religious fundamentalism will be used to draw a big picture of the Army of God and set the stage for the social psychological theories. The working-model will thus begin by briefly describing how the Army of God features the characteristics of reactivity, selectivity, absolutism and dualistic thinking. These features can contribute to psychological processes that have the power of inducing acts of religiously motivated violence. The reactivity aspect constitutes an opportunity for an “us versus them” thinking. The features of selectivity and absolutism highlight the differences between the in-group and out-group, while also providing means for depersonalization. It further meets the personal need for meaning while constituting an opportunity for moral justifications, cognitive reconstructions and gains in significance. The dualistic thinking relates to the cognitive orientation used in social identity theory, Moghaddam’s staircase model and Bandura’s selective moral disengagement theory. It provides the means for stereotyp-

ing and dehumanizing the out-group while unifying the in-group by creating prototypes.

After setting the stage the thesis will use the Staircase to Terrorism model as a tool to organize the different theoretical concepts in this thesis. The structure will begin with the ground floor followed by the five higher floors. Before we continue however, it must be emphasized that this model should not be viewed as a chronological progression. The psychological processes that are represented in each floor can occur in a different order and in parallel with other floors. These processes may also develop simultaneously and mutually influence and/or reinforce each other. For instance, the desecration of a sacred value might create a moral outrage that strengthens a particular social identity that becomes threatened, or vice versa. The threat to a social identity might also make sense in the light of a collective meaning-system that can frame the perceived injustice, thus amplifying a social identity and sacred values as the collective meaning-system becomes more internalized. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Lygre, Eid, Larsson and Ranstorp (2011) the Staircase to Terrorism model can be used to present various contributing factors that together increase the likelihood of violence. Each floor in the working-model can thus be viewed as different dimensions that simultaneously reduce the degree of freedom for those who perceive themselves as threatened. For this reason, the working-model will not be visualized as a staircase but as a collection of dimensions that form the processes that contribute to religiously motivated violence. Each dimension will, however, retain the names used in Moghaddam's metaphor to facilitate reading and underline the working-models relation to the theories used in 2.2.

Ground floor:

The ground floor will function as a category to examine how the conflict is described, i.e. if abortion is seen as a desecration of something sacred and if there is a perceived injustice. This relates to a threat to the self in both the Staircase to Terrorism and social identity theory, as well as the process of sanctification.

First floor:

The first floor will be used as a category to examine if and how members have tried to solve the threat they experienced and what opportunities they perceived as closed.

Second floor:

The second floor will be used to examine how individuals vent their frustration through displacement onto an external enemy. This category will primarily concern the second condition for conflicts asserted by Herriot (2007). If conflicts are to occur in the first place it must be possible for the in-group members to compare themselves with other groups. The selection of an enemy on the second floor can thus be examined by looking at stereotypes of the out-group. In contrast to the fifth floor this floor will relate to *what* the members of the Army of God say about the out-group and not *how* they talk about them. This floor also relates to the third condition for conflicts. If the threat from the ground floor persists, individuals will perceive an increased insecurity, which they displace on a relevant out-group in an effort to regain security and self-esteem.

Third floor:

This floor will be the largest category in the working-model. It will involve the first and second conditions for conflicts, the internalization of a collective meaning-system and expressions of a moral disengagement.

First, it will be used to examine whether members within the Army of God emphasize any particular social identity, and how they express and emphasize their beliefs and values. This relates to the first condition for conflicts asserted by Herriot (2007). By investigating whether individuals within the Army of God often express and emphasize central beliefs and values to the collective meaning-system, we can examine if its social identity is salient. Strongly internalized beliefs and values thus imply a social identity that is internalized into the self. If this social identity also often directs one's behaviour it further suggests a strongly internalized in-group identity.

This floor will then be used to examine how the in-group prototype is perceived, if it is depersonalized and how it is related to the out-group. This relates to the second condition for conflicts in the form of the meta-contrast principle. According to social identity theory, the salience of a certain social identity depends on the social context. A certain social identity becomes especially salient if the similarities within one's own category and the differences with an out-group are maximized. However, in the context of the pro-life movement, the difference to other Christians might not be perceived as very great. In accordance with the meta-contrast principle, individuals that develop a readiness to physically displace their frustration must distinguish themselves from others fighting abortion.

Next it will be used to investigate how individuals affiliated to the Army of God are perceived, if the members express clear and explicit beliefs and values to hold and if there is a comparison between the prototypes and the stereotypes. It will also be used to examine whether members perceive themselves as maintaining God's truth and whether they believe in a forthcoming victory. This relates to the internalization of the collective meaning-system of the Army of God. This internalization can be seen as a way to meet the fundamental psychological needs of self-esteem and security pointed out by Herriot (2007).

Finally, the third floor will be used to examine the moral justifications used by the members, e.g. if there is any euphemistic language, advantageous comparisons or if the responsibility for the violent acts are displaced on God. This relates to Bandura's theory of selective moral disengagement. By making the violent response morally warranted and justifiable it can address a perceived injustice and threat to scared values, and thus tackle a loss of significance.

Fourth floor:

This category will be used to examine how the social context is perceived by the members (e.g. if it is a cosmic war or struggle) and if there is a strict comparison between prototypes and stereotypes of the in and out-group. It will also be used to investigate whether the beliefs and values of the in-group are perceived as absolute and whether there is an authoritative god image. This relates to the second condition for conflicts in the form of a rigorous categorical thinking process in which the world is divided into a clear 'them' and 'us'. It also relates to the third

condition for conflicts in the form of impermeability. A rigid categorical thinking suggests self-imposed boundaries and a reduced individual freedom. Impermeability can also be caused by an authoritarian god image with high demands for obedience and conformity. This might also relate to the process of sanctification since the fight against abortion can become sacred through a perceived duty to God.

Fifth floor:

The last floor will be used to examine how the members of the Army of God talk about the out-group, i.e., if they are stripped of human qualities and provokes emotions such as disgust, hate and contempt. This relates to the second condition for conflicts in the form of depersonalization and a severe differentiation between in-group and out-group. It also relates to Bandura’s selective moral disengagement in the form of demonization and an animalistic or mechanistic dehumanization.

Below is an illustration of the working-model.

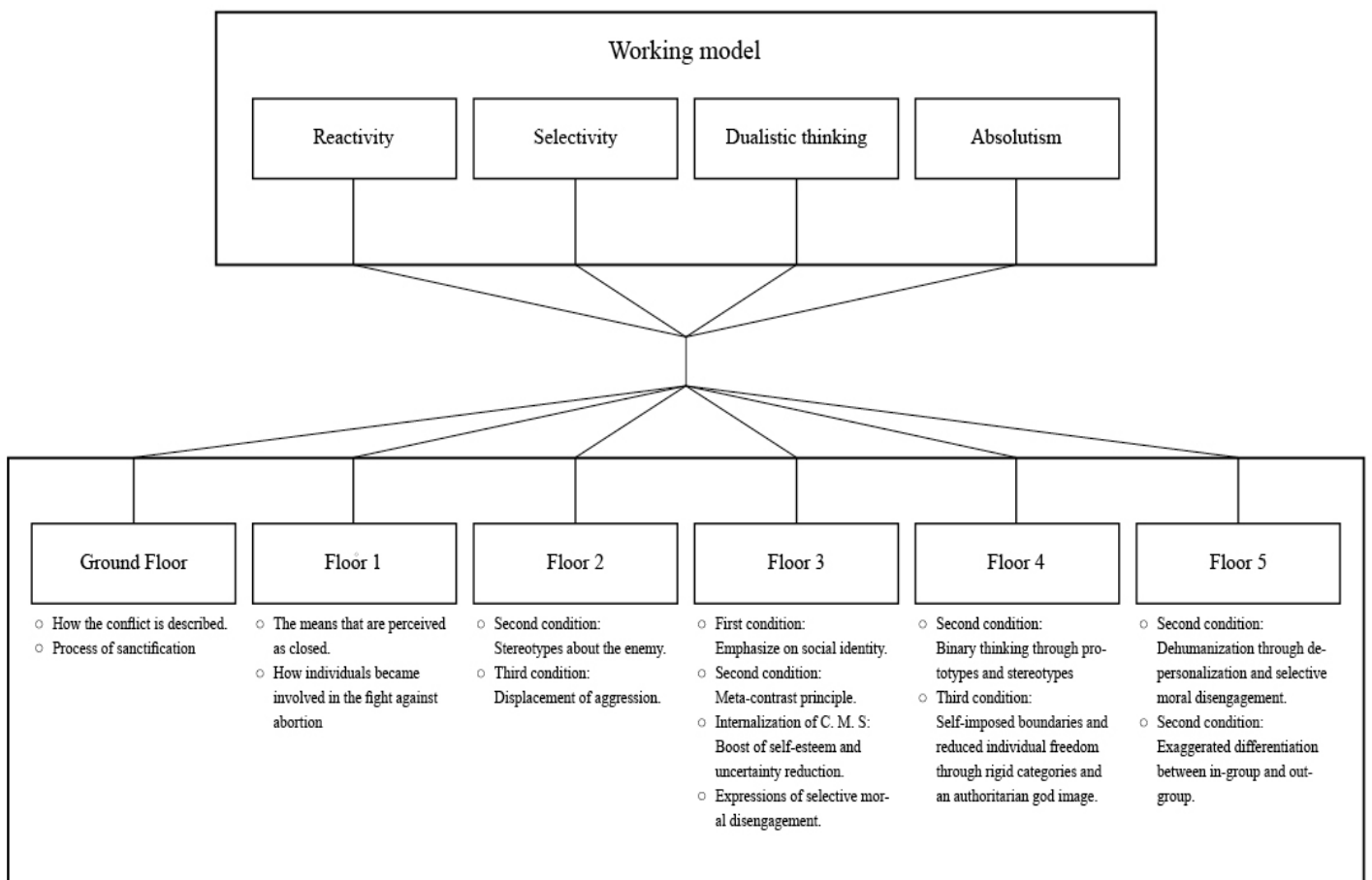


Figure 2.2 Working model

2.3.1. Propositions

Based on the theoretical framework used in this thesis we can derive the following suggestions:

- 1.** In the material there will be signs of a Christian social identity that is threatened by the secularized U.S. society through the legislation and practice of abortion. Abortion will represent an injustice and threat to the sanctity of life and is by extension a crime against God.
- 2.** In the material there will be descriptions of individuals within the Army of God who participated in different branches within the pro-life movement in an effort to influence procedural justice. In relation to this there will be expression of how such opportunities are perceived as closed.
- 3.** In the material there will be expressions of how the people within the Army of God displace their feelings onto the government, abortion doctors/staff, abortion clinics and the Supreme Court, which become representatives for the secular world.
- 4. A.** There will be signs of prototypes and beliefs/values that are emphasized and connected to Army of God's collective meaning-system. If so, this suggests a strongly internalized social identity, which implies that the first condition for conflicts asserted by the social identity theory is met.
- 4.B.** In the material there will be signs of a meta-contrast principle in relation to other pro-life movements, Christians and unbelievers.
- 4.C.** There will be signs of factors that fuel the internalization of the collective meaning-system by improving the member's self-esteem and reducing uncertainty. The self-esteem factors are a perceived belonging, perceived victories, a perceived status of being special/worthy and comparisons to out-group. The factors that reduce uncertainty are clear accounts about the world, themselves and others.
- 4.D.** There will be justifications for violence that can be related to Bandura's theory of selective moral disengagement in order to avoid a cognitive dissonance and to tackle a loss of significance.
- 5.A.** In the material there will be expressions of depersonalization and the meta-contrast principle between the prototypes and stereotypes in relation to abortion doctors and abortion clinics.
- 5.B.** There will also appear expressions of impermeability where the Army of God has clear boundaries between 'us' and 'them', for example, a battle between the forces of good and evil. Furthermore, there will be some expressions of God as an authoritarian figure with high demands for obedience and conformity.
- 6.** Since the collective meaning-system needs to sidestep the mechanisms that normally inhibit someone from killing another there will be expressions of dehumanization and a strict differentiation between the in-group and out-group.

Chapter 3 Method and Material

3.1. Method

In the following chapter I will describe the design and methods used in this qualitative study. The structuring of the chapter is based on three important components. The first is the researcher's *worldview assumptions*, the second is the *research design* related to the worldview and the third is the explicit *research methods* of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2014, p. 5). These three components will be presented in order to provide both a framework for the research methods and an explanation to the qualitative approach of this thesis. Through presenting my worldview assumptions this thesis will also display an increased transparency, which can enhance its quality (Johnson, 2012).

3.1.1. Worldview

Even though the researcher's own philosophic assumptions influence the study, it often remains hidden in the research. These assumptions must therefore be identified and accounted for (Creswell, 2014; Johnson, 2012). In the presentation of my own worldview, I follow Creswell's own understanding of the concept as:

a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study. Worldviews arise based on discipline orientations, students' advisors/mentors inclinations, and past research experiences. (Creswell, 2014, p. 6)

My own philosophical worldview is partly influenced by social constructionism, which assumes a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge (Burr, 2003). The social constructionist argues that people's subjective meanings about the world are negotiated socially and historically and that they are formed through interactions with others, thus the name social constructionism (Creswell, 2014). In accordance with social constructionism, I consider religions as social products created by persons living at a particular time and place. This does not, however, imply that there exist no religious truths or God. It only means that different religious beliefs are social constructions and that they might or might not contain an ultimate truth. The purpose of the psychological study of religion is not to determine whether religious truth claims are true or false, but rather to understand and explain religious behaviors, experiences, and phenomena (Hood, Hill & Spilka, 2009). My approach to research can thus be labeled as a *methodological agnosticism* (Sander & Andersson, 2015, p. 41), i.e. I leave the ontological questions of religion open for discussion.

Although I agree with social constructionism to a point, I believe that humans share an evolved psychological architecture with the same set of functional mechanisms. Religions can thus be seen as social constructs that emerge from our universal psychological systems. These can, however, only be universal to the same

extent that the environments from which they emerge is universal (Kirkpatrick, 2013). A contextual awareness is thus necessary and each phenomenon that is examined must be explained within the actual context and understood as a specific cultural and historical product. My philosophical worldview can therefore be seen as related to Critical realism, which argues that reality exists independent from our knowledge of it, while also acknowledging the existence and influence of social constructions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). If reality has certain characteristics and exists independently, it also puts a framework on how we can describe reality.

3.1.2. Research design

Research designs can be seen as different types of inquiries within qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method approaches that provide directions for the procedures in the research (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014). The strategy chosen for this thesis was a case study design. This is:

A design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Case studies are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using variety of data collection procedures. (Creswell, 2014, p. 14)

A case study tries to understand a particular unit or issue in depth. It is concerned with the complexity and particular context of the case in question (Bryman, 2012) The value of a case study design is that it deals directly with the individual unit or issue in its actual context. It gets as close as possible to the particular object of interest. The focus is the case itself and not the variables. It is mainly concerned with generating knowledge of the particular issue, but it can also be used for a theoretical elaboration or analytical generalization (Yin, 2015)

Case studies are a common research method in psychology and are used in many situations to understand complex social phenomena and group behavior (Yin, 2014). Case studies are adequate when the researcher poses *how* questions, has little control over events, focuses on a contemporary phenomenon and tests their theory (Yin, 2014). A case study design thus matched the aim and research question of this thesis. This design was also in line with the urging from Horgan (2014) to set aside *why* questions and instead devote more attention to *how* questions in order to better understand psychological processes behind extremism and terrorism. It was moreover relevant in relation to my worldview since I emphasize a contextual awareness where each phenomenon must be understood as a cultural and historical product bound to a particular context.

More specifically, this thesis used a *single-case design* (Yin, 2014, p. 50). This design is appropriate when a single case is relevant to a theoretical framework so it can be used in order to confirm, extend or challenge its theoretical suggestions (Yin, 2014; Bryman 2012). This applied to this thesis since the Army of God served as a relevant case for the theories and concepts presented in 2.2.

3.1.3. Research method

This component relates to the specific methods that are used to gather data and the forms of analysis and interpretation that are used in the study (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014). In this thesis the data was gathered through qualitative interviews and qualitative documents through the Army of God website and autobiographical books from various members. The qualitative research interview seeks to understand the world from the participant's point of view and elicit meaning out of his or her experiences (Creswell, 2014; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This is an important tool when investigating religiously motivated violence since our understanding of it can be enhanced by talking to people who have been or are still involved in this kind of violence (Horgan, 2014; Post, 2007). Furthermore, this method is one of the most important sources of information in a case study since it focuses directly on the case study topic (Yin, 2014). This made it essential to the research design. The advantage of using self-authored documents is that it offers an unobtrusive method to collect data while also providing an opportunity to access information that reflects the participant's own reality (Creswell, 2014, Yin, 2014). This kind of empirical material is important in understanding religiously motivated violence since it provides accessible and reliable information to the ideology of terrorist movements (Lindgren, 2009).

The current study conducted in-depth interviews with 3 prominent figures within the Army of God. Although this is a small number, it is reasonable since there are only a handful of known members that is not incarcerated. By focusing on fewer interviews this thesis could conduct a more thorough examination, which in turn can enhance the quality of an analysis (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Repstad, 2007). Two interviews were conducted in person and face-to-face. The third interview was conducted by telephone. The interviews were between 90-120 minutes, audio recorded and transcribed in a slightly modified verbatim mode (Malterud, 2014). Furthermore, the interviews were semi-structured and followed an interview guide. A semi-structured interview incorporates specific themes and follow-up questions that the interviewer asks each of the participants. The questions do not have to be asked in a consecutive order; instead, they can be brought up and discussed when the opportunity arises. The qualitative interview is open, flexible, and comparable to ordinary conversation (Bryman, 2012). In this thesis the interviews adopted a flexible approach where the interview guide functioned more as a memory list than a detailed scheme (the interview guide can be seen in appendix A).

The qualitative documents were gathered from the Army of God website where "Anti-abortion Heroes of the Faith" and "Prisoners of Christ" have posted numerous texts about their ideology and actions. The autobiographical books were gathered from the website as well, and via the meetings with the interview participants.

3.1.3.1. Selection of participants

The participants were selected based on a *purposive sample* (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). The participants were thus selected based on their relevance to the research question. Furthermore, this was made in a snowball fashion (i.e., asking participants to suggest someone else who might be appropriate and willing to participate in the study). Since the only possible contact for me was the Army of God web-

site, I used the contact information presented on the webpage to get in touch with individuals within the Army of God. To establish a first contact I sent an email with information about the study (this email can be seen in appendix C.) I then requested for the information to be sent to any relevant individual who could be interested in participating in the study. Through this method I managed to get in touch with 3 individuals (all male with similar age) within the Army of God, whom all were willing to be interviewed.

3.1.3.2. Themes for the interviews

The interviews were structured around 4 themes; *religious background*, *perceptions of the society*, *views on abortion*, and *perceptions about the Army of God*. Each of these themes relates to several of the theories and concepts in 2.3. For example, the religious background concerns a directing social identity and central beliefs and values (first condition for conflicts), issues of permeability (third condition for conflicts; e.g. image of God), as well as sanctification (e.g., by getting a sense of how an individual view something sacred). The second theme concerns perceptions of a threat (third condition for conflicts) and comparisons (internalization of C.M.S). The third theme relates to the process of sanctification, central beliefs and values (first condition for conflicts), stereotypes, prototypes and depersonalization (second condition for conflicts). The last theme is the largest and concerns all of the theories/concepts in the working-model. The concepts that relate to a selective moral disengagement are found within all themes, but in particular the third and fourth.

Since these themes relate to the concepts in 2.3 they also touch upon the features of religious fundamentalism. The reactivity aspect constitutes an opportunity for an “us versus them” thinking. The selectivity and absolutism features are highlighted through the differences between the in-group and out-group, which also provide the means for depersonalization. It can further meet the personal needs for meaning while constituting an opportunity for moral justifications and cognitive reconstructions. The dualistic thinking relates to the cognitive orientation used in social identity theory, Moghaddam’s staircase model and Bandura’s selective moral disengagement theory. It provides the means for stereotyping and dehumanizing the out-group while unifying the in-group by creating prototypes.

See appendix A for more information about the interview guide and the questions asked.

3.1.3.3. Selection of documents

The documents consist of self-authored texts and autobiographical books written by individuals that are presented as “Anti-abortion Heroes of the Faith” or “Prisoners of Christ” on the Army of God website (www.armyofgod.com). The thesis only included texts that express beliefs, values or norms in relation to abortion, or texts that have an inspiring function, justify violent acts or express how the Army of God distinguishes itself from other Christians.

3.1.3.4. Analytic questions

Based on the theoretical perspectives presented in the earlier chapter, several analytic questions were asked in the examination of the documents. These were based on the working-model presented in 2.3. See Appendix B for more information about these questions and how they relate to the theories.

3.1.3.5. Data analysis procedure

The collected data was analyzed through a deductive approach, which can be described as a theory-driven approach where existing theories are used top-down to explain and understand the case that is being examined (Malterud, 2014). The data analysis procedure followed a *Template Analysis Style* (Malterud, 2014, p. 113). Although this style involves risks in reproducing already known knowledge, it is adequate for sorting data based on existing theories and for providing a suitable starting point for new descriptions (Malterud, 2014). First, the raw data was organized and prepared for analysis by transcribing the interviews, optically scanning physical documents, and copying virtual texts from the Army of God website and converting them to PDF files. Next, all of the data was read in order to get a general sense of the information. Thereafter the decontextualization process begun by identifying meaning-bearing units in the material and classifying them into themes based on predetermined categories from the theories presented in 2.3., such as the *first condition for conflict* and *sanctification*. In this process the computer program MAXQDA11 was used to organize and sort the electronic information. The data was then structured into codes by bracketing text segments and writing words representing a category; for example, *stereotype*, *prototype* and *euphemistic language*. The data was then summarized and described. These descriptions are presented in chapter 4 and analyzed in chapter 5 by applying the theoretical perspectives presented in 2.2.

3.1.4. Validity and Reliability

In this thesis, several steps were carried out to check for the validity and reliability of the findings. In a qualitative approach, validity means the accuracy of the findings while reliability relates to the consistency of the research approach (Creswell, 2014).

3.1.4.1. Validity

To check for validity, the thesis used the following strategies:

Triangulation: By using different data sources of information and establish coherent themes based on these the validity can increase (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). In this thesis triangulation was applied by using documents and interviews as data sources.

Clarify bias: By being an honest, open, and self-reflective researcher, the validity of the study can be improved (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). This thesis applied this by being as forthcoming and transparent as possible throughout the research process and thesis.

Present negative or discrepant information: By presenting discrepant or negative information that runs counter to the researcher's assumptions and expectations, the validity can be improved (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). This is accomplished by discussing information that contradict the themes and theories presented in this thesis. This will be done in chapter 6.

Pattern matching: It is important to check whether the empirical material and the theoretical ideas that the researcher develops in the study match. If so, the validity

can improve (Bryman, 2012). This can be achieved by *pattern matching*, which is the comparison between empirical based patterns predicted before the collected data and the findings of the case study (Yin, 2014, p. 143). This thesis applies pattern matching by formulating suggestions based on the theories presented in 2.3.1., and discussing these in chapter 6.

Analytic generalization: The validity of a case study improves in relation to the extent to which the findings can be analytically generalized to situations outside the case study where it can shed light about some theoretical principles or concepts (Yin, 2014, p. 41). This was addressed by posing a descriptive research question and by applying appropriate theories and theoretical concepts that can be corroborated, modified, advanced or rejected. Whether the empirical results supported or challenged the theories are discussed in chapter 6.

3.1.4.2. Reliability

In order to minimize biases and errors the thesis used the following strategies:

Checking transcripts: By double-checking transcripts the accuracy of the information can increase (Creswell, 2014, p. 203). This was applied in this study to make sure that no obvious mistakes were made during the transcription.

Checking codes: By checking the codes so that their meaning is not confused the reliability can increase (Creswell, 2014, p. 203). In this thesis the data was constantly compared with the codes. It also had written memos about each code and its definition to make sure that there was no shift in its meaning during the coding process.

Case study database: By establishing a database with the raw data the research procedure can be followed, thus increasing the reliability (Yin, 2014, p. 123-124). In this thesis the case study database was created as an electronic folder in which I placed all the compiled data from this case study. The only information not disclosed in the database was the collected information from the interviews since it would jeopardize confidentiality promised to the participants.

In addition to these three procedures, the supervisor of this thesis read the transcripts, as well as the codes in order to reach an agreement on how the codes would be used. A high level of agreement was reached in the independent coding of the material by author and supervisor.

3.2. Ethical issues in research

Research entails gathering data both from and about individuals, thus the researcher needs to consider ethical issues throughout the research process in order to protect human subjects (Yin, 2015). In anticipating these ethical issues Creswell (2014) recommend the researcher to address them in relation to different phases of the study.

Prior to the study the researcher should consider codes of ethics provided by professional associations within one's research area (Creswell, 2014). In this study the research followed the ethical principles developed by The Swedish Research

Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011). These principles are the information requirement, the requirement of consent, the confidentiality requirement, and the utilization requirement. These were observed in the following way: in the email to the members I introduced myself and gave a brief introduction to my research project. The individuals were informed that his or her participation was entirely voluntary and that s/he could withdraw from the study at any point. The members were also informed that the interviews would be audio-recorded. If the participant refused to be audio-recorded s/he would be excluded from the study. The participants were also informed that they would be treated in a confidential manner and that they could be anonymous if they wished (i.e., no one other than myself and my supervisor would have access to the collected information). After the interviews, the participants were given the opportunity to receive more information about the research project and how they could contact me if they had any further questions. In accordance with suggestions from Repstad (2007) the participants was also informed that the data collected about them would only be used for research purposes.

During the data collection phase it is important to respect the potential imbalance of power when interviewing the participant (Creswell, 2014). In accordance with Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) the study addressed this issue by avoiding leading questions and disclosing sensitive information. The questions were designed to be as open as possible and with an emphasis on *how*, *when*, and *what* questions so that the participants could talk about their beliefs and values without being influenced by myself as an interviewer. This further prevented the possibility of only answering yes or no to the questions. The questions were also formulated as short and specific as possible in order to have a relaxed conversation without any misunderstandings.

During the analysis of the data the researcher must avoid revealing only positive results (Creswell 2014). In a qualitative study the researcher needs to convey the full range of the findings, including those that run contrary to the themes and theories hypothesized (Malterud, 2014). Thus this study will describe multiple perspectives, as well as, report both confirming and inconsistent results. This will be done in chapter 6.

The last phase relates to the reporting, sharing, and storage of the data (Creswell, 2014). This study applied the strategies presented in 3.1.4 to check for accuracy and consistency. The study will also be published and publicly available on the DIVA portal, which is a database for research publications and student theses in Sweden. Finally, it is vital to keep the raw data for a reasonable period of time (Creswell, 2014). This study will follow the guidelines provided by APA and keep the raw data safe for 5 years (APA, referred in Creswell, 2014, p. 100). After this period the audio-recordings will be deleted.

3.1. Material

The research material consists of 43 documents (about 140 000 words) and 4 autobiographical books (about 770 pages), written by individuals that are presented as “Anti-abortion Heroes of the Faith” or “Prisoners of Christ” on the Army of

God website (www.armyofgod.com). It also includes 1 anonymous manual/manifest (The Army of God Manual), which could be considered representative of the Army of God's goals and ideals. The documents were retrieved from the Army of God website (www.armyofgod.com) 2016-01-18. In addition to these I conducted interviews (between 90 and 120 minutes) with 3 prominent figures within the Army of God movement (see Juergensmeyer, 2003; Stern, 2003; Kressel, 2007; Jefferis, 2011 for an overview). The interviews were conducted in the spring of 2015 and make up about 5 hours in total. The presentation of the material in chapter 4 will be done in two sections, the first consists of the data collected from the interviews and the second consist of the data retrieved from the autobiographical texts.

The material includes only texts that express beliefs, values or norms in relation to abortion, or texts that have an inspiring function, justify violent acts or express how the Army of God distinguishes itself from other Christians. Any text not self-authored by a member was excluded (except the Army of God Manual). All of the texts are summarized and presented collectively according to the categories in the working-model (see 2.3.). However, since the writings of the Army of God are extensive the presentation of the texts is focused on the underground and anonymous *Army of God Manual*, and the two books *A time to Kill* by Michael Bray and *Mix My Blood with the Blood of The Unborn* by Paul Hill. These 3 texts are arguably the most seminal and representative works within the movement (Ingersoll, 2013; Jefferis, 2011; Juergensmeyer, 2003; Stern, 2003).

Chapter 4 Results

This chapter presents the material found during the data collection (see 3.1.). This is done in two sections, the first consists of the data collected from the interviews and the second consists of the data retrieved from the autobiographical texts. Each section is arranged according to the categories in the working-model (see 2.3.).

4.1. Presentation of the interviews

To draw a picture of the collective meaning-system of the Army of God, the interviews are presented collectively with exemplifying quotations from the respondents. This also has the advantage of preserving the anonymity of the respondents. In order to retain confidentiality all of the respondents have fictitious names and there will be no reference for the citations in the text.

4.1.1 Religious fundamentalism

This section illustrates how the Army of God features the characteristics of reactivity, selectivity, dualistic thinking and absolutism. However, it is important to remember the ambiguity of the Army of God. It is not an organization since it lacks a hierarchy or structure. This was also stressed by the members in the Army of God during the interviews. For example:

The Army of God that you have heard about, that movies have been made about, and that has been written about, it is not really a structured organization. There is no list of members anywhere, nobody pays dues to belong, and nobody issues orders to anybody else telling them what to do. So, there isn't actually an army of God per se. (Interview with Jacob)

A similar remark was made by another respondent. When I asked him to describe the Army of God and its members he replied that it is:

[...] very difficult because we don't keep any list. Then people are at different stages of commitment. There are people who agree with us but never do anything. We don't know whether to include them or not. Some would say yes they are and some would say no. Usually they won't say no but they won't answer. There are a lot of those, there are a lot of people who agree with us but they are not involved. There are the people all the way in, there are people who do little stuff and as you go in there are people doing more and more stuff, who are committed all the way in. Then there are people whose entire life is committed to save the babies. So there is a whole big spectrum and I have no idea of the number, because I don't keep track, I don't keep anything because of the authorities. (Interview with Daniel)

The ambiguity was also stressed by the third respondent, who highlighted that the Army of God is “undefined other than saying that there are people who would be apologists for the use of force” (Interview with Ben). He further asserted that:

Anyone who believes that there is a time to use force to save innocent people, that it is legitimate, even when it is disapproved by the government. You could say that would be a contemporary definition of an Army of God member. (Interview with Ben)

However, the Army of God is not merely a term:

[...] is not just a term. But there is no organization that the government can go after. A federal grand jury investigation thoroughly investigated and they came to that conclusion. That there is no such organization per se. (Interview with Jacob)

A more fitting description of the Army of God could thus be that of a loose network or a form of leaderless resistance:

So it's like a nebulous organization, it is loosely knit as they say. They say it is loosely knitted underground organization, so it is not normal things that this and this, or read this. We don't have anything like that. If someone wants to read something they can read the peoples writings on the Internet [...] If they want more than that they can write to the prisoners, the people that have done stuff. But it's up to them. They have to go their own way (Interview with Daniel).

However, even these descriptions are limited in portraying the Army of God. Similar to leaderless resistance, the Army of God has a unity in purpose but in contrast it exists an interaction between individuals affiliated with the Army of God. For example:

I keep in touch with other guys who have done what I have done. And, of course, the only ones that I know are the ones that have gotten caught. [...] So the only ones that I know are the ones who have gotten caught, gone prison and served their time and gotten out. [...] we get together and have cookouts, from time to time. Most of us live to far from one and another too get together often. (Interview with Jacob)

He further pointed out that “I am not aware of any network of people who have never been caught. I am not aware of any conspiracies between people that have never been caught or done prison time” (Interview with Jacob).

In contrast to other forms of leaderless resistance the Army of God is not set up in a network manner with different nodes that share a strategic direction. During the interviews it became clear that the relationship between individuals is rather based on a shared commitment to a specific set of beliefs where individuals join the Army of God in an abstract sense. The link amongst the individuals is the resonance between one's worldview and the collective meaning-system of the Army of God. To illustrate the collective meaning-system of the Army of God the thesis will turn to the 4 characteristics of religious fundamentalism.

4.1.1.1. Reactivity

During the interviews the respondents expressed how U.S. society has turned away from God since abortion is legal and practiced. The society is often viewed as increasingly secularized and fellow Christians who do not oppose abortion are described as confused, hypocritical or phony. An example on this is when one of the respondents pointed out that the U.S. is “a very wicked society. But there is a minority of strong Christians here still. And so I am hoping that we will be able to restore this country” (Interview with Jacob).

When I asked him to elaborate on why it is not a Christians society he replied that it is “because of abortion. The killing of babies. The shedding of innocent blood. And all the sexual immorality” (Interview with Jacob).

Another example is when another respondent stated that:

there were a lot of Christians here and Christianity was integrated into the society but now it's not. Since they turned their back to God and went after their idols I believe God's punishment will be coming. (Interview with Daniel)

He later explained that “there are a lot of phony Christians in America, people who are Christians in name only and they can be for abortion, for everything” (Interview with Daniel).

Similar remarks were made by the third respondent. When asked how Christians view abortion he replied that:

any Christian that is a real Christian calls it murder. Confused Christians call it something else. It is just flat out murder! [...] There are those who, I suppose, somehow maintain this schizophrenia. They say on one hand there is a baby but when you kill the baby it is not murder. I say it is a schizophrenia. (Interview with Ben)

He further described how the U.S. has become secularized in the following way:

When I was a child in the sixties the schools in variety of states, I would move from state to state, my father was a navy man, we would move from state to state every year or two and so I experienced a lot of states and we always prayed in the schools. And the teachers would open up with prayer and there was no doubt which god we were talking about. It was the triune God even though it was not always said that he was triune, it was understood who we were talking about. We weren't referring to Jews or Muslims or anybody else. It was understood the Christian God. And this was erased essentially by the federal government, imposing its godless standards upon the rest of the country. So we became secularized, and I would say paganized from the top down. It doesn't mean that we don't have Christians running around still meeting together and carrying out their lives and trying to exercise influence, but statutorily, as a matter of law, and that is the fact in as pretty much we defer to the Supreme Court, one of the three branches that we have allowed to rule, and so really we have almost an exclusion of Christianity by one branch of the government, which has been exalted to our most monarchical condition. A monarchical state, we have the monarchy of the Supreme Court and it is godless, it is a godless court. (Interview with Ben)

4.1.1.2. Selectivity

The respondents often emphasized the fight against abortion and the importance of opposing it. The reason that the society is wicked and sinful is primarily because of abortion, and the issue is a divider between true and corrupted Christians. Abortion is seen as something atrocious and grievous that should be unconditionally prohibited. An example on the importance of the issue is given by one of the respondents, who stated that:

It is very important to me to take a stand for the oppressed and the helpless, like preborn babies. Especially preborn babies. [...] I feel I have a duty to speak up for them, to take a stand for them. (Interview with Jacob)

He further explained that:

Well everybody that has called themselves members of the Army of God, they were only focused on abortion. So obviously we are all absolutely opposed to abortion. (Interview with Jacob)

4.1.1.3. Dualistic thinking

The fight against abortion is frequently viewed as a fight between light and darkness, or as an absolute war between good and evil. Abortion is seen as something truly and completely evil while abortion clinics are equivalent to concentration camps or even hell. An example of this view was given by one of the respondents:

I was just telling my daughters, ‘who is out there’, when we were out today at the abortion clinic, across from the abortion clinic there is a crisis pregnancy center where Christians provide for an alternative. Right across the street, has been established and it is paid by money donated by Christians, there it is right across the street. The light and the darkness, standing right next to each other, and there are people out there and they were Christian people. Once again, you have the influence of God’s people in the world, and what a foul world it would be without them. What darkness there would be here without God’s people. (Interview with Ben)

4.1.1.4. Absolutism

The respondents clearly expressed an absolute view on God’s truth and Scripture. Obeying God and advocating God’s law is described as being of utmost importance. Justice is defined by God’s word and Scripture is seen as the only source for a proper understanding of what it means. For example, one respondent stressed that Scripture:

should inform our conscience, it should inform every individual’s conscience as well as every community’s conscience and every government’s mindset. God’s word should inform those things. (Interview with Ben)

He further explained that just war and the use of force is justified through the holy Scripture:

We justify these kind of things because we have this principle of there is an ultimate right and ultimate wrong, and it comes from God and there is an authority above each government. Above each king and it is God’s authority. (Interview with Ben)

A similar remark was made by another respondent. When asked if the use of force is justified by the scriptures he replied:

Yes, there are scriptural examples for that. For example, how the good kings on Israel, the Lord in the Bible commanded them for tearing down alters of human sacrifice in the Old Testament. And Gideon in the book of Judges, he did the same thing. And the Lord called his people to go to war against their enemies. That is all through the first Kings, the second Kings, first Chronicles, second Chronicles, first Samuel, second Samuel and the book of Judges, and even in the book of Deuteronomy. So it is because it is war. When people who are in power and government participate in the slaughter of innocent people that is war. So acts of just defensive warfare are justified. (Interview with Jacob)

The supreme importance of the Bible was also emphasized by the third respondent:

we go by the holy Bible and that is our source book for everything. So we are committed to believe, what the Bible teaches is what we believe no matter what. We believe the Bible was given to us by God, as God’s word to us so we know what the truth is and what we are supposed to do, and what we are supposed to obey. (Interview with Daniel)

Furthermore, he describes the faith within the Army of God in the following manner:

our faith is really in the word of God, only in the word of God and in God himself. Faith in God. I mean this is not organized religion, this is pure faith in the Bible and pure faith in God and obeying God. (Interview with Daniel)

4.1.2. Ground floor

The respondents expressed how they felt persecuted and marginalized. Society is described as wicked and anti-Christian, and the government is viewed as evil and oppressive. Abortion is seen as a severe injustice and the decision of *Roe V Wade* in 1973 is perceived as a major turning point. Abortion is further described as an evil and horrendous act since it kills the innocent who are created in the image of God. Christians therefore have a duty, directly from God, to prevent abortion by all means necessary. One of the respondents described it in the following way:

I think now that we are very far away from God. There are a lot of Christians here but the society is not. The society is actually very anti-Christian and it's getting worse. There will be prosecutions coming to Christians in this country. Probably in the near future there will be prosecutions coming. There is already some. Some people have been losing their jobs and they get harassing phone calls. I have been punched one time and I gotten death threats and stuff. So it's coming. It's been going on but now it seems to have escalated and it's escalating very fast. (Interview with Daniel)

When I asked how he views abortion he replied:

I believe it's the murder of an unborn child, and it's very sad 'cause I'm at the abortion clinics and I see the women go in and I know they have their own child within them that God gave them. Their babies are living in them and they are the mother of that child, and the mother goes in there to have her child killed. [...] It's too much for words. It's beyond comprehension and words. I see it with my own eyes but it is hard to believe it's actually happening. That mothers are walking into this place and paying someone money to kill their own child. To me it's no difference as if they took their baby in their arms in there and then have it killed. There is no difference. So it's a horrendous act. [...] it's a horrible thing and it's happening all over the place. In every city it's going on. It's an evil thing. (Interview with Daniel)

He further stated that:

God created them in his image, in his likeness and the government is allowing them to be murdered. Not only is the government allowing them to be murdered, a lot time the government is paying for them to be murdered and on top of that the government is protecting them. People that will go out and try to stop these babies from being murdered, the government comes against those people and to protect the baby killer. (Interview with Daniel)

Another example of this is when another respondent stressed that abortion is “very grievous to me, and horrifying to me. I grieve for these babies, I feel bad for them, and I love them” (Interview with Jacob).

He further asserted that:

Those who oppose us because they hate God and want to kill ... human beings are special because we are created in the image of God. And so it is a horrible thing to kill the innocent. (Interview with Jacob)

An example of the view of *Roe V Wade* is when a respondent stated that it was:

a very evil decision. It could be a turning point in the country 'cause God's wrath will be poured out on bloodshed, God can't ignore it, all these untold millions of innocent children

being murdered. God can't just ignore that. He is a just God. He is a righteous God. He is not going to ignore that and so it was a very evil decision. (Interview with Daniel)

The decision is also seen as oppressive. One respondent described it in the following way:

Again that was just tyranny! It was just court that imposed that. Now maybe they were licking their fingers and sticking it in the air and thought that was the proper course in the midst of the sex revolution. Maybe they thought that goes with the sex revolution and we gonna have one with the other. They may have [caught] it at a time when it was tolerable for some people. But it was an act of tyranny. It was not a legitimate act of the legislative process, which is what it should have been. We made the law, so it is supposed to be made by the legislator and not decreed by the courts. And that is what this was. It was just a tyrannical decree, which should not have been respected by any of the states. But the states, the governors, the rulers of the states apparently don't have the character or the courage, the integrative to do the right thing and simply refuse. Refuse to enforce a renegade decision. (Interview with Ben)

4.1.3. First floor

The respondents described different but also similar paths to how they became engaged in the fight against abortion. They have a background in Operation Rescue, were active in crisis pregnancy centers (CPSs), or participated in different marches and demonstrations protesting abortion. An example of this was given by one of the respondents:

It was in the eighties. The Reagan era, it was a big issue. It was coming up because Reagan was speaking about it so it was a lot more in the news. So I hadn't thought much about it up until then. This is early eighties, so it has been legal for a decade before I even gave it a thought. And it was just a matter of... I was alive spiritually and in the word God, and I was teaching it at Church. So I was very much engaged in the Scriptures, in God's word, and again it was coming into the news. I became aware of it. So that was it. Literature was brought to me by a friend and this woman came up when I was teaching about it. And yes, we started a pregnancy center. Our church did, because we brought her testimony before the church and she talked about the fact that she had had four abortions, back when they were illegal. (Interview with Ben)

Furthermore, the engagement in activities such as demonstrations and CPSs were never viewed as useless by the respondents. However, sometimes other Christians were perceived as doing too little or failing in their fight against abortion. An example of this is when one of the respondents made a remark about the pro-life movement:

When I started there were almost no pro-life groups but now it's pro-life groups everywhere and almost all of them raise money, they don't do anything they just raise money. I don't know what they do. They might have a convention or something and they might do some little thing but they do almost nothing. And every email I get from them is 'send us money', 'help stop abortion' and 'send us twenty dollars'. Me sending them twenty dollars is not going to stop abortion. (Interview with Daniel)

Another example is when one respondent pointed out that there has been a failure amongst other Christians:

They are often just silent and will talk about nothing but people's souls rather than the fact that they have bodies too, and that there are just ways of treating people and unjust ways of treating people, and sometimes they need to address matters of law and government. There has certainly been a failure there, but then again, it is not to say, I'm pointing out the example of crisis pregnancy centers, the church continues to perform all kinds of deeds of mercy

for people. And members of the church have advocated in other non-profit organizations, political organizations and so forth, their involvement here in the world, and thank God for it. (Interview with Ben)

He furthermore stressed the necessity of using other means:

There are different levels of defensive action that are justifiable. In this particular circumstances when you have the law protecting the killing, you can't just walk in and shine the light on it and say 'hey you are killing somebody!', 'You should stop!', 'You shouldn't do that!'. You get dragged away. Because the law protects the killer, the only way the defender, sometimes, can defend the child is by covert action. (Interview with Ben)

4.1.4. Second floor

Throughout the interviews the respondents expressed clear stereotypes and pictures of their perceived enemies. Society is described as horrible and wicked and pro-choice movements are seen as oppressive advocates of injustice. The government is evil and god-hating while abortion doctors are viewed as deceiving monsters with the intent of killing as many innocent children as possible. During the interviews the abortion doctors were mostly referred to as "abortionists", "baby-killers" and "mass murderers" while the abortion clinics was described as "abortion mills". One example of this is when one of the respondents stated the following about abortion doctors:

They should be in prison. They should be on death row. To me they are mass murderers. They have murdered all these innocent people. I understand the laws of the country so legally you can't put them in jail but the laws of the country should put them on death row for murdering all these children. When I hear about abortion doctors, that they got shot I'm glad because that person is not killing any more babies. Someone stopped him from murdering any more babies. Christians don't like me saying that. That's why they separate themselves from me a lot but that's what I believe. That doctor, I don't call them doctors I just call them abortionists, but they go in there and murder people for money, they murder innocent little children for money. (Interview with Daniel)

4.1.5. Third floor

Since this is the largest category in this chapter it is divided into 4 parts that involve the first and second conditions for conflicts, the internalization of a collective meaning-system and expressions of a moral disengagement.

Emphasized social identity:

During the interviews the respondents often expressed strong beliefs and values that they shared with each other, such as obeying God and the necessity of using violence in the fight against abortion. They also stressed that God doesn't teach pacifism. By loving God and by loving one's neighbor as oneself, one has a holy duty to God to protect the unborn child by any means. One example of this is when a respondent told me the following:

Jesus commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves and do unto others as you would want them to do unto you, and if someone would kill me by sucking me to pieces by a vacuum sucking machine I would like someone to stop them. (Interview with Daniel)

All the respondents also described a Christian upbringing while stressing the importance of their faith. They explained how their faith is central and foundational, it influenced their daily life thoroughly and had done so for the greater part of

their lives. The respondents further stated that their faith is paramount in the choices they make in life and that it has always or mostly been so. This faith is further related to the Army of God and the fight against abortion. One example of this is when a respondent described how his faith and love for God gave him the courage to firebomb an abortion clinic:

If God doesn't give you the grace to carry such an act out, you can't do it. Because sometimes people say to me 'you are right brother, it is justified but I am too scared to do it'. And I tell them 'well I was too scared to do it too'. I couldn't do that; it was the grace of God that enabled me to do this for my neighbor. So I understand what it is to be too afraid to do it. I was too afraid to do it too but the Lord gave me the strength to do it, gave me the grace to do it. (Interview with Jacob)

Perception of the in-group prototype:

The respondents described themselves in terms of "real Christians", "defenders", "good-doers" and "righteous". This stands in stark contrast to abortion doctors who are perceived as "mass-murderers" or the "wicked" society that allows and practices abortion.

It also stands in contrast to Christians that condemn the use of force. These are described as the "phony", "hypocritical", "blind" or "confused". An example of this was when one of the respondents told me the following:

They say in one hand there is a baby but when you kill the baby it is not murder. I say it is a schizophrenia. And they say it is not a murder because the law says it is ok. And of course I would say 'well the law used to say that it was ok to beat your slave'. That is not even as clear as the baby issue. I mean it is possible to say that a person can have a servant and... beat a servant that is not working properly. I suppose one even might defend that but killing a child is a lot less defensible than beating a slave. And yet everyone is abhorred by beating a slave and can't believe that we used to do that. And again that is much more defensible than is killing a child. So when Christians can't come out straightforward and say... the killing of a child is wrong, even if they can't call it murder because the law allows it, if they can't flat out say it is wrong, unconscionable, and must be prohibited and can be tolerated under no circumstances, if they can't say that they are just blind or useless or deceived. (Interview with Ben)

Furthermore, the pro-life movement is viewed as being ineffective, corrupted or spineless. An example of this is the following:

the pro-life movement believe in being nice and polite. But there are some times when the Christian thing is not to be nice but to push. To fight. Sometimes it is unchristian to fight, sometimes it is unchristian not to fight for an innocent and helpless victim. [...] the prolife movement, they try to pass laws and if they can't get a total ban on abortion then they try to compromise with partial bans. But that has never worked. They have been trying that for 40 years and it has never worked. But they keep trying and trying and offering new compromises. You know what Albert Einstein said what the definition of insanity is? He said that insanity is trying the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. (Interview with Jacob).

Internalization of the collective meaning-system:

As shown earlier, the respondents expressed clear and explicit beliefs and values. The Bible is of the utmost importance and justice is defined by God's word. The use of violence is further perceived as being justified and decreed through the holy Scripture. The core value is the absolute opposition to abortion and belief that one should use any means necessary to prevent it. In addition, these are described as being true Christian beliefs and values that are shared among all of the mem-

bers in the Army of God. The membership was described in the following way by one of the respondents:

anyone that, who embraces the name and embraces the idea of the use of force to defend the innocent. I suppose that would be the values. Anyone who believes that there is a time to use force to save innocent people, that it is legitimate, even when it is disapproved by the government. You could say that would be a contemporary definition of an Army of God member. (Interview with Ben)

In comparison to other Christians the members viewed themselves as devoted, consistent, truthful, and assertive. They further saw themselves as God's people in a sinful world, representing and proclaiming an essential part of God's truth. One respondent summarized it in the following way:

There are so many different Biblical principles' that are God's truth. We are not promoting them all, we are just trying to save the children. That is the truth that we are focused on. It's protecting the innocent, treating our neighbor as we want to be treated. That is the truth that we are focused on. (Interview with Daniel)

The Army of God is also seen as being successful in preventing abortion. However, the view of its success or ultimate victory was nuanced. An example of this is when I asked one of the respondents if the Army of God has had any success in its goals:

Oh yeah. Look at Scott Roeder. He shot George Tiller. He was the only abortionist in that whole area of Kansas and it took two years or something before they even had another abortionist there. So in that whole place you couldn't get an abortion for two years. So how many children were saved during that whole time? That's a lot of children saved. And that's a bigger picture of enacting God's law and to the government but that's... I think that's beyond us at this point. So right now it's just going focus on the front line. (Interview with Daniel)

A similar remark was made by another respondent concerning an ultimate victory:

I am positive that the Lord will give us complete victory someday. If you had asked me 30 years ago if it would go on this long, I would have said no. But here we are all this time later still going on. But I believe that the Lord will give us complete victory someday, but the victory will only be able to won by people who will not compromise. (Interview with Jacob)

The Army of God further seems to provide a sense of belonging. The respondents pointed out that it connects people to each other, or that it constitutes a feeling of warmth and camaraderie. For example, one respondent expressed that "the most devastating form of loneliness is to not to be able to find anybody who thinks the way you do" (Interview with Jacob), and that this is why the Army of God is so important since "people are drawn to other people who think the way they do" (Interview with Jacob). Another respondent described it in the following way:

It is like Christians. I have a relationship with all Christians. I have a stronger relationship with Christians that have a high view of the Bible and the trinity. And the more we agree the closer the relationship. But I don't always meet all those people. So you could say the same if you want to use the Army of God term, which is undefined other than saying that there are people who would be apologists for the use of force. (Interview with Ben)

Another description made by one respondent was that of a vehicle and focal point:

I guess it is a cohesive, a vehicle that brings us together though, with the prisoners and other people that support the prisoners and people finding out more and stuff. It is a focal point for people, so it is important I guess, as a focal point for people who want to know more information and help the prisoners or get involved. (Interview with Daniel)

Selective moral disengagement:

Throughout the interviews the respondents made use of a euphemistic language, displacement of responsibility and advantageous comparisons. The word violence was never used unless it refers to abortions. When used to describe the actions of the Army of God it is always replaced with terms like “force”, “defending”, “stopping” or “forceful defensive action”. The use of “force” is further justified by referring to the holy scriptures and obeying God’s will. Non-violent acts are seen as ineffective and the use of “force” is often viewed as the only option in preventing suffering and bloodshed. Abortion doctors are also frequently compared to Nazis and the abortion clinics are seen as concentration camps. An example is when one respondent stated that “anybody that would promote and defend killing unborn children is just, to me, they are like Nazis” (Interview with Daniel). Another example is given by another respondent who described his view of abortion clinics in the following way:

They are the equivalent of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. They are the moral equivalent of the concentration camps where Jews were slaughtered in the 1940s. Because of the babies are equal to the victims of the Nazis in Europe in the 1940s. So abortion is as heinous as genocide that took place back then 70 years ago. That is how I see abortion facilities. (Interview with Jacob)

An example of the necessity of using “force” is when one respondent told me that “the would be defender is left to no choice but to use covert action. Force. Blowing places up. Shooting abortionists” (Interview with Ben). Demonization was also frequently used. This is addressed in the last section (fifth floor). However, an attribution of blame, distortion of sequence of events, or diffusion of responsibility were infrequent or nonexistent.

4.1.6. Fourth floor

The respondents clearly expressed a binary division of the world in two opposing camps, the good vs the evil. The fight against abortion is viewed as an ongoing war where you are either a true and devoted Christian following God’s decree or you are a part of the sinful and wicked society. As a truthful Christian one has a holy duty to God to act, in whatever way possible, to prevent abortion that is pure evil, permissible through the oppressive and evil government, and executed by the mass murdering “abortionists”. The perception of the enemy is also framed in a fixed dichotomy. The society has to embrace the will of God or it is evil and sinful, a truthful Christian has to be unconditionally opposed to abortion or they are corrupted and blind, and an “abortionist” deserves a capital punishment unless s/he repents and asks God for forgiveness.

Furthermore, the respondents frequently stated that “God’s law commands us to protect the innocent” or that “the Lord called his people to go to war against their enemies”, or viewed the struggle as a “war wedge against us”. God’s word and will are understood as absolute and as a truthful Christian one has to be absolutely

opposed to abortion. An example of the central place of God is when one respondent explained that God:

is the one who must be and is central to any who is fully alive spiritual and intellectually and morally I think. He is the center for them. The foundation for them. And so I think it is for me. I live or die by his will. (Interview with Ben)

The importance of God in the fight against abortion is also described by another respondent:

I'm glad that God choose me to go this path. I feel privileged that I was chosen to go this path. So I'm very thankful to the Lord Jesus. He saved me, he filled me with the Holy Ghost and then he put me on this path and everything I ever wanted and he put me in this path to do his work, to proclaim his truth. So it is beyond words. My joy is beyond words that he is using me like this. (Interview with Daniel)

Another example is when one respondent explained that he felt a duty to God to firebomb an abortion clinic:

I knew that God had read my mind, he knew what I thought. He knew that I had seen this, had this insight, and he knew that I had thought about burning these places. So I was never ashamed to have done it for him. That drove me on. I felt that it was my duty to do it, and I had to do it. (Interview with Jacob)

Not only did he act due to a sense of duty, but also through his love to God:

I loved the Lord, I loved God and I wanted to show it to him. And I wanted to love my neighbor as I love myself. I was familiar with that verse for a long time, before, but I was always thinking that it meant love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. But now I think it is stronger than that, I think that it is deeper than that. I think that it means that we have to love our neighbor as he is ourselves. Not just as much as we love ourselves, but as much as if he is ourselves. (Interview with Jacob)

4.1.7. Fifth floor

The respondents clearly expressed forms of dehumanization and demonization where the perceived enemy is stripped of human qualities and attributed bestial or demonic qualities. As pointed out before society was seen as wicked and the government or state was frequently related to evil, ungodliness and tyranny. Abortion doctors are recurrently described as “baby-killers” “mass-murderess” or the “evil ones”. An example of this dehumanization is when one respondent pointed out that abortion doctors are “utterly depraved and selfish and perverted” (Interview with Ben), or when another stressed that all abortion doctors are “just monsters” (Interview with Jacob). Another example is when a respondent described them as the “lowest people on the planet earth” (Interview with Daniel). The abortion clinics were further seen as pure places of evil, equivalent to concentration camps or hell:

it's a very evil place. It's like the gates of hell. Like the concentration camps where they put people in the ovens, just like that. Taking them in there and killing them. Every day it takes more people going in there and getting killed (Interview with Daniel).

4.1.8. Conclusions of the interviews

Throughout the interviews the respondents expressed how the U.S. society has become increasingly secularized and how it has turned away from God by legalizing abortion. The fight against abortion is frequently viewed as a fight between light and darkness and the respondents expressed an absolute view of God's truth and Scripture. The respondents further described how they felt persecuted or marginalized and how abortion represents a severe injustice. It is also described as an evil and horrendous act since it kills the innocent, who are created in the image of God. Furthermore, the respondents expressed clear stereotypes of their perceived enemies. The perception of the enemy is also framed in a fixed dichotomy. They also expressed strong beliefs and values that they shared with each other, such as obeying God and the necessity of using violence in the fight against abortion

The respondents described themselves in terms of "real Christians", "defenders", and "good-doers". This stands in stark contrast to abortion doctors that were perceived as "mass-murderers" or the "wicked" society that allows and practices abortion. It further stands in contrast to Christians that condemn the use of violence. These were described as the "phony", "hypocritical", "blind" or "confused".

The Army of God was also viewed as being successful in preventing abortion and appears to provide a sense of belonging. Throughout the interviews the respondents made use of a euphemistic language, displacement of responsibility and advantageous comparisons. The respondents also expressed forms of dehumanization and demonization, where the perceived enemy is stripped of human qualities and attributed bestial or demonic qualities.

Finally, it should also be noted that there were some individual differences among the respondents, for instance their Christian background, how they got involved in the fight against abortion, and the extent of the rigidity in their categorizations (e.g. amount of the societal decay). However, in general there was a considerable similarity between the respondents' beliefs and viewpoints.

4.2. Presentation of the texts

In order to give a fuller picture of the collective meaning-system, this thesis will turn to the self-authored texts from the Army of God. The texts are summarized and presented collectively according to the categories in the working-model (see 2.3.). However, since the writings of the Army of God are extensive the presentation draws most of the examples and quotes from the most influential and characteristic works within the movement; the anonymous *Army of God Manual, A time to Kill* by Michael Bray and *Mix My Blood with the Blood of The Unborn* by Paul Hill.

Michael Bray is a minister who was convicted in 1985 for his involvement in the bombings of several abortion clinics. He is often described as an intellectual leader within the movement. Rev. Paul Hill, who is also viewed as an inspirational figure, killed an abortion doctor and his escort in 1994, and was executed nine

years later by the state of Florida (Jefferis, 2011, Juergensmeyer, 2003, Stern, 2003).

On the next page there is a table of the documents and autobiographic books used in this thesis. The table also works as a reference point for the texts presented in this chapter.

<u>Texts</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Designation</u>
<i>Praise be to God and the Christian terrorist</i>	Chuck Spingola	Spingola, n.d.
<i>Clayton Waagner's Message to the US</i>	Clayton Waagner	Waagner, 2001
<i>Fighting the Great American Holocaust (Book)</i>	Clayton Waagner	Waagner, 2003
<i>An apology for Paul Hill days</i>	Dan Holman	Holman, n.d.,a
<i>God is NOT pro-life</i>	Dan Holman	Holman, n.d.,b
<i>Holocaust Resolution Project</i>	Dan Holman	Holman, n.d.,c
<i>Pro-life Heretics</i>	Dan Holman	Holman, n.d.,d
<i>Pro-life Pretension</i>	Dan Holman	Holman, n.d.,e
<i>Rethinking Pro-life</i>	Dan Holman	Holman, n.d.,f
<i>Weapons of Choice</i>	Dan Holman	Holman, n.d.,g
<i>Yes, Virginia, sometime the end justified the means</i>	Dan Holman	Holman, n.d.,h
<i>Dennis Malvasi speech</i>	Dennis Malvasi	Malvasi, 2001
<i>Prison Letter White Rose Banquet</i>	Dennis Malvasi	Malvasi, n.d.
<i>Between the lines of Drift: The Memoirs of a Militant (Book)</i>	Eric Rudolph	Rudolph, 2013
<i>Eric Rudolph's written statement</i>	Eric Rudolph	Rudolph, n.d.
<i>The Brockhoeft Report, letters 1-16</i>	John Brockhoeft	Brockhoeft, n.d.
<i>A time to Kill (Book)</i>	Michael Bray	Bray, 1994
<i>AOG Easter statement</i>	Paul Ross Evans	Evans, 2012
<i>Candid analysis of Forceful Action Against Murder Mills</i>	Paul Ross Evans	Evans, n.d.,a
<i>Collapse of the Fundamental Doctrinaire</i>	Paul Ross Evans	Evans, 2008
<i>Determination</i>	Paul Ross Evans	Evans, n.d.,b
<i>Methodical Terrorism: Why and How</i>	Paul Ross Evans	Evans, n.d.,c
<i>One Nation, Under God</i>	Paul Ross Evans	Evans, n.d.,d
<i>The Militant Christian</i>	Paul Ross Evans	Evans, n.d.,e
<i>The Zealot's Way</i>	Paul Ross Evans	Evans, n.d.,f
<i>Mix My Blood with the Blood of The Unborn (Book)</i>	Paul Hill	Hill, 2003
<i>Why Shoot An Abortionist</i>	Paul Hill	Hill, 2000
<i>Rick Ellis Anti-Abortion Extraordinaire</i>	Rick Ellis	Ellis, n.d.
<i>A Response</i>	Shelley Shannon	Shannon, n.d.,a
<i>Join the Army</i>	Shelley Shannon	Shannon, n.d.,b
<i>Toward the Use of Force</i>	Shelley Shannon	Shannon, n.d.,c
<i>The Army of God Manual</i>	Unknown	Anonymous, n.d.

4.2.1 Religious fundamentalism

Similar to the presentation of the interviews, this section illustrates how the material features the characteristics of reactivity, selectivity, dualistic thinking and absolutism.

4.2.1.1. Reactivity

Throughout the texts the members frequently stress how U.S. society is in a state of post-Christian chaos or decadence. It is also described as being culturally sick and infested by ailments such as liberalism, modernity and secularism, which oppose God's will and Law. An example of this is given by Paul Ross Evans:

Decomposition of Western civilization is at every avenue of modern society. Rudimentary investigations behold abundant examples of the enveloping decadence and the pretentious maleficence with which our society is infected. Our sophomoric opposition uses an ignorant ridiculing posture when clashing with those of us who still have an interest in the direction of our society's future. Certainly, tragedies such as abortion and euthanasia are clear indicators of the revolutionary liberal agenda that this country has embraced, and the value each of our futures and lives merit in today's "free thinking" pacifist culture. The anti-Christian advance cannot and will not be tolerated (Evans, 2008).

This view is also evident in the Army of God Manual, which describes society as:

A nation ruled by a godless civil authority that is dominated by humanism, moral nihilism, and new-age perversion of the high standards upon which a Godly society must be founded, if it is to endure (Anonymous, n.d.)

Society is also seen as increasingly secularized and the government is viewed as anti-Christian or as an adversary to God's people. Fellow Christians who do not oppose abortion are described as "confused", "hypocritical" or "false". For example, members claim that the "American church is in a state of apostasy" (Holman, n.d., c), or that the church is "nearly dead" (Brockhoeft letter 2, n.d.). This view is also evident in Paul Hill's book:

If your brand of Christianity allows you to conform to popular opinion, and thereby avoid great sacrifice, when the government has forbidden people to save their neighbor's souls, or their lives, you have adopted a cross-less and false religion that contradicts the teachings of Christ— "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 17:24-25). Such a corrupt religion may be popular and easy to swallow but it renders Christians tasteless and lukewarm—fit for nothing but to be spewed out and washed down the drain. [...] Let us not forget that an essential aspect of proclaiming the gospel is the application of the law of God to the most common and heinous sins of the day. Our culture is not only guilty of committing murder by abortion; our hands are also covered with blood for neglecting the duty to prevent murder (Hill, 2003, p. 5).

A similar remark is given by Michael Bray:

The shift in government policy regarding not only abortion but homosexuality has set the government in overt opposition to Christian Law. The Clinton administration made itself an opponent to God's standard and therefore an adversary of His people. The regime wasted no time displaying its invidious, anti-Christian animus. Within a day of swearing an oath on a Bible and getting Billy Graham's blessing at his inauguration, William the Apostate, a member in good standing with his Southern Baptist home church in Arkansas, signed several executive orders designed to increase the number of abortions in the land. [...] This behaviour (along with the blameworthy vote-casting of the citizenry) does not bode well for national survival (Bray, 1994, p. 150-151).

4.2.1.2. Selectivity

In all of the texts there is an evident emphasis on abortion in relation to other issues. Brockhoeft points out that abortion is “the most horrendous breach of justice, the ultimate human rights violation” (Brockhoeft, letter 7, n.d.). Eric Rudolph explains that abortion represents “everything rotten about liberal modernity” and because “it is the most egregious of Washington’s many crimes, abortion would be the main focus of my attacks” (Rudolph, 2013, p. 181).

In the case of Bray, his whole book *A time to Kill* is focused on the theological justifications for the use of “force” in fighting abortion. An example of the importance of the issue is when he stresses that the battle against abortion “may well hold back the supernatural judgement that comes from God upon nations which practice the idolatry of childslaughter” (Bray, 1994, p. 84).

This is also clearly expressed in Paul Hill’s book, which in its entirety address the issue of abortion and the use of deadly violence:

Some sins are more heinous than others. Neglecting any aspect of the Moral Law is sinful, but neglecting the duty to defend helpless children, as millions are being slaughtered, is an especially heinous sin. Bowing to an injustice of this magnitude encourages submission to an untold number of lesser atrocities. Tolerating this form and number of murders also sets a precedent for submitting to more heinous types, and even larger numbers of murders. If your right to defend your own child may be removed by the government, there is no right that may not be similarly removed by the state. These aggravators, as well as many others, make neglecting the defensive duties of the Moral Law (as they apply to the unborn) an extremely heinous sin in the sight of God (Hill, 2003, p. 3).

Moreover, this emphasis is evidently found in the Army of God Manual:

This is a manual for those who have come to understand that the battle against abortion is a battle not against flesh and blood, but against the devil and all the evil he can muster among flesh and blood to fight at his side (Anonymous, n.d.)

4.2.1.3. Dualistic thinking

Throughout the material there is a clear tendency toward describing the world in black-and-white terms, or perceiving the fight against abortion as a war between light and darkness. For example, in one of his texts, Evans explains that:

For those who know the truth, it can be difficult and exhausting to walk through a grey world, where no black and white lines are drawn, and everything remains uncertain. It is my wish that this text will give my brothers and sisters those clear lines, as they have been revealed to me. My hope also is the sheer, plain truth of the text will influence others to follow Christ, and join us as well (Evans, n.d.,e).

In Bray’s book there is a clear dichotomy between faithful and true Christians and the “slumbering” and “emasculated” Church. Furthermore, there is a stark binary division between the Christian “rescuers” or “protectors” and the “government-sanctioned childkillers”. An example of this thinking is when Bray proclaims that the fight against abortion is part of a cosmic battle between the forces of light and darkness:

Our Christian brethren of the middle ages were not dupes, however. They were aware of the cosmic battle between good and evil. They were aware that servants of darkness were always trying to pass as ministries of light. We modernist Christians make the mistake of refusing to truly believe in divine judgement in history and the pending judgment of our

American nation. We cannot even entertain the idea that the use of force against abortion not only saves the lives of innocent children, but may well hold back the supernatural judgment that comes from God upon nations which practice the idolatry of childslaughter (Bray, 1994, p. 84).

This dichotomy is further present throughout Paul Hill's book. For example, he points out that abortion and other moral matters are a black-and-white issue:

There is no neutrality on this or any other moral issue. Someone's concept of what is right will be enforced. The alternative to submitting to God's law is bowing before men's lawlessness. It's either God's law or Satan's lawlessness (Hill, 2003, p. 26).

This view is also evident in the Army of God manual, which asserts that it is "a How-To Manual of means to disrupt and ultimately destroy Satan's power to kill our children, God's Children" (Anonymous, n.d.).

4.2.1.4. Absolutism

In the material there is a noticeable emphasis on God's absolute truth and the supreme authority of the scriptures. The members do not stress a literal interpretation of the Bible, but there is an evident prominence of its sacredness, and the subordination of everything else in relation to the scriptures. In the texts the members frequently refer to the scriptures to prove their point, and they often express how they search in the Bible for different answers. For example, Brockhoeft points out that "I believe the Bible like nothing else. I revere the Bible like nothing else. I hold it up as the final authority on all matters" (Brockhoeft, letter 8, n.d.). A similar point is made by Shelly Shannon who explains that "the Word of God began to convince me that God wasn't the tame tabby in the cage I'd imagined" while asserting that "abortionists are mass murderers. Abortion mills are death camps. That's the absolute truth" (Shannon, n.d.,c). Another example of God's truth is the Army of God Manual which describes the current society as a "perversion of the high standards upon which a Godly society must be founded" (Anonymous, n.d.).

A similar view is expressed by Michael Bray, who throughout his book repeatedly emphasizes the scriptures and presents biblical examples in order to legitimize the use of violence in opposing abortion. It is through a "true" Christian piety and close-examination of the holy scriptures that God's will is known, and "His will" calls for the execution of "capital criminals":

Christians advocate justice for the preborn on basis of biblical principles found mostly in the older scriptures. Those same scriptures which uphold the sanctity of human life call for the execution of capital criminals. [...] We have no standard but the revelation given us. The advocacy of capital punishment accentuates the relevance of God's Word in the civil arena. It signals the role of the Authors of life in human affairs and government (Bray, 1994, p. 26-27).

This view is also strongly expressed by Paul Hill, who throughout his book asserts that God's word is the supreme judge by which all of life must be examined. An example of this emphasis, especially in relation to abortion, is given in the following piece:

The strength and beauty of Christianity consists in exhibiting the relevant truths and duties of the Bible—not in suppressing and ignoring them. Thus, we must rid ourselves of the satanic delusion that we somehow further the pro-life movement, or our personal ministries,

by ignoring the defensive duties of the Moral Law. Biblical Christianity is not advanced by suppressing and hiding the difficult and unpopular duties of morality, lest people take offense. The suffering for Christ's sake that occurs when believers disobey unjust laws is one of the principle means that God has ordained for purifying His church, and bringing glory to Himself. True and Spirit-filled believers, thus, should get up on a high mountain and proclaim the duties of the Bible—regardless of the consequences: “What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:27-28). Any movement that is based on ignoring the duty to love and defend your neighbor, as millions are being slaughtered, is fatally flawed and cannot hope to enjoy God’s blessing (Hill, 2003, p. 5-6).

4.2.2. Ground floor

Throughout the texts there is an apparent sense of marginalization and collision with society due to the Christian faith of the members and their fight against abortion. For example, the Army of God Manual assert that “when a Christian lives his or her faith, a collision with society and its value-less system is inevitable”, while proclaiming that “there is a limit to how long our land can be allowed to run red with the blood of God's children” (Anonymous, n.d.). This view is also stressed by Michael Bray:

Truly the Enemy has deeply infiltrated the land, even to the soul of society. How shall he be stopped? We offer no immediate solution to the larger cultural sickness. But we cannot withdraw from the truth. Force is justifiable in defense of the innocent preborn child threatened imminently with death (Bray, 1994, p. 78).

In addition, Paul Hill asserts that:

the issues at stake involve much more than the lives of millions of unborn children; our response to the immediate needs of our neighbors demonstrates the difference between biblical Christianity, which requires costly repentance, and the devil's counterfeit that allows people to continue in sin. (Men will profess faith in all sorts of religions so long as they may live as they please, and they are not required to take up their cross and follow Christ.) (Hill, 2003, p. 4).

In short, abortion signifies a terrible injustice which stirs feelings of emergency, grief and outrage. The decision of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 is further seen as a major turning point. A clear account of this is given by Eric Rudolph who asserts that “since 1973, legal abortion has wiped out an entire generation. It’s the most efficient machine of mass murder in history” (Rudolph, 2013, p. 25). Another example is Paul Ross Evans, who emphasizes that “the *Roe v. Wade* decision created two very distinct political realities: Pro-Life v. Pro-Death” (Evans, 2012).

Abortion is further described as a hideous and sinful act since it kills the innocent children who are created in the image of God. For example, members express how they are “Christ's little brothers and sisters” (Shannon, n.d.,c), or “we are made in the image and likeness of Almighty God; we are the crown of God's creation” (Holman, n.d.,c). The evil and horrendous act of abortion is also clearly pronounced in the Army of God Manual where the “Holy Innocents” who are “created in the very image of God”, are “crying out to heaven for vengeance”. Abortion is further equated with the killing of God who is “the way and the truth and the LIFE”. This view is also echoed by Bray who points out that God is “in anguish over the impending death of his child” (Bray, 1994, p. 28-29). He further explains

that:

Our view of the sanctity of human life comes from the Scriptures which say that man was created in the *imago dei* – the “image of God.” Those same Scriptures declare that because man is so celestially endowed, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed” (Gen.9:6). (Bray, 1994, p. 24).

This view is also explicitly pronounced by Hill, who stress that:

The immoral passion that drives the pro-abortion movement—to indulge their lusts and abort the unborn—must be overcome by an even greater and godly passion for defending these children. This desire needs to be fanned into flames, purified by the entire Bible, and directed toward God (He is the ultimate source and object of our fervor for protecting those made in His image). As we learn to sustain and spread this zeal, it will illumine the world with the blazing brilliance of the glory of God. God has unspeakable zeal for His own glory and honor. All of His glorious attributes, including His love and holiness, incline Him to protect the unborn. He is certainly not cold or indifferent about defending the unborn, and is absolutely devoted to defending these helpless, little ones. We must experience a similar compassionate zeal for their protection; our joy in life—under these intolerable circumstances—and God’s glory, are inseparably connected to it (Hill, 2003, p. 4).

He further proclaims that:

The primary party offended by neglecting the defense of the unborn is God Himself. He has many attributes that are directly impugned by those who are guilty of this neglect. God is life, and has created human life to reflect Him in a unique manner. Since those at war with God cannot harm Him physically, they often vent their murderous fury on those made in His image, including the unborn. To deny the duty to defend these helpless children is an affront to the One in whose image they are made (Hill, 2003, p. 20).

4.2.3. First floor

In the texts the members describe different backgrounds and previous efforts in the fight against abortion. However, there is a common perception that legal solutions are insufficient and that a procedural justice is impossible, due in large part to the *Roe v. Wade* decision and the Freedom of Access to Clinical Entrance Act (FACE):

I did a lot of blockades with Advocates For Life, Lambs of Christ, Operation Rescue, and other groups. I also did a lot of picketing and other pro-life activities. Sometimes I felt like a failure when I stood with a sign and didn't do everything I could to try to save babies lives. I let them kill the babies! I allowed it. When you stand and watch 20 or more babies being taken to their death, how is that more pro-life than making it so those babies cannot be killed? Allowing many babies to be killed day after day may not even be "pro-choice." It may actually be pro-abortion. Think about it. I was allowing the "choice" of abortion, but didn't really stop it. I didn't give the babies any choice (Shannon, n.d.,a).

This frustration is also present in the *Army of God Manual*:

Beginning officially with the passage of the Freedom of Choice Act - we, the remnant of God-fearing men and women of the United States of Amerika, do officially declare war on the entire child-killing industry. After praying, fasting, and making continual supplication to God for your pagan, heathen, infidel souls, we then peacefully, passively presented our bodies in front of your death camps, begging you to stop the mass murder of infants. Yet you hardened your already blackened, jaded hearts. We quietly accepted the resulting imprisonment and suffering of our passive-resistance. Yet you mocked God and continued the holocaust (Anonymous, n.d.).

Moreover, these efforts are not always seen as effective in a “pagan” land:

In our land, anti-abortion activists have adopted a sit-in strategy of intervention which was inherited not from Scriptures, but from the Civil Rights movement. The sit-in tactics served well the purpose of exposing racial prejudices in India (under the rule of the British) and the United States. Such peaceful opposition won success in countries with a collective Christian conscience. The same level of success may not be forthcoming in a pagan land where the people have their consciences seared by two decades of legalized childslaughter (Bray, 1994, p. 27-28).

A similar remark is also articulated by Paul Hill, who points out that:

Rather than continuing to plaster over the abortion problem by merely endorsing legal remedies, we must cut to the heart of people's sinful neglect of the unborn by upholding this forbidden aspect of God's law (Hill, 2003, p. 7).

4.2.4. Second floor

Similar to the respondents in the interviews, the members frequently expressed clear stereotypes of their perceived enemies throughout the material. American society is described as rotten and sick, and the pro-choice movements are seen as cowards and advocates of injustice. The government is evil, tyrannous and god-hating while abortion doctors are viewed as greedy villains or hired assassins. Abortion doctors were mostly referred to as “abortionists”, “baby-killers” and “mass murderers” while the abortion clinics were often described as “abortion mills”, “slaughterhouses”, “abortuaries” and “death camps”.

One such example is when Paul Hills explains how he began to think about “what would happen if I were to shoot an abortionist (Hill, 2003, p. 7). Another example is when Michael Bray points out how the “slaying of (even) government-sanctioned childkillers are justifiable” (Bray, 1994, p. 174). Similar remarks can be found in the Army of God Manual, which stress that “annihilating abortuaries is our purest form of worship” (Anonymous, n.d.).

4.2.5. Third floor

As in the presentation of the interviews, this category is the largest in this chapter. Hence, it is divided into 4 parts that involves the first and second conditions for conflicts, the internalization of a collective meaning-system and expressions of a moral disengagement.

Emphasized social identity:

In the material there are recurring values and beliefs that the members share with each other. One strong belief is the necessity and justification of using violence in the fight against abortion. Pacifism or non-violence is seen as unbiblical and there is a common belief that any means justifiable in the defense of a born child is also justified in the protection of a pre-born child. Furthermore, the use of any means necessary to prevent abortion is not only seen as warranted but also a Christian responsibility promoted by God. For example, the Army of God Manual points out that:

It is our positive response to Our Lord's call to action, drafting us into service against the enemy in this battle of his war against mankind, and against God as well. A Pro-Lifer who

is not an active, although maybe troublesome, member of a Christian Faith Community has cut him or herself off from the Church, and therefore, from Christ (Anonymous, n.d.).

The actions taken by the members were also expressed to be acts of love towards God and one's neighbor, the unborn child:

Any movement that is based on ignoring the duty to love and defend your neighbor, as millions are being slaughtered, is fatally flawed and cannot hope to enjoy God's blessing. [...] Any revival in love to God must demonstrate itself in love to our needy neighbors. God gives little account to our outward worship of Him as long as we are tolerating the oppression and abuse of our neighbor: "So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood." (Isaiah 1:15) (Hill, 2003, p. 6).

Another example is when the Army of God Manual highlights that:

Our Most Dread Sovereign Lord God requires that whosoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. Not out of hatred for you, but out of love for the persons you exterminate, we are forced to take arms against you (Anonymous, n.d.).

Many of the members also describe a Christian upbringing from different denominations. They also articulate the importance of their faith, how God is preeminent in their lives and how the faith moved them into the fight against abortion. Hill describes, for example, that "I wanted to put my beliefs about defending the unborn into consistent action" (Hill, 2003, p. 8). Another example is when Clayton Waagner asserts that:

Protecting the pre-born is such a part of me that I cannot quit. I will not quit. The satisfaction of closing an abortion mill and knowing that children were spared is beyond explanation (Waagner, 2003, p. 200).

Perception of the in-group prototype:

The members frequently described themselves in terms of "martyrs", "brave Christians", "blessed few", "baby-defenders", "warriors", "chosen by God", "God-fearing rescuers", "Christian soldiers", or a "remnant band of faithful":

By the grace of God there remain many good Christians soldiers "at large" out there. If you suspect them in your neighborhood, don't lock your doors or hide your daughters. These, of course, are not thieves and rapist. They are kind to women and children, rescuing the innocent from death. And they are those whom the Almighty has seen fit to leave unshackled. They have their reward. And God has His purpose for them and shall guide them according to His will (Bray, 1994, p. 136).

It should also be noted that several persons are mentioned as inspirational figures (e.g. Michael Bray). However, among these Paul Hill clearly stands out as an inspirational hero and paragon within the movement. Clayton Waagner points out that he has, "always been inspired by Paul Hill and his courage" (Waagner, 2003, p. 125). Brockhoeft asserts that Hill is "the most valorous, honorable, gallant, and finest example of manhood American Christianity has produced since Sgt. Alvin York's display of gallantry in 1918, if not in our nation's entire history" (Brockhoeft, letter 15, n.d.). Eric Rudolph explains that:

Hill seemed like a perfect anomaly, a genuine American hero in an age of cowardice. I'd read about such people in history books, but I didn't think they existed anymore. I knew then that the era of hot air was over. People were finally bridging the gap between their

rhetoric and their actions. I knew then it was time for me to act as well (Rudolph, 2013, p. 3).

Holman stresses that:

Paul Hill is God's standard for our response to abortion on demand. Paul Hill's response to baby-murder was biblical and appropriate. [...] There is nobody who lives up to God's standards, nobody but Jesus Christ. Paul Hill did better than most of us in fulfilling God's law. He came closer to loving God with his whole heart, mind, soul, and strength than anyone I know. He loved his pre-born neighbor as himself. He treated the pre-born slated for abortion as a brave father protecting his children (Holman, n.d., a).

Paul Hill is further mentioned in Bray's book as an extraordinary example of a person who has "affirmed the justice of forcefully protecting the unborn against practicing abortionists" (Bray, 1994, p. 129).

This stands in stark contrast to abortion doctors that are perceived as "baby-killers" or the "sick" society that allows and practices abortion. The prototype is also compared to and clearly distinguished from Christians that do not oppose abortion or condemn the use of "force". These Christians are described as having a "lack of zeal" or being "schizophrenic" "false", "cowards", "slumbering", "indifferent" "ignorant" or having an, "apathy", a "lack of love" or a "lack of knowledge". A clear example of this is given by Bray:

Unfortunately, a vast number of Christians have jumped to the other side of a line that should separate Christians from pagans on both issues. On the questions of forceful intervention, they have withdrawn into an abject schizophrenia. They affirm that the preborn are fully human and deserving of the full protection of the law. And yet, the same laws which justify intervention to protect the innocent (born) from an assailant are denied any application in the case of the preborn. They belie themselves and cannot be taken seriously. Who can relay believe that they believe their own words? (Bray, 1994, p. 108).

Furthermore, the pro-life movement is seen as being "heretics", "ineffective" or "indifferent", "unbiblical", "corrupted" and "hypocrites". For, example, Paul Hill points out that:

They claim to speak from a "Christian pro-life perspective," but they not only annul the biblical duty to defend the innocent with the means necessary, they also directly contradict the Scriptures in this matter (Hill, 2003, p. 59).

Internalization of the collective meaning-system:

As shown earlier the members have clear and explicit beliefs and values. God is described as being in control, offering an absolute Moral Law and Truth. The Bible is of utmost significance. Justice is defined by God's word, which is found in the holy Scripture, and it calls all faithful Christians to take responsibility and fight abortion. The core value is the absolute opposition to abortion and belief that one should use any means necessary to prevent it. In addition, these are described as being true Christian beliefs and values that are shared among the members in the Army of God. Members also describe how they are on a "mission" and how their "calling" from God has given them a purpose in life. An example of this is when Clayton Wagner stress that his fight against abortion struck him "with a purpose and it was burning in me to act" (Waagner, 2003, p. 27). He further states that:

It is in this cause that I have found fulfilment. Perhaps it is because I am warped, or perhaps it is because God truly made me His warrior. Though I strongly suspect the later, I really don't know for sure. I have found purpose in something greater than myself, greater than the life I have for my family, greater than anything I can imagine on this earth (Waagner, 2003, p. 200).

Bray makes a similar point by highlighting how members within the movement had “a calling” from God and that they carried out their “mission” (Bray, 1994, p. 84-85).

In comparison to other Christians, the members view themselves as faithful, consistent, stouthearted and truthful. They further see themselves as having a divine calling or responsibility, while representing God's truth in a decaying world:

Those who function in a prophetic role are small in number, for the majority of the population in times of general apostasy are well duped by the spirit of the age. [...] They stand in conflict with the majority. And they are few. The delusion is of such a strength as to deceive all to some degree. Were it not for the grace of God, even the elect would be deceived. But by His grace a remnant is preserved. God calls out His servants for extraordinary tasks in especially backslidden times. Were it not for this grace true darkness would engulf civilization (Bray, 1994, p. 92-92).

A similar remark is made by Hill:

I realized that many important things would be accomplished by my shooting another abortionist in Pensacola. [...] most importantly, I knew that this would uphold the truths of the gospel at the precise point of Satan's current attack (the abortionist's knife) (Hill, 2003, p. 9).

The members also express that they believe in a coming victory, or that they have been successful in preventing abortion and the great joy this has given them. Paul Hill points out that “I was certain that if I took my stand at this point, others would join with me, and the Lord would eventually bring about a great victory” (Hill, 2000). Brockhoeft proclaims that:

The pendulum has never stopped swinging, only pausing, briefly, at the beginning and end of each cycle. But one day it will stop. It will come to rest on the right side – on God's side -- the side where truth and justice lie (Brockhoeft, letter 7, n.d.).

Another example is Clayton Waagner:

After closing hundreds of abortion clinics, interrupting thousands of scheduled abortions and preventing the deaths of untold numbers of innocent pre-born babies, I was content to bask in the warmth of success. For the first time since I began my one-man campaign against the abortionist, I experienced a deep satisfaction in knowing that I had made a difference. Without any doubt I knew that babies had been spared death by abortion because of me, and in that knowledge a satisfaction warmed me and continues to do so to this day (Waagner, 2003, p. 174).

The Army of God further appears to provide a sense of belonging. Throughout the material the members express a clear “we” while also mentioning each other as examples of truthful Christians or God's warriors. In relation to this the members often refer to one another as “brothers” and “sisters”. A clear example of this sense of belonging can be found in the Army of God Manual, which asserts that “the covert activist must always remember that he or she is a part of a special

group most often referred to in Scripture as a ‘remnant’." (Anonymous, n.d.). Another example is when Paul Ross Evans declares that:

We, those who have -through armed resistance- rebelled against such a murderous regime, offer the only real proposal, as to resolving the present crisis concerning the abortion conflict (Evans, 2012).

Another sign of a perceived belonging is when Paul Hill encourages others to join him:

This work will arm you with the most powerful weapon anyone could wield in the battle against abortion: the defensive duties required by God and forbidden by the government. I challenge you to join with me in upholding these duties as the light of God’s law dawns on the battle for the unborn (Hill, 2003, p. 7).

Selective moral disengagement:

Throughout the material the members frequently make use of a euphemistic language, displacement of responsibility and advantageous comparisons. A very prominent feature in all of the texts is how abortion clinics are referred to as “abortionaries”, “slaughter house”, or “baby butcheries”, while “justified homicide”, “defensive action”, or “deadly force” is used for violence against personnel or clinics. A clear example of this is when Bray asserts that “those who use lethal force to stop a murderer are not themselves committing murder. They kill, or terminate, or slay, or neutralize; they do not murder” (Bray, 1994, p. 175).

The use of “force” is further justified by referring to the holy scriptures and obeying God’s call to action. Non-violent acts are seen as ineffective and the use of “force” is often viewed as the only option in preventing suffering and bloodshed. Abortion doctors are also frequently compared to Nazis and the abortion clinics are seen as death camps. For example, when Paul Hill explains his actions he points out the following:

Others object that killing Dr. Britton was excessive. But many who hold this position would not object if they learned that, during the Jewish holocaust, someone had shot and killed a Nazi concentration camp “doctor.” Suppose, for instance, someone had shot and killed the notorious Dr. Joseph Mengele who practiced at Auschwitz. Wouldn't this have been warranted, under the circumstances, to prevent him from continuing his torturous and murderous experiments? (Hill, 2003, p. 12).

In the texts there is also an underlying moral urgency to act, something which is often related to the immoral actions of the government. The violence is also justified by blaming the victims for bringing the consequences on themselves or by pointing out that the violence is only a reaction to the actions of the “abortionists”. An example of this is when Eric Rudolph explains that “I had nothing personal against Lyons and Sanderson. They were targeted for what they did, not who they were as individuals” (Rudolph, n.d.).

Demonization was also recurrently used in the material. This will be addressed in the last section (fifth floor). Similar to the respondents in the interviews, the distortion of sequences of events or the diffusion of responsibility were infrequent or non-existent.

4.2.6. Fourth floor

In the texts there is an apparent and persistent division of the world in two binary camps; the light vs the darkness, pure and impure, faithful and damned, the righteous and the apostates. The fight against abortion is also frequently described as a cosmic “war” or “combat zone”. For example, in the Army of God Manual the fight against abortion is described as a “war against child killers” or a “war to save the Innocent”. It further stresses God’s “call to action, drafting us into service against the enemy in this battle of his war against mankind, and against God as well” (Anonymous. n.d.).

This “war” is further related to one’s love towards God and one’s neighbor:

The more we love the Lord, the greater will be our affection for His word, including the defensive duties required by the Sixth Commandment. David, in Psalm 119:97, cried out, “Oh, how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day.” His affection for God’s law certainly included the duty to defend innocent people. We should have a similar fervor for this neglected but essential aspect of God’s word. As believers meditate on this aspect of God’s law, as it applies to the plight of the unborn, His Spirit will give us great ardor for proclaiming and maintaining this duty throughout the world (Hill, 2003, p. 4).

This love is also related to the perceived duty that one has to a demanding and wrathful God. For example, throughout his book, Bray points out how God “slays His apostate people” and how God is a “God of War” (Bray, 1994, p. 152-153). He further cites examples of how Jesus used force against injustice and how Jesus told his disciples to take up swords (Bray, 1994, p. 43). Bray also stress that:

“neither the life of Christ, nor his teachings, abolish the Law regarding godly force. Jesus of Nazareth came in humiliation to die. Yet even in that role, He had occasion to act forcefully (Bray, 1994, p. 42).

Another example of this can be found in Bray’s distinction between “violence” and “the use of force” in which he points out that God commands the latter:

Force, even lethal force, is not only commanded by God and performed by Him on innumerable occasions in the older Scriptures, it is also prescribed in the Law for citizens’ participations. When a man sacrificed his own children to a false God, the whole community was obligated to participate in an execution by stoning (cf Lev. 20:2-4). Use of lethal force is not only commanded as a judicial act, but granted to the individual in case of self-defense or the defense of others (Bray, 1994, p. 41).

This view resonates with Hill, who stress that the use of violence is not only justified and necessary, but also a holy duty to God:

Not only does the Moral Law require the means necessary for defending the innocent, this duty comes directly from God, and cannot be removed by any human government. The duty to defend your own or your neighbor’s child, thus, is inalienable. When the government forbids this defense, the people “. . . must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29b). The Scriptures teach that when the government requires a sin of omission (as it has by forbidding the defense of our unborn children), we must obey God rather than the government. As a consequence, you do not need the state’s permission before defending your unborn child. No man-made law can remove the individual’s duty to defend his own or his neighbor’s child (Hill, 2003, p. 2).

The role and importance of God is also distinctly pronounced in the Army of God Manual, in which God is referred to as “the General and Commander in Chief”. It also asserts that:

Our Most Dread Sovereign Lord God requires that whosoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. Not out of hatred for you, but out of love for the persons you exterminate, we are forced to take arms against you. Our life for yours - a simple equation. Dreadful. Sad. Reality, nonetheless. You shall not be tortured at our hands. Vengeance belongs to God only. However, execution is rarely gentle (Anonymous, n.d.).

Furthermore, the denial or neglect of this holy duty is equal to offending God:

Those who neglect or deny the duty to defend the unborn impugn one of God's attributes which affirm Him as Lord, King, and Sovereign: His omnipotence. God is not an impotent king; He has an abundance of power to enforce His will. He is El Shaddai, God, the Omnipotent One (Genesis 17:1); the One with invincible strength and might. When Christians will not maintain the means that the Lord has ordained for carrying out His will, but bow in servitude to the devil, it brings a reproach on the Almighty God whom they profess. By not defending the Lord's little ones, believers misrepresent the King of kings as being an uninvolved and impotent deity. One reason, therefore, God is so terribly angry about our neglect of our duty to defend the unborn is because tolerating mass murder is a direct contradiction of His being and attributes (Hill, 2003, p. 20).

This view is also visible among those who have not been able affirm to this duty:

Moving from preparations, to planning and action was very difficult for me. Doing so underscored to me just how difficult it was me to take a life. No matter how much I hated what the abortionist did to God's children I simply could not force myself to hate them. On an intellectual level I could easily justify killing an abortion doctor in order to prevent the murder of an innocent child. As easy as it was for me to intellectualize the argument for taking their life, I found it nearly impossible to transfer that rational to my heart. This was not the first time I had struggled with this issue. I faced this same difficult issue nearly two years earlier, before my arrest and subsequent escape. In my jail cell I had agonized daily of those earlier failures and could not envision a scenario where I would allow myself to fail again (Waagner, 2003, p. 56).

4.2.7. Fifth floor

As mentioned earlier, and as seen in the previous quotes in this chapter, the members frequently express forms of dehumanization and demonization in their texts (e.g. calling abortion doctors assassins or mass-murderers). A clear example of this dehumanization is the following quote from Eric Rudolph as he describes how he planned to bomb an abortion clinic. It is also an illustration of how the dehumanization is often tied to the previous floors concerning themes of war and the attribution of blame:

It felt strange planning the deaths of other human beings. During the next month, the employees of New Woman would go about their lives oblivious to their date with death. Perhaps it was better not knowing. But I knew, and that unsettled me. I never wavered in my conviction, though. To me this was war. As the operators of a facility that slaughtered 10 to 20 unborn babies every day, the employees of New Woman were mass murderers. I saw them as enemy targets. Pushing aside any feelings of pity, I proceeded with a clear conscience (Rudolph, 2013, p. 40).

The dualistic and dichotomous thinking in the form of demonization is also evident in Hill's book, where abortion is regarded as a battle between the forces of

good and evil. The world is in a state of war and the U.S. is viewed as being in league with Satan by allowing the practice of abortions:

The conflict is between God's will and kingdom, and Satan's opposing will and kingdom. We must choose between maintaining God's word, though it turns to the world upside down, and ignoring the truth so that the murderous status quo, and our place in it, may remain intact. The choice is between the misery of sinful negligence, and the joy of sacrificial service. Instead of adjusting our responses to legal abortion to fit within our comfort zones, we must adjust our lifestyles so they conform to God's law under these truly horrific circumstances. [...] Since the government has legalized the murder of the unborn, much as when the Roman government legalized the murder of Christians, it gives believers a glorious opportunity to show where their true allegiance lies: either with Satan, the state, and the protection of murderers, or with God, His law, and the protection of the oppressed; there is no neutral moral ground. You must choose between protecting abortionists, and protecting the unborn. To encourage submission to mass murder, and stay in the mainstream, is to forsake the straight and narrow way that leads to life. (Hill, 2003, p. 6-7).

The dehumanization is also noticeable in Bray, who explains that "the abortionist has unequivocal intentions to kill innocent children. He is a murderer by profession" (Bray, 1994, p. 181). He also claims that "we are not talking about "doctors" by about hired childkillers" (Bray, 1994, p. 173). There is also signs of demonization as he calls abortion doctors "servants of darkness" (Bray, 1994, p. 84). Dehumanization is also evident as Bray stress that the sanctity of man is a question of obedience to God:

The imago ("image of God") is not some physical property in man which cannot be violated. The right to life of any human being is a function of his conformity to the law of God. There is no inviolability principle inherent in the imago apart from the law of God. It is God who defines the viability of human life under His Law. And when particular transgressions occur the offender is responsible and is justly deprived of his right to life (Bray, 1994, p. 33-34).

Forms of demonization are also clearly expressed in the Army of God Manual, which compare abortion clinics with "altars of Baal". It also points out that the purpose of the manual is to provide the "means to disrupt and ultimately destroy Satan's power to kill our children, God's Children". It further proclaims that "the battle against abortion is a battle not against flesh and blood, but against the devil and all the evil he can muster among flesh and blood to fight at his side" (Anonymous, n.d.).

4.2.8. Conclusions of the text material

The image of the collective meaning-system provided by the text material is to a large extent similar to the one expressed by the interview respondents in 4.1. Throughout the material, the members convey how the U.S. society is in a state of decadence or cultural sickness. American society is also seen as increasingly secularized and the government is viewed as anti-Christian or as an adversary to God's people. There is also an evident emphasis on abortion in relation to other issues, and a tendency towards describing the world in black and white terms. There is also a noticeable emphasis on God's absolute truth and the supreme authority of the scriptures. The material further shows a perceived collision with society due to the Christian faith of the members and their fight against abortion. Abortion signifies a terrible injustice which stirs feelings of emergency, grief and outrage. Abortion is also described as a hideous and sinful act since pre-born children are

created in God's image. Furthermore, the members describe different backgrounds and previous efforts in the fight against abortion. However, there is common perception that legal solutions are insufficient and that procedural justice is impossible.

Similar to the respondents in the interviews, the members frequently expressed clear stereotypes of their perceived enemies throughout the material. The members describe themselves in terms such as "Christian soldiers" or "remnant band of faithful". This stands in stark contrast to abortion doctors, which are perceived as "baby-killers" or the "sick" society that allows and practices abortion. The prototype is also compared and clearly distinguished from Christians that do not oppose abortion or condemn the use of violence. These Christians are described as having a "lack of zeal", as being "false", or having a "lack of love".

Additionally, the material displays recurring values and beliefs that the members share with each other. One strong belief is the necessity and justifiability of using violence in the fight against abortion. Pacifism is seen as unbiblical and there is a common belief that any means justifiable in the defense of a born child is also justified in the protection of a pre-born child. The Army of God further appears to provide a sense of belonging, and the members express how they believe in a coming victory, or how they have been successful in preventing abortion. Moreover, the members frequently make use of euphemistic language, displacement of responsibility and advantageous comparisons. In the texts there is also an underlying moral urgency to act. The violence is further justified by blaming the victims for bringing the consequences on themselves or by claiming that the violence is only a reaction to the actions of the "abortionists". The members also expressed dualistic and dichotomous thinking in the form of demonization and dehumanization. The fight against abortion is also frequently described as a cosmic "war". This war is further related to one's holy duty and love towards God and one's neighbor. God is often described as being demanding or wrathful, and the denial or neglect of the perceived duty is equal to offending God.

It should be highlighted that there exist differences in the material since the texts varied in topics, purpose, audience and contexts. However, overall the members were similar in their beliefs and values, in particular the anonymous *Army of God Manual*, *A time to Kill* by Michael Bray and *Mix My Blood with the Blood of The Unborn* by Paul Hill.

Finally, it is important to note that the texts by Clayton Waagner and Eric Rudolph stand out in relation to the rest of the material. Even though there is a clear dualistic thinking present in Waagner's book, it differed when compared to other texts such as the *Army of God Manual* and Paul Hill's book by not showing an equally severe and rigorous categorization. Waagner also had a lack of fundamentalist categories while not displaying an aversion towards the U.S. government. Eric Rudolph had a notable difference by not primarily framing his actions in relation to God's authority, a divine command or biblical justifications. He draws more upon secular ideas of a national progression and a universal duty to defend a fellow human being. Nevertheless, there are still some religious aspects interwoven in the framing. Rudolph's and Waagner's differences will be discussed more in chapter 6.

Chapter 5 Analysis

5.1. Analysis

In this chapter I analyze the collective meaning-system of the Army of God based on the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2. The analysis is made based on the material as a whole as both the data sources resemble each other. The analysis follows the presentation in chapter 4 in order to facilitate the reading of the analysis. First this thesis briefly examines the characteristics of reactivity, selectivity, dualistic thinking and absolutism. It thereafter uses the theoretical tools presented in 2.3. in the analysis of how sacred values and social psychological processes contribute to religiously motivated violence. The chapter is then concluded by answering the research questions.

5.1.1. Religious fundamentalism

The collected data shows that all of the four features that distinguish religious fundamentalism were present in both the interviews and the autobiographical texts. The members have a hostile reaction to the modern and secular world, which they perceive as threatening. They further express how other Christians are false or blind, and how the Christian traditions within the U.S. are in a need of a restoration.

The perceived marginalization is further related to the selection and prominence of a specific subject, in this case abortion, which is clearly emphasized in preference to others issues. This issue is further framed in a dualistic way of thinking, where the fight against abortion is viewed as a cosmic war between good and evil. This thinking is accompanied with an emphasis on an absolute truth and an intra-textual approach to the Bible.

These features provide the members with a collective meaning-system that can attribute meaning to a variety of aspects in life, and function as a unifying framework through which everything else is mediated. In short, the collective meaning-system of the Army of God has a psychological power in its ability to create a sense of coherence by providing clear and simple answers about the world and the self. This can meet an individual's needs for meaning while also counteracting experiences of uncertainty, caused by modernization and secularization.

Since the collective meaning-system of the Army of God contains the characteristics of reactivity, selectivity, dualistic thinking and absolutism, it can be described as a form of religious fundamentalism, and by extension an example of violent extremism. The reactivity aspect constitutes an opportunity for an "us versus them" thinking. The features of selectivity and absolutism highlight the differences between the in-group and out-group, while also providing the means for depersonalization. It further meets the personal need for meaning while constitut-

ing an opportunity for moral justifications, cognitive reconstructions and gains in significance. Finally, the dualistic thinking forms a cognitive orientation that enables rigorous social categories in the form of dehumanization and demonization. All of these features can thus contribute to acts of religiously motivated violence. However, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how this can result in violence, the thesis will turn to the social psychological theories presented in chapter 2.

5.1.2. Ground floor

The collected data demonstrates how the members of the Army of God perceive a threat from a secular world, both in terms of marginalization or persecution, and through the legislation and practice of abortion. Abortion is further perceived as a terrible injustice, and as a desecration or destruction of something sacred since the innocent children are created in the image of God.

This relates to threat of the self that the sanctification process, social identity theory and the Staircase to Terrorism model revolves around. “Pre-born” children are tied to a manifestation of the member’s beliefs or experience of God and/or are ascribed with divine qualities associated with God. This sanctification makes it gain an important psychological significance, and it becomes a part of the members’ identity and sense of self.

As the member’s identity and sense of self are tied to the sacred, the threat to the object implies a perceived threat to the most fundamental level of one’s being. Evidently, this elicits strong behavioral, cognitive, motivational and emotional responses, such as a moral outrage. This is because the desecration or destruction of the sacred can feel as much of a threat as a direct physical one. The violent reaction to this is thus motivated by an injury or threat to the self.

Since sacred values are also strongly tied to a social identity it can reinforce the threat and loss of significance caused by a perceived injustice and a sense of marginalization. This is of central importance in regard to religious fundamentalists, who according to Moghaddam, Warren and Love (2013) often feel particularly threatened by globalization, modernization, and secularization. If the social identity is threatened while it is central to the self, the self becomes existentially threatened. The individual is no longer sure of who s/he is, about her or his place in the world or about core beliefs and values. Everything is in danger, both the meaning and the purpose of in life are at risk. This further motivates an individual to search for solutions to what they perceive as unfair or threatening.

These findings are consistent with suggestion 1 proposed in section 2.3.1. The Christian social identity is threatened by the secularized U.S. society and the legislation and practice of abortion. Abortion is further viewed as an injustice and threat to the sanctity of life, and is by extension a crime against God.

5.1.3. First floor

The data illustrates how the individuals within the Army of God have tried different efforts and tactics to fight abortion. However, there is common perception that procedural justice is impossible, and that pro-life activities such as blockades and

picketing are insufficient. This implies that the threat to one's social identity and sacred values still persist, which creates a frustration that the individual has to vent through some other means.

These findings support suggestion 2 proposed in section 2.3.1. The individuals within the Army of God participated in different branches within the pro-life movement or made other efforts to influence a procedural justice, which in turn were perceived as closed.

5.1.4. Second floor

The collected data shows how the members continuously stereotype abortion doctors, the pro-choice movement, as well as the government and the secular world, who they perceive as the enemy responsible for the great injustice. In these cases, a depersonalisation is further evident. For example, the abortions doctors were not viewed as unique idiosyncratic individuals. Instead they were repeatedly considered to be similar and simple embodiments of categories such as "mass-murderers". This displacement and categorization can be viewed as an effort to vent the feeling of frustration and threat. Furthermore, it provides opportunities for group comparisons, which can function as a way to regain security and increase self-esteem, and act as a buffer to the perceived threat (see third floor). Moreover, since the out-group are perceived to be responsible for the threat to one's social identity and sacred values, the first factor of the third condition for conflicts is met (i.e., relevant out-group).

These findings are consistent with suggestion 3 proposed in section 2.3.1. The people within the Army of God displace their feelings onto a relevant out-group, such as the government and abortion doctors/staff, who have become representatives of the secular world and the perceived injustice.

5.1.5. Third floor

Emphasized social identity:

The material demonstrates how members within the Army of God emphasize a common social identity through their language and concepts, which are suffused with recurring values and beliefs that the members share with each other. For example, the members make distinctions between "true" and "false" believers and "biblical" and "unbiblical" teachings. They also stress the necessity and scriptural justifications for using violence in the fight against abortion, and how the love for God and one's neighbor imply a duty to protect the unborn child by all means necessary.

Furthermore, many of the members describe a Christian upbringing while stressing the importance of their faith. The interview respondents explain how their faith is central and how it influences their daily life thoroughly, and how it has done so for the greater part of their lives. They further state that their faith is paramount to the choices they make in life and that it has always or mostly been so. Their faith is further related to the Army of God and the fight against abortion.

The emphasis on a social identity related to faith is also apparent in the text material where the members describe the importance of their faith, how God is

preeminent in their lives and how it moved them into the fight against abortion. Since most of the members in the text material have acted on these beliefs, it is evident that the social identity has a directing function for their behaviour. In short, the social identity within the Army of God is both central to the self and habitually salient in the mind of its members. This demonstrates that the first condition for conflicts (i.e., strongly internalized social identity) proposed by social identity theory is met.

Perception of the in-group prototype:

The data illustrates how the members described themselves in terms of “martyrs”, “righteous”, “God-fearing rescuers”, “Christian soldiers”, “remnant band of faithful” or “real Christians”. This is opposite to the stereotypes of abortion doctors who are perceived as “mass-murders” or the “wicked” society that allows and practices abortion. It also stands in contrast to Christians that condemn the use of violence, which are viewed as the “phony”, “hypocritical” or “blind”. It is also in juxtaposition to the “spineless” and “ineffective” pro-life movement. The Army of God also has a clear and inspirational prototype in the form of Paul Hill, who is viewed as the epitome of a true Christian and soldier of God who is faithful and steadfast to the end.

All of this together provides the members with a tight and homogenous prototype. Its content is further closely related to the stereotypes of the relevant out-group, which strengthens the distinctiveness of the in-group, as well as the difference between the in-group and out-group. Moreover, there is a clear case of depersonalisation regarding the prototype. The members mostly describe themselves through a narrow lens of group membership or in relation to a simple embodiment of the prototype.

Furthermore, according to social identity theory, the salience of a certain social identity depends on the social context. A social identity becomes especially salient if the similarities within one’s own category and the differences with an out-group are maximized. Moreover, in the context of the pro-life movement, the difference to other Christians might not be perceived as very great. In accordance to the meta-contrast principle, individuals that develop a readiness to physically displace their frustration must therefore clearly distinguish themselves from others fighting abortion. All of this is evident in the collected data. This demonstrates that the second condition for conflicts (i.e., group comparisons) is met.

Internalization of the collective meaning-system:

According to Herriot (2007) individuals internalize certain collective meaning-systems primarily because of two fundamental psychological needs: the need for self-esteem and the need to reduce uncertainty.

Self-esteem can be gained through a sense of belonging, by presenting the in-group as better in comparison with the out-group, through the content of the beliefs and values (e.g., being special and worthy) and by believing to have won battles and/or a forthcoming victory.

The data shows that all of these components were present among the members. They describe or use terms that indicate a feeling of belonging or closeness. This sense of belonging, however, is not due to a structured organization but a result of

the collective meaning-system, which focus on a deeply held idea about a single issue; the holy fight against abortion. The in-group prototype also stands in stark contrast to the out-group stereotype. For instance, in comparison to other Christians the members view themselves as faithful and assertive. They further believe themselves to be special because they have been chosen by God or granted a divine calling. They also view themselves as God's people in a sinful world while representing and proclaiming an essential part of God's truth. Finally, the Army of God is seen as being successful in preventing abortion and the members express that they believe in a coming victory.

The need to reduce uncertainty can be met by internalizing a social identity that provides a clear account of the world and who one is. According to Herriot (2007) religious fundamentalists often provide such social identities as they have worldviews with clear and explicit sets of beliefs and values about the world, themselves and others. The internalization of a social identity associated with a certain worldview thus reduces the uncertainty about oneself and the world. This worldview is further reinforced when one sees that fellow adherents agree with what is considered the right values and beliefs to hold, and when out-group members disagree. The need for certainty is also more likely to be greater if one perceives uncertainty to be high, such as when there are threats to one's social identity and values.

The collected data contains all of these components. The members express clear and explicit beliefs and values. God is described as being in control, offering an absolute Moral Law and Truth. The members further express an intratextual approach to the Bible. The collective meaning-system further provides clear and explicit prototypes as well as stereotypes. As mentioned earlier, the members also perceive a threat to their social identity and sacred values, which further increase the need of certainty.

In sum, the internalization of the collective meaning-system of the Army of God can be seen as a way to meet fundamental psychological needs for self-esteem and security.

Selective moral disengagement:

The collected data shows that the members mostly used a euphemistic language, displacement of responsibility and advantageous comparisons. They also frequently expressed extreme and dualistic categories in the form of demonization or dehumanization. However, there was an apparent lack of a diffusion of responsibility. This can be explained by the Army of God's ambiguous nature, which does not provide a cohesive group structure. Moreover, the infrequent use of a distortion of the sequence of events can be explained by the Army of God's focus on the evil actions of the relevant out-group, which created more avenues for an attribution of blame.

The justifications can be seen as a cognitive restructuring that makes the harmful conduct acceptable. This enables the individual to use violence without violating self-imposed moral standards, which would threaten their self-worth. Moreover, by preserving self-imposed sanctions self-satisfaction and self-worth can be enhanced. Furthermore, by making the violent response morally warranted and justifiable it can address a perceived injustice and threat to the sacred values, thus

promoting and conferring significance onto the individuals. In other words, the violence-justifying beliefs within the Army of God's collective meaning-system can function as a significance restoration since other avenues to the members' goal are perceived as closed.

All of these findings correspond with the suggestions proposed in section 2.3.1. (4A-4D). The members expressed prototypes and beliefs/values that were emphasized and connected to the Army of God's the collective meaning-system, as well as signs of a strongly internalized social identity. There were also expressions of a meta-contrast principle in relation to other pro-life movements, Christians and unbelievers. Moreover, the internalization of the collective meaning-system is fueled by improving the member's self-esteem and reducing uncertainty. Finally, the members frequently used justifications in order to avoid cognitive dissonance and to tackle a loss of significance. However, not all of the justifications proposed by Bandura's theory were employed. There was instead an emphasis on a euphemistic language, a displacement of responsibility, and advantageous comparisons.

5.1.6. Fourth floor

The collected data illustrates a rigorous categorical thinking among the members, where the world is divided into a clear 'them' and 'us'. As mentioned previously the prototypes and stereotypes are not only clear and explicit, but also closely related and depersonalized. Furthermore, the social context is perceived as a cosmic war or struggle between the forces of good and evil. This rigid categorical thinking suggests self-imposed boundaries and a reduced individual freedom, which hinders the individual from leaving the threatening situation, thus moving the person closer to acts of violence. These factors demonstrate that the third condition for conflicts is met.

In addition, these processes are reinforced by a high demand for obedience and conformity from an authoritarian god image, which further reduces the individual's freedom of action while making it difficult to leave the perceived group. Since the fight against abortion has become sacred through a perceived duty to God, the call for action also gains an important psychological significance and a directing power by becoming a part of the individual's identity and sense of self.

These findings support suggestions 5A and 5B proposed in section 2.3.1. There were clear signs of a depersonalization and a meta-contrast principle between the prototypes and stereotypes. There were also clear expressions of impermeability through an 'us' and 'them' thinking and an authoritarian god figure with high demands for obedience and conformity.

5.1.7. Fifth floor

In order to perform acts of deadly violence the collective meaning-system needs to sidestep the mechanisms that normally inhibit someone from killing another human being. One such psychological means includes dehumanization, which can be generated through social categorization in the form of depersonalization and a severe differentiation between the in-group and out-group.

These processes were evident in the collected data as the members frequently stripped the out-group of human qualities, and attributed the victims with bestial or demonic qualities. For example, the abortion doctors are often viewed with disgust, contempt or anger, and perceived as sub-humans, lacking a moral or civil dimension. They were, in addition, viewed as the servants of darkness or minions of Satan. This form of demonization and animalistic dehumanization makes the violence not only acceptable but also desirable and necessary. Finally, this is consistent with suggestion 6 proposed in section 2.3.1.

5.2. Conclusion

This thesis concludes the analysis by answering the research questions posed in 1.2.

How can we understand the processes of sanctification and sacred values regarding religiously motivated violence in relation to the Army of God?

This thesis has shown that abortion is perceived as a desecration or destruction of something sacred among the members of the Army of God. "Pre-born" children are tied to a manifestation of the member's beliefs or experience of God and/or is ascribed with divine qualities associated with God. This sanctification makes it gain an important psychological significance, and it becomes a part of the members' identity and sense of self. Once it is perceived as something sacred it elicits strong behavioral, cognitive, motivational and emotional responses. Among these responses are the protection of the sacred. The loss, or the threat of loss of the sacred leads to moral outrage and aggression since it constitutes a threat to the most fundamental level of one's being, something which can be experienced as an equal threat to a direct physical one. The violent response of the members within the Army of God is thus motivated by an injury to the self.

Furthermore, since the fight against abortion has become sacred through a perceived duty to God, the call for action further gains an important psychological significance and a directing power by becoming a part of the individual's identity. By answering God's calling or acting on one's Christian responsibility the members can restore the significance lost by the perceived injustice and threat to one's social identity and sacred values.

How can we understand the social psychological processes that contribute to religiously motivated violence in relation to the Army of God?

This thesis demonstrates how a perceived injustice and threat towards one's social identity moves the individuals towards the use of violence. This is further reinforced by a loss or threat of loss to significance, which puts the meaning and the purpose of life in danger. Since legal solutions are perceived as insufficient or impossible the individual begins to use displacement and social categorization in an effort to vent the feelings of frustration and threat, and as an effort to regain security and increase self-esteem, which can act as a buffer to the perceived threat. However, if this is insufficient the individual can adopt a "the ends justify the means" mentality provided by the collective meaning-system of the Army of God.

This offers the individual a morally warranted and effective (and thus significance promoting) method of addressing the perceived injustice and threat. It can further fuel the internalization of the collective meaning-system by addressing the fundamental psychological needs of self-esteem and security through group identification and social categorization while also enhancing self-satisfaction and self-worth through cognitive reconstructions. However, the internalization also brings a rigid categorical thinking with self-imposed boundaries and a reduced individual freedom which hinders the individual from leaving the threatening situation, thus moving the person closer to acts of violence. These processes are reinforced by a high demand for obedience and conformity from an authoritarian god image, which simultaneously provides a psychological significance and a directing power through the process of sanctification. The act of violence thus becomes prompted by a perceived calling or duty from God, and is further facilitated by a demonization and animalistic dehumanization that sidesteps the mechanisms that normally inhibit someone from killing another human being.

Taken together these processes can contribute to religiously motivated violence. However, it is important to keep in mind that these processes can occur in a different order, and in parallel with each other. They may also develop simultaneously and mutually influence one and another. Nevertheless, they can be seen as various contributing factors that together increase the likelihood of violence by reducing the degree of freedom for those who perceive a threat towards their social identity and a loss of significance.

How can we understand the collective meaning-system of the Army of God in relation to religiously motivated violence?

The collective meaning-system of the Army of God can be understood as a form of religious fundamentalism, containing the features of reactivity, selectivity, dualistic thinking and absolutism. These features can attribute meaning to a variety of aspects in life, and function as a unifying framework through which everything else is mediated. The collective meaning-system of the Army of God thus acts as a frame that binds the members together, creating an intangible structure from which group processes can induce violence. The reactivity aspect constitutes an opportunity for an “us versus them” thinking. The features of selectivity and absolutism highlight the differences between the in-group and out-group, while also providing the means for depersonalization. It further meets the personal need for meaning while constituting an opportunity for moral justifications, cognitive reconstructions and gains of significance. Finally, the dualistic thinking forms a cognitive orientation that enables extreme and rigorous social categories in the form of dehumanization and demonization. In short, the ideas within the collective meaning-system bind the members through a unifying framework, which in turn encourage acts of violence performed by self-radicalized and self-activating individuals.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter is divided into five parts. It first compares and discusses the findings of this thesis in relation to the previous research presented in 2.1. Next it discusses the contributions of the findings in relation to the research area. The subsequent section reflects on the particular theories and framework used in this study. It then discusses the methodological approach and addresses issues concerning reliability and validity. The chapter ends with a reflection concerning suggestions for future research.

6.2. Empirical reflection

6.2.1. Religious terrorism and violence

The three papers featured in the *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* offered several important insights into a terrorist's belief-system and how it influenced their action. All of them point to a perceived injustice or a vicarious humiliation, a relevant out-group responsible for the injustice/vicarious humiliation, and the identification of an effective method (i.e. violent response) capable of redressing the injustice as explaining factors behind acts of terrorism. These findings are supported by this thesis, which also found that a perceived injustice, social processes, and moral justifications are significant influences in religiously motivated violence. These are especially important in regard to a search for significance in which the moral justification for a violent response acts as an opportunity for a gain in significance. This stands in relation to the perceived injustice which constitutes a threat or loss of significance, something that becomes further reinforced by social processes through the collective meaning-system.

Furthermore, both Putra and Sukabdi (2013) and Milla, Faturochman and Ancok (2013) highlighted a divine duty or struggle for God as important factors in explaining violent actions. Yet, Putra and Sukabdi (2013) did not elaborate further on why this is important. Milla, Faturochman and Ancok (2013) on the other hand suggested that it is tied to the social identity and thus gains a directing power. This suggestion is supported by the current study, which has shown the importance of a perceived duty to God and how it is tied to the social identity, creating impermeability. However, in contrast to Milla, Faturochman and Ancok (2013) the findings of this thesis suggest that a leader or a tightly-knit group are not an essential component when explaining religiously motivated violence. Nevertheless, the importance of a perceived injustice and a moral justification in relation to a sacred violence suggested by Muluk, Sumaktoyo and Ruth (2013) is consistent with the findings in this thesis. Unfortunately, Muluk, Sumaktoyo and Ruth (2013) did not

elaborate on how this is connected to the sacred. This was, however, addressed in this thesis by using the concept of sanctification.

Furthermore, it is important to note the discrepancy between Putra & Sukabdi (2013), Muluk, Sumaktoyo and Ruth (2013) and Aly and Striegher (2012) regarding the role of moral justification. The former studies highlight its importance in explaining religious violence while the results from the latter suggest the opposite. This discrepancy can perhaps be explained in relation to the search for significance. As suggested by this thesis and Kruglanski et al (2014), the moral justifications in various ideologies can tackle the loss of significance, which appears to be a powerful force in moving individuals towards violent extremism. This implies that when violence is perceived as morally unacceptable it can no longer function as a mean of gaining significance, thus losing its appeal to the individual. This could be the case for Roche described in Aly and Striegher (2012), while it still promotes significance to the participants in Putra & Sukabdi (2013) and Muluk, Sumaktoyo and Ruth (2013). In analyzing religiously motivated violence one therefore needs to take into account the importance of a search for significance when explaining religiously motivated violence.

In relation to the paper by Neuberg et al (2014) the current study further supports the suggestion that a religious infusion can contribute to conflicts by reinforcing incompatible values (i.e., sacred values), which can influence group processes that can promote a collective motivation and action. These findings highlight the importance of sacred values in interpersonal conflicts. Finally, this thesis further supports the findings in the study by Moyano and Trujillo (2012), who propose that a perceived injustice, an out-group threat and a uniform social identity anchored in religion might contribute to violence. A similar suggestion is made by Adam, De Cordier, Titeca and Vlassenroot (2007), who qualitatively investigated violence motivated by Christian beliefs.

In short, the findings in this thesis are consistent with the results seen in previous research. These highlighted the importance of group processes in understanding religiously motivated violence, particularly in relation to a social identity. Similar to the current study, they also found that a perceived injustice or a vicarious form of humiliation can function as a precondition for violence. The findings in the previous research further underlined the importance of moral justifications, especially in relation to religious fundamentalism (Muluk, Sumaktoyo & Ruth, 2013). This is supported by the current study, which found that a moral justification can function as a restoration of lost significance. Similar to the results presented by Neuberg et al (2014), sacred values also appear to be an important factor in explaining religiously motivated violence in relation to the Army of God.

6.2.2. The Army of God and terrorism/violence

The study conducted by Connelly et al (2015) provided similar results to the current study. The authors found a high degree of social categorization, out-grouping and moral disengagement among the violent ideological websites, including the one belonging to the Army of God. The authors further suggested that the psychological processes important to the formation of a social identity and a moral behaviour are embedded within these websites, and that they can act as an important

source for a social identity. All of this was also evident in the qualitative analysis of the Army of God in this thesis. This result is interesting in relation to Smith (2004) who suggests that the in-group description might be more important in predicting terrorism than how the group describes its opponents. This does not appear to be the case in the current study, which rather suggests that the close relationship and comparison between the prototypes and stereotypes are an important factor. However, as pointed out in the research review the conclusion might not be consistent with the Army of God, due to the non or near statistical significant difference compared to Operation Save America. This highlights a need to qualitatively compare the two in future research.

The subsequent study conducted by Smith (2008) suggests that terrorist groups are significantly higher in in-group affiliation motive imagery and significantly lower in outgroup affiliation motive imagery when compared with the non-terrorist groups. Furthermore, terrorist groups were also significantly higher in power motive imagery compared to the control groups. The importance of these factors is supported by the current study, which highlights this in relation to group processes. However, it is important to keep in mind that the difference of these factors were largely statistically non-significant in comparison to Operation Save America. Similar to the results provided by Smith (2004), this underlines the need to further examine the differences and similarities between the Army of God and Operation Save America.

Finally, the study conducted by Saucier, Akers, Shen-Miller, Knežević and Stankov (2009) suggests that violent extremism can provide individuals with a coherent and compelling narrative, which can move and persuade a person by framing important events. This narrative can be formed by various themes, including perceptions of a crisis, such as violations of something sacred (which may or may not be explicitly religiously in nature), along with moral justifications for the use of violence in order to address such problems. This is consistent with the function of the Army of God's collective meaning-system found in this thesis. However, the results provided by Saucier et al (2009) pointed out that Eric Rudolph, who is associated with the Army of God, had several important themes in relation to such a narrative, including those that concern sacred values. The current study noticed these themes as well, but they were not primarily framed in relation to God's authority, a divine command or biblical justifications. Rudolph rather draws upon secular ideas of a national progression. Unfortunately, this is not addressed by Saucier et al (2009). A more nuanced discussion on the concept of the sacred would thus have been highly informative and relevant. This issue is not limited to the study by Saucier et al (2009) or to the concept of the sacred. The lack of a thorough discussion and definition of key terms, such as *the sacred* or *religion* applies to all of the studies in the research review. As mentioned before, this obscures the analysis of religiously motivated violence by presupposing a self-evident connotation of the concepts. In an effort to address this issue, the current study clarified these key terms in order to provide a stronger structure for understanding religiously motivated violence.

6.3. Contributions

The findings of this thesis bring further knowledge regarding religiously motivated violence. First, it has addressed a phenomenon that has rapidly grown over the past decades (Philpott, 2013; Svensson, 2012), as well as focused on leaderless resistance and lone-wolf terrorism, which is an emergent trend in contemporary terrorism (Sageman, 2008; Simon, 2013; Weimann, 2015). Moreover, it has touched upon the important but often overlooked factor regarding sacred values in relation to religiously motivated violence (see e.g. Ginges, Atran, Sachdeva & Medin, 2011; Pargament, Mahoney, Shafranske, Exline & Jones, 2013). In addition, the current study has addressed the general need to empirically comprehend extremism within the field of psychology of religion (Hood, Hill & Spilka, 2009), and the need of actual empirical data in the psychological research of extremism and terrorism (Horgan, 2014). Furthermore, as seen in 2.1., few psychological studies have explicitly investigated the Army of God. Of those who have, none did so from a meaning-system approach or in relation to the process of sanctification. By contrast, this thesis has been able to show that the collective meaning-system of the Army of God acts as a frame that binds the members together, creating an intangible structure from which group processes and a social identity can induce violence. It further demonstrates how the loss, or the threat of loss, of the sacred leads to moral outrage and aggression by constituting a threat to the most fundamental level of one's being. Furthermore, since the fight against abortion has become sacred through a perceived duty, the call for action gains an important psychological significance and a directing power by becoming a part of the individual's identity. This highlights the importance of taking into account a search for significance when explaining religiously motivated violence since a moral justification for a violent response functions as an opportunity for a gain in significance. This relates to a perceived injustice that constitutes a threat or loss of significance, which becomes further reinforced by social processes via a collective meaning-system that is internalized based on the need for certainty and self-esteem. These findings further contribute with needed empirical support concerning the association between uncertainty and violent extremism (see e.g., Hogg, 2014).

Finally, in contrast to previous research suggestions (e.g., Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Post, 2007) the current study demonstrates that a leader or a well-structured group is not necessarily a key factor when explaining religiously motivated violence from a social psychological perspective. This can contribute to the theoretical understanding and the importance regarding social identity and a collective meaning-making in relation to violent extremism and lone-wolf terrorism. This will be further discussed in the section below.

6.4. Theoretical reflection

The theoretical framework in this thesis has been a meaning-system approach. This has been valuable in organizing and adequately combining key concepts such as religion, religious fundamentalism and religiously motivated violence in relation to the theories of social identity, selective moral disengagement, processes of sanctification and the Staircase to Terrorism model. Furthermore, it has proved to be advantageous in capturing and analyzing the guiding ideas, images and princi-

ples that give the ambiguous Army of God its integrity. Comprehending these central components and themes is vital in understanding how the worldview of leaderless resistance coheres, and how this outlook on the world gives rise to violent actions. However, it is important to note that the collective meaning-system is a conceptual entity, hence there are concentric spheres of social realities that join with the particular collective meaning-systems, such as the one of the Army of God. This makes it difficult to demarcate the social boundaries of a collective meaning-system. Its followers or members are often engaged through the Internet in a more fluid pattern of social relationships. The relationship between individuals within a collective meaning-system is thus based on a shared commitment to a specific set of beliefs, leading concepts or sacred narratives. Furthermore, it is not necessary for all of the individuals to share or embrace all of the beliefs and concepts to the same degree. Individuals join in an abstract sense by internalizing the ideology and the link amongst the individuals is based on the resonance between one's own worldview and the collective meaning-system. This thesis has shown that this is not a theoretical weakness but a strength since the concept of a collective meaning-system both has the flexible and substantial capability of grasping the organizing principles and common features within the ambiguous phenomenon of leaderless resistance.

The particular theories and models used in this thesis have also been useful in explaining religiously motivated violence from a social psychological perspective, even though the Army of God concerns a form of leaderless resistance. Contrary to the suggestions by Jones (2008; 2011; 2013a; 2013b) the processes of social influence and group processes still have a powerful explanatory power in such a loose confederation due to the collective meaning-system.

Nevertheless, it is important to use a more critical eye towards the theories and the findings of this thesis. Jones (2013b) points out that social psychological perspectives on religiously motivated violence and terrorism imply that these groups are no different than from any other groups, and that they can be understood with the same kind of theories used for all human communities. This is a relevant criticism since the same political, economic, and demographic context is acting on a great number of people, yet still only a few engage in violent acts. As pointed out by Horgan (2014) it might therefore be "useful to identify factors that point to some people having a greater *openness* to *increased* engagement than others" (Horgan, 2014, p. 98). In accordance with Jones (2013b), it is thus reasonable to conclude that both social psychological analyses and individual factors are necessary to understand religiously motivated violence and violent extremism. The findings in this thesis should therefore be seen as one piece of a much greater puzzle since no explanation alone is sufficient to understand such a multidetermined and multidimensional phenomenon. However, as pointed out by Sageman (2008) psychologists throughout the world have tried for over 40 years to find an individual difference or personality without any success. To bridge the gap between the micro and the macro, Sageman (2008) suggests an approach that examines the terrorists themselves embedded in their own contexts, something that has been applied in this thesis by utilizing a social psychological perspective. Moreover, in the most comprehensive and thorough review of psychological research on terrorism, Victoroff (2005) concludes that the terrorists are extremely psychologically diverse and that each person is motivated by one's own mixture of traits and psychosocial

experiences. Horgan (2014) also stress that the influence of individual factors is difficult, if not impossible, to answer due to the absence of any reliable systematic and controlled empirical research. A focus on individual factors would therefore be outside the scope of this thesis. It would also run the risk of giving a misleading and simplistic answer to the ambiguous Army of God. Employing psychodynamic theories (e.g., Jones, 2008; 2011) would further have difficulty living up to the requirements of an analytic generalization (i.e., be corroborated, modified, advanced or rejected) and therefore not be amenable to testing.

This relates to the particular theories employed in this thesis. The current study demonstrates how the empirical findings support the theories presented in 2.2. Moreover, the contributions offered by this thesis (see 6.3) can assist with some theoretical advances. First, it demonstrates that social categorizations and group processes can be relevant in explaining leaderless resistance and lone-wolf terrorism since the individual joins a movement in an intangible sense by internalizing a collective meaning-system. This identification and internalization is further fueled by a feeling of uncertainty, caused by a perceived injustice and threat to the self, and a need for self-esteem which can act as a buffer to these feelings. These findings can advance the theoretical understanding of how people, under certain circumstances, get involved in violent extremism through group identification and social categorization. However, in contrast to previous research suggestions (e.g., Hogg, 2012; Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Kruglanski & Orehek, 2012), the current study demonstrates that group entitativity (in the form of a clear internal structure and membership criterion) is not essential in reducing uncertainty. It further illustrates that the impact of uncertainty on social identity is not necessarily associated with a clear and directive leadership, provided that there is an authoritative god image and prototypical members that can inspire others. A possible explanation to this is that these two factors can function as a substitute to a clear and directive leadership within leaderless forms of violent extremism. In addition, the current study demonstrates a possible avenue for how social identity theory can be combined with the uncertainty-identity theory (see e.g., Hogg, 2014; 2012) and terror management theory (see e.g., Pyszczynski, Rothschild & Abdollah, 2008) in explaining how existential uncertainty and fear contribute to religiously motivated violence.

Second, the current study can assist in a theoretical understanding of violence-justifying beliefs within a collective meaning-system. The thesis shows that these can relate to a cognitive reconstruction and act as an opportunity for significance gain by making sense of a moral outrage and frustration caused by a perceived injustice, suggesting possible ways to recreate the lost significance.

Third, it offers an empirical support to the process of sanctification and how the destruction or desecration of the sacred can be theoretically combined with the concepts of social identity, god image and moral justifications for violence.

Fourth, it is relevant to note the importance of the theoretical perspectives offered by both Herriot (2007) and Moghaddam (2005; 2006). Herriot (2007) offers an understanding of the psychological reaction that contributes to violence, while

Moghaddam (2005; 2006) provides an understanding of how this reaction is psychologically mobilized. These two aspects further contribute to a theoretical understanding of how the framing of a perceived injustice and the restoration of significance leads to violent extremism.

These findings illustrate how this thesis can shed some light on important theoretical principles and concepts regarding religiously motivated violence. However, in order to do so the theoretical advances must be able to pertain to situations other than those examined as part of the current study. This raises the question of whether the theoretical findings described in this thesis are applicable to the USA only or if they reflect similar psychological and social mechanisms in other parts of the world. There is no easy answer to this question but a reasonable suggestion is that the fundamental psychological processes and needs presented in this thesis (e.g., social categorization and the need for significance) are generally valid, but with context-specific expressions and variations (see e.g., discussion in Hogg & Vaughan, 2014). In contrast, some of the cultural factors that can impact on the theoretical findings are dimensions concerning fatalism, tightness-looseness, individualism-collectivism, power distance, and gender egalitarianism (see e.g., Gelfand, LaFree, Fahey & Feinberg, 2013). For the current study the last dimension seems to be most relevant since the known individuals within the Army of God are almost exclusively male, and whom often express rigid and stereotypical gender roles (see e.g. Jefferis, 2011; Stern 2003). This was also visible in the material in the current study. Furthermore, this has also been highlighted as an important cultural factor for violence in the U.S. (Gelfand et al, 2013) and as a prominent and influential aspect in relation to acts of lone-wolf terrorism (Simon, 2013). Future research could thus gain much by examining this factor in general, and leaderless forms of religiously motivated violence within the cultural context of the U.S. in particular.

Finally, it is important to address how the material concerning Eric Rudolph and Clayton Waagner can be explained in relation to the theories in this thesis. As mentioned earlier, the material produced by Waagner did not demonstrate equally stern differences between the in-group and the out-group compared to other members within the Army of God. However, this difference can support the conclusion of this thesis as Waagner, despite several attempts, could never use lethal violence. This is consistent with the theoretical framework of the current study, which argues that a strict categorization is an important factor in sidestepping inhibitory mechanisms. Still, a similar remark was also made in the material produced by Dan Holman, who demonstrated a more rigid form of social categorization compared to Waagner. This highlights the possibility of individual factors that can be important in promoting a greater openness to an increased engagement in violent extremism.

The case of Eric Rudolph demonstrates that the process of sanctification is not a necessary factor in relation to violent extremism. It could also be argued that Rudolph should not be included as a member of the Army of God due to the absence of references to God's authority and biblical justifications. However, Eric Rudolph is still listed as a Prisoner of Christ on the Army of God website, and he is

also mentioned as an inspirational exemplar by some members. This demonstrates the difficulty in demarcation concerning the concept of a collective meaning-system. Nevertheless, his material still contained some religious justifications common to the Army of God, and his case can serve as an illustration of how a national-secular framing of the fight against abortion can be interwoven with religious ideas.

6.5. Methodological reflection

The current study has applied a qualitative approach with a single-case design. This has given the thesis an in-depth focus that enables it to study the meaning that the members make in their lives. It can further capture their perspective and represent their views while accounting for the contextual condition in which they are embedded. Due to this in-depth approach it can contribute new insights that help to explain and understand human thinking and social behavior concerning religiously motivated violence. This approach can further be seen as necessary due to the ambiguous nature of the Army of God. Moreover, it is vital in addressing the urgent need to pay attention to *how* questions in order to better understand psychological processes behind extremism and terrorism (Horgan, 2014). Furthermore, it has been appropriate due the lack of studies that have empirically investigated Christian forms of violent extremism, especially in relation to the Army of God.

By applying qualitative methods such as interviews, the current study has also been able to elicit opinions and views from individuals within the Army of God. This is vital when investigating religiously motivated violence since our understanding of it can be enhanced by talking to people who have been or are still involved in this kind of violence (Horgan, 2014; Post, 2007). The use of self-authored documents has provided the thesis with an unobtrusive method to collect data while also providing an opportunity to access information that reflects the participant's own reality. This has been beneficial in understanding religiously motivated violence since it provides accessible and reliable information to the ideology of leaderless movements such as the Army of God (Lindgren, 2009).

Nevertheless, since this is a qualitative study it has important limitations such as the difficulties in measuring and replicating the study. However, the thesis is intended to shed an empirical light that can elucidate a theoretical corroboration and advancement. The current study therefore only endeavors towards an analytic generalizability. In addition, the use of written material has a weakness as they are a retrospective view of events. This allows the members of the Army of God to frame and present their actions as part of a meaningful endeavor, something that might not have been the case in the actual sequence of the events. Furthermore, it is impossible to tell whether the data has been derived from the members own accounts or if they only replicate an acquired account developed from being involved in terrorism and extremism over time. This makes it difficult to discern whether the psychological processes described in the thesis contribute to an involvement in a violent extremism or if they resulted from it. This problem is, however, not limited to this study but pertinent to the research field of violent extremism and terrorism as a whole (see e.g. Horgan, 2014).

Finally, it is important to address the issue of validity and reliability. This thesis has employed several strategies to make sure that it truly measures/records what it is intended to measure/record. It has added validity through triangulation by using documents and interviews as data sources. It has improved validity by clarifying biases and presenting discrepant information. It has further demonstrated a good match between the suggestions in 2.3.1 and the collected material. Finally, it has further improved its validity by showing that the findings can be analytically generalized. In sum, this should be adequate to provide proper validity to the thesis.

In order to minimize biases and errors the study has double-checked the transcripts in order to make sure that no obvious mistakes were made during the transcription. It has further compared the data with the codes. There have also been written memos about each code and its definition to make sure that there is no shift in its meaning during the coding process. An electronic database with the raw data has also been created in order to create reliability. Finally, the supervisor of this thesis has checked the transcripts, as well as the codes in order to establish an agreement on how the codes would be used. A high level of agreement was reached in the independent coding of the material by author and supervisor. All of the procedures should be sufficient in creating reliability for the thesis.

6.6. Concluding reflections

Besides the recommendation already mentioned, an adequate inquiry for future research would be to conduct in-depth psychological comparisons between individuals within the Army of God and matched controls from an identical context who are non-violent. This could be accompanied by estimating the willingness of perpetrating violence in relation to one's group membership in order to examine the influence of individual and group factors. A suitable comparison with the Army of God would be Operation Save America since they are contemporary and active in the same context, within the same faith tradition.

Future research also needs to examine possible ways of preventing violent extremism. This has been highlighted by both Jones (2013a) and Horgan (2014). It has also been underlined by Kruglanski, Crenshaw, Post and Victoroff (2007) who emphasize the need to address terrorism-justifying ideologies (i.e. collective meaning-systems) that can frame perceptions of injustice and vicarious forms of humiliation.

A promising way to address this is by methods that employ integrative complexity thinking, which has empirically shown an increase in people's resilience to 'black-and-white' ways of thinking and ideologies that frame and make sense of the perceived injustice or loss of significance by justifying violent extremism (see e.g., Savage, 2011; Savage, Khan & Liht, 2014; Liht & Savage, 2013). This also has an important strength by being able to address some of the factors that appear to influence the involvement in terrorism and violent extremism, e.g., low cognitive flexibility, low tolerance for ambiguity and a high affective valence concerning an ideological issue (Horgan, 2014; Victoroff, 2005). Furthermore, since these methods make use of value systems they are consistent with suggestions from recent research (e.g., Ginges, Atran, Sachdeva & Medin, 2011) which highlight

the need to attend to sacred values in order to prevent violent extremism. The importance of this factor has also been supported by the findings of this thesis. Finally, integrative complexity thinking methods might be able to promote complex social identities (Brewer, 2010; Roccas & Brewer, 2002), which could build a resilience to violent extremism by preventing a narrow down and susceptible identity while promoting multiple and integrated in-group identities which can offset the perceived threat to one social identity. Future research needs to explore these questions more thoroughly and empirically test and validate the effects of such an approach in different contexts, especially its long term effects.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how social psychological processes as well as how processes concerning sacred values can contribute to religiously motivated violence. The aim was to understand these psychological processes from a psychology of religion perspective in relation to the collective meaning-system of the Army of God. The study applied a single-case design and the data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 3 prominent figures within Army of God, as well as through 43 qualitative documents (about 140 000 words) and 4 autobiographical books (about 770 pages). The collected data was analyzed through a deductive approach, implementing the concepts of sanctification, religious fundamentalism, social identity theory, selective moral disengagement, and the Staircase to Terrorism model.

The results show that the collective meaning-system of the Army of God can be understood as a form of religious fundamentalism that acts as a frame that binds the members together, and from which social categorization and group identification can induce acts of violence. The relationship between the individuals within the Army of God is thus based on a shared commitment to a specific set of beliefs and concepts, and where the individuals joins the Army of God in an abstract sense by internalizing the collective meaning-system. Furthermore, it is not necessary for all of the individuals to share or embrace all of the beliefs and concepts to the same degree.

The results further demonstrate that abortion is perceived as a grave injustice and destruction of something sacred, and how it leads to a moral outrage and aggression by constituting a threat towards one's social identity. Since legal solutions are perceived as insufficient or impossible the individual begins to use displacement and social categorization in an effort to vent the feelings of frustration and threat. This threat moves the individuals towards a 'black-and-white' and 'the ends justify the means' mentality. This offers the individual a morally warranted and effective (and thus significance promoting) method of addressing the perceived injustice and threat. It can further fuel the internalization of the collective meaning-system by addressing the fundamental psychological needs of self-esteem and security. The internalization also brings a rigid categorical thinking with self-imposed boundaries and a reduced individual freedom which hinders the individual from leaving the threatening situation, thus moving the person closer to acts of violence. These processes are reinforced by a high demand for obedience and conformity from an authoritarian god image, which simultaneously provides a psychological significance and a directing power through the process of sanctification. The act of violence thus becomes prompted by a perceived calling or duty from God, and is further facilitated by a dehumanization and demonization that sidesteps the mechanisms that normally inhibit someone from killing another human being.

Taken together these processes can contribute to religiously motivated violence. However, these processes can occur in a different order, and in parallel with each other. They may also develop simultaneously and mutually influence one and another. Nevertheless, they can be seen as various contributing factors that together increase the likelihood of violence by reducing the degree of freedom for those who perceive a threat towards their social identity and a loss of significance.

The findings of the study address the need of primary empirical data in the psychological research of violent extremism. Furthermore, it brings further knowledge regarding religiously motivated violence and leaderless resistance by taking into account the search for significance and sacred values, and how a moral justification for a violent response can function as an opportunity for a gain in significance. In contrast to previous research (Hogg, 2012; Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Kruglanski & Orehek, 2012; Post, 2007) the current study also demonstrates that a leader or a well-structured group is not necessarily a key factor when explaining religiously motivated violence from a social psychological perspective, provided that there is an authoritative god image and prototypical members that can inspire others. This can contribute to the theoretical understanding regarding social identity and a collective meaning-making in relation to violent extremism and lone-wolf terrorism.

Suggestions for future research includes in-depth psychological comparisons between individuals within the Army of God and matched controls from an identical context who are non-violent (e.g. Operation Save America). This could be accompanied by estimating the willingness of perpetrating violence in relation to one's group membership in order to examine the influence of individual and group factors. Finally, future research also needs to examine and evaluate possible ways of preventing violent extremism. A promising way to address this is by methods that employ integrative complexity thinking, which has empirically shown an increase in people's resilience to 'black-and-white' ways of thinking (see e.g., Savage, 2011; Savage, Khan & Liht, 2014; Liht & Savage, 2013). It might also promote complex social identities (Brewer, 2010; Roccas & Brewer, 2002), which could build a resilience to violent extremism by promoting multiple and integrated in-group identities which can offset a perceived threat to one social identity.

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Appendix A

Interview guide

Information before the interview:

Your participation in this project is voluntary and if you like to stop the interview you can do it whenever you want. You also don't have to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable with.

The interview will be recorded and transcribed, and will only be used for research purposes and the recording will be stored in a secured and locked location.

The purpose with today's interview is to understand the process of religious conviction moving into action and to get a better picture of the Army of God, its members and values.

Do you have any questions before we proceed?

Theme 1: Religious background

Can you describe your religious background? (Initial question)

(Follow-up question): What kind of congregation were you part of?

(Follow-up questions): What kind of congregation are you a part of now?

What kind of rituals has been important to your Christian life?

(Follow-up question): Are there other religious acts that have been important?

(Follow-up question): Are these still important in your life?

(Follow-up questions): Are there other religious acts that are more important for you today?

What kind of symbols has been important in your Christian life?

(Follow-up questions): Are there any kind of symbols that are very important today?

How would you describe your Christian faith?

(Follow-up questions): Has your Christian faith changed over the years?

How important are your Christian faith to you?

(Follow-up question): Has your Christian faith always been important/unimportant for you?

In what way does your faith influence how you act in your daily life?

(Follow-up question): Has it always influenced how you act in life?

How would you describe God?

(Follow-up question): Is this image of God the same as when you grow-up?

In what way does your faith influence the choices that you make in life?

(Follow-up question): Does this differ from earlier in your life?

Theme 2: Perception of the society

Would you describe the US as a Christian society?

(Follow-up question): How come/How come not?

Would you say that Christianity is compromised in the US society?

(Follow-up questions): How come/come not?

(Follow-up questions): In what way?

What would you describe as the greatest threat to Christian values in the US?

Theme 3: Views on abortion

How do you think Christians perceive abortion in the US? (Indirect question)

What are your thoughts about the decision to make abortion legal in the 70ts?

What are your thoughts about abortion?

How did you become engaged in the fight against abortion?

How do you perceive the pro-choice movements?

What are your thoughts about the women going to abort clinics?

What do you think about the abortion doctors?

What are abortion clinics to you?

How do you perceive Christians that condemn the use of a ‘defensive action’?

What justifies the use of a ‘defensive action’?

What kind of means is justified?

Theme 4. Perceptions about the Army of God

What can you tell me about the Army of God?

(Follow-up questions): How would you describe the Army of God?

Why the name ‘the Army of God’?

What values does the Army of God have?

What kind norms does the Army of God have?

What beliefs that the Army of God have?

To what extent do you think the Army of God express Christian values and beliefs?

Would you describe these values and beliefs as representing God’s truth?

Can these be compromised in some way?

What distinguish the Army of God from other pro-life movements?

How would you describe the aim of the Army of God?

Would you say that the Army of God has had any success in its goals?

(Follow-up question) How come/come not?

(Follow-up question) Do you believe in a forthcoming victory concerning these goals?

What is your relation to the Army of God?

How did you become engaged in the Army of God?

How important is the Army of God to you?

How would you describe the members of the Army of God?

When is one a member of the Army of God?

(What can you tell me about the ‘Anti-abortion Heroes of Faith’ on the website?)

To what extent do you think members of the Army of God are defined by its be-

iefs and values?

How important do you think the Army of God is to its members?

In what way do you think the Army of God influence the daily life of its members?

Does the Army of God have any special symbols?

(Follow-up question): Can you elaborate on these?

Does the Army of God have any kind of rituals?

(Follow-up question): Can you elaborate on these?

Does the Army of God have any religious acts?

(Follow-up question): Can you elaborate on these?

Does it have any special events?

(Have there been any special events?)

Does the members in Army of God support each other in some way?

(Follow-up question): Can you elaborate on these?

Why do you think people want to affiliate to the Army of God?

(Follow-up question) Can you elaborate on these?

Does the Army of God have any clear opponent?

(Follow-up question) Who is this opponent?

How would you describe this opponent?

Do you think that the members of Army of God perceive themselves as being in a minority?

(Follow-up question) How come/How come not?

I don't have any more questions but is there anything you want to comment or say before we end the interview?

Appendix B

Analytic questions

Religious fundamentalism

The four features that distinguish religious fundamentalism will be used to draw a picture of the Army of God and set the stage for the social psychological theories. In the examination of the documents several analytic questions will thus relate to these features:

- Are there any expressions of reactivity in the material?
- Are there any expressions of selectivity in the material?
- Are there any expressions of dualistic thinking in the material?
- Are there any expressions of absolutism in the material?

Threat to the self and sanctification.

According to Jones (2013a), violence occurs when a sacred object is perceived as desecrated or threatened since it has become a part of the self. As mentioned earlier, one of my suggestions is that abortion will represent an injustice and threat to the sanctity of life and is by extension a crime against God. This also relates to threat to the self in both the Staircase to Terrorism and social identity theory. The following analytic questions will thus be used:

- What is the conflict?
- What is at stake religiously? (In relation to the sacred)
- Is life perceived as a direct manifestation of one's beliefs, image or experience of God and/or is it ascribed with divine qualities associated with the divine.
- Is abortion perceived as violation or desecration of something sacred?

First condition for conflicts: The in-group identity should be strongly internalized.

For conflicts to ensue, Herriot (2007) states that certain conditions have to be met.

Herriot (2007) asserts that the first condition is a social identity that is central to the self and habitual salient. This means that individuals must construe themselves in terms of this central identity. This can be examined by investigating whether individuals within the Army of God often express and emphasize central beliefs and values of the collective meaning-system. Strongly internalized beliefs and values thus imply a social identity that is internalized into the self. If this social identity also often directs one's behaviour, it further suggests a strongly internalized in-group identity. This relates to the third floor in Moghaddam's model. The analytic questions for this will be:

- Do individuals emphasize any particular social identity?
- Do individuals express a clear and simple distinction between them and us?
- Does the individual often express or emphasize central beliefs and value of the collective meaning-system?

Second condition for conflicts: Group comparison must be possible

If conflicts are to occur, it must also be possible for the in-group members to compare themselves with other groups. This can be examined by looking at the prototypes and stereotypes of the group. How are they expressed? How is the difference between them maximized and is there any depersonalization in relation to these? How is the social context perceived? This can be related to the second floor (selection of enemy), the third floor (prototype in relation to other pro-life movements), fourth floor (prototypes and stereotypes in relation to the enemy; binary thinking) and the fifth floor (depersonalization as a form of dehumanization and a social categorization through an extreme differentiation between the prototype and stereotypes). The analytic questions for this will be:

- How is the out-group perceived? (Is there any clear stereotypes and a depersonalization?)
- How is the prototype perceived? (In relation to out-group, and is there a depersonalization?)
- How is the social context perceived? (Cosmic war or struggle? Is the conflict political? Is it theological?)

Third condition for conflicts: The out-group has to be relevant

The out-group also has to be perceived as a threat to the in-group's security and there must be some degree of impermeability. This can be related to the third and fourth floor of Moghaddam's model. The analytics questions will be:

- How is the threat perceived? (Threat to the in-group's security?)

- Can the beliefs and values of the in-group be challenged? (Authoritative God?)
- Are the beliefs and values of the in-group perceived as absolutely right?

Driving factors for the internalization of the collective meaning-system

According to Herriot (2007) there are two fundamental psychological needs that drive the internalization of a collective-meaning system: the need for self-esteem and the need to reduce uncertainty. Self-esteem can be gained through belonging. If the individual internalizes the approved prototype and its beliefs/values, the individual's self is approved by other members of the group and thus the self-esteem is enhanced. It can also be gained if the group is perceived to have won battles in the conflict and/or if they perceive possibilities to a great victory. Self-esteem can also be gained through the content of the beliefs and values. For example, if the beliefs, values and norms assure the in-group members that they are special and worthy people. Belonging to a collective meaning-system can also boost self-esteem by presenting the in-groups as better in comparison with the out-group. More specifically, by comparing the in-group prototype with the out-group stereotype.

By providing a clear and explicit set of beliefs, values and norms, the need for certainty can be met. The collective meaning-system can also reduce uncertainty by providing simple propositions to act on. Having clear stereotypes of the out-group and prototypes of the in-group can also reduce the uncertainty (Herriot, 2007). A clear prototype reduces one's uncertainty about who one is and since in-group members presume to know the sort of people their enemies are, they can plan ahead and feel control. It increases the certainty about the future while also providing a boost to their self-esteem since the individual feels powerful and in control (Herriot, 2007). The need for certainty and self-esteem can be seen as a theme that follows along all the steps in Moghaddam's model, but especially at the third floor. The analytic questions for this will be the following:

- Do people within the Army of God perceive themselves as having won any battles?
- Do individuals within the Army of God believe in a forthcoming victory?
- How are individuals affiliated to the Army of God perceived? (Right beliefs and values? Common prototype? When is one member?)
- Is there comparison between the prototypes and the stereotypes?
- Does the Army of God express clear and explicit beliefs and values to hold?
- Do the collective meaning-system provide an explicit identity?
- Do they perceive themselves as maintaining God's truth? (Defending jus-

tice from a clear threat?)

Selective moral disengagement

According to Bandura (2003), people generally tend to abstain from behaviour that violates their moral standards. When one's behaviour is regulated by self-imposed sanctions the self-worth and self-satisfaction is enhanced. However, if one's behaviour violates the self-imposed moral standards the self-worth is threatened. People therefore do not usually engage in a violent conduct unless the morality of their actions has been justified. If a harmful conduct is to be justified it must be viewed as something benign or worthy through a cognitive restructuring. Bandura (2003) points that there are several tactics that can be employed to achieve this end:

- **Euphemistic language:** Is there any euphemistic language present in material? How are the violent acts and the victims described?
- **Displacement of responsibility:** Is the responsibility for the violent acts displaced on the victims, circumstances, authorities or God?
- **Diffusion of responsibility:** Are the violent acts in some way blamed on group decisions? Is one's own accountability diffused by the distribution of responsibility?
- **Distortion of sequence of events:** Is the violence described as a response to the action of the out-group?
- **Advantageous comparison:** Is the violence compared to something much worse and harmful? Are non-violent acts seen as ineffective? Is the violence described as preventing suffering?
- **Attribution of blame:** Do the Army of God blame the victims for bringing the suffering on themselves?
- **Dehumanization:** How are the victims or out-group perceived?

Appendix C



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Department of Theology

Dear XX

My name is Sacharias Wirén and I am a Master student in Psychology of Religion at Uppsala University, Sweden. I have just started preparing for my master thesis in which I want to understand more about the Army of God. I have previously read texts from the Army of God website and autobiographical books from Paul Hill and Eric Rudolph. However, to get a better picture of the group, membership, and values I would like to do interviews with some of its members and/or spokespersons. Can you help me with this? Would you perhaps be interested in being interviewed or do you know someone else affiliated with the group who might be interested? If desired, the interviews will be anonymous and you can withdraw from the project at any point. The information collected will only be used for research purposes.

If you want information by a representative of the university you can contact Professor Valerie DeMarinis who is head of the area, and my supervisor for the thesis. She can be reached at the following e-mail: valerie.demarinis@teol.uu.se.

If you have any questions about the thesis or the interviews, please feel free to contact me at this e-mail address.

Yours sincerely,
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