

MUSLIMS AS THE 'OTHER'

OTHERING OF MUSLIMS BY DONALD TRUMP SUPPORTERS IN THE UNITED STATES

MASTER THESIS TESSA VEERMAN

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Abstract

This thesis examines how individuals come to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims, through the analysis of the role of uncertainty on the identification process, and strategies one may use to diminish this experience. Because of processes related to globalization, such as economic changes, migration, terrorism, and the role of media, individuals increasingly experience uncertainty. Although uncertainty can open a broad range of possibilities, it can also lead to anxiety, this thesis explores the role of the experience of uncertainty on the identification process. There are three strategies specifically that individuals may use to diminish the experience of uncertainty that can account for their support for the 'othering' of Muslims by Donald Trump, namely by retreating from society, by giving the lead to particular positions in their repertoire, and by sharpening the boundaries between oneself and the other. The role of Muslims as the 'Other' in Western society has been theorized from many angles. This thesis elaborates on these theories by explaining that apart from the uncertainty participants experience regarding Muslims and Islam, there is another factor that influences someone's support for the 'othering' of Muslims. Participants feel that the uncertainty they experience, particularly in regard to their concerns about Muslims and Islam, is not taken seriously through which they feel to be 'othered' themselves. The research concludes that this experience further influences Trump supporters' likelihood to turn to the strategies that influence their support for Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Problem Analysis

In December 2015 United States presidential nominee for the Republican Party Donald Trump stated that Muslims should temporarily be banned from entering the United States. According to him, this solution would allow the government time to ‘figure out what the problem is with Muslims’ (ABCNews, 2015). His comments were criticized by media, several organizations, and over 500,000 people signed a petition to ban Donald Trump as a presidential candidate. Polls held in the same week, however, stated that 59% of Republicans would support such a ban (Abadi, 2015).¹

In the following months, and particularly after the attack on a LGBT+ club in Orlando on June 12, 2016, Trump further developed these plans and discussed them in a speech where he blamed Democrats such as president Obama and presidential nominee for the Democratic party Clinton for not taking proper action and ‘refusing to speak about radical Islam’ (Trump, 2016). Although he received much criticism for his comments, it did not affect his popularity. Moreover, a Reuters study suggests that Trump’s proposal of a temporary ban on Muslims entering the United States has only received more approval under American voters over the subsequent months (Barrett, 2016).

At the same time, the rate of suspected hate crimes against Muslims in the United States has tripled since the Paris attacks on November 13, 2015, with 38 crimes in the month after the attacks (Stack, 2016). This number had not been as high since immediately after the attacks on September 11, 2001, when there were on average 40.1 anti-Islam hate crimes every month according to FBI statistics (Siemaszko, 2015). This was an increase of 1600 percent compared to the previous year (Schevitz, 2002, p. 1). Eighteen of the 38 crimes since November 13, 2015 were committed in the week after the shooting in San Bernardino on December 2, 2015, when a radicalized Muslim couple killed fourteen people and wounded 22 at a non-profit benefit corporation that provides services and programs to people with developmental disabilities.

¹ 59% is one of the more modest estimates.

Donald Trump has mentioned these attacks in many of his speeches as a way to explain the importance of taking Muslim extremism seriously, while arguing that the current government is not doing that enough. He has also appropriated the situation as a way to explain how he thinks the government should deal with Muslims extremists and the family of terrorists, saying that: ‘We have to take out their families. When you get these terrorists, you have to take out their families. They, they care about their lives, don’t kid yourself’ (FoxNews, 2015).

Furthermore, Trump has talked about these attacks as a way to demonstrate the relevance, in his opinion, of the second amendment, the right to keep and bear guns, for example. In numerous interviews he has said that if he would have been present in San Bernardino that day, and he would have been carrying a gun, there would have been a very different ending to the story (CBSNews, 2015). These comments were met with much criticism from several media outlets, while Trump’s popularity rose to its highest level in the following month, three weeks before the first Republican primaries and caucuses (Rappeport, 2016). Since then, he has won the Republican nomination, and it is relevant to take Donald Trump seriously as a presidential candidate.

After his wins on Super Tuesday on March 1st, Donald Trump said: ‘I’m a unifier. I know people find that a little hard to believe but I am a unifier. I have a bigger heart than anybody’ (Trump, Super Tuesday Full Victory Speech, 2016). At the same time, there is currently an ongoing Avaaz petition, which argues for the exact opposite, and reads:

Dear Mr. Trump,

This is not what greatness looks like.

The world rejects your fear, hate-mongering, and bigotry. We reject your support for torture, your calls for murdering civilians, and your general encouragement of violence. We reject your denigration of women, Muslims, Mexicans, and millions of others who don’t look like you, talk like you, or pray to the same god as you.

Facing your fear we choose compassion. Hearing your despair we choose hope. Seeing your ignorance we choose understanding.

As citizens of the world, we stand united against your brand of division (Avaaz, 2016)

The petition has been signed by over two million people, who argue to oppose Donald Trump's 'othering' of, for example, Muslims. Since Trump's announcement of his candidacy in June 2015, there have been protesters present at his meetings and rallies. Similarly Trump has been criticized and mocked in the media as well. Many people did not expect Donald Trump to do as well as he has, and several media described to expect that his statements on, for example, Muslims were too extreme to gain such a large group of support (Bilefsky, 2016).

This has proven not to be the case. In this thesis I aim to describe how Trump voters feel about Donald Trump's ideas that support the 'othering' of Muslims, ideas that make many others oppose Donald Trump as a presidential candidate. I will analyze how Trump supporters come to support these political ideas that 'other' Muslims, by looking at individuals' identification process and the way they experience uncertainty through globalization processes, while focusing specifically on the role of their feelings about Islam and Muslims.

Apart from processes related to globalization that directly cause people to experience uncertainty, I argue, there is a subsequent factor that influences these feelings. Namely, the uncertainty that individuals experience increases when they feel as if these feelings are not taken seriously. My research suggests that Trump supporters do not only feel as if their experiences are not being taken seriously by their current government, but that they are mocked for their fears about Muslims and Islam as well. As their worries about this topic are embedded in a general experience on uncertainty, this influences the strategies they may use to diminish this experience.

To diminish their experience of uncertainty, I argue, there are three strategies specifically that account for individuals' support for Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims. These strategies help people cope with uncertainty they experience through factors related to globalization. I argue that these strategies are particularly influenced by their experience not to be taken seriously and feeling 'othered' themselves because of their fears about Muslims and Islam in Western society. Because of the uncertainty experienced, individuals may respond with three strategies. Namely by retreating from society, by giving the lead to

specific positions in their repertoire, and by sharpening the boundaries between oneself and the other.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

In this thesis I aim to describe how Trump supporters experience uncertainty, and how they respond to this. I argue that because of processes related to globalization (such as economic changes, immigration, terrorism and media) individuals increasingly experience uncertainty. These processes affect people directly (e.g., being afraid of Muslims because of terrorist attacks by Muslim extremists), and can also cause an increase of positions and changes as well as conflict in their position repertoire (e.g., 'I am an open minded person and do not judge people' vs 'I am becoming less trustworthy of Muslims and may subconsciously judge them').

Moreover, I argue, as my study as well as other research suggests, these feelings of uncertainty increase when people feel as if their experiences are not taken seriously. More specifically, my research suggests that Trump supporters feel that their fears regarding Muslim extremism are not shared by a variety of groups (that people describe as 'Democrats', 'Liberals', 'the Government'), but actually express to feel that those groups are 'othering' them because of these differences. Because of this, individuals feel that dominant positions, such as their religious, national, and political positions, are being threatened.

To cope with this uncertainty, individuals may respond by retreating from society, giving the lead to one or a few positions, or by sharpening the boundaries between oneself and the other. I argue that the likelihood for individuals to turn to these strategies that account for someone's support for the 'othering of Muslims' is influenced by participants' experience to be 'othered' themselves.

This research entails Trump supporters' perspectives, and only focuses on Trump's ideas in relation to his supporters. Its focus is not on Donald Trump directly, nor is it directly on Muslims or Islam, but on how Trump supporters perceive Donald Trump and his ideas. My main interest in Donald Trump is therefore only because of his anti-Islamic

rhetoric and his millions of who seem to share the same sentiments against Muslims, which is what will be the focus of this thesis.

In analyzing how individuals come to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims, this thesis is guided by the following central research question: *How can motives to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims be explained and how do Trump supporters feel about Islam?* The first part of the question focuses on people's motives to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims by analyzing the uncertainty participants experience and how they come to use strategies to diminish these feelings. The second part of the question concentrates on individuals' feelings about Muslims and Islam specifically, while looking at factors that influence their opinions.

I aim to answer this question in five chapters with help of the structure I will hereby present. This introductory chapter provides information on the organization of this thesis and further background of the research I have conducted. The chapter then returns to the main topic of the thesis, and I will place the support for Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims in a broader context, that of Islam in Western society, to provide an understanding of the current circumstances.

The second chapter reviews theoretical literature on identity and uncertainty and aims to provide the framework for the argument that I will further develop in the subsequent chapters. It focuses on how Trump supporters may experience uncertainty because of globalization and how this affects their position repertoire. I argue that identity is an anxiety-controlling mechanism, and I will describe how people may try to deal with this experience of uncertainty. The chapter is guided by the following sub question: *How can different motives for 'othering' be explained through the role of uncertainty and how could these motives be used to clarify Donald Trump supporters' opinions about Muslims and Islam specifically?*

I aim to answer this question by exploring the role of uncertainty in the identification process, before looking at the role of globalization. I argue that because of factors related to globalization (such as economic changes, migration, terrorism and the media), individuals are increasingly exposed to uncertainty. The identification process may then provide people with a sense of stability and purpose. According to Hermans and Hermans-

Konopka (2010), the 'Self' consists out of several positions, and the 'I' is bound between these positions. The 'I' can let these voices 'speak' depending on the situation.

Because of globalization, the 'Self' may be populated by an increased amount of positions that are more likely to cause changes and even conflict in the position repertoire. Furthermore, because of globalization, the repertoire is subjected to changes and can receive more 'visits' from unexpected positions, because of which there are larger 'position leaps' that someone has to deal with. I will describe how individuals are affected by these processes directly (e.g., 'I am scared of flying since 9/11'), and how it affects their identification process by, for example, experiencing conflicting positions (e.g., 'I am very trusting of others and I love meeting new people' versus 'Since 9/11, I do not trust Muslims as much and I do not want to meet them').

The second chapter in particular, but the thesis in its entirety as well, will be taking a 'thick signifier' approach of uncertainty, which entails that, although my focus is on Trump supporters' views on Islam and Muslims, this will be placed in a broader context. It is important to analyze the uncertainty individuals experience because of Islam in Western society, by also looking at other factors that cause them to experience uncertainty in general (e.g., through job loss or increased fear because of terrorism). This broader context provides an understanding of participants' experience of uncertainty more generally, which further influences the strategies that someone may use to diminish this experience. Therefore, although this thesis focuses specifically on Trump supporters' ideas about Trump's 'othering' of Muslims and their views on Islam, this broader context will also be discussed.

Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) provide five strategies as to how individuals may respond to the uncertainty they experience, and I argue that three of these strategies in particular are useful in explaining how Trump voters may come to support the 'othering' of Muslims by Donald Trump. These three approaches can be interrelated and an individual can use all strategies in various moments in their life.

First of all, individuals may retreat from society to decrease the positions in their repertoire to find a quieter way of living. Some positions may be pushing to become dominant, but have not (yet) taken over the repertoire. People may choose to spend time with more likeminded people and fewer people they experience as 'Others', for example. Stud-

ies have suggested that people who know Muslims personally tend to view them more positively. Therefore, if people purposely retreat from places in society where that is possible, and choose to be in contact with likeminded people, this may influence their views on Islam and Muslims.

Secondly, individuals may give the lead to one or a few positions, in which case these positions have become dominant. In particular national and religious positions are suited to become such 'identity-signifiers', as they are able to convey a picture of security, stability, and simple answers, when individuals are searching exactly for that (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 742). In this case, people may fall back onto chosen traumas and chosen glories, from which future events may be perceived. Apart from nationalism and religious beliefs, political ideas can also be an important signifier. These signifiers can be connected and I argue that many individuals experience these three signifiers to be united in their support for Donald Trump.

Apart from that, individuals may sharpen the boundaries between 'Self' and 'Other' to diminish their feelings of uncertainty. By doing so, and by placing one's own group above another group, individuals can construct an identity that augments positive positions and diminishes negative positions, which increases self-esteem and pride. Within this process 'Self' and 'Other' can both become to be seen as essentialized bodies. This means that both 'Self' and 'Other' are being reduced to only a number of characteristics. Even though these characteristics are fabricated, they can come to be seen as natural and unified features for describing the group.

Over the past decades, Muslims in particular seem to have become an 'Other' that in some cases has been placed outside of society and has been blamed for a variety of things. A series of events over the past thirty years seems to have provided lasting images of militant versions of Islam. The Iranian Revolution, the hostage taking at the American Embassy, the Lebanese hostages, the Rushdie affair, and the crisis in Algeria all had an impact on how Islam is perceived (Cesari, 2004, p. 3). The role of Muslims as the 'Other' in Western society has been theorized from different angles. I will demonstrate with Said

(1978) and Kristeva (1991) how Muslims in particular seem to have become an 'Other', and what this means.

In the third chapter I will present the research I have conducted in the two months I spent in the United States. For this research, I interviewed 26 Trump supporters of ages 20-62, of whom eighteen are men and eight are women, who lived in a total of twelve states. I interviewed people in person, and I also conducted interviews online (through Skype or Facebook video) with people I had met online (e.g., in forums, or on Donald Trump's Facebook page) or in person (e.g., at the rally or at protests).

I attended a Trump support rally and I did a personal study about one of the Trump support groups on Facebook. The field notes that I took in both of these cases proved to be very useful in providing a broader understanding of Trump supporters' background and worldview. These techniques were helpful in understanding specific examples of some of the issues that interviewees referred back to, as it provided more insight into their worldview. Similarly, this information also provided an illustration of some of the processes that I describe in the theoretical framework in chapter two.

The third chapter will be guided by the following sub question: *How can individual opinions and feelings of Donald Trump supporters about Islam be explained and how do his supporters feel about Donald Trump's political ideas about Muslims?* The chapter has a similar structure to the second chapter, and starts by looking at individuals' backgrounds and the uncertainty they experience. This will be guided by the four factors I mentioned previously: economic changes, migration, terrorism, media. After this, I will focus on participants' feelings about Islam and Muslims specifically, before turning to how individuals may respond to the uncertainty they experience.

The research that I will present suggests that these feelings of uncertainty as influenced by these various processes related to globalization are intensified by the experience of the participants of my research not to be being taken seriously, or even mocked. All participants described feeling that their worries about Islam and Muslim extremists are not shared by 'Democrats' or 'the government', and that they are instead being ridiculed for their fears and religious or political beliefs.

My research, as well as other studies that I will present in this third chapter, suggest that Trump supporters feel neglected, and subsequently 'othered' by a liberal elite that, in their opinion, currently has a dominant voice. In their opinion, this group also consists out of the people, who are protecting Muslims at the cost of Christians or who they see as 'true Americans'.

In other words, I suggest, Trump supporters feel 'othered' themselves, which is an additional factor that explains why they might experience uncertainty and respond by, for example, 'othering' Muslims. This is the argument that I will further explore in the fourth chapter, while aiming to provide an answer to the following sub question: *How can the findings in the empirical framework be understood with help of the theoretical framework, and how does it possibly challenge theory or require additional information?*

This is the chapter where I analyze the results of the research with the help of information provided in the theoretical framework, as well as possible others, such as Susan Harding (1991), who provides an explanation as to how the group that is the focus of this thesis may feel 'othered' themselves, which causes them to respond a certain way. I argue that, although Christian beliefs, nationalism, or political support is not an invention of modern discourse, extreme variations are a part of modernity.

In the fourth chapter I will further describe how these processes related to globalization affect the three strategies they may turn to that explain their support for Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims, while incorporating the experience of participants to be 'othered' themselves. This chapter therefore further develops the argument as presented in the second chapter, while integrating information from my own research.

Subsequently I will present the conclusion of this thesis in the fifth chapter. In this chapter I will summarize my chapters and the argument that I have proposed. I will take stock present concluding remarks.

1.3 Research Methodology

This research has taken a qualitative approach. This allowed me to identify issues from the perspective of participants as well as to understand interpretations that they give to behavior, events or objects. Qualitative research studies, for example, textual materials (such as

interview transcripts, field notes, and documents), or visual materials (such as artifacts, photographs, video recordings, and websites) that document human experiences (Saldana, 2011, p. 3).

Qualitative research intends to approach the world as it is (not in specialized research settings) and to understand, describe, and explain social phenomena ‘from the inside’ (Kvale, 2007, p. x). This can be done by analyzing experiences of individuals or groups, interaction and communications, or documents and similar traces of experiences or interactions. In this research I aim to analyze how individuals’ identification processes are affected by the experience of uncertainty, and how they respond to feelings of uncertainty, while focusing specifically on their feelings about Muslims and Islam in Western society.

My main way of gathering data was through structured and semi-structured interviews that focus on the perspectives and subjective realities of Trump supporters in the United States. I conducted interviews with Donald Trump supporters in Texas, Oklahoma, and New York. I also conducted several interviews through Skype and Facebook Video, with people I met in the United States as well as through online forums.

Silverman argues that we are currently part of an ‘interview society’, where interviews play a central role in the understanding of our lives (Silverman, 1993, p. 19). The face to face interview is presented as enabling special insights into subjectivity, voice and lived experience (Rapley, 2013, p. 15). In past decades, researchers have become more interested in autobiographical recollections, life stories, and narrative approaches to understanding human behavior and experience. McAdams’ life story model of identity was an important development in this context, which asserts that: ‘people living in modern societies provide their lives with unity and purpose by constructing internalized and evolving narratives of the self’ (McAdams, 2001, p. 100). He argued that identity itself takes the form of a story, complete with a setting, scenes, character, plot, and theme.

Because of how life stories are constructed, they reflect cultural values and norms, including assumptions about gender, race, and class. They are intelligible within a particular cultural frame, while also differentiating between people, and as such, it has become an interesting area of study (McAdams, 2001, p. 101). This seemed to be an accurate way to

gather data for my research as well, as I am interested to learn about people's motives, interests, attitudes and feelings.

I wanted to conduct semi structured lifeworld interviews, which is an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee, with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 2007, p. 8). The other ways that I collected information, would then provide additional insights and examples of the information I have found through the interviews and literature study.

Before I started preparing the interviews, I needed to decide on the scope of my research and choose who exactly I was going to be focusing on. I was interested in capturing differences between Trump supporters, as this would provide a broad understanding of how individuals experience uncertainty and subsequently respond to this uncertainty.

I aimed to speak with people who actively support Donald Trump, as I found it important to interview people who consciously chose to support Donald Trump in relatively early stages of the election process (I found interviewees between December 2015 and March 2016). All interviewees either attended Trump support rallies or protests, and most people actively used social media as a way to talk about their support for Trump. As I am focusing on 'selfing' and 'othering' processes, I also thought it was important to interview people who specifically identify as a Trump supporter. Everyone very much identified with being a Trump supporter, which was something that we always discussed during the preparatory stages before the actual interview.

Although I did not assume that all participants would directly oppose Islam, my hypothesis is based on the idea that these people support Trump's 'othering' of Muslims and Islam, as he has been very outspoken about this topic. 25 out of the 26 interviewees did oppose Islam as a religion, and all participants had a variety of reasons for supporting Donald Trump's 'othering' of Islam and Muslims. All participants saw 'radical Islam' as an important threat to society, and in the conversation leading up to the interview, everyone responded that they agreed with Trump's plan to temporarily ban Muslims from entering the United States.

1.4 Islam in Western society: Background

Although it is not only Muslims who Donald Trump seems to 'other' as he has, for example, targeted Mexicans as well, this research specifically focuses on the 'othering' of Muslims in the United States. I found this topic specifically interesting as it can be placed in a broader context in Western society.

Parties on the far right have been emerging all across Europe, and in Western Europe most of these parties focus on immigration and anti-Islam policies (Jansen, 2014). These parties seem to have gotten extremer in their ideas and statements, while continually receiving more support. After the attacks that Islamic State claimed responsibility for in Brussels on March 22nd, 2016, Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch Party for Freedom, which is currently leading in the Dutch polls (Peilingen, 2016) responded by writing the following tweet: 'I am about to request a debate with Rutte (Dutch prime minister) on the Brussels attacks. How many debates will be necessary until one acknowledges that Islam is the source? #noislam' (Wilders, 2016).²

It is important to note that there are significant differences between the perception of Muslims and discussion around Islam in the United States and many Western European countries. It makes one wonder how exactly these 'othering' processes have evolved in Western society. Although many Europeans did not immediately take Donald Trump seriously as a political candidate, with media mocking the Republican candidate in many ways, ideas and rhetoric similar to that of Donald Trump can be recognized in various countries (Bilefsky, 2016).

The way that Donald Trump presents himself might seem different from how most political leaders in Europe would present themselves, the topics these politicians cover and the way they speak about the current government are comparable. Similar to Geert Wilders' tweet as discussed earlier after the attacks in Brussels, right after the attacks in Orlando, Donald Trump tweeted several messages about being right to fear 'radical Islam' and propose a ban on Muslims. He wrote:

² My own translation from the original Dutch tweet.

What has happened in Orlando is just the beginning. Our leadership is weak and ineffective. I called it and asked for the ban. Must be tough. [...] Appreciate the congrats for being right on radical Islamic terrorism, I don't want congrats, I want toughness & vigilance. We must be smart! (Trump, 2016).

These tweets demonstrate a comparable line of thought and rhetoric as Wilders did in his comment, and similar to how Geert Wilders turned to prime minister Rutte, Donald Trump has responded by blaming president Obama for not taking action.

These parties on the extreme right of the political spectrum are currently leading the polls in many countries in Europe. The Swiss Schweizerische Volkspartei, the Austrian Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, the French Front National and the Dutch Partij voor de Vrijheid all currently have around 30 percent in the polls. This is a trend that has slowly emerged from the 1980s on, and is therefore not a new phenomenon in Western Europe.

It is important to note that there are significant differences between the perception of Muslims and discussion around Islam in the United States and many Western European countries. In the media, but also in academics, it sometimes seems to be assumed that discrimination of Arabs and Muslims mostly started in Western society after the attacks on September 11, 2001. However, the automatic association of ethnicity, Islam, and poverty was widespread in Europe, more so than in the United States, long before September 11, as was the resurgence of xenophobic and race-oriented nationalism.

A survey done in 1991 in France reported that 51% of the participants stated that the greatest danger for France came from the global South. Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Algeria were cited as the four countries most feared, specifically due to their Muslim character (Cesari, 2004, p. 3). Furthermore, in every country in Europe, the rate of unemployment is higher among people from a Muslim background than among non-Muslim Europeans (Cesari, 2004, p. 22).

The term 'Islamophobia' emerged in 1997, during discussions in the United Kingdom on the topic of anti-Muslim discrimination. This indicates that there was already a discussion about Islam in Western society long before September 11, 2001 (Cesari, 2004, p. 3). There is much literature documenting the claim that profiling of Arab and Muslim

communities was widely accepted before 9/11 as well, and that there were already similar policies in the United States in use before the 'War on Terror' (Akram & Karmely, 2005, p. 616). Similarly, a 1994 survey, for example, indicated that 61% of Americans said Islamic resurgence would be a threat (Cesari, 2004, p. 2).

The attacks on September 11, 2001 did trigger a wave of anti-Muslim incidents across the Western World. The then European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (now the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)) said that the attacks triggered a latent Islamophobia (Iganski, 2015, p. 5). The attacks seemed to have initiated a higher stage in the meta-narrative on Islam as the enemy (Cesari, 2004, p. 22).

Especially verbal abuse in person, and abuse by phone or email to Muslim organizations was widely reported in the United States. Mosques and Islamic cultural centers were also targeted in acts of vandalism and desecration (Allen & Nielsen, 2002, p. 49). Moreover, stricter laws have been created as part of the 'Global War on Terror', right after the attacks on September 11th 2001, which often targeted Muslims and Arabs in the United States (Akram & Karmely, 2005, p. 634). In the year after the attacks the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) cites more than 1717 acts of discrimination against Muslims, particularly in the workplace and at airports (Akram & Karmely, 2005, p. 625).

Although George W. Bush, helped initiate programs that targeted Muslims in the period after 9/11, he spoke about Muslims and Islam in a very different manner than Donald Trump is doing. On September 17, 2001, less than a week after the attacks on September 11, Bush gave a speech at the Islamic Center of Washington D.C., where he said:

America counts millions of Muslims amongst our citizens, and Muslims make an incredibly valuable contribution to our country. Muslims are doctors, lawyers, law professors, members of the military, entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, moms and dads. And they need to be treated with respect. In our anger and emotion, our fellow Americans must treat each other with respect (Bush, 2001).

In another speech he gave three days later, he said:

I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends. It is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them (Bush, 2001).

These comments depict how differently George W. Bush spoke about Islam after the attacks on September 11, 2001, compared to how, for example, Donald Trump did in the wake of the Paris attacks on November 13, 2015, the attack in San Bernardino December 2, the same year, or after the attack in the Orlando LGBT+ club on June 12.

Apart from how Donald Trump seems to be targeting Muslims, there are currently several other organizations that focus on anti-Islamic ideas (such as Stop Islamization of America (SIOA, formerly called American Freedom Defense Initiative), and the Ku Klux Klan. Pamela Geller, president of the SIOA, supported Ted Cruz to be the Republican nominee, but David Duke, former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, has endorsed Donald Trump.

Duke argued that Trump has made it easier for racist people to express racist views in public, without worrying about public disapproval (Wilkie, 2016). Although the Ku Klux Klan is an apolitical group and normally does not want to get involved in politics, Duke later announced that Donald Trump would be the best candidate to support in the presidential race, saying that: 'Voting against Donald Trump at this point is really treason to your heritage' (Rappeport, 2016).

Although there was already a variety of organizations that concentrates around the 'othering' of Muslims, this was not as heavily represented in American political parties as in, for example, various political parties in Western Europe. With Donald Trump's popularity, that seems to have changed. Despite the criticism that Donald Trump often receives, there does seem to be a lot of support for his ideas that 'other' Muslims.

However, many Republicans are not pleased with Donald Trump's nomination. Trump was officially nominated at the Republican National Convention in July 2016, a

number of prominent Republicans skipped the convention. Indiana delegate Josh Clayburn, for example, said: 'I could not in good conscience attend a coronation and celebration of Donald Trump' (Peters, 2016). Many other Republicans spoke out about considering to vote for the Democrats or use abstention, and former presidential candidate Ted Cruz used his speech at the convention to question Trump's values (Grim, 2016).

Moreover, Ewan McMullin, former C.I.A. official and Republican who identifies as being 'anti-Trump', announced on August 8 2016 that he would run for president as an independent candidate (Haberma, 2016). On that same day, 50 of the most senior Republican national security officials presented a letter declaring that they would not be voting for Donald Trump. The letter said that Trump 'lacks the character, values and experience' to be president and that electing Trump would put the United States' national security and well-being at risk (Sanger & Haberman, 50 G.O.P. Officials Warn Donald Trump Would Put Nation's Security 'at Risk', 2016).

The National Review, a conservative magazine for the Republican elite published a number of essays attacking the 'white working class' who they see as the core of Trump's support. Columnist David French, for example, wrote:

Simply put, [white working class] Americans are killing themselves and destroying their families at an alarming rate. No one is making them do it. The economy isn't putting a bottle in their hand. Immigrants aren't making them cheat on their wives or snort OxyContin (Arnade, 2016).

French's comments make the situation seem easier than it is. The middle-income Americans he speaks about have fallen further behind financially from 2000 onwards, and the middle class has become smaller, from 62 percent of the adult population to 43 percent (PewResearch, 2015). In contrast, the lowest and highest incomes have shown the most growth in the same period. Over the past 35 years, except for the very wealthy, incomes have stagnated, with more people looking for fewer jobs. Especially jobs for those who work with their hands, the manufacturing employment, has been the hardest hit, falling from 18 million jobs in the late 1980s to 12 million jobs today (Arnade, 2016).

There are people from many segments of society who support Donald Trump, and

it is not only the white working class that backs the Republican candidate. However, his supporters are more likely to come from less educated and poorer backgrounds, although this is changing as he is becoming increasingly popular and gaining more support from a larger variety of people (Ross, 2015). Although he has received much criticism, Trump seems to voice these people's concerns about Muslims and Islam. Moreover, I will be arguing, because of how Trump supporters feel they are being viewed, they are more likely to experience uncertainty. This influences the strategies they turn to that influence their support for the 'othering' of Muslims.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the background of the topic of this thesis. It discussed the support for the 'othering' of Muslims by Donald Trump, which was placed in a broader context of Muslims in Western society. The chapter also provided the organizational structure of the five chapters that the thesis consists out of. I have introduced my argument that individuals may experience uncertainty because of factors related to globalization, where I explained that I will focus specifically on the role of economic changes, migration, terrorism, media, which may also affect the identification process.

Furthermore, I explained that my research suggests that another factor may affect individuals' feelings of uncertainty, namely the way that, in their experience, their concerns regarding Islam in Western society are not being taken seriously. Moreover, they experience to feel 'mocked'. Because of this, participants feel that specifically those positions that they prefer to see as most 'stable' are being threatened.

As individuals search for stability, there are three ways that could account for how individuals come to support the 'othering' of Muslims and Islam by Donald Trump. These strategies may help diminish individuals' experience of uncertainty: people may retreat from society, people may give the lead to one or a few positions in the framework, or people may sharpen the boundaries between oneself and the other.

The first chapter further described how Muslims were perceived before and after September 11, 2001, and I explained how the perception of Muslims and Islam differed from their perception in Europe. I described how there was already much support in many

Western European countries for political parties that ‘other’ Muslims, whereas there were no major American political parties that had similar ideas. Trump’s nomination as the Republican candidate seems to have made the gap between the United States and Europe in this respect smaller.

In this first chapter I have aimed to sketch a background of Islam in Western society, where I have focused on the position and perception of Muslims in the United States. This chapter also provided a general understanding of how Trump supporters view Islam and Muslims and what factors may contribute to these feelings. Because of this, I am now able to present the theoretical framework that I will be working with, which I will do in the subsequent chapter. I will explore the argument that Trump supporters deal with the uncertainty they experience in a globalizing world, by retreating from society, giving the lead to one or a few positions, or sharpening the boundaries between oneself and the other. I argue in the next chapter that these responses influence the likelihood to support Donald Trump’s ‘othering’ of Muslims.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the theoretical framework of my thesis. I aim to describe how people come to support the 'othering' of Muslims by analyzing individuals' experience of uncertainty, and how this affects their position repertoire. The chapter is guided by the following sub question: *How can different motives for 'othering' be explained through the role of uncertainty and how could these motives be used to clarify Donald Trump supporters' opinions about Muslims and Islam specifically?*

I argue that through processes related to globalization, individuals are increasingly exposed to uncertainty. Although experiencing uncertainty is not inherently negative, as it can open a broad range of possibilities, it can also lead to anxiety. Because of this, individuals may try to diminish feelings of uncertainty. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) propose five strategies as to how someone may do so, where they focus on a dialogical reaction in particular. Apart from this response, where one 'travels into uncertainty', there are four other responses that an individual may have to diminishing uncertainty. I argue that three out of the four other responses in particular account for how an individual comes to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims. These responses are to retreat from society, to give the lead to a few dominant positions, and to sharpen the boundaries between oneself and the other.

I will start this chapter by exploring the concept of 'identity', as the context in which I will place my analysis of Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's description of the 'Self' as a 'multiplicity of positions' (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 36). This analysis is the basis from which I am able to further propose my argument. I argue that 'identity' can be seen as an anxiety-controlling mechanism that reinforces a sense of trust, predictability, and control (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 746). I will analyze the meaning of uncertainty and how the experience of uncertainty can affect the position repertoire.

In the subsequent section I will describe how globalization has led individuals to increasingly experience uncertainty. Although not a new process, globalization has affect-

ed how certain and secure individuals feel in the world. I will focus on how processes related to globalization such as economic changes, migration, terrorism and how the media has covered these topics affect individuals directly and how it influences their position repertoire.

Because of, for example, merging of companies, automatization, and the economic crisis, the middle class has become smaller (PewResearch, 2015). Studies also demonstrate that Americans feel increasingly unsafe over the past decade (Connelly, 2011). People are exposed to more information, and there are more people and more perspectives that one comes in contact with. All of these things need to be processed, which can lead someone to feel uncertain or overwhelmed.

In analyzing these topics, I will focus specifically on how they affect Trump supporters and their perception of the world. I will refer to recent studies that demonstrate how Trump supporters are affected by these processes and how this influences their identification process. The impact of these processes that people are exposed to is unequal, as there are tremendous differences between groups, and I will explain how Trump supporters are affected by these changes. After having sketched a context of how individuals may experience uncertainty, I will analyze theories that describe how globalization has affected how Muslims and Islam have come to be perceived in particular.

In the following section I will then be able to present the strategies that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) have distinguished to diminish the experience of uncertainty. As mentioned, they explain that there are five ways that individuals deal with uncertainty, and I argue that specifically three of these strategies (retreating from society, giving the lead to one powerful position, and sharpening the boundaries between oneself and the other) are helpful in analyzing how Trump supporters feel about Muslims and Islam.

With Kinnvall (2004), I will focus specifically on the role of religion and nationalism as identity signifiers in this process, and how this has contributed to how Donald Trump supporters feel about Muslims as the 'Other'. I will analyze the meaning of the 'Other' and how these three strategies influence how someone can come to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims in particular. The three strategies may be used by the same individual at various times, and they may complement or follow each other.

This thesis focuses on Donald Trump supporters, and their feelings about Muslims and Islam. It does not assume that all Trump supporters oppose Islam, nor does it assume all Trump supporters oppose Muslims. Without doubt, it is difficult to speak about millions of people and to draw conclusions. I therefore want to note that in this chapter I aim to provide a framework of possible reasons as to how a Trump supporter could be ‘othering’ Muslims, and how an individual comes to support someone who proposes ideas that ‘other’ Muslims, such as a ban on letting all foreign Muslims into the United States. I have used data of several studies that analyze information from different groups of Trump supporters to provide insights into the group, but it should be clear that there are people who fall outside of these categories as well.

2.2 Identification Process and Uncertainty

The term ‘identity’ is often used in various ways, to refer to several concepts. First of all, it is important to note that a postmodern line of thought argues that the concept of identity is close to meaningless, as the essence of who one is, is constantly in flux, which is why it cannot be defined as anything in particular. Although, as I will be arguing, individuals often seem to search for such a stable identity, it is important to note that identity should not be understood as a fixed, natural state of being, but as a process of becoming (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 748). This is why I will mostly be using the term ‘identification process’ rather than identity.

Erikson conceptualized identity development as an important task of adolescence. According to him, this optimally results in a coherent, self-constructed dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and personal history, which defines ones ‘place in the world’ (Erikson, 1950, p. 230). This is a line of thought that is of particular importance in this chapter, as I argue that identity can be seen as an anxiety-controlling mechanism.

According to Schwartz, identity is a synthesis of personal, social, and cultural self-conceptions (Schwartz, 2006, p. 6). In his view, personal identity refers to goals, values, and beliefs that an individual holds. Social identity refers to the group with which an individual identifies as well as the extent to which this identification leads someone to favor

the 'ingroup', and to distance oneself from 'outgroups'. He describes cultural identity as a special kind of social identity, which is defined as the interface between the person and the cultural context. Cultural identity refers to a sense of solidarity with the ideals of a particular cultural group, as well as the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors manifested toward one's own (and other) cultural groups as result of this solidarity (Schwartz, 2006, p. 6).

McAdams describes identity as an integrative configuration of self-in-the-adult-world that makes sense of oneself in the world, and is integrated in two ways (McAdams, 2001, p. 102). Firstly, it is integrated in a synchronic sense, in that identity integrates the wide range of different, and sometimes conflicting, roles and relationships that characterize a given life in the here and now. This means that individuals need to integrate current positions that might appear to be very different (e.g., when I am at my job I feel very bored and uninspired, but when I am with my family I am very creative and optimistic), but can be viewed as integral parts of the same self-configuration.

Secondly, identity is integrated diachronically, or in time, which means that individuals need to integrate contrasting positions such that they can be brought together meaningfully into a temporally organized whole (e.g., I voted for Obama in 2008 and liked him, but now I feel that I am a Republican). McAdams' idea therefore, similar to what Erikson describes, focuses individuals' creation of certainty in their lives through their identification process.

Hermans and Hermans-Konopka view the 'Self' as a dynamic multiplicity of 'I-positions', or internalized voices. (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 36). These positions have originated in different situations and the 'I' is bound to certain positions within the 'Self'. Voices of other individuals as well as collective voices of groups cause an individual to form positions that agree or disagree with or unite or oppose each other. This means that real, remembered, or imagined voices of friends, allies, strangers, or enemies can become temporary or more stabilized positions in the 'Self' (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 32).

These positions are thus not only internal in the sense that they can say something directly about the self (e.g., I as a man, I as white), but also external, in that they belong to the extended domain of the 'Self' (e.g., my family, my country). At the same time, they

can take the form of combinations of internal as well as external positions (e.g., I as an opponent of Islamic organizations in the United States) (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 32). As these voices have originated in various places in time and space, 'I-positions' can be very different and even conflicting.

Because of the dynamics of identity, many individuals feel the need to construct a 'Self' to distinguish themselves from others, but also to perceive a continuity during their life span. (Berry et al., 1980, p. 50). Hall argued that opposed to the 'Enlightenment subject', who was seen as a unified individual, capable of reason, the postmodern or decentralized subject is composed of different parts that are influenced by changes around us. He writes:

Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted about. If we feel that we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or "narrative of the self" about ourselves. (Hall, 1992, p. 277)

It can be confusing to feel as if one is being pulled in different directions, as Hall says, which is why in humans there exists a powerful drive to maintain the sense of one's identity. In this sense, individuals keep a sense of continuity that can be comforting when one is afraid of changing too fast or being changed against one's will by outside forces (Sigel, 1989, p. 459).

Similar to what has been discussed so far, Giddens explains how self-identity consists of the development of a consistent feeling of biographical continuity where an individual is able to sustain a narrative of the 'Self' and that one is able to answer questions about doing, acting, and being (Giddens, 1991, p. 39).

This brings me back to McAdams, who explains that identity takes the form of a story, complete with a setting, scenes, character, plot, and a theme (McAdams, 2001, p. 101). He describes how people living in modern society begin to reconstruct the personal past, perceive the present, and anticipate the future in late adolescence and young adulthood in terms of an internalized and evolving self-story. This self-story is an integrative

narrative of the 'Self', which provides modern life with some idea of psychosocial unity and purpose.

Individuals want to be able to tell their story in such a way that they feel that it is a good one, which rests on solid ground (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 746). In this way, at an individual level, ontological security is provided. This means that a person feels confident and trusts that the world is what it appears to be, that one feels safe in the world and has a basic trust of other people. This is necessary in order for an individual to maintain psychological well-being and to avoid existential anxiety (Giddens, 1991, p. 44). According to McAdams, the stories he refers to are formulated with external as well as internalized audiences in mind (McAdams, 2001, p. 114).

This is something that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka focus on as well. They arrive to their description of the 'Self' by analyzing the Jamesian 'I-Me' distinction (James, 1890). This distinction describes the 'I' as the 'self-as-knower', which implies the awareness of self-reflectivity essential to the 'I'. The 'me' refers to the 'self-as-known' and entails the empirical self that is defined by everything a person can call their own (e.g., their own body, ideas, family, or reputation). Similar to what Hall describes, this demonstrates how the 'Self' is not a closed off entity, but rather extended toward specific aspects of the environment.

Sarbin (1986) proposed that the 'I-Me' distinction emphasizes the importance of the narrative in the identification process. In this view, the 'I' stands for the author, who is able to construct stories where the 'Me' is the protagonist. In other words, the 'I' can let the 'Me' speak from different perspectives. This is what Hermans and Hermans-Konopka elaborated on and it can be compared to the way they view the 'Self', which can let 'I-positions' 'speak'. 'I-positions' can be voiced as such that dialogical exchanges among positions can develop. Dialogue can take place among internal positions in the 'Self', between internal and external positions, and between external positions (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 17).

2.3 The Impact of Globalization

Globalization can provide people with new perspectives and possibilities, and people have never been as interconnected. This has fostered different forms of cooperation across the borders of regions, countries and cultures (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 21). These increasing demographic, economic, ecological, political and military interconnections on a global scale, has led some theorists to argue that societies are becoming more homogenized.

These homogenizing tendencies inherent in globalization, however, actually lead to a sharpening of cultural contrasts or even bring about new oppositions. This means that although people are now more interconnected globally, local identities are increasingly being cherished (Zock, 2010, p. 137). Globalization has created conditions for localization, or, attempts at creating bounded entities, such as countries (nationalism or separatism), faith systems (religious revitalization), cultures (linguistic or cultural movements or interest groups (ethnicity). To articulate this interconnectedness of 'global' and 'local', Robertson proposed the term 'glocalization' (Robertson, 1994, p. 33).

Globalization does not necessarily override locality, but globalization and localization can often be seen as two sides of the same coin. In many cases the processes related to globalization imply localizing processes as well, but there also cases of defensive localization. This can, for example, be seen in the United Kingdom's referendum on June 23rd, 2016, when people voted to withdraw from the European Union. Apart from economic reasons, many people voted to leave the European Union because of immigration laws (BBCNews, 2016).

In the contemporary world specifically, individuals are increasingly confronted with different ideas and perspectives, which can increase a sense of uncertainty. Life is already inevitably uncertain, as there are no indubitable and universally agreed codes and rules, but people become more aware of this through different globalization processes (Bauman, 1995, p. 287). For many people a globalized world can be a world devoid of certainty, and of knowing what tomorrow holds.

The processes related to globalization that will be discussed in this section have severe direct consequences for many individuals. Moreover, these processes have an impact on individuals' identification processes, as, understandably, the position repertoire is populated by an increasing amount of (internal and external) positions (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 76). This requires the 'Self' to organize and reorganize itself, but because an individual is increasingly faced with a diversity of cultures, groups and perspectives, the position repertoire becomes laden with differences and contradictions. Through processes related to globalization the repertoire can be subjected to unexpected changes, and receives more 'visits' by new positions. Because there is a large range of possible positions and possibilities one can choose from, there can be larger 'position leaps' witnessed in the repertoire which can be seen when someone experiences serious changes in their life.

There are large differences as to who seems more sensitive to experience the anxiety that this might lead to, as the risk seems higher for those at the bottom of society. Maslow (1943) famously explained how people's needs depend on which ones are being fulfilled. The hierarchy he described demonstrated the importance of feeling secure (immediately after basic physiological needs) and how this influences other needs higher in the pyramid.

When it comes to providing answers as to why Trump supporters might feel negatively toward Muslims, I argue that changes in their economic situation, migration, terrorism, and how the media has responded to these influence one's feelings of anxiety in the world. I aim to show how these factors are interconnected, and could influence individuals' feelings of security in several ways. This is important to understand when analyzing how people may subsequently respond to these feelings, which I argue influences their likelihood to 'other' Muslims.

As explained, I aim to look at the uncertainty experienced as a 'thick signifier'. This means that I focus on the experience of uncertainty more broadly and that I will place it in a larger context, before turning to Trump supporters' views about Islam and Muslims specifically. This section also provides context as to how changes in the position repertoire can develop, something that will be returned to in more detail in the following two chap-

ters. Throughout the process I will however focus on Trump supporters' views on Muslims and Islam, but this will be placed in a larger context.

Globalization has influenced real changes in terms of scale, speed, and cognition (Kinnvall, 2002, p. 742). These changes have also become visible in the United States. The process of Americanization, which is closely related to globalization and entails the influence the United States has had on other countries in these globalizing processes, has also influenced the United States itself. As markets have opened up, it became possible to sell products to a larger market and there has been an enormous rise of multinational American corporations. These same processes, however, also caused many companies to start manufacturing their products abroad, as labor might be cheaper, which led to job loss for people in the United States. Similarly, technological advancements and companies that have gotten too big for the small town they started in or were bought by bigger companies, led to fewer jobs in some areas.

Middle-income Americans have fallen further behind since 2000, and the middle class has become smaller (PewResearch, 2015). In contrast, the lowest and highest incomes have shown the most growth in the same period in the United States. Programs that aimed at privatization and increased global competitiveness that were meant to create stability and to strengthen civil society, often had the opposite effect by removing job security from the lower-middle classes in many societies (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 743).

Over the past 35 years, incomes have stagnated, with more people looking for fewer jobs. Especially jobs for those who work with their hands, the manufacturing employment, experienced the hardest hit (Arnade, 2016). For every one percent increase in college graduates over 25, Donald Trump's share of the votes falls by 0.65 percentage points, and many people in this category have experienced such losses (Thomson, 2016). Apart from those who do not have a college degree, his support is strongest among those who earn less than 50,000 dollars a year (Ross, 2015).

The changes in individuals' financial situation have also influenced how over the past decades, migration has started to be viewed negatively in the United States. Whereas in Europe people are more likely to worry about the integration of immigrants into their

host nation's culture, Americans tend to worry more about economic effects (Harrell, 2011). In particular those whose personal household situation got worse since 2010 were more likely to say that immigrants take jobs away from native-born workers. In the United States, 63% of those who had experienced job loss or pay cuts, expressed that immigrants threatened job availability (Harrell, 2011).

The situation changes when we shift focus to migrants with a Muslim background specifically. Americans tend to view the integration of migrants more positively than Europeans, with 60 percent of people being content with migrants in the United States. This number, however, changes when one focuses on Muslims. Being a country with people with many religious beliefs that takes pride in having strong anti-discrimination norms, it is remarkable that 61 percent of people has unfavorable views towards Islam (Telhami, 2015).

Similarly, this can be recognized in the extent to which migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are currently being framed by, for example, Donald Trump, as posing a threat. This demonstrates the relationship between globalization and feelings of insecurity (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 744). Ten years after the attacks on September 11, 2001 and subsequent terrorist attacks by Muslim extremists in Europe, a study reported that 42 percent of Americans found it to be likely for another terrorist attack to happen within the next few months (Connelly, 2011).

Another important factor that affects individuals' experience of feeling certain in the world, is the increasing popularity of sensationalist news. Limited empirical work has been done to study how audiences actually view news, but cultural studies scholars have discovered an active audience for sensationalist news (Sparks & Tulloch, 2000, p. 214). These studies demonstrate that people are both more interested in news with sensationalist topics, as well as traditional news that is being covered 'sensationally'.

As discussed, contrasting American attitudes of Islam and Muslims have been around for some time. A series of events over the past thirty years seems to have provided lasting images of militant versions of Islam. The Iranian Revolution, and the hostage taking at the American Embassy, the Lebanese hostages, the Rushdie affair, and the crisis in

Algeria all had an impact on how Islam is perceived (Cesari, 2004, p. 3). In addition to how the news has reported these events, the topics have been covered and sometimes dramatized in TV-series and movies.

Attitudes toward Islam and Muslims worsened in the months after September 11, 2001, but more in particular over the past few years (Telhami, 2015). Immediately after the attacks in 2001, 59 percent of Americans expressed to expect another terrorist attack in the next few months. Although people reported feeling increasingly safe in the following decade, 47 percent of Americans currently find the country to be less safe than it was before the attacks on September 11, 2001 (Miller, *Homeland Insecurity: Americans feel less safe than any time since 9/11*, poll finds, 2014).

Several critical media outlets have continuously pointed out how after attacks committed by Muslims, other media outlets as well as public figures (e.g., politicians) are more likely to mention someone's ethnicity or religion, and they are more likely to speculate about motives the shooter may have had (Starr, 2016). Similarly, several media outlets have been criticized for being more likely to describe a white attacker in certain attacks as 'mentally ill', whereas someone with a Middle-Eastern background is more likely to be called a 'terrorist' within the first hours after the attack (Butler, 2015).

Starting with their coverage of the attacks on September 11, 2001, Fox News has put much focus on the 'Islamic threats' and began to consistently beat CNN and MSNBC in the ratings (Hughey & Parks, 2014, p. 55). Partially influenced by this, there are many people who feel that the United States government has not responded adequately to such 'Islamic threats' (Shapiro, 2015). This is something Donald Trump often refers to as well. A few days after the attacks in San Bernardino, where a Muslim-extremist husband and wife killed 14 and seriously injured 22 people, Trump proposed a ban for Muslims to enter the country. This was received very well under Republicans (Abadi, 2015).

The processes as discussed (economic changes, migration, media) can have an enormous impact on individuals' lives and identification processes. Moreover, it can be difficult to see that other people in your society seem to deal with the effects of globalization differently. As suggested in this section, globalization can affect individuals' feeling of certainty and security.

Uncertainty can also be experienced as a way to create new possibilities and chances for the self, and in this sense it is associated with lower or intermediate levels of anxiety, and with more positive than negative feelings. There are people who argue that the main reason that Trump is so popular is not only because of they appreciate his specific ideas, but because they feel 'othered' by an elite who does not experience the same anxiety because of uncertainty. Miller, for example, suggests that Trump supporters came to 'hate progressive bigotry' and that they do not feel taken seriously by a liberal elite (Miller, 2015). This suggests that individuals feel neglected and 'othered' by people who in their experience seem to deal with certain changes better, and who might be affected less because of these processes related to globalization.

Although I argue that this does not provide a convincing and thorough enough explanation of the popularity of Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims, or explains the underlying tensions of his supporters well enough, I will be discussing this point in more detail in the following chapters. In particular in the fourth chapter I will argue that the experience of not being taken seriously or 'othered' by a liberal elite affects individuals' likelihood to increasingly experience anxiety, which influences how individuals may respond to the experience of anxiety and how someone comes to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims.

In the next section I will focus on how people respond to uncertainty as I have explained in this section, which I will do by describing five different strategies of diminishing uncertainty that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka distinguish. I will pay specific attention to three strategies that I argue provide an understanding as to how Donald Trump supporters come to be 'othering' Muslims.

2.4 Strategies to cope with Uncertainty

As explained in the previous section, because of processes related to globalization such as economic changes, migration, terrorism and the role of the media, individuals can experience an increasing amount of anxiety. Controlling anxiety is an important dimension of the identification process, and there are different ways as to how individuals try to manage this and try to remain feeling secure. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) distinguish five

different strategies to cope with a heightened level of uncertainty and in this section these different strategies will be discussed. I argue that three ways specifically (by retreating from society, by giving the lead to one powerful position and by sharpening the boundaries between oneself and the other) help explain how people could support Donald Trump's ideas on Islam and Muslims.

Hermans and Hermans-Konopka explain four different strategies as to how people might cope with such uncertainty, but focus on the fifth, which is a 'dialogical approach'. As explained, they argue that the 'Self' consists of 'I-positions' among which it can shift. These positions can be voiced as such that dialogical exchanges can develop. This interchange is open-ended and broadly ranged, and affects the initial positions of the participants. During this process, positions that are relevant to a certain problem (including their expectations, aims and needs) can be organized, reduced, simplified, and evaluated on how much they are contributing to problem solving (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 47).

Some positions can become more dominant than others, or some positions can be combined and integrated in a new coalition. This process is not easy. It implies a certain complexity, as it is to 'travel into uncertainty', without any stability that is given from the start (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 47). It is something that one can learn as part of developing a dialogical self that becomes competent in dealing with emotions. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka propose this as the way to deal with globalizing society, which they develop in more detail in the rest of their book.

The other strategies that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka distinguish are characterized by trying to avoid uncertainty instead of going into uncertainty. One of the other strategies that one might use to diminish feelings of uncertainty is by adding the number of positions in the self. Although this might sound illogical (as adding new positions to an already crowded position repertoire increases the risk of a 'cacophony of voices', as it gets more difficult to take all voices into account), this is something that might be recognized in people who try to take advantage of the possibilities globalization has to offer. One might continue to search for a new job, relationship, or city or country to live in, which one hopes will give the 'real' satisfaction that earlier ones did not provide.

I argue that the next three strategies are of particular relevance in explaining how someone comes to support Donald Trump's ideas for policies that 'other' Muslims. The first strategy is that someone tries to reduce the number and heterogeneity of positions in the repertoire (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 44). As the identification process can be seen as a permanent effort to harmonize opposites, it is understandable that this gets more complex as there are more positions in the repertoire (Berry et al., 1980, p. 51). The anxiety that this can cause can be reduced by, for example, retreating to a simple form of life, or by moving to a quiet place to find peace of mind, where there are possibly fewer ways the position repertoire will be impacted.

You can imagine someone leaving the city, for example, to move somewhere that feels easier in some ways. Someone can decide to do this after increasingly feeling uncomfortable with the doubts about the meaning of distracting activities an individual can be involved in. In this strategy one position might be 'pressing' to become dominant, but is not yet strong enough to take the lead. It can already be more comfortable to spend time with likeminded people and to feel more 'closed off' from parts of your experience that create uncertainty.

This might not be something that an individual is aware of initially, but one can suddenly realize that they were dissatisfied with certain things in their life. This is when a 'conversion' can take place, where positions that were neglected or suppressed come to the surface and can lead to serious changes in one's lifestyle or circumstances (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 45).

Studies have demonstrated that Trump supporters are more likely to live in places where there are fewer people who come from first or second generation migrant backgrounds, and with fewer people per square mile (Thomson, 2016). Studies have also shown that the more acquainted a person is with Muslims, the more favorably they tend to view Islam and Muslims.

Looking at Republicans specifically, when not acquainted with any Muslims, 82 percent has a negative view towards Islam. This number changes to 49 percent when they know some Muslims but not too well', and to 42 percent when they say to know some Muslims very well (Telhami, 2015). In this process of retreating from society, one is more

likely to come in contact with likeminded people and the 'Self' may get less unexpected visits, which is how someone diminishes their experience of uncertainty.

Another way to reduce uncertainty is by giving the lead to one powerful position, which is permitted to dominate the repertoire as a whole (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 45). Many people may organize their lives around one or a few positions that are of important personal value to them, such as their job, their relationship, or their role as a parent.

The difference with letting one position dominate the repertoire is that in these latter case these positions refer to dialogical dominance instead of monological dominance. This means that monological dominance generally implies dealing with uncertainty by expressing a strong hierarchical organization of the repertoire, where one or only a few positions at the top actually dominate all other positions. This can be seen in, for example, religious orthodoxy or political fundamentalism, but also in Donald Trump supporters who take such a radical stance on issues of immigration or want to close borders.

Any collective identity that is available to provide such security might then become a potential pole of attraction. According to Kinnvall, nationalism and religion specifically are two such 'identity-signifiers' that are more likely than other identity constructions to provide a feeling of stability. Similar to what Hermans and Hermans-Konopka say, the reason that specifically these 'identity-signifiers' can become dominant is that they are able to convey a picture of security, stability, and simple answers, when individuals are searching exactly for that (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 742).

By being portrayed as resting on solid ground, or as being true, they create a sense that the world really is what it appears to be. As explained in the previous sections, this is exactly what people tend to look for in their identification process. The reason these positions can dominate the position repertoire is that they thrive on simplification. As individuals feel vulnerable and experience existential anxiety, they are more likely to want to reaffirm a threatened self-identity.

Moreover, religion and nationalism can be intertwined as they can provide similar levels of comfort, but also because of how a nation might be organized. Cavanaugh has

argued, for example, that in discussing ‘religion and violence arguments’ implicit definitions of religion are ‘unjustifiably clear’ about what does and does not qualify as religion (Cavanaugh, 2004, p. 40). He argues, however, that it is difficult to make such a distinction between religious and secular, as religion is a social construct it does not make sense to insist upon fixed borders, but that it is better to have more flexible contours that admit to contestation and negotiation (Cavanaugh, 2004, p. 41).

Americans, particularly Christians, are becoming less religious with 71 percent of the population in 2014 to have religious beliefs (Lipka, 2015). There has been a rise in people who identify as unaffiliated with any religious tradition, as well as a small rise in non-Christian religions. However, religion is very much intertwined in society as well as in the American government (Epps, 2011). Institutionalized religion, similarly to the nation, is often territorially defined up to some degree, as it refers to bounded entities (churches, organizations, political parties).

Although Donald Trump was not initially known to be very religious, he has characterized his candidacy by saying that he will defend ‘Christian American values’ and he seems to attract voters who support his nationalist as well as his Christian ideas (Nelson, 2016). He has put focus on Christian beliefs as being part of the United States in his campaign and he has received much support from white evangelical Protestants (Ross, 2015). When Pope Francis questioned Trump’s Christianity, Trump replied that the pope would regret not supporting his candidacy, saying that when the Vatican is attacked by ISIS: ‘which as everyone knows is ISIS’ ultimate trophy, the pope can have only wished and prayed that Donald Trump would have been president because this would not have happened’ (Jacobs, 2016). His argument with the pope has not had much negative influence on his religious support, as Trump has won across the South, among both self-identified evangelicals and also among Catholics he has consistently been doing well (Douthat, 2016).

Similarly, as I have explained in the first chapter, Trump is popular with extremist religious and nationalist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. Donald Trump has been very clear that his most important goal is to ‘Make America Great Again!’. He plans to do this by ‘putting America first’ in foreign politics, saying that:

'America first' will be the overriding theme of my administration. [...] Under a Trump administration, no American citizen will ever again feel that their needs come second to the citizens of foreign countries. [...] My foreign policy will always put the interests of the American people and American security first. (Diamond & Collison, 2016).

These comments demonstrate his focus on the United States. In many of his comments he refers to how, in his opinion, president Obama has not taken enough care of the country and that the current government has not responded adequately to threats from 'radical Islamic terrorists' (Trump, 2015). In many of Trump's speeches he refers back to these threats, while focusing on a (previous) strength of the nation.

This is something that is often inherent in nationalism and religion, as they refer back to chosen traumas, and their opposite, chosen glories. A chosen trauma is the memory of something that happened to a group's ancestors. It is not only the factual history, but also includes fantasized expectations and emotions (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 755). Chosen traumas may provide comforting stories in times of increased ontological insecurity and existential anxiety, as they can provide a feeling of home, stability, and continuity. Such traumas can also be used to interpret new traumas.

Chosen glories may also provide comfort and boost a group's self-esteem. Both chosen glories and chosen traumas can be reinterpreted and reused by later generations in new situations, and they can also be used to justify new forms of violence against perceived or real 'Others'. The government of the United States has often emphasized the necessity of unity during crises, especially when it involved a common enemy, such as the British in 1812, the Mexicans 1898 or Communism in 1920 and the Cold War (Hughey & Parks, 2014, p. 42).

Some scholars who have researched the possibility of unity after traumatic experiences, however, also argue that in some ways the United States was actually able to unite after the attacks on September 11, 2001 in some ways by focusing on symbols of unity such as the national flag, the Constitution, the presidency, or the concept of freedom (Grabowski et al, 2014, p. 10). Poet and social critic James Baldwin has said that: 'What

passes for identity in America is a series of myths about one's heroic ancestors' (Hughey & Parks, 2014, p. 59), and although American identity, just as any other identity, consists out of much more than that, it does seem to be the case that chosen traumas and chosen glories play a big role in American culture.

This might be demonstrated through the use of an example. If you compare Dutch and American (both eleven) federal holidays, you will see that most Dutch holidays are based on religion (Feestdagen, 2016). All but two (New Year's Day and Liberation Day) are inspired by Christianity, whereas in the United States there is more variety. Three days celebrate 'American Heroes', three days celebrate important mile stones in the history of the United States, two days celebrate important groups specifically in American society (labor workers and veterans), two days are (partially) based on Christianity, and then New Year's Day (Holidays, 2016). It is clear that the majority of holidays in the United States, then, are based on nationality – sometimes intertwined with religion.

In the now-famous speech that Ronald Reagan gave after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, which brought the symbolic death of the then 'good versus evil' dichotomy of the Cold War, he referred to the 'City Upon a Hill' view of American identity from John Winthrop's 1630 poem about the first settlement in the New World. Ronald Reagan reprised Winthrop's words and said:

We cannot escape our destiny, nor should we try to do so. The leadership of the free world was thrust upon us two centuries ago in that little hall of Philadelphia. In the days following World War II, when the economic strength and power of America was all that stood between the world and the return to the dark ages, Pope Pius XII said, 'The American people have a great genius for splendid and unselfish actions.

Into the hands of America God has placed the destinies of an afflicted mankind.' We are indeed, and we are today, the last best hope of man on earth. (Pintak, 2006, p. 5)

Reagan refers to previous glories and a stable idea of American identity, in interpreting the end of the Cold War. Interesting to note is that Donald Trump has often referred to Ronald Reagan in his speeches, and they use the exact same campaign slogan ('Make America

Great Again!'). Even though Ronald Reagan is seen as the beloved icon of the Republican party, and the GOP is uncertain of their support for Donald Trump, Trump has often been compared to Reagan (Board, 2016). Their stances on many topics are actually very different, but something that does connect the two is through their ways that they refer back to a nostalgic idea of American identity. They both fall back on religion and nationalism (in the light of trauma) by referring back to a nostalgic idea of American or Christian identity.

There are also people who fall back onto religion or nationalism after trauma differently. Some people realized the vulnerability of the United States after September 11, 2001, something they may not have realized before. In recognizing this, one could feel humbled, and it has the possibility tear down borders between other parts of the world by realizing they are more similar in this sense than one initially thought (Blake, 2011).

In this sense, one could also fall back to chosen traumas. Thomas Long, a nationally known pastor who has been active in interfaith efforts after the attacks, says that the attacks forced many people to confront their limitations. He argued that just as the ancient Hebrews who faced national calamities, Americans must face the same test. He says that the situation can be explained from understanding the issues they were confronted with in the Old and New Testament, and how the chosen people needed to learn how to become humble people. Long says that Americans could interpret this situation in the same way (Blake, 2011). In this way, religion can be a source of strength and there has been a growth of understanding and interest in Islam among Christians (Brown, 2011).

However, many people have also interpreted ideas about religion and nationalism in a different way after September 11, 2001. The attacks have become part of American collective identity, and because the nature of the attacks is experienced both as threatening American as well as Christian values, people have referred to this in other situations. By seeing themselves as victims of the September 11 attacks, Americans increased feeling solidarity with each other and their identity. There has, for example, been national outrage over plans to build an Islamic community center near ground zero, as this would be disrespectful to the memory of the attacks (Blake, 2011).

Donald Trump often speaks about how he feels that the United States has responded to 'Islamic terrorists', focusing on how, in his opinion, Barack Obama does not repre-

sent or protect the country (Goldberg, 2016). Trump has, for example, done so by suggesting several times that Obama is Muslim. Speaking about Obama's birth certificate in 2011 he said: 'He may have one, but there's something on that, maybe religion, maybe it says he is a Muslim [...] Maybe he doesn't want that' (Moody & Holmes, 2015).

Some of his comments are not only to demonstrate his support for 'American Christian values', but also to specifically show that he is different from Obama, specifically on the stance related to these values. Namely, I argue to let a few positions become dominant, can sometimes imply that one also sharpens the boundaries between oneself and the other.

Studies have shown, for example, that individuals who identify as Christian, are much more likely to oppose Islam than people from other religions or unaffiliated people are. Only 18 percent of Christians have favorable views of Islam, which is much lower than the average of 37 percent (Telhami, 2015). Out of the group of people who view Muslims in the United States as 'very unfavorable', Republicans top the list, and Trump supporters in particular, with 43 percent of people (Telhami, 2015).

This brings me to the final strategy to minimize uncertainty that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka distinguish, which is, as mentioned, through sharpening the boundaries between oneself and the other and between in-group and out-group (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 46). By doing so, and by placing one's own group above the other group, individuals can construct an identity that augments positive positions and diminishes negative positions. This increases self-esteem and pride.

Tajfel (1970) demonstrated through his work on the minimal group paradigm that individuals tend to favor their own group (in-group) in relation to other groups (out-groups), even when the formation of that group is completely random. This shows that people are able to 'other' groups of people based on relatively arbitrary terms. There are also many examples where an 'Other' is turned into an enemy that is perceived as threatening, without people actually knowing much about the group. There is, for example, anti-Semitism in Poland, despite the relative lack of Jews, and there are sometimes stronger anti-immigrant feelings in places with few or no immigrants (Kinnvall, Globalization and

Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security, 2004, p. 753).

This demonstrates the power of imagination in this process. According to Kristeva, the psychological roots of xenophobia, racism, and the marginalization of 'Others' can be found in the foreigner, who was the enemy in primitive societies within ourselves (Kristeva, 1991, p. 1). This implies that it is not only the case that this 'enemy-other' is created by the self, but that it is a previous part of the self that one feels needs to be rejected. This unconscious self is neither object nor subject, but it is abject. In other words, it is something that is rejected from which one does not part or protect oneself from as from an object.

Kristeva writes that it is thus not the actual 'bad' or 'filthiness' in an 'Other' that causes abjection, but that what disturbs one's identity, as one recognizes parts of the Self (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). The ambiguity of these 'Others' is what causes people to feel uncertain. Therefore, by rejecting the 'Other' on emotional grounds, and by not considering them as an integrative part of the conscious self, individuals try to maintain a feeling of certainty in their identification process (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 753). This process helps to reduce anxiety and increases ontological security, as the 'Self' can thus be separated from any possible negative influence.

Different from enemies, strangers can be disordering as they are inside as well as outside society, which is why strangers can be turned into enemies. Because of the events with Muslim extremists as discussed previously, 'the Muslim' more than anyone else seems to have become an 'enemy' that some people in Western society have try to exorcise (Sunier, 2007, p. 127).

Frazer (1993) warned about the 'thin crust' of civilization in modern Europe, and about the forces that are slumbering below, which refers to the dark side within Western civilization. Through Orientalist discourse, this dark side has been projected unto the Islamic 'Other'. As Edward Said demonstrated in his critique on Orientalism, 'the Orient' is imagined as 'them' opposed to a Western 'us'. Said writes: 'As much as the West itself,

the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imaginary, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West' (Said, 1978, p. 5).

Within this process one can recognize how 'Self' and 'Other' are both seen as essentialized bodies. This means that 'Self' as well as 'Other' are being reduced to a number of cultural characteristics. Even though these characteristics are fabricated, they come to be seen as natural and unified features for describing the group. This is what can be recognized in the way that Donald Trump, for example, speaks about the United States, as discussed previously. In a similar way, but while focusing on the 'Other', through this rhetoric he is able to create a ban for all foreign Muslims to enter the country and to generalize the group.

As explained in the first section, the 'Self' is not a static object, but it is part of a larger process of identity construction. Regardless of the existence of a stable identity, individuals do seem to try to create stability, as explained in the first section of this chapter. This process of confirming and rejecting positions within the 'Self' involves a stranger-other, as the 'Self' is not static.

Apart from this process that happens within the 'Self, this is also an important part of the United States' as a collective identity. Former diplomat George F. Kennan notes that the creation of this 'enemy system' seems essential to the United States' sense of self. He says:

There is a substantial, politically influential, and aggressive body of American opinion for which the specter of a great and fearful external enemy, to be exorcised only by vast military preparations and much belligerent posturing, has become a political and psychological necessity. (Pintak, 2006, p. 7).

John F. Kennedy tried to warn American society for worldviews that essentialize 'Others', saying that: 'No government or social system is so evil that its people must be lacking in virtue.' (Pintak, 2006, p. 4). However, this changed directly after his assassination when his successor Lyndon Johnson said that the nation must 'accept the necessity of choosing a great evil in order to ward off a greater', as the United States pursued the Vietnam war.

In similar ways, there are people who argue that American leaders have created an external threat to distract and unite the nation, when faced with divisiveness and dissent at home (Pintak, 2006, p. 7). After the attacks on September 11, 2001, for example, the country needed to create unity, through which process an 'Other' was created. This started with the 'War on Terror', as I explained in the first chapter, when George W. Bush explained that Americans and their allies needed to stand together to fight terrorism.

As explained in the previous chapter, although there were laws that specifically targeted Muslims, George W. Bush did speak about Muslims and Islam very differently than Donald Trump. In an interview with Fox News, for example, Trump said this about Muslims in the United States:

Assimilation has been very hard. It's almost — I won't say nonexistent, but it gets to be pretty close. And I'm talking about second and third generation. They come — they don't — for some reason, there's no real assimilation (Jacobson, 2016).

Trump's comments have since then been discussed and proved false by several media outlets that used various studies to prove their point (Jacobson, 2016). This does, however, not influence his popularity. Of Republicans who express 'very unfavorable views' of Muslims, 43 percent prefers Donald Trump as president. In comparison, for Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio (who were still in running to become the Republican nominee at the time of the study) supporters three and eight percent respectively feel the same way (Telhami, 2015).

By framing Muslims as an 'enemy-other', and by essentializing the group as being one and the same, some people seem to try to 'exorcise evil', as discussed, by 'othering' Islam as the only evil through which negative circumstances in the United States can be removed. According to Said, any discussion of Islam therefore becomes a one-sided activity, in which we do not look at what we do, but instead highlights what Muslims and Arabs by their very nature are (Said, 1997, p. 12). Thus, in order to feel more secure about 'Us', we need to create 'Them'.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a theoretical framework that evaluates reasons as to how individuals could feel come to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims and Islam. The chapter was guided by the following sub question: *How can different motives for 'othering' be explained through the role of uncertainty and how could these motives be used to clarify Donald Trump supporters' opinions about Muslims and Islam specifically?*

I aimed to answer this question by first analyzing the importance of feeling secure and the meaning of uncertainty. I demonstrated how someone's identification processes can be influenced by globalization. Particularly economic changes, migration, terrorism and how the media has covered these issues, seem to play a role in how an individual perceives the society they live in. I argued how specifically Trump supporters seem to have been affected by these issues in several ways, and how they consequently responded.

The processes that alter the position repertoire have caused many people to experience anxiety, and I described five strategies that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka distinguish to cope with these uncertainties. I argued that individuals may respond to uncertainty in three ways in particular that I argue can account for the support of Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims.

One can respond by retreating from society, by giving the lead to one dominant position (particularly religion and nationalism), or by sharpening the boundaries between oneself and the other. Moreover, I described how Trump has fallen back onto these two pillars of religion and nationalism, in relation to Islam, which is something that I have demonstrated to be important for his supporters.

Religion and nationalism are particularly good 'identity signifiers' to become dominant when one experiences uncertainty, as they provide an idea of stability, security and simple answers (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 742). They are portrayed as being true, which is how they create the image that the world is really what it appears to be. Moreover, one can also fall back onto these 'identity signifiers' when facing difficulties. Specifically, the attacks on September 11, 2001 proved to be an important event where people turned to reli-

gion and nationalism. The events were perceived as having an impact on the idea that Americans had of their country as being invulnerable.

Donald Trump has not only focused on his 'selfing' with certain positions, but has also turned to the 'othering' of Muslims in the process. According to some authors, The United States has a tradition of having a stranger-enemy, which could now be seen as Islam. As many people do not know many Muslims personally, it becomes possible, through imagination, to 'other' such a large group in times of uncertainty.

In this chapter I argued the importance for individuals to experience certainty, and how people may respond to experiencing uncertainty, where I stated that particularly three strategies account for individuals' likelihood to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims. In the next section I will discuss these similar topics, while now presenting the data of my research. It aims to follow the guidelines as presented in this chapter, but it also leaves space for possible other factors that can be of influence.

3 Empirical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical data from the research that I conducted between February and April 2016 in the United States. I went to Texas, Oklahoma, and New York and interviewed Trump supporters about their feelings about Islam and their support for Trump's political ideas about Muslims. The chapter seeks to answer the following sub question: *How can individual opinions and feelings of Donald Trump supporters about Islam be explained and how do Trump's supporters feel about Donald Trump's political ideas about Muslims?*

In the previous chapter I pointed out that factors related to globalization can cause individuals uncertainty directly, and that it affects their position repertoire. Although uncertainty is not always a negative experience, it can lead to anxiety, which is why people may try to diminish the experience of uncertainty in their life. I argued that there are three strategies in particular as to how individuals respond to uncertainty that helps explain how someone comes to support Trump's 'othering' of Muslims. These three strategies (diminishing the positions in the repertoire, giving the lead to one powerful position, and sharpening the boundaries between oneself and the other), I argued, can follow each other up and one individual may go through these different strategies.

I aim to answer the sub question by focusing on three main parts in the third chapter. It starts by presenting some of the individuals' dominant positions, and describes their backgrounds. Guided by the answers of participants, I focus on their religious and political affiliation, as well as their feelings about their country. This gives insight in their position repertoire, which is something I will focus on in more detail in the following chapter.

In the next section, I will explain how interviewees experience anxiety through processes related to globalization. Similar to the focus of the second chapter I will specifically describe the role of economic changes, migration, and the media. In analyzing how individuals are affected by these processes, I will look at aspects that demonstrate how the position repertoire is influenced by globalization. I look at uncertainty as a 'thick signifier',

which means that I focus on the experience of uncertainty more broadly, before turning to participants' views about Islam and Muslims specifically in the third section.

In this section interviewees' opinions about Muslims and Islam will be discussed, while analyzing how people describe that this topic causes them to feel uncertain. In the first and second chapter I described how because of a series of events around Muslim extremism, and their coverage in the media, Islam has come to be viewed negatively by some people. What I found out in my research is that apart from their negative feelings about Islam, people were upset by how, in their experience, Muslims were being protected while Christians were being neglected. This is an important point of my thesis and will be discussed in the third section of this chapter, as well as in the next chapter.

In the next section I will discuss the strategies that can be recognized in how participants seem to deal with the uncertainty they have been exposed to. I will focus on three strategies that have been discussed in the previous chapter, namely retreating from society, giving the lead to one or a few positions, or sharpening the boundaries between oneself and the other. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka describe how an individual can experience all (five) strategies they propose in a lifetime, but I argue that specifically in the case of Trump supporters' 'othering' Muslims these three strategies can be recognized that may influence each other or follow each other up.

This chapter does not aim to analyze individuals' statements yet. Its goal is simply to introduce the interviewees, and present the data of my research. I will do so by first describing interviewees' backgrounds, subsequently describing the uncertainty they experience, before turning specifically to their feelings about Muslims and Islam, and to then analyze the strategies they use to diminish the experience of uncertainty. In the next chapter, I will aim to analyze their statements, the influence on their position repertoire and how the strategies they use to diminish uncertainty can account for their support for the 'othering' of Muslims by Donald Trump.

As mentioned in the first chapter, this research has taken a qualitative approach. This allows me to identify issues from the perspective of participants as well as to understand interpretations they have given themselves. Qualitative research intends to approach the world as it is, which means that it is not done in specialized research settings. In other

words, it aims to understand, describe, and explain these phenomena ‘from the inside’ (Kvale, 2007, p. x). In this research specifically, I seek to understand how the experience of uncertainty affects individuals’ identification process and how their aims to diminish uncertainty help explain their support for the ‘othering’ of Muslims.

This research entails Trump supporters’ perspectives, and only focuses on Trump’s ideas in relation to his supporters. Its focus is not on Donald Trump directly, but on how his supporters perceive him and his ideas. It is impossible to speak about millions of people and to draw conclusions. In this research specifically, I have analyzed the interviews of 26 Trump supporters who I have spoken to. I therefore do not aim to present these results as legitimizing or disapproving the theoretical framework, but as an illustration as to how these processes work in specific instances. I will demonstrate how possible explanations as presented in the previous chapter affect these 26 individuals, and how these people deal with feelings of uncertainty they might experience.

3.2 Background Interviewees

I spent two months in the United States, where I conducted interviews in Texas, Oklahoma and New York. I spoke to Trump supporters of ages 20-62 from a total of twelve states. I also conducted interviews online (through Skype or Facebook video) with people I had met in online forums or who I had sent online messages.

Apart from that, I attended a Trump support rally and also did a personal study about one of the Trump support groups on Facebook. The field notes that I took in both of these cases proved to be very helpful in providing a broader understanding of Trump supporters’ background and worldview. This was useful in the first place because it made it easier to recognize some of the topics they found important to talk about. Secondly, it gave me more insight into their world, which helped me analyze their statements better.

The interviewees’ backgrounds are as varied as the larger group of Trump supporters. I expected that the variety of the group would provide an interesting background into individuals’ experiences. All of the participants I interviewed are active Trump supporters and reported to very much identify as such (more so than, for example, an individual who supports Trump because of lack of better option).

I interviewed eighteen men and eight women, which is slightly more men than in line with the male-female gap (47% support among men and 28% percent among women) of Donald Trump supporters (Ross, 2015). Two participants have an Asian background (Chinese American and Japanese American), three people identify as black, and the rest (21 people) are white. This is similar to the larger group of Trump supporters, who are predominantly white (Ross, 2015). All but one participant were born in the United States. One person was born in Japan, but had grown up in the United States.

Ten people grew up in a city, ten in suburbs and six people grew up on the country side in a total of eighteen states.³ At the time of the interview this had shifted completely, with three people living in a city, eleven people who lived in suburbs, and twelve people on the countryside in a total of twelve states.⁴

A factor that seems to influence one's support for Donald Trump is their education level. For every one percentage point more college graduates over 25, you can see that Donald Trump's share of the votes falls by 0.65 percentage point (Thompson, 2016). This is something that can be seen in my participants as well. Six people have a college degree, which includes lower education (real estate, photography, acting school), four people are currently in college, and sixteen people did not receive any college education. This division is somewhat similar to the national average where most Trump supporters did not receive any higher education, although, as his support is getting larger, the gap is increasingly getting smaller (Ross, 2015).

The first part of the interview focused on the participants' background. Apart from their personal background, I focused on someone's religious, and political upbringing, as well as on their relationship with their country and the place they grew up. This provided insight into individuals' backgrounds and it was a relevant starting point from where I was able to ask more questions. The information gathered from this part of the conversation

³ The states were: Tennessee, Texas, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, New Hampshire, Georgia, California, Kansas, New York, Nevada, Colorado, New Jersey, Maryland, Ohio, Arkansas, Kentucky, Oklahoma.

⁴ The states were: Texas, Oklahoma, North Dakota, Massachusetts, South Carolina, California, Kansas, New York, Illinois, North Carolina, Washington D.C., Florida.

also provides information about which possible 'I-positions' can be recognized, which will be described in the next chapter.

Everyone was brought up religiously (mostly Christian and one person had a Jewish upbringing) up to some degree, and everyone had gone to church or the synagogue at some point in their childhood. Most of the interviewees were still religious, although there was some variety as to how much of a role this played in their daily lives. 21 people identify as Christian, nineteen of whom identify as protestants (southern Baptist, Methodist, Mormon, or 'just protestant'⁵), and two identify as Catholic (both have an Italian background). Four people are currently not affiliated with any religion, and one person is Jewish.

Twelve people described how religion played a bigger role to them today than it did to their family. Kerron, a 38-year-old photographer from Washington D.C., was part of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints for a big part of his life. When I asked him about how he got interested to join the church and if his family played a role in this decision, he said:

My family; I mean they Christians, but they are not practicing Christians, you know? [...] I was on my own because they didn't go to church and they didn't understand why all of the sudden I was going to church in my teenage years.

This was something that eleven others described about their parents as well. Although religion was not very actively practiced in eleven participants' families when they were growing up, to most people religion was still a big part of their life when they were younger. Many people referred to coming from a 'Christian background', and to come from a family with 'Christian values', also when they reported that their family did not necessarily practice Christianity as much as they do now. Sandra, a 50-year-old real estate agent from Tennessee, described:

⁵ Several people said to 'not believe in labels' but did identify as (protestant) Christians.

Oh we were a true American family, you can simply imagine what my family looked like. With my mother, she was this beautiful Christian lady, and my father. You know, my father worked very hard, a true Christian. My sister always says, you know, we should be on a poster or what do you call that. Pretty picture. [...] I mean, they were so busy, you can't blame them. I know Jesus is in their heart and we could not take the bus so that's the only thing that matters. [...] You know my parents, my parents they never taught me to pray or really speak to Jesus. [My husband] helped me to really find God.

The way she spoke about her family's traditions showed she had gotten more religious over the years, but that she had always identified as Christian. Moreover, it depicts her idea of Christianity and 'being American' to be intertwined. She often seemed to use these two interchangeably, which can also be recognized in this quote. This was something many of the participants did, as they, for example, referred to 'Christian American traditions'. A few people would also speak about something 'truly American', while referring to something religious.

Six people described that religion plays a smaller part in their life today than it did when they were growing up, but still saw it as part of their identity. Enyo, a 53-year-old restaurant owner from Oklahoma, said:

Well yeah Americans, like, you need to understand that Americans love Jesus. I love Jesus! But I can love him from a distance, and I can have my own opinions, you know what I mean? Not everyone sees that because it's just a part of who we are.

Similar to Sandra's comment, Enyo explained how, in his opinion, Christianity is an important element of American identity, and how the two are intertwined. This was demonstrated, for example, by 21 people who underlined the importance of having a Christian in the White House, with one person explaining to prefer someone with 'Judeo-Christian values'. Sixteen people stated that they thought president Obama does not represent Christian (or Christian-American) values.

Four people had lived abroad at some point, of whom three had lived in different countries in their childhood. Dan, a 20-year-old student from North Dakota, had moved around a lot during his childhood. His father still lived abroad and he described that it was difficult to stay in touch. Although he found it difficult to explain where he was from, he identified as being American. He said:

I am definitely American, but I wouldn't really be able to tell you where I am really from if that makes sense. It's okay though because I know I'm American, although sometimes I feel some people maybe think that I'm not real American because we moved around so much. But I know for myself that I'm a real American so I just focus on that you know?

Dan explained that growing up in several countries, and experiencing different cultures had confused and influenced him. He explained how sometimes when he would come back to the United States that he felt that many things changed really fast, which is something that will be returned to later in this thesis. Although he had the experience of living abroad, he very much identified as 'being American'.

The other three people who had lived abroad, as well as those who had not lived abroad, all very much identified with their nationality. As explained, for many of these people this was closely intertwined with their Christianity, and for five people sometimes with their skin color.

Seventeen people had a Republican upbringing, whereas nine people said that their parents were Democrats. However, eleven people explained how this was not necessarily a big part of their upbringing. Junson, a 33-year-old actor from New York, explains:

My parents are very socially conservative, but they don't technically vote. I mean, most Asians, or at least around my parents' age, they're like 60 plus, they don't really vote. But when they did, they would usually just vote for the Democrats. I mean that's just how it is in New York.

Junson further described how his family is Christian, and that religion was an important part of his upbringing, but that politics were never a big part of his life. Nine people said that their and their parents' political views were an important part of their upbringing, of whom seven came from a longer tradition of Republicans. Two people who grew up with politics playing an important role in their upbringing, had a democratic background and they both had supported Democrats in the past. Out of the eleven people who said politics were not a big part of their upbringing, there were eight⁶ who had never voted before, and twelve people who had never been as involved in a political campaign as much as during this election.⁷

3.3 Uncertainty experienced in Globalization

Now that I have discussed the backgrounds of the participants of my research, I am able to describe the uncertainty they experience through processes related to globalization. The previous chapter focused on how the identification process can function as an anxiety-controlling mechanism. I argued that through processes related to globalization individuals increasingly experience uncertainty. In this section I will discuss how the participants of my research are affected by globalization, where I focus on the role of economic changes, migration, terrorism, and media.

I aim to describe how this causes the interviewees anxiety in general, while leaving space for other and personal factors that could affect the experience of uncertainty. In this chapter I will describe participants' experiences, while in the next chapter I will analyze in more detail how individuals' position repertoire are affected.

As explained, I look at uncertainty as a 'thick signifier'. This means that I focus on the experience of uncertainty more broadly, before turning to participants' views about Islam and Muslims specifically. In this section I aim to place their feelings about Islam and

⁶ It must be noted that of those eight people, four people voted for the first time this year because of their age.

⁷ This number is based on participants' response to the question in the first place, which was then demonstrated by how they did so. For example: 'attending a rally for the first time' (Julie), 'creating four Facebook pages to support Donald Trump' (Sandra), 'campaigning for mister Trump' (Ray), 'writing articles about Trump' (Junson).

Muslims (and the possible stress and anxiety this brings them), which I will focus on in the next section, in a larger context of other stress and uncertainty they might experience.

The first factor that will be focused on is economic changes. I never asked interviewees directly how much money they or their family made. Although this part of the research focuses on someone's financial history as well, it does not aim to answer questions of a factual nature. Moreover, some people who brought the topic up were not always completely sure of the details of their financial situation. It is, however, important to analyze how individuals feel about their financial situation.

	Much financial stress	Some financial stress	No financial stress
Growing up	11	11	4
Today	13	8	5

Figure 1: The amount of financial stress interviewees reported to experience.

Four people described not to have experienced much financial stress growing up, and five people do not experience much stress today. This does not equal that, apart from these five people who do not experience stress about finances, the other 21 automatically have lower or middle-lower class incomes. It solely demonstrates that half of the participants are currently quite worried about their financial situation, whereas five people are not. Of these five people, two people did experience some and much financial stress growing up.

Both of these people explained to find it very important that they have done well financially, and that they are better off today than they were growing up. It is something they frequently referred to during the interview. Dennis, a 44-year-old business owner from Oklahoma, said for example:

No one works anymore. I work so hard, because I know what it's like, you know? The country will go to hell if we get a socialist like Bernie because people won't work hard. We can work much harder than we are working today, Americans are strong. We used to own everything, but look at it now. Just getting lazy.

In my conversation with Dennis, he explained how, in his opinion, the United States has been in a poor state, because people have gotten 'lazy'. His comments focused on how he thought that the country was actually a strong country, but that the situation had worsened over the past years. Dennis continuously explained how hard he had worked to get to where he is today. This is why he said to judge people who, in his opinion, had not worked as hard. Junson made a similar comment, although he did report to currently experience much financial stress and described himself as an actor who is currently looking for work. He said:

I don't agree with the current situation or like on the way to socialism, I just don't think it works, because it takes away the incentive to work hard, and I like to work hard and then keep whatever, you know, that I earn and make.

Junson's comment demonstrates how, although he currently experienced financial stress as he was out of work, he felt that people need to work hard for their own money. According to him, 'socialism' threatens this process. During our conversation he explained how he disagreed with societies that, in his words, 'only focus on the communal aspects'. In explaining this, he also referred to his family's background (Chinese), and said to disagree with the parts of Chinese culture that focus on the community on a larger scale.

Apart from Junson, many people reported to experience stress because of their financial situation. Thirteen people have fulltime jobs, and four people have some part-time work. All but one (a stay at home mother) of the people who have no or only part-time work reported to want to do more work but that they were struggling. Nine people were also directly or indirectly affected by the economic crisis, in that they, or a family member (husband, son, parents) lost their jobs in processes where many people were fired.

Fulltime work	Some part-time work	Retired	Student	No work
13	4	1	4	4

Figure 2: Overview of types of work that interviewees had.

Julie, a 59-year-old former manager at JC Penney (a clothing store) from Illinois, lost her job in 2013. She explained how she had to move into a smaller house, and was not able to provide as much for her children and grandchildren, which very much affected her. She said:

My husband says I always kind of spoil my children, but I used to be strict with them, too. I just always want to make sure, or take care of them, you know? I guess a little more backbone wouldn't be the worst, but it's okay. And I mean, (laughing) grandchildren are there to be spoiled, right?

She explained that she still tries to provide for her grandchildren, and babysits two of the children three times a week, but she struggled with not being able to do more and this caused her much stress. The comment demonstrates how she saw it as her task to provide for those children, and she explained how in her experience she was now 'failing' as a mother.

Similarly, Dale, a 49-year-old Uber driver from Texas, told me that his family used to own a large farm that did quite well, but that a larger company took over. In our conversation it seemed that he experienced a lot of stress from when his family lost the farm. When I asked him how this affected him and his family, he said:

You know what it's like, the big guys are taking over. We just couldn't get rid of it anymore (referring to his produce). [...] And it sucks because everyone knew our farm, you know? We were the best and then we just couldn't compete and it felt different, like the way I saw my mom and dad, and how I saw us as a family.

Dale's comment shows how these changes do not only cause financial stress, but affect how his family interacted with each other as well. Comments such as this one from Dale demonstrate that, although the reasons for losing the farm were financial, the stress Dale and his family experienced is felt on several levels. This can be recognized in all other participants in various ways, which is something I will come back to in the next chapter.

Allison, a 20-year-old woman from Oklahoma who worked in prosthetics, similarly had experienced financial stress that affected her worldview in a broader sense. She explained how she had been 'making artificial limbs' since she was 10 years old (together with her older cousin). She did not finish high school, and has a very difficult time making ends meet. Allison explains:

The American dream does not exist. I mean, maybe for some, but not for us. But, like, they don't know what it's like and I'm working my whole life but it doesn't get better, you know what I'm saying? Maybe 60 years ago. But like, I've seen my parents work hard, my grandparents. [...] But we don't have much and it's just not okay.

With Allison, many people connected their financial struggles to problems they feel the United States is having. Many interviewees referred to the economic crisis, but also to international relations. Furthermore, they placed their own situation in a larger context, by, for example, comparing their situation in the United States with (mostly) Europe. In the way that people spoke about their financial struggles, it was visible how individuals' perspectives of the whole country and their worldview were affected. This is also where several people mentioned how this is related to their feelings about migrants. Allison continues:

It's racy I feel like. Ehm. I just feel like there's too many illegal immigrants crossing the border. And we can't do anything about it, it's just open and they can just come in and that's annoying. And I know that we don't have enough jobs anymore because of that.

Seventeen people directly referred to (illegal) immigrants as a source of anxiety. People made negative comments about immigrant mostly in relation to their financial situation, arguing, for example, that migrants are taking their jobs. Out of the thirteen people who explained to experience much financial stress, twelve people directly or indirectly blamed migrants. However, this was not the only ground on which people had difficulties with migrants.

Although some people argued that they thought the United States is a country ‘for everybody’, which is beautiful in its diversity, nineteen people explained to feel uncomfortable with this diversity and said that the country was ‘changing too much’. Participants argued that ‘Christians’, ‘white people’, ‘people from a European background’, or ‘people like us’ should stay the largest group in the country. Eleven of these people explained how this group is currently still a majority, but that they are afraid that the group is becoming smaller. Five people described that, since 2015, ‘white people’ now make up less than 50 percent of the United States, which bothered them.⁸

22 people said that ‘white people’ or ‘Christians’ are the people who built this country, and that they felt uncomfortable and confused with how things are changing in this regard. John, a 59-year-old window-cleaner from Texas, explained that he thought that other religions wanted to take over and that too many people wanted to ‘have a say’, which he thought was unfair. About the Black Lives Matter movement he said:

I mean, they make up 13 percent of our nation in population and they think there should be more black people on TV because now they're all whites? How is that possible? How is that possible? There's more white people than black people so how would that make sense? That stuff confuses me.

With John, nineteen other people described feeling as if there is ‘too much division’, and that there are ‘too many religions’ in one country. Fifteen people said that younger generations are too involved with other cultures. Mike, a 53-year-old man from Oklahoma who had previously worked as a contractor, said:

Kids these days they don't know (talking about being American). I'm not even talking about different foods or anything like that. [...] My nephew thinks he's a rapper or some-

⁸ This is not accurate, as white people still make up the majority (62 percent) of the United States. However, data from the US Census Bureau in 2015 did demonstrate that there were 50,2 percent of children under five who came from minority backgrounds. The minority population is expected to be 56 percent of the total population in 2060 (Wazwaz, 2015).

thing, always listening to Jay-Z and what not. My wife's friend's daughter is crazy about Japan. What's that about? I don't remember there's much to like about that. I mean, maybe I am wrong. That could be true, you know? Maybe I don't know what a true American is today. Maybe those kids know. But it's just not the same as before.

Mike's comment demonstrates how, in his experience, people of younger generations around him are too heavily influenced by cultures that, in his opinion, are not 'American'. The comment shows how he is not only confused about these people's actions, but that it affects the certainty with which he sees his own idea of 'American identity'.

Out of the fourteen people who made similar comments, twelve referred to the role that the media plays in this process. Many interviewees explained not to feel very positively about media as well as social media, especially when it had an international focus. Although Kerron said to be interested in international news and media today, he described that this was not something he spent much time thinking about when he was younger. According to him, there were other things that he needed to worry about, and this led him to focus on his own country and his own city first. He explains:

You have to understand, when you grow up in America, that you don't care about the rest of the world in a way, because there is so much things you have to worry about. Your school, paying bills, going to work on time. You didn't care what China thinks, you didn't care what UK thinks, you don't care what the rest of Europe thinks. All we know about Europe is that the French like croissants and tea and they always happy. We didn't care what was happening anywhere else. [...] So when people say Americans are so stupid it's not that, it's just that they have so much happening in their world right now, they can't afford to worry about you in the other side of the world.

THV: What kind of things did you have to worry about, for example?

Kerron: College tuition, finishing my college degree, going to school, church, that my parents were giving me hell about because they didn't understand. There are certain things that as a young man in America you have to worry about. I wanted to play basketball. I

wanted them new Jordans, there's so many things that personally and to our neighborhood that we were worried about.

Every one of the interviewees expressed this up to some degree, and it depicts the uncertainty they experience in their daily lives. Participants explained how they simply cannot care about everything that is going on in the world, because it is more important to focus on the issues that your country or your family is having.

When I asked people if and how they stayed up to date of, international, national, and local news, 21 participants said to not follow international news on a regular basis. However, most of them said they do know 'the most important things' that are going on in Europe, where they gave the refugee crisis and terrorist attacks by Muslim extremists as examples.

International news	National News	Local News	No News
4	21	19	1

Figure 3: News that participants watch regularly.

Most people mainly used Fox News and Facebook (both used by seventeen people) as ways to stay up to date of news, although many people criticized Fox News for the way they have been reporting about Donald Trump. Nineteen people said that they do not very actively follow the news, but there was only one person who absolutely did not watch any news.

John said that it caused him too much stress and that he thinks there is too much 'trash' on television. He also did not read newspapers, and did not spend much time online. He said that younger generations spend too much time getting involved in social media and television. He explained:

Don't get me started on entertainment, I mean, what does that produce for the public? But I guess people love entertainment, or to be amused and our kids are just obsessed with it and getting hit by cars because they just don't look up from their phones.

Everyone except John made use of some form of social media. Although eighteen people said that social media has mostly had a positive impact in their lives, many people (also of that group) expressed to experience stress that can come with it as well. Several people used platforms like Facebook and Twitter as a way to report about their political or religious ideas. All of the people who had done that (seventeen) explained how they had experienced bullying, online arguments, and even threats. Even when the effects of social media were not as extreme, social media had an influence on everyone who used it. Dale said that it bothered him that social media is such a big part of daily life now. He explains:

I feel now there's something new every week. And it's all because of what they're doing on those little screens all day. I'm telling you that I get more updates from my daughter's life on Facebook than in real life. Same for my neighbor, my classmate, or just about anyone who I know online.

There were some differences in these comments between men and women, and especially between the younger and older generation. The younger people who I interviewed (eight people who were in their twenties) all spent a lot of time online and although they mostly saw the positive aspects (meeting new people, discussing politics, sharing moments), they all felt it was stressful as well.

Dan explained several negative experiences he had had on social media. He described how he used an application on his phone that lets students chat with each other anonymously. He said that there were so many discussions and viewpoints online that he disagreed with that it made him anxious to go online. Apart from that, people had made fun of him on that application because of his Donald Trump bumper sticker on his car.

Moreover, another factor that influenced people's experience of uncertainty were recent acts of terrorism in Western society. Many people referred to the attacks on September 11th, 2001, which had a big impact on their lives. Most participants described that this was the moment when Americans started to realize that their government was not able to protect them. Julie explained:

We're such a strong country and I never knew that someone could feel so much hate for us, you know? We're not bad people. It doesn't matter if you know someone who died that day, because they want us all to die. They don't care who were in the towers. They would have killed me because, because I'm American. What did I do to them?

This comment depicts a similar attitude to how all other interviewees described to feel in some ways as well, specifically for the older generations. They described to not understand why this had happened to them, and that they started to doubt their government. Eleven people felt that their government was strong, and they often referred to it as 'the strongest in the world', so it came as a shock that the government was unable to protect the country from such an attack. Kerron described:

Americans always felt safe and we felt that the only thing that, well you know, that countries always worried about their neighbor countries invading them or something. But no, we all felt safe. That was the first time I think people realized that the government can't protect us.

Kerron describes a feeling that many of the interviewees expressed as well. This did not only influence the way they expressed to feel about their country, but also the way that people lived their daily lives. All interviewees explained to experience fear in the months after the attacks. However, to the participants who lived in larger cities at the time (specifically on the east coast) this seemed to particularly affect their lives. These five people all had stories about how everyone around them seemed to be anxious as well. Salvatore, a 51-year-old car mechanic from New York, explains:

Oh it was crazy. Everyone was just on edge, people were so stressed out, you can't imagine. Suddenly everyone was a potential murderer, when a week earlier I wouldn't notice you're a Muslim. Suddenly you see them everywhere but I know they were there already but now you see it, you know?

This is what many people described, specifically people who lived in cities. Kerron was the only person who I interviewed who had lost someone in the attacks. He lost his uncle, who worked in information technology in the Pentagon, on September 11, 2001. This had a big impact on Kerron's personal life, as well as on his ideas about Muslims. He expressed that he was very upset and that it was a very intense period in his life. He described how many of his friends joined the army because they were so upset and wanted to do something. He also said that he did not realize how much someone could feel so much hatred toward the United States. He explains:

Yeah at the time it happened I was very upset, it was very intense. I mean, I was into politics and I knew what was happening, but I didn't know that the Taliban was so angry at the US or that they were so willing to do something else. I was pissed off. A lot of my friends were pissed off.

The events with Muslim extremists over the past decades influenced how he came to view Muslims, which will be discussed in the next section in more detail. All comments as discussed in this section depict how people are affected by living in a globalized world in general. People experience uncertainty directly because of stress that these factors may cause them. At the same time, it also influences how they perceive themselves, their family, and their beliefs about their religion and country. Many people experience these factors as a threat to their identity, and to ideas about religion, politics and the United States in particular. Apart from the influence of these processes, people argue that Islam and Muslims specifically are important causes of their stress, which is what will be discussed in more detail.

3.4 Focus on Islam and Muslims

As explained in the previous chapter, these factors related to globalization affect individuals directly, and also influence their position repertoire. The increase of ideas and different people they come in touch as well as the changes they experience in their personal lives causes them to feel anxious, which is something I will discuss in more detail in the next

chapter. A very important factor that individuals distinguish as affecting them, was their experience of the role of Muslims and Islam in the United States.

As discussed in the previous section, people often referred to immigrants as generally affecting the country economically and culturally. However, specifically Islam was seen much more as a direct threat on American society in different ways as well. There was a difference between people's opinions about Islam and people's opinions about Muslims, and all participants described that 'Muslim extremism' is a big threat to American society.

Problem with Muslims	No problem with Muslims
14	12
Problem with Islam	No problem with Islam
25	1
Knows Muslims personally	Does not know Muslims personally
17	9

Figure 4: Participants' views on Muslims and Islam.

Apart from referring to 'radical Islam', sixteen people worried about Islam in the United States because of 'cultural differences'. This was often placed in a more general context of experiencing uncertainty because of a variety of cultures within the United States. John explained, for example, how it made him uncomfortable that he does not understand Muslims:

It's not like they want anything. I don't know that they want the same as us. I don't know that they want a nice house, a nice car, a better TV, a nicer phone, I don't think they're about that. They're not barbaric but their stories are not... They're not... They're just not like us.

John's comment demonstrates a significant point that is very much in line with what nineteen other participants said: 'They're just not like us'. Participants explained to feel unsure about what exactly it is that 'they' (referring to Muslims) are about. Twelve people said

they do not have any problems with Muslims personally, but everyone except one participant did report to have a problem with Islam. The only person (Dan) who said to not have a problem with Islam still explained that he did feel that 'Muslim extremists' are currently the biggest threat to society.

Although, in our conversation, John referred multiple times to the fact that he did not know any Muslims personally, he did have very specific expectations and ideas about Islam and Muslims, which he describes in more detail:

Islam just brings a new twist to it (division in religion in the United States) because now they're like this: If we bring enough of us over here, we can create our own law and live under sharia law. [...] It's not going to happen in my lifetime because there's still population to catch up, but it will happen.

Although twelve people said not to have a problem with Muslims personally, eighteen people described that in their experience there is an increase of Muslims in the United States, which they experienced as a threat. These people described that they feel that Muslims currently have much influence, whereas American and Christian values have stepped into the background. Kerron explained:

Well yeah, America was built on Christians. They were part of fundamental rights. [...] Now you can't pray in schools anymore, and you can't say Jesus Christ. I mean if I go to my cafeteria in my company I can't put my head down and start praying because I'm offending people, but if the Muslim guy drops a rug on the ground and drops on his knees it's okay because we don't want to offend them.

When I asked him why he thinks Islam is being viewed as he said it is, he replied:

I think because of all the violence that happened and the violence that comes with it now and people are trying to not come across as being hateful towards it or not respecting it. So in doing so Christianity is shut aside. That's not cool.

In my conversation with Kerron, it did not only seem that he had difficulties with the position of Muslims in the United States, but that he was specifically worried about their position at the cost of Christians. In a large part of our conversation, he explained how, in his opinion, Muslims were treated better than Christians, which he found unfair.

This is something that many other participants also described. Seventeen people found it 'unfair' that, in their experience, Muslims are treated very well, considering that specifically this group of people, in their opinion, is 'dangerous', or 'a threat to America'. Although fourteen people said to not have problems with individual Muslims directly, everyone described 'Muslim extremism' or 'radical Islam' as a threat.

Similarly, all participants described that the current government is not able to tackle the difficulties that Islam has brought to Western society, in their opinion. Many people referred to the attacks on September 11, 2001, but also to more recent attacks in Europe and the attack in San Bernardino. Specifically older participants focused more on September 11, but participants from all ages spoke about the threat they see for the United States in ISIS.

Kerron, said not to have any problems with Muslims personally, and said that he used to have a friend who is Muslim. However, similar to all other participants, he expressed that it was difficult to distinguish 'good' from 'bad' Muslims. This can be seen in Dan's observations. Dan had lived in Qatar for some years, and he is the only person who described to not have any issues with Islam directly. He described a similar line of thinking as to all other participants, although more mildly put:

Let's face it, those terrorists are Muslim and you can't really tell the good ones from the bad ones. Like I used to have people in my school who had very like common Al-Qaeda names like that you know? I knew this one guy named Osama. I mean, he was a nice guy, but you know? Or a lot of people have 'bin' in their names. They were all good guys but it's hard to tell the difference so it's good to do something about that.

Comments such as this one from Dan depict how participants found it difficult to distinguish individual Muslims from Muslim extremists. Although seventeen people said to

know Muslims personally, most of them did not call these people friends. The rhetoric, that can, for example, be seen in Dan's comment, allowed participants to generalize and speak about the 'danger' or 'threat' they perceive is within 'Islam'. They seemed to justify their argument by the existence a 'higher importance' (e.g., 'a safe America').

Moreover, interviewees argued, their concern is not only because of Islam directly, but because how, according to them, the government is not responding adequately. Participants referred to 'liberals', 'the media', 'Democrats', 'the government', and 'president Obama', who they feel are standing up for Muslims, while in their opinion 'Christian' and 'American' values are being threatened.

Many people blamed political correctness, or the fear of more terrorist attacks as to why liberals, the media, or the government is not doing more about Islam in the United States. They argue that the group that they perceive as the United States' biggest threat, is actually better off at the expense of, for example, Christians.

Salvatore explained how, in his opinion, the government is doing everything to protect Muslims at the cost of Christians. With 23 others, he described feeling that the government is trying to be politically correct. This was something that bothered him. He knew some Muslims, but explained they were not really friends. He described that the attacks in Western society committed by Muslim extremists cannot be called a coincidence. He said:

I understand it's not what people want to hear, but then what? Should we just ignore that there is something going on? You're not telling me that there's not a problem. You know it, I know it. Obama knows it too, but for whatever reason they're trying really hard to pretend there's not.

Salvatore's comment depicts a line of thought that almost everyone else mentioned as well. People described to feel that the government was not honest about things that seemed very obvious to them. It bothered participants that because of the, in their opinion, 'political correctness' of the current government, no one wants to speak about 'the real problems'. Brooke, a 20-year-old student from Nevada describes:

Like, after the shooting in California, liberals were like: 'It's not Muslims, it's not Muslims!'. But I mean, they were Muslims. Why can't we just say that? They know there's a problem but then we're the bad guys for pointing it out because they're too afraid to talk about it?

In my conversation with Brooke, I discovered something that I heard from many other participants. In her experience, it is not only that Muslim extremism causes her anxiety, but moreover, she feels that her concerns are not taken seriously, but even 'mocked'. This is something that all participants referred to in some way, which is why this will further be analyzed in the next chapter.

This section demonstrated how individuals are affected by globalization and how this can cause people to experience anxiety. I have explained how participants experience uncertainty because of processes related to globalization such as economic changes, migration, terrorism and the role of the media. This provided an understanding of the general uncertainty individuals experience, which affects their position repertoire as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Moreover, I have focused on how interviewees feel about Muslims and Islam and how this further influences their experience of uncertainty. I demonstrated that the Trump supporters from my study view Islam negatively, and experience 'radical Islam' and 'Muslim extremism' as a threat they very much worry about. Furthermore, my data suggested that these individuals felt that their experience of uncertainty is not taken seriously and that Muslims are being protected at the cost of, for example, Christians.

3.5 Strategies to deal with Uncertainty

Now that I have explained how individuals experience uncertainty, I will explain how participants responded to dealing with the uncertainty. In the second chapter I have argued that the support for Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims, can be explained by an analysis of three strategies (to retreat from society, to give the lead to one or a few positions in the repertoire, and to sharpen the boundaries between self and other) that people may turn to in order to diminish uncertainty. I argue that these specific strategies can be experienced

by one individual in different times, but that in this particular case, they can also influence each other.

One thing that stood out in the early stages of the analysis was about where and how people were living. Ten people grew up in a city, ten in suburbs and six people grew up on the country side in a total of eighteen states. As explained, at the time of the interview this had shifted completely, with three people living in a city, eleven people who lived in suburbs, and twelve people on the countryside in a total of twelve states.

	Countryside	Suburb	City
Growing up	6	10	10
Today	12	11	3

Figure 5: Places where interviewees had grown up and currently live.

Nine people never moved outside of their home state, thirteen people had moved to another state at some point in their lives, and four people had moved abroad for longer periods of time. Nine people left the city for either the suburbs or (mostly) the countryside, and described to want to have a quieter life, which was easier outside of the city in their opinion. Two people moved to a city, both of whom moved to the city closest to the suburbs where they were from, and both did so for their work in the creative industry (a photographer and a TV producer).

Although some people were struggling financially, all twelve people who lived in the countryside said to appreciate their living situation. Of those living in the suburbs, six people were happy to be living there, and as for the city, two people appreciated the place they lived. The six people who were not happy with their living situation all said to look for a quieter, as well as more stable life. 21 people said in various ways to feel overwhelmed by a variety of processes related to globalization, and for sixteen people this was one of the reasons why they did not want to live in the city (anymore).

John described how he feels overwhelmed by everything that is going on in the world. He spoke about terrorist attacks, the economic crisis and how the media reports these topics. He expressed that he has been worried about the future of the United States

for a long time, and that he has dealt with personal stress as well. This is why, after moving around and living in cities, he chose to have a quieter life, which can be seen in the other nine people who made the same choice.

John further explained how, when he was younger, he tried to diminish anxiety by drug and alcohol abuse and by trying to avoid thinking or talking about these topics too much. However, he explained that he realized that that was not how he is supposed to live, and that he started becoming more interested in Christianity. He explains:

I used to be confused by so, so many things until I found out that I am no longer in condemnation, I am no longer a sinner. Although I may sin, transgress, I am no longer a sinner because when God looks at me now, he doesn't just see me, he sees Jesus Christ, he sees the blood of Christ over me. And he paid the full price when he was on the cross.

This seemed to give John a lot of strength. He argued that his Christian beliefs are the most important thing in his life, and that he tries to avoid talking about topics that cause him stress. The only other thing he is very much involved with, is the presidential campaign, as he finds it important that 'true American and Christian values' will be represented. In his opinion, the United States' government is currently no longer based on Christianity, which he hopes will change when Donald Trump becomes president. He thinks that Trump can tackle the 'issue with Muslims' and that he will not be as politically correct in doing so. John said:

Our government took over. It is wrong to be discriminative, it is not good to do that and you can't do that because you judge and it is wrong of you to judge and use your moral. But then, whose morals are we going to use? Well it should be God's. But God hasn't existed in the public school system since forever.

This is something that many other people also mentioned. Sixteen people argued that the current government is not Christian enough, and 23 people argued that it is not based on true American values. Many people had become increasingly interested in Christianity, and they explained to have shifted further and further to the political right over the past years.

The four people who expressed that their Christianity did not play as much of a role in their lives did seem to very much identify with their 'American identity'. As explained, it seemed that for many people these ideas were very much intertwined, as people referred to 'true American values' as for example, going to church on Sundays. Most participants had an ideal image of how the country used to be, and argued that it is not the same anymore. John explained:

From the industrial revolution until like the second world war, this country was like the bomb. I mean it was amazing. If you said something bad about her or if you didn't tip your hat for that lady or you didn't open the door for that lady. If you didn't treat a woman with respect, it was just a different time.

With ten others, John also referred to national heroes such as George Washington and Christopher Columbus, saying that these people had good values and created the nation to what it once was. This catered their idea of what 'true Americans' are and how the country should be. In this process, people referred to old heroes, and people who 'made America great again' in the past. Apart from Ronald Reagan, people referred to the Civil War, as well as the War of Independence. Ten people described that the country had been divided in the past, but that it had come together after that, which, according to them, Trump is able to do as well.

This focus on past American strength was something that empowered people in thinking how they could deal with the issues the country is facing now. According to Lauren, a 21-year-old student from Oklahoma, Americans should come to realize their worth, and she felt that Americans need to be protected:

He is a little bit 'in your face' about that, and I know that people get really fired up about that. Look, if restricting Muslims from coming into the U.S., if that saves fourteen American lives, rather than having, like, 50,000 Muslims come in, I'd much rather do that and save our own Americans' lives. For me, personally, I'd rather be safe than sorry, kind of.

ISIS is such a big problem and I would take any steps necessary to protect innocent U.S. Americans, rather than, you know, do something for the wellbeing of the Muslims.

Lauren's comments demonstrate how she is aware of how many people view Trump's ideas about Muslims and Islam, but that it is in her opinion more important to protect Americans (from 'Muslim extremists'), than to be politically correct. This is something that all other participants explained as well. 24 people explained how the country is going to need to recover from president Obama, who put 'true American values' in the background, while, in their opinion, Muslims are being favored. Kerron explains:

Yeah, when people try so hard to not offend Muslims, they actually put the Christians in the back of the bus. Look, Christians can't pray in school anymore, they can't say Jesus Christ anymore. If you work for the federal government and you want to say Jesus Christ, you have to say 'word of silence'. [...] But you don't want to offend the guy who's wearing a hijab. [...] They want to show them that they are not trying to offend them but at the same time they're pushing Christians to the side.

According to Kerron, people, and Democrats in particular, have become so afraid to offend anyone, that in that process they neglect Christians. Sandra took this even further, as she argued that the government does not only neglect Christians, but actively supports Muslims. She says:

My anger stems from this president who is more concerned about illegal foreigners than he is about Christian veterans. He has reduced our military so low that it's dangerous for us Americans to be protected. Obama was not even really raised in America. [...] He does not salute our flag and he doesn't celebrate Christmas: all the markings of a true foreigner. He's for sure a Muslim, because I saw a video where he admitted it so I know that. Trump is the savior.

Most people did not see Obama as being Muslim, and only John as well as Ray, a 41-year-old accountant from South Carolina, made similar comments. Sixteen people did feel that president Obama does not represent Christian, or even American, values. Enyo explains:

Maybe it's harsh, but the country wasn't ready for a black president. Look at this mess! I mean, I don't even care about Obama, I mean, fine. But if you see Trump's popularity, you understand with me that this country wasn't ready for someone so different from us.

Although Enyo did not have problems with Obama, he jokingly said that many people think he is Muslim because of his middle name (Hussein). Enyo said that this did not influence his support for Trump, but that he does understand that many people do not see president Obama as representing 'Christian American values'.

Fourteen people expressed how president Obama favored Muslims in the United States. Sandra argued that Muslims are the biggest of her worries and that they are the 'evil' that the world is facing today. In this argument, she focused on the good in Christians, and how Christians as a group do not cause any difficulties in the country.

Similar to nineteen other participants, Sandra instead blamed the direct influence of other governments, as well as the influence of people from different backgrounds in the United States. These people referred to how they feel that the government is too heavily influenced by other countries' governments, where they refer to gay marriage, gun control, and policies toward Muslims. Although they expressed that the influence of Islam in the United States is causing them stress, they seemed to feel empowered by how they, and many Trump supporters with them, are fighting for the 'right values'.

I met several interviewees in a group called Donald Trump Forever 2016, where people talk about their support for Trump, Christian values, as well as ideas about the future of the United States. Most of the posts in this group (268 out of the 331 in one month)⁹ had the intention to 'other' certain groups (e.g., politicians, religions, famous people).

⁹ Results are from a personal study.

Grant, a 28-year-old man from Massachusetts who worked as a website promoter, was one of the creators of the group. He explained how he felt comfortable in the group, as it was one of the few places where he felt he could say things without too many 'P.C. complaints'.¹⁰ Sixteen other participants described to be members of such groups, where they both enjoyed meeting likeminded people, as well as openly speak about 'Others' they disagree with.

This section demonstrated how individuals respond to the uncertainty they experience, which accounts for their support for Trump's 'othering' of Muslims. My data suggests that individuals respond to diminish uncertainty with three strategies, that are intertwined in some degree, and which will be further analyzed in the next chapter.

Their comments furthermore suggest that they respond to the uncertainty they experience directly because of Muslim extremism, and that they feel that the government is not responding adequately. More specifically, they feel not taken seriously by their government, the media, and Democrats. Participants blamed 'political correctness', and 'fear' as reasons as to why these groups of people are not dealing with the issues, and they feel that Donald Trump is the only person who is not afraid to speak about these issues.

All participants argue that these groups protect Muslims at the cost of Christians and 'true Americans', which they feel is part of the problem. In this process, they fall back to traditional American ideals and values, and several people have become very much involved with their Christian beliefs, which gives them hope and strength for a better future. This is something that will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

3.6 Conclusion

The third chapter provided the empirical framework of this thesis. It presented the data from the interviews I conducted in the United States over two months. It was guided by the following question: *How can individual opinions and feelings of Donald Trump supporters about Islam be explained and how do his supporters feel about Donald Trump's political ideas about Muslims?* I aimed to answer this question by analyzing individuals' dominant

¹⁰ P.C. stands for 'politically correct'.

positions and by providing information about their backgrounds, so that I could describe how they express to experience uncertainty. I then focused on their feelings about Islam and Muslims specifically, and how this affects their experience of uncertainty, before describing how participants subsequently deal with this uncertainty.

The chapter started with a 'thick signifier' approach, as I analyzed in which ways individuals experience uncertainty in general. It did so by looking at how people are affected by processes related to globalization and how this influences their identity. After this, I focused on the four processes related to globalization (economic changes, migration, terrorism, media) that individuals expressed to experience anxiety.

After this, I focused specifically on people's views on Muslims and Islam, where I also demonstrated how their (negative) feelings towards Islam seem to be affected by the way they feel that they are being perceived. All participants described how the current government is not responding adequately to threats from extremist Muslims, but that instead Muslims are being protected at the cost of Christians or 'true Americans'.

Because of the anxiety that individuals experience, and in particular the way that this was affected because of their experience not to being taken seriously by their current government, people responded to these feelings of uncertainty by finding strength in that part of their identity they feel is being threatened (religious, national, and political). Several people have become increasingly interested in religion over the past years, and several people fall back onto ideas about the United States' past. Everyone seemed to feel empowered through the way that Donald Trump is helping them fight for the ideals they feel are currently lost and pointing out real problems the country needs to be protected from (such as Muslim extremism).

This chapter has presented the relevant data of my research, without analyzing exactly the meaning of participants' statements. A part of my research can, however, because of the structure of this chapter, be understood because of the information explained in the theoretical framework. However, another part is not, namely that the experience of uncertainty increases by not feeling taken seriously, which influences individuals' coping strategies. This requires further exploration, which is why I will pay specific attention to this

topic in the next chapter, where I will analyze and interpret the data obtained in the light of the theoretical frame.

4 Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters I have presented the theoretical and empirical framework. In the theoretical framework I analyzed the role of uncertainty in the identification process and how through processes related to globalization, such as economic changes, migration, terrorism and media, individuals increasingly experience uncertainty. I described identity as an anxiety-controlling mechanism and I explained how there are three strategies that individuals may turn to that explain how someone comes to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims, namely by retreating from society, by giving the lead to one or a few positions in the position repertoire, or by very much distancing oneself from others. I specifically focused on the processes through which Muslims have become an 'Other' over the past years in the United States.

In the third chapter, the empirical framework, I subsequently presented the data of my research. I demonstrated how interviewees are affected by these processes related to globalization, and how this causes them uncertainty. I also focused specifically on participants' perception of Islam and Muslims in Western society, where I explained how Islam plays a role in the uncertainty that individuals experience in two ways. Firstly, interviewees described to experience anxiety because of the fear of attacks by Muslim extremists and the threat they see in Islam on Western values. Secondly, people said how, in their experience, their worries are not taken seriously, but that instead they are being 'mocked' and they feel 'othered' themselves.

The fourth chapter looks at the data as presented in the empirical framework with help of the information in the theoretical framework, while also turning to additional literature when necessary. I aim to do so with guidance of the following question: *How can the findings in the empirical framework be understood with help of the theoretical framework, and how does it possibly challenge theory or require additional information?*

The chapter reestablishes the importance of the role of uncertainty in the identification process, while analyzing how this is affected by globalization-related processes (financial changes, migration, terrorism, and the role of the media). I argue that because of

these processes, individuals are affected directly (e.g., not being able to pay the bills because of job loss), and that it also influences their identification process, which will be analyzed in more detail in this chapter.

People experience uncertainty in general in life, as all life is inevitably uncertain. Because of globalization, the repertoire is populated by an increasing amount of (internal and external) positions, and because people are more exposed to diverse groups and cultures, the position repertoire becomes more heterogeneous. There can therefore also be more oppositions within the 'Self'. People can, for example, experience a conflict of positions (e.g., the position 'I-as-not-racist-woman' vs 'I-as-woman-who-does-not-trust-her-Arab-neighbors-after-9/11').

Furthermore, because of the unpredictability of global changes, the repertoire also has to respond to these changes and can receive more 'visits' from unexpected positions and one may experience larger 'position leaps' where some positions become dominant and others might be 'muted' (e.g., the position 'I-as-successful-realtor' becomes muted because of job loss, and other voices may become more dominant).

After I have analyzed how these changes in the position repertoire can be recognized in the participants, I will focus on their perspectives on Islam and Muslims. My data suggests that apart from the anxiety individuals experience because of Muslim extremism and their perception of Islam in Western society, there is another factor that increases their experience of uncertainty.

I argue that another important factor that affects individuals' experience of uncertainty, as well as their response to cope with uncertainty, is the feeling not to be taken seriously and neglected. I will describe how participants feel that certain positions in their repertoire are threatened. More specifically, they referred to particularly those positions that, as explained in the theoretical framework, individuals prefer to see as stable (their religious, national, and political identity).

Interviewees described to feel as if this part of their 'identity' is being threatened directly, by Muslim extremism and the role of Islam in Western society. Moreover, people said to feel as if they are not being taken seriously, but actually 'belittled', 'othered' and 'mocked'. In this chapter I will analyze their feeling that Muslims are being protected at

the expense of Christians, who in their experience are neglected, with help of Harding (1991).

I argue that this experience further influences the strategies to deal with uncertainty that individuals turn to as well. Because of the direct stress and the uncertainty that one experiences in the position repertoire, and how individuals feel that their most dominant positions are being threatened, people respond in various ways. To feel certain and secure of themselves in the world they live in, people retreat and try to shelter themselves from the world, give the lead to one or a few dominant positions on the one hand, or distance themselves from others.

4.2 Experience of Uncertainty in Globalization

4.2.1 Introduction

In the theoretical framework I argued that although people often seem to search for a stable identity, it is important to note that identity should not be understood as a fixed, natural state of being (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 748). As life can be uncertain, and it can be confusing to feel as if one is being pulled in different directions, there exists a powerful drive in humans to maintain a sense of one's identity.

By doing so, individuals create a feeling of continuity that can be comforting when one is afraid of changing too fast or being changed against one's will by outside forces (Sigel, 1989, p. 459). In this way, as I have argued, identity can be seen as an anxiety-controlling mechanism that reinforces a sense of trust, predictability, and control. Ontological security needs to be provided in order for individuals to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and to avoid existential anxiety (Giddens, 1991, p. 40).

The self can be viewed as a dynamic multiplicity of 'I-positions', or internalized voices (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 36). The 'I' is bound to certain positions within the self, which have originated in different situations. Voices of other individuals or collective voices of groups enter the self-space and can become temporary or more stabilized positions in the self. The 'Self' can be seen as the director of the story that can let different voices 'speak'.

Individuals want to be able to tell their story in such a way that they feel that it is a good one, which rests on solid ground (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 746). In the empirical framework I demonstrated how factors related to globalization affect this process. This can make it more difficult to provide a sense of stability and certainty in the world. In the contemporary world, individuals are increasingly confronted with different ideas and perspectives, thus for many people, a globalized world can be a world devoid of certainty, and of knowing what tomorrow holds.

Apart from the direct consequences that one can experience, these processes affect one's identification process. The position repertoire is populated by an increasing amount of positions, which requires the self to organize and reorganize (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 76). Because of this, individuals can get more 'visits' by unexpected positions and there are larger 'position leaps' where one has to jump from one position to another. This process not only implies an increase in the number and heterogeneity of positions, but also of the number and heterogeneity of audiences that are (implicitly) present in speech.

Moreover, these processes can cause individuals to feel that specific 'I-positions' are being threatened, particularly the ones that are preferably seen as more stable. In this section the experience of uncertainty and the four ways that this can be recognized in their position repertoire (increasing amount of positions, heterogeneity of positions, 'visits' from unexpected positions and larger 'position leaps') will be analyzed through these processes (economic changes, migration, terrorism, media) related to globalization.

4.2.2 Economic Changes

As explained in the theoretical framework, economic changes have had a major impact on middle-income Americans, who make up a large part of the group that is being discussed in this thesis. Middle-income have fallen further behind financially in the past two decades, and the middle class has become smaller (PewResearch, 2015). Incomes have stagnated over the past 35 years, where the manufacturing employment has been hit the hardest. As

described in the previous chapters, Trump's support is strongest among Americans who have a lower income and those who do not have a college degree (Ross, 2015).

My research confirmed this conclusion. Sixteen of the interviewees did not receive any college education, and 21 people described to currently experience some or much financial stress. Nine people were directly or indirectly affected by the economic crisis. This means that either they or a family member (husband, children, parents) lost their job in processes where many people were fired. Other participants were affected by larger companies who took over or did well at the cost of smaller companies.

Many individuals expressed that their financial situation caused them much stress. All but one (a stay at home mother) of the eight people who had no or only part-time work said that they wanted to work more, but could not find anything. Similarly, over half of the people who did work fulltime, explained that they were dissatisfied in their jobs (mostly because of financial reasons), and many interviewees said that their family and friends were also struggling.

Allison said to perceive the world around her to be unsafe. She described how that is her reality for as long as she can remember and that she does not expect it to change. The 21 participants who reported some or much financial stress described feeling 'upset', 'stressed' and 'angry' about their financial situation, while often also explaining to be worried about their family's (especially their children's) future.

Apart from the direct stress that this brought participants, it also affected their position repertoire. Allison, for example, experienced conflicting positions because of her financial situation. Many of her statements showed how much she loved her country and that she was proud to be American. However, what that position of 'I-as-American' really entailed changed depending on the situation in which it was used. Her belief that comes from the position 'I-as-woman-with-a-poor-future' contrasts with her ideas of living in 'the best country in the world'. She had a difficult time trying to unite those ideas. She explained how the 'American dream' is, in her opinion, not real, or that it at least has never been an option to her.

In our conversation, it was visible how she shifted between positions, which made it difficult for her to answer questions in as much detail as she wanted. When asked about

what she loved about her country, she had a difficult time giving a detailed answer, for example. It seemed as if some of her comments came from fixed positions that she was afraid to see threatened, and would therefore sometimes perceive those questions as threats.

Dale (49, from Texas) his financial struggles also influenced his position repertoire, but in a different way. He spent much time explaining how important his family's farm was to him. It had always been a big source of pride for him that everyone in town knew of the farm. He was upset while explaining how he felt that the farm was taken away from him and his family once they could no longer compete with larger businesses. Apart from the direct changes in their financial situation this caused, this changed Dale's position repertoire, as he experienced larger position leaps.

The position 'I-as-farmer' had been very dominant. He lived close to the farm, worked there every day of the week, and life on a farm had been a part of his life since childhood. His position 'I-as-farmer' had been integrated in many other positions, such as 'I-as-wanting-to-work-with-my-family', 'I-as-being-part-of-a-well-known-farm', or 'I-as-raising-sons-as-farmers'.

When his family lost the farm, many of those positions changed and needed to be replaced by other positions. He now worked as an Uber driver, something that he was very unhappy about. He was still proud of his farming background, but he was conflicted about what he hoped for the future. On the one hand, he still wanted his sons to work as farmers. On the other hand, he now did not view the job as positively, as he was afraid of losing another farm.

The conflicting positions that this caused, and the 'position leap that Dale explained, caused Dale to feel as if part of himself (or his identity) was missing. Furthermore, he witnessed his family struggle as well, which he found very difficult. He explained how relations within his family changed in this process, as everyone in the family dealt with these changes differently, and how the event led him to view his parents differently.

Several others also commented how either their job or their financial situation caused them stress. Julie explained how after she had lost her job, and had to move into a smaller apartment, she could not provide for her family as much, and she worried about her children's future. In her comments, a struggle to deal with conflicting positions can be rec-

ognized as well. There are several 'I-positions' that can be recognized. There are positions of 'I-as-mother', 'I-as-grandmother', 'I-as-Christian', but also, for example, 'I-as-(grand)mother-who-wants-to-provide-for-her-(grand)children'.

She explained how much she enjoyed caring for her two sons and five grandchildren, saying that they are the most important part of her life. However, since she lost her job, she was often unable to do so. It became clear that her position of 'I-as-wanting-to-save-money' conflicted with her wishes to take care of her family, which upset her.

4.2.3 Migration

Twelve people blamed immigrants for their financial struggles, and sixteen of these people specifically mentioned Muslims. In total, seventeen participants referred to (illegal) immigrants as a source of anxiety. There were several reasons that people gave (and there was some overlap). Sixteen of these people specifically mentioned Muslims. Out of these sixteen people, eight people knew Muslims personally (three people said either to 'know Muslims well' or to have (or have had) 'Muslim friends').

The increase of positions in the repertoire, as well as conflicting positions this may cause is visible in how participants experience the influence of migration on their personal lives. Although some people argued that the United States is beautiful in its diversity, everyone described specific limits as to how they would prefer to see this diversity. Apart from those who linked migrants to their bad financial situation, many participants had difficulties with migrants (and other ethnic minorities) on other grounds. Interviewees explained how in their experience the country was changing too much and described feeling that it was confusing to share a country with so many people, and that is difficult to take so many perspectives into account.

Half of the interviewees argued it to be 'impossible' or 'unrealistic' to share a country with people from such a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds. These processes not only imply an increase and heterogeneity in positions, but also an increase and heterogeneity of audiences. This further affects the uncertainty that individuals experience.

Mike explained how it bothered him that people around him were too heavily influenced by other cultures and religions. His comments demonstrate how he struggled to find

balance between these different positions, and how these were influenced by a variety of audiences. He explained how people around him had become interested in other cultures and religions than he felt they should be a part of. Mike had lived in several states growing up and explained that now, in Oklahoma, he had found his home. This was very important to him, as he had been struggling to feel safe and comfortable somewhere.

Mike said that it bothered him how much American society is influenced by, in his opinion, 'other' cultures and religions. Mike argued that there are currently too many perspectives that need to be taken into account, which he felt was unfair to 'real Americans'. He described that even something that was, according to him, small, such as his son's birthday party, now cost him a lot of energy, as he felt there were too many differences between children and the different values their families share.

Similar to Mike, John described to feel overwhelmed by the amount of cultures and ideas he had come in contact with. Similar to Mike, John had also experienced a lot of changes as a teenager up until his late twenties. He said that it had been difficult to understand himself, and that he felt as if there were too many possibilities.

John described that he had focused on positions such as 'I-as-wanting-exciting-experiences' and 'I-as-wanting-to-be-independent' instead of 'I-as-Christian', 'I-as-wanting-to-have-a-family', or 'I-as-wanting-to-be-successful'. In his opinion, he made poor choices because of the overwhelming choice of options, and friends. He described how he had many friendships with people from different cultural backgrounds, about which he said: 'that simply does not work', and 'that's the wrong kind of distraction'.

The increase of positions in his repertoire also caused him to deal with sometimes conflicting positions. In my conversation with John, these positions seemed currently most dominant: 'I-as-Christian', 'I-as-father', and 'I-as-grandfather'. When he was younger, he had been a Democrat ('I-as-Democrat'), which he argued was because of how, in his opinion, Democrats take better care of 'those who need help' (referring to help those who are poor, those who have problems with substance abuse).

4.2.4 Media

The increase of positions and the conflicting positions that this may cause was also visible in the role that the media played in individuals' lives, also because these two can be intertwined (e.g., because of topics related to migration that the media covers).

Similar to the influence of migration, people experienced an increasing amount of positions in the repertoire as well as conflicting positions because of media. Moreover, people described that the world is in their experience becoming an increasingly unsafe place. Nineteen people said to be afraid of things that were happening in Europe (mostly referring to refugees and terrorist attacks), and argued that examples as the attack in San Bernardino prove that the United States has to deal with similar problems. All but one participants followed these events through media.

As mentioned, everyone except John made use of some form of social media. Although eighteen people said that social media mostly has a positive impact in their lives, seventeen people had experienced bullying, online arguments, and even threats. Even when the effects of social media were not as extreme, social media had an influence on everyone who used it.

John had lived in Maine, which he enjoyed because of the quietness of the state, and because he felt that the government was not as involved in issues as it is in some other states. This is when he realized the role that the media had played in his life, saying that 'it takes up everything if you don't pay attention', and when he decided to stop following the news (until the election).

During the seventies and eighties, his position of 'I-as-Christian' had moved to the background. However, it was still part of the repertoire, but he chose to give more attention to other positions. In this period of his life, he started to feel overwhelmed by the amount of choices he had. John described to have made decisions that could be categorized as 'un-christian' and 'sinful', in John's opinion. This started to frustrate him, and caused him to feel guilty. This conflict was, for example, between 'I-as-Christian' and 'I-as-wanting-exciting-experiences'.

He explained that he struggled to find security and stability, describing to have been 'confused by so, so many things'. John had had problems with alcohol and drug abuse, and said he had been 'tempted by too many things', for which he sometimes blamed the processes as discussed in the previous sub section (e.g., 'If things weren't so easy online...').

Because of this, he decided not to make use of media anymore. 21 people said not to really follow international news, and to focus on national (21 people) and local (nineteen people) news. Although seventeen people had experienced online bullying, there were still seventeen people who said to (also) use social media as a way to stay up to date of the news.

It must be noted that most of the participants' choice of media outlets (Fox News and Facebook groups) could be categorized as outlets that have had a tendency to sensationalize news (Hughey & Parks, 2014, p. 58). Moreover, because of Facebook's 'suggested posts', members are often presented with articles that are similar to ones that they have previously clicked on. This causes individuals to get more articles with similar views and topics. As there is much misinformation online, it could sometimes be complicated to judge correctly.

4.2.5 Terrorism

Another factor that had a direct impact on the participants' feeling secure as well as their position repertoire are the terrorist attacks that occurred over the past two decades, with the attacks on September 11, 2001 in particular. Many interviewees described how this had been the first time to experience such fear. Particularly people living in larger cities (five people at the time of the attacks) expressed to be very much affected by the attacks and experienced fear for long periods of time. These people described feeling 'mad', 'pissed off', 'scared' or 'upset', and explained that it had been a very confusing time for them.

Kerron lost his uncle, who he described to be a very important person in his life at the time. He described that this made him very mad, but moreover, he felt afraid. Kerron explained that although he was into politics, he never realized how much hate there was, and that this was the first time that he realized that his country was attacked in this way.

These feelings were shared by all participants in some way, although the four youngest people (20-22 years old) generally mainly discussed more recent terrorist attacks that happened in the United States (San Bernardino on December 2, 2015) or attacks in Europe (such as the ones in Paris on November 13, 2015).

Apart from the direct anxiety that individuals experienced because of terrorism, their position repertoire was affected. The main process that can be recognized was the experience of conflicting positions or the experience of receiving more 'visits' from unexpected positions. On the one hand, people described to have a position of 'I-as-not-racist', or 'I-as-welcoming-towards-all-people'. On the other hand, however, everyone described how after the attacks they became afraid or did not trust people who they perceived as being Muslim (e.g., 'I-as-afraid-of-one-specific-group-of-people').

All participants seemed self-conscious at times when talking about certain issues during the interview regarding being perceived as racist. People would make statements such as: 'It's racy I feel like', 'I'm not racist, but...', 'I'm sorry, but...', which shows how the participants were aware of other voices or audiences that they took into account. This could be me, the interviewer, but also those of real and possibly imagined others, of whom they think they might perceive their comments a certain way.

Participants such as Lauren, Kerron, and Dan, described how some of Trump's comments might sound extreme (which sounded as a 'disclaimer' for the audience), before returning to how Islam poses a threat to American society (e.g., 'Let's face it, those terrorists are Muslims', or 'I'd rather be safe than sorry'). Their comments demonstrate how they felt one specific way ('I-as-not-wanting-a-Mosque-near-my-house', that might conflict with other positions they have ('I-as-welcoming-strangers').

4.2.6 Conclusion

The examples that have been discussed in this section demonstrate how such processes related to globalization cause individuals to experience uncertainty. Apart from the direct anxiety that one experiences from, for example, losing a job, it becomes clear that individuals' identification process is influenced as well. The interviews suggested that individuals experienced an increase of positions in the repertoire, as well as conflicting positions. Moreover, unexpected 'visits' from positions were recognized, as well as 'position leaps'.

Interviewees expressed that such changes impacted the way that they view themselves (e.g., from 'I-as-a successful farmer' to 'I-as-part-time Uber driver'). At the same time, these changes also affected the relationships within one's family and friends, as well as how they viewed those people around them.

There are differences as to who has a higher chance of becoming affected by these processes, as the risk is often higher for those at the bottom of society. As described in the previous chapter, Trump supporters, including the people in this research, seem to have been affected by various of such processes, which have very much influenced their position repertoire. The stress they experienced because of such processes influenced their lives directly and affects their position repertoire. Moreover, interviewees explained how these changes made them feel as if their identity was being threatened, which will be discussed in the next section.

4.3 Focus on Participants' Perception of Muslims and Islam

Now that the ways in which participants described experiencing uncertainty more broadly have been analyzed, I am able to focus specifically on their perception of Muslims and Islam in Western society. I find it important to understand the context in which their perception of Muslims and Islam can be understood, which is why the previous section described the uncertainty they experience through processes related to globalization, before turning to their feelings about Muslims and Islam.

My data suggested that 25 Trump supporters who I interviewed viewed Islam very negatively. All interviewees saw 'Muslim extremism' as a very serious threat to American society. Although twelve people said not to have any problems with Muslims personally, everyone described that there need to be stricter rules for all Muslims coming into the United States.

There was, however, something else that I discovered in my research. Apart from the direct anxiety people experienced and the uncertainty individuals felt because of changes in their position repertoire, people felt that some positions were directly being threatened. This became visible when the interview focused on participants' feelings about Muslims and Islam.

Interviewees felt that particularly those positions that, as I have explained, individuals sometimes try to perceive as stable, are being threatened, which increased their experience of uncertainty. As argued in the theoretical framework, nationalism, religion, and sometimes political views are 'identity-signifiers' that are more likely than other identity constructions to provide a feeling of stability, as they are able to convey an idea of security, stability, and simple answers, which is exactly what many individuals are searching for (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 742).

When the conversation with the participants turned to the topic of this thesis, namely how Muslims and Islam are being perceived, interviewees described not only to experience Islam as a threat, but experienced anxiety that these threats are not taken seriously. Moreover, they feel 'mocked' and 'othered' by groups (e.g., 'Democrats', 'the government', 'media') in society who do not feel the same way. As mentioned earlier, this was visible in the way people seemed conscious of other 'audiences' that were implicitly present in their speech. Individuals demonstrated to be very aware of the way that they are being perceived by some groups in society.

Something that stood out in the interviews, and what has been demonstrated thus far, is how individuals feel that, in their opinion, 'real Americans' are neglected while Muslims are being protected, although this group, in their opinion, should be perceived as posing a threat to American society. As has been suggested by my data, participants of my study were not only afraid of Islam as a threat to the United States, but moreover felt that the current government is not taking enough action.

More specifically, everyone described in various ways that Democrats (and the government) are too 'politically correct', 'diplomatic' and 'trying not to offend anyone' when it comes to Muslims and Islam, while interviewees experienced to feel 'neglected', 'forgotten', 'put in the back of the bus'. In other words, they described, Muslims were being protected at the cost of 'Christians' or 'real Americans'.

As demonstrated in the empirical framework, religious and national identity were very important to the interviewees. In the theoretical framework I described how these two can often be seen as intertwined, and it indeed seemed that the interviewees referred to re-

ligious and nationalist ideals and values interchangeably. I explained how participants spoke about something ‘truly American’, while referring to something Christian (e.g., going to church on Sundays). Similarly, people would often refer to ‘Christian American traditions’.

Six people described that religion plays a smaller part in their life today than it did when they were growing up, but still described it to be part of their identity in various ways. Every one of the interviewees talked about their love for the United States (e.g., describing it as ‘the greatest country on earth’, ‘the best’, ‘most beautiful place to live’). Although various groups are discussed in explaining why interviewees feel the country is facing difficulties, mainly Muslim-extremists are discussed in describing who exactly the country is threatened by. People refer to ‘ISIS’, ‘Muslim-extremists’, ‘Taliban’ and ‘Al-Qaeda’, with some people making more general statements (e.g., Islam is against the United States).

People seemed to justify these statements mostly because of recent attacks by Muslim extremists. Dan (who was the only one of the participants to say he does not necessarily have a problem with Islam) explains, for example, how because of such attacks, it should only be reasonable to be cautious and to take drastic measures. He argued this to be important because, according to him, it is difficult to distinguish the ‘good ones’ from the ‘bad ones’. Interviewees felt that that measures needed to be taken, and therefore agreed with Trump’s idea to stop letting Muslims into the country.

Lauren, for example, explained that Trump’s idea to ban Muslims from entering the United States might seem as a drastic measure, but that such measures are necessary when Americans are being threatened. She explained that although it might not be nice for Muslims that they cannot be let into the United States, this is more than worth it if you even save one American’s life.

These feelings did not only describe how they felt personally, but these comments were generally placed in a context of ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’, where ‘Us’ generally refers to ‘Christians’ or, in their opinion, ‘real Americans’ and ‘Them’ refers to Muslims. Therefore, apart from perceiving their country to be threatened, interviewees reported to feel that specifically that threat, is getting more attention from the government.

22 people referred to themselves as ‘Christian’, or ‘real American’ directly in this context, and described how these are the people who built the United States. This is why all of these people explained that this group should have more of a say in some issues. In other words, some people were not necessarily upset to share their country with people from different backgrounds, but they did feel that those people’s wishes cannot be granted at the cost of ‘their own’ people’s wishes. This was suggested was by the amount of time people spent talking about how the government or other liberals and Democrats responded in times of crisis. For example, nine people mentioned how, in their opinion, president Obama spent more time, after the attacks on San Bernardino, ‘defending Muslims’, than he did to ‘protect Americans’.

According to Kerron, for example, Democrats are too busy trying to be politically correct, and trying not to offend anyone, that they are neglecting Christians. This goes back to the idea that many participants described that they felt as if they were ‘not allowed’ to speak their minds for the fear of being called ‘racist’, when these people felt they are doing the right thing for ‘calling the problem what it is’. He described how Republicans are the only people who are calling out the problems as they are. In his opinion, Democrats are not taking measures against threats that Kerron felt the United States is facing.

Similarly, John explained how he feels that only he and people with similar beliefs are seeing the issue clearly, and that everyone else is afraid to take measures because, in his opinion, everyone has become afraid to offend anyone. Their comments are in line with what several academics argue as well. According to professor Nichols, for example:

To understand Trump's seemingly effortless seizure of the public spotlight, forget about programs, and instead zero in on the one complaint that seems to unite all of the disparate angry factions gravitating to him: political correctness. This, more than anything, is how the left created Trump (Drum, 2016).

This line of argumentation is also what my research suggests. Apart from the worries people had about Islam, they felt threatened and not taken seriously because of these worries.

24 participants' comments described that they felt to be 'made fun of', specifically about the topic of Islam.

These feelings were, for example, described by Brooke, who said that she felt as if the government did not take Muslim extremism seriously, and that, instead, those who warn the country for the threat they perceive to be Islam are not taken seriously or judged. All interviewees described that apart from feeling that dominant positions in their repertoire are being threatened, they worried about feeling 'othered' and neglected themselves. More than supporters of any other candidate (both Republicans as well as Democrats), Trump supporters report to feel 'voiceless' in enormous numbers.

A study from RAND corporation demonstrated that out of all voters who agreed with the statement 'people like me don't have any say about what the government does', 86.5 percent was more likely to prefer Trump (Pollard & Mendelsohn, 2016). This is also what can be found in my research. All participants felt distanced from the government, and felt neglected, while in their opinion, Muslims were not. People reported to feel estranged from the government, saying that it does not take their feelings and fears into account. Many people argued that 'politicians' do not have good intentions, and only look out for themselves (and 'their people', who participants did not feel they were a part of).

Moreover, people reported to feel that they are directly and indirectly belittled by 'the media', 'the government', and 'liberals', and seventeen participants had also received criticism online. These experiences made participants feel as if they were not only 'voiceless' but not taken seriously, and judged. I argue that this is an important factor to take into consideration in explaining how Trump supporters may be 'othering' Muslims. This does not mean that only the Democratic party has been of influence. According to professor Nichols:

[Trump's popularity] is the result of a conglomeration of political, academic, media, and cultural elites who for decades have tried to act as the arbiters of acceptable public debate and shut down any political expression from Americans with whom they disagree (Nichols, 2016).

In other words, and in line with the data from my research, Trump supporters may disagree with how certain things in their country are currently being handled, but feel as if they are not 'allowed' to speak about these topics. Specifically their fears regarding Islam in the United States, were a topic that participants seemed very aware of to not discuss in too much detail.

As explained, people were implicitly aware of an audience with different views from their own, and often provided 'disclaimers' (e.g., 'I'm not racist, but...'). Many others explicitly mentioned these issues (e.g., 'We can't say what we want, but Muslims can and will be protected'). As has been suggested in the previous chapters, Trump supporters fall in several categories because of which they are often more likely to be exposed to the uncertainty that individuals may experience in a globalized world. Because of this, as my research suggests as well, individuals have experienced anxiety. The participants reported to not feel taken seriously, or even mocked, which, I argue, increases these feelings of uncertainty, which affects the strategies as to how individuals may respond to their situation.

I argue that the group of 'Trump supporters' has come to be seen as a backward cultural 'other' whose exclusion enables and secures a hegemonic 'modern' point of view. According to Susan Harding, this is problematic, as this places them in the same conceptual and political space as other minorities (e.g., women, gays, ethnic and racial minorities) (Harding, 1991, p. 392). This provokes a chain of differentiating rhetorical moves in 'me' and 'my audiences', through which it seems that Trump supporters are 'less oppressed' than other 'others'. In other words, many participants blame, for example, Democrats for being 'politically correct' when it comes to Muslims, but feel that Democrats are not 'politically correct' when it comes to Trump supporters.

I argue that, although Christianity, nationalism, and political beliefs are not an invention of modern discourse, extremism and fundamentalism are a part of modernity specifically. Trump supporters feel 'othered' by a liberal elite that, in their opinion, currently has a dominant voice. In their opinion, this group also consists out of the people, who, as my research suggests, are protecting Muslims at the cost of Christians or 'true Americans'. This process also influences how people may respond to the increased uncertainty they experience, as I will discuss in the next section.

4.4 Strategies to deal with Uncertainty

4.4.1 Introduction

The previous two sections described the uncertainty that individuals experience because of globalization, where specific attention was paid to their feelings about Muslims and Islam. I described how participants of my study experienced uncertainty directly because of economic changes, migration, terrorism and the role of the media, how this affects their position repertoire, and I explained that participants of viewed Muslim extremism as a very serious threat to American society.

Furthermore, my research suggests that individuals' experience of anxiety increases because of their feelings to be 'othered' and 'mocked' when it comes to their fears about Islam in Western society. Interviewees described that apart from feeling that the government is not responding adequately to this threat of Muslim extremism, they said that in their experience 'Democrats' protect Muslims at the cost of 'Christians' or 'real Americans'.

Trump supporters' feeling to be 'othered' when it comes to their worries about Islam in Western society, I argue, increases the likelihood to respond by retreating from society, letting one or a few positions become dominant, or by sharpening the boundaries between oneself and the other, which will be discussed in the next sections. These strategies can be used by one and the same individual in their life, and these strategies can also influence each other.

4.4.2 Retreating from Society

As described in the previous chapter, many of the people who I spoke to for my research had left the city for suburbs and the countryside. Everyone who had left the city (nine people) said that living in a city had been a negative experience, describing it as, for example, 'stressful', 'too chaotic', 'not my thing'. Several other people had tried to diminish the influence of media and migration on their position repertoire by not spending as much time on (social) media. John was the only person to have completely retreated, but many people pondered similar ideas.

This is closely related to the two other ways I argue people respond to dealing with this uncertainty in relation to how they feel about Muslims and Islam. It is part of a process that can be distinguished in many of the interviewees that is related to 'glocalization'. Many participants, either currently or in previous stages in their lives had retreated from society as they felt overwhelmed. Many of these interviewees said to feel a need for a more 'simple life', or to be closer to 'likeminded people' (as opposed to 'Others').

For example, in the theoretical framework I argued how studies have shown that the more acquainted a person is with Muslims, the more favorably they tend to view Islam and Muslims (Telhami, 2015). As many people of the interviewees had tried to avoid (directly or indirectly) to come in contact with Muslims, this could suggest influence on their opinion of Muslims.

Seventeen people said to know Muslims personally, of whom six people said to either 'know some Muslims well' or to have (or have had) Muslim friends. Out of those six people, one person lived on the countryside, and all others lived in the city (three) or suburbs (two). All of the people who said to not have a problem with Muslims personally (twelve) did indeed know Muslims personally, which is in line with what studies suggested.

The chances of generalizing Muslims are higher when an individual does not know any Muslims personally. As explained in chapter two, 82 percent of Republicans has a negative view towards Islam, which changes to 49 percent when they know 'some Muslims but not too well' and to 42 percent when they know some Muslims well (Telhami, 2015). This is therefore an important factor to take into account in explaining as to how individuals may come to 'other' Muslims specifically.

4.4.3 Dominating Positions

Everyone expressed how, in their experience, their most dominant positions (religious, political, and national positions) were being attacked. Because of this, many people responded by giving more attention to these positions. When asked about her experience of feeling attacked as 'being American' or 'being Christian', Lauren explained how this hurt her, as she said to not understand why people would have anything bad to say about just wanting

to protect Christians or 'real Americans'. When asked if this influenced her belief in God or her country she replied that it did not, explaining that if anything, it makes her love the United States 'even more' and that she has even more faith that 'God will protect this country'.

This is something that can be recognized in almost all (24) of the participants. Although not everyone had religious beliefs, everyone (including the Jewish interviewee) expressed that Christianity is an important part of the United States, and everyone felt very strongly about their country. In arguing why measures need to be taken against Muslims, people explained how the United States needs to be protected. Especially in looking at the attacks on September 11, 2001, people seemed to fall back on certain beliefs about their country and religion that seemed comforting.

As explained, religious and nationalist beliefs can become important 'identity-signifiers' that can become dominant. This is because they are able to convey a picture of security, stability, and simple answers, when individuals are searching exactly for that (Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security*, 2004, p. 742). By being portrayed as resting on solid ground, or as being true, they create a sense that the world really is what it appears to be. Individuals may provide the self with a stabilized religious position, which is based on a belief in a sacred past, a social hierarchy of men over women, adults over children, and God over all.

This is demonstrated, for example, in the conversation with John, who described that exact hierarchy. John had a very chaotic and stressful life until he started 'giving Christ the attention he needs'. The previous chapter described how he had a hard time with drug and alcohol abuse and that he made many choices that he now describes as 'sinful'. In the previous section I have described how he had been overwhelmed by positions in his repertoire, and that in his experience he did not handle this well.

However, when he was, according to himself, at his lowest point, he explained how his only option 'out' was to believe in God. After this period in his life, he started praying again, and his position of 'I-as-Christian' became the most dominant position in his repertoire. He explained how only since then, he has felt a sense of stability and purpose in his

life, something he described had always been missing. He also did not feel as overwhelmed anymore as, according to him, 'God does not want you to get too distracted'.

Apart from John, in the conversations with Sandra and Ray their Christian beliefs also played a particularly dominant role in their position repertoire. Kerron's religious beliefs used to be a very big part of his life, but they had somewhat moved to the background, although he still very much wanted to 'fight' causes that threaten Christians. For these people, their religious beliefs were not just very present in the repertoire, but dominant up to the point that many of their other ideas and feelings were related to or viewed from this position. In other words, dialogical relations cannot develop, and instead there seems to be monological dominance.

These people in particular, often referred back to chosen traumas, and their opposite, chosen glories, although they were not the only ones to do so. Six people explained the importance of respecting the Founding Fathers, who were often described as 'our heroes', and eleven people referred to American heroes in general. Many people told stories of battles that were fought during, for example, the Civil War, as well as conflicts in earlier times, where people seemed to want to demonstrate how heroic these people were to the country.

Eight people also referred to Christian beliefs to support their arguments, saying that many figures have faced more difficult challenges and that this country, 'united as Christians' will overcome. These chosen traumas can provide comforting stories in times of increased ontological insecurity and existential anxiety, as they can provide a feeling of home, stability, and continuity. Chosen glories may also provide comfort, and can also boost a group's self-esteem. Both chosen glories and chosen traumas can be reinterpreted and reused by later generations in new situations. Such stories demonstrated the hardship that they had faced, which people could relate to. Some of these ideas were also used as a framework in which future conflicts were placed, arguing that sometimes 'clashes' are necessary for a greater good.

Apart from how this process may comfort individuals by providing purpose and organization, an important factor in this process is how people seemed to find strength in knowing that they belong to a large group with similar beliefs. As discussed, many indi-

viduals reported to feel 'othered' or 'neglected' by 'Democrats' or 'the government'. As suggested by other data as well as my own, Trump supporters are more likely to feel 'voiceless', which also creates feeling uncertain in the world.

Therefore, in this sense, individuals seemed to find strength in knowing that they do belong to a group that agrees with them. Apart from their religious and national positions, their political position specifically played an important part in this process as well. The Trump supporters who I have interviewed were very much aware of the way that Trump is being portrayed in the media, and that many people disagree with his ideas. However, this only caused them to feel more support for the candidate. In particular, now that they are increasingly more aware of knowing they are not alone feeling this way, since Trump has won the Republican nomination.

This provided them with a sense of security, as individuals may increasingly feel that their opinion is valid, and that they have a say of what is going on in the world around them. Audiences were present in individuals' speech when talking about Muslims, and they were cautious not to offend anyone when discussing the topic. Everyone described to be aware of this (e.g., 'People might find that racist, but...') in various ways, which caused participants stress. Many people described to be 'annoyed' or 'stressed out' because, in their opinion, they need to take too many opinions into account, as described in the previous chapters.

4.4.4 Othering of Muslims

In his 'selfing' as Christian, John felt a sense of purpose and stability in his life. It also made him feel more certain and secure of who he is, which he did in comparison to others. As explained in the theoretical framework. He was very clear about his feelings that Muslims will not go to heaven, as they are not Christians. He received comfort out of the idea that he, as a Christian, will go to heaven.

Only John, Sandra, and Ray were this outspoken about such ideas, but thirteen people described in various statements to feel 'better' than Muslims. People justified these ideas by saying that the people they defended ('Christians', 'whites', 'Republicans') were the people who built this country. According to 24 people, this is why these groups are more important than people who arrived later. In this process, people were able to general-

ize these 'newer groups' and were able to make general statements about 'Christians', 'real Americans', and 'Muslims'.

In this process, and by placing one's own group above the other group, individuals can construct an identity that augments positive positions and diminishes, in their opinion, negative positions. This increases self-esteem and pride. In some ways, this can merge with the previously discussed way to deal with uncertainty, as 'selfing' and 'othering' in a general sense imply each other. Furthermore, people who retreat and try to not come in contact with as many people, there is a smaller chance of them knowing Muslims personally. As explained, studies have shown that this affects the way that individuals perceive Islam and Muslims.

In the theoretical framework I have explained how within this process one can recognize how 'Self' and 'Other' are both seen as essentialized bodies, which means that both 'Self' and 'Other' are reduced to a number of cultural characteristics. Although these are fabricated, they can come to be seen as natural and unified features for describing a group. This became clear, for example in Allison's statements about how the United States is the best country in the world, and how she did not want to view this differently, although she struggled financially and felt that there was not much help for her. Similarly, Enyo (53, from Oklahoma) described how 'Americans love God', which demonstrates how he generalizes this group of people.

Similarly, as many people were not very acquainted with Islamic views or Muslims, this group was often generalized too. People justified how Muslims pose a threat to the United States by referring to terrorist attacks by Muslim extremists, with, for example, Dan arguing: 'Let's face it, those terrorists are Muslims'. Moreover, it became clear how, as explained in the second chapter, it is possible to generalize or 'other' strangers, as strangers might be experienced to cause more uncertainty than enemies.

This was suggested by John's comments as discussed in the previous chapter. He did not know any Muslims personally, and acknowledged several times that he 'may not have the facts straight'. His problem with Muslims in the United States was that he did not understand who they are, or what they want, concluding his comment with: 'They're just not like us'. In chapter two I explained how Kristeva argues that individuals might experi-

ence more certainty by 'othering' and generalizing a group, as this might provide more of a feeling of certainty than strangers do.

As explained in the second chapter, Muslims specifically have become an 'enemy-other' that is blamed for many problems in the country. In pointing to Muslims for problems individuals feel the country is facing, the 'Self' is being cleared from any negativity. As mentioned, all interviewees described how 'Christians' or 'real Americans' need to be protected from 'such dangers' (referring to Muslim-extremists). Although some people did include Muslims (who are not extremists) as needing to be protected from extremists, most people described Islam as being inherently 'dangerous' or 'violent'.

Sandra was absolutely convinced that the reason that the country is not doing well is not only because of the threat she feels the country is experiencing by Muslims, but because according to her Obama is 'a Muslim' and the 'antichrist'. Four other people believed that Obama is not a Christian, and seventeen people described that he did not stand up for 'real Americans' and 'Christian values'.

The group I mentioned in the previous chapter, 'Donald Trump Forever 2016', also describes how the 'othering' of some groups and people, can help feel individuals stronger as a group, which demonstrates how 'othering' implies 'selfing'. And as explained in the second chapter, imagination plays a role in this process.

23 people, of whom nine did not know any Muslims personally, were convinced that parts of Islam are 'against Christians' or 'against Americans'. According to them, it is therefore understandable that Americans need to be protected. Everyone justified Donald Trump's idea to ban Muslims from entering the country. People experienced Muslim-extremists as a very big threats to the United States for which accurate measures need to be taken. In their opinion, the current government is not doing so. More specifically, interviewees feel as if the government is protecting Muslims by being politically correct, at the cost of Christian Americans.

In other words, as the interviewees did not feel taken seriously, or even 'othered' the more likely it seemed they were to 'other' Muslims. Out of those who had experienced online arguments, bullying, and even threats, all (seventeen) people said that it did not impact their support for Donald Trump negatively, but that instead, they were more con-

firmed about their beliefs. Similarly, people reported frustration about how the media portrayed Trump.

When asked if this made them doubt their support for Donald Trump, no one said that it had made them doubt their support, but again, had instead made people more certain of their beliefs. As Lauren said, for example, that some of his comments may seem extreme, but, according to her, the problems that the country is facing are similarly extreme, and it is therefore more important to speak out about those topics, even if it may not make some people happy.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have aimed to analyze the empirical framework in light of the theoretical framework. It was guided by the following sub question: *How can the findings in the empirical framework be understood with help of the theoretical framework, and how does it possibly challenge theory or require additional information?* I answered this question by analyzing how processes related to globalization affect individuals' feeling of security directly (e.g., through direct fear that comes with job loss or terrorist threats), and how it affects individuals' position repertoire. I then focused specifically on participants' perception of Muslims and Islam, before explaining how the strategies they use to diminish uncertainty explain their support for the 'othering' of Muslims by Donald Trump.

I argued that through processes related to globalization (such as economic changes, migration, terrorism, and media) the position repertoire is affected. One can experience an increase of positions and conflicting positions, as well as receiving unexpected 'visits' from positions or experiencing 'position leaps'.

Furthermore, when I focused on participants' experience of Islam specifically, I described how individuals felt that some of their most dominant positions are being threatened. While they are already experiencing uncertainty, interviewees describe that one of their biggest causes of anxiety, which is described as Muslim extremism, is not being taken seriously. Moreover, participants describe, Muslims are being protected at the cost of Christian Americans. Interviewees are aware of how they are being seen, and this judgement is present in their speech, which further causes participants to experience uncertainty.

Individuals respond to this in various ways (that can overlap) that explain their support for Donald Trump's comments on Islam and Muslims in the United States. Some individuals retreat and try to diminish the positions in their repertoire. Some people gave the lead to one or more positions in the repertoire, and had 'I-as-Christian' as a very dominant position, whereas many others fell back onto traditional 'American' ideas. This caused people to feel stronger, and the organization and purpose of these beliefs provided certainty, also as chosen glories and chosen traumas helped individuals frame situations, which provided them strength. Participants experienced a sense of strength and unity, knowing that their fears are shared with other people.

Individuals also sharpened the boundaries between 'Self' and 'Other', and 'othered' Muslims. Because of terrorist attacks, and not knowing many Muslims personally, it might be understandable that individuals may draw certain conclusions. However, before these conclusions are properly drawn, they feel that certain groups of people (e.g., 'Democrats', 'liberals') already stop them from speaking out about some difficulties. This frustrated all of the participants and subsequently makes them more certain of their beliefs.

Now that I have interpreted the data from the third chapter in light of the theoretical framework, and have further explained the conclusions drawn from the third chapter with other theory, I am able to draw conclusions. In the next chapter I will therefore take stock and provide an overview from what has been learned in this research, and how this is accounted for by other studies and theory.

5 Conclusion

This thesis described how the support for Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims can be explained, by looking at the role of uncertainty in the identification process and individuals' strategies to diminish the experience of uncertainty. The thesis was guided by the following research question: *How can motives to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims be explained and how do Trump supporters feel about Islam?*

I aimed to answer this question by first providing a background of the perception of Muslims and Islam in Western society, where I considered differences between Europe and the United States over the previous decades, before illustrating the context of the current attitudes towards Muslims and Islam in the United States. I subsequently presented the theoretical framework of this thesis where I focused on elaborated on the concept of identity and the experience of uncertainty. The third chapter provided the empirical framework, where I demonstrated the data found in the research I conducted over the two months I spent in the United States. The fourth chapter aimed to account for the information in both the second and the third chapter, where this information was analyzed.

In this thesis I have argued that the support for Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims can be explained as a response to dealing with uncertainty experienced in a globalized world. I have described how individuals increasingly experience uncertainty directly, and how this affects their position repertoire. Moreover, my research suggests that participants feel that the uncertainty they experience, particularly in regard to their concerns about Muslims and Islam, is not taken seriously through which they feel to be 'othered'. All of these factors that contribute to their experience of uncertainty, I argue, cause them to use strategies to diminish uncertainty, which influences their support for the 'othering' of Muslims.

The first chapter of this thesis explored the concept of 'identity' as an anxiety-controlling mechanism that provides individuals with a sense of stability in the world. With Hermans and Hermans-Konopka I have described the 'Self' as consisting out of several positions that can be voiced and can 'speak' depending on the situation.

Processes related to globalization affect the identification process. I argue that specifically economic changes, migration, terrorism and the media have had an effect on the position repertoire, and can cause individuals to experience uncertainty. I have taken a 'thick signifier' approach, which entails that I have analyzed uncertainty more broadly, before I turned to individuals' feelings about Islam and Muslims more specifically.

Because of globalization, the repertoire can become more populated by internal and external positions, and the repertoire becomes more heterogeneous because of which one can experience conflicting positions. Furthermore, because of the unpredictability of global changes, the repertoire can receive more 'visits' by unexpected positions. Through processes related to globalization, there is also an increasing range of possible positions, because of which there are larger 'position leaps' one has to deal with.

Although uncertainty can open a broad range of possibilities, it can also lead to confusion and anxiety. Because of this, individuals may respond with three strategies that I argue influence the support for the 'othering' of Muslims. These strategies to diminish the experience of anxiety are to retreat from society, to give the lead to particular positions or to sharpen the boundaries between oneself and the other.

I further analyzed how Muslims in particular seem to have become an 'Other' in Western society. I argued that a series of events over the past thirty years seems to have provided lasting images of militant versions of Islam. These events were exploited by political and media outlets, which helps account for how Trump supporters' perception of Islam may be constituted, and how Muslims specifically have become an 'Other' in Western society. I described these processes while providing theoretical context of Muslims as the 'Other' and the meaning of 'othering', through scholars as Said and Kristeva.

This allowed me to present the research that I conducted over two months in the United States with 26 participants confirmed these ideas. The research suggested that individuals were affected by processes related to globalization and that they experienced changes in their position repertoire, because of which they experienced uncertainty. My research also demonstrated the anxiety individuals felt because of 'Muslim extremism' and 'radical Islam'.

Furthermore, I found that individuals describe to feel that the uncertainty they experience, and their concerns about Muslims and Islam in particular, are not taken seriously. Participants described to feel neglected and that, in their experience, Muslims are being protected at the cost of Christians. Moreover, individuals described how they feel 'othered' by groups that, in their experience, support Muslims (e.g., 'Democrats', 'the government', 'the media').

I argued that this increasingly caused individuals to experience uncertainty, as they do not only feel anxious because of the factors as discussed, but they feel that specifically the positions in their repertoire that people prefer to see as more stable are being threatened. In the theoretical as well as the empirical framework I have demonstrated how specifically national and religious positions are suited to become 'identity-signifiers' as they are able to convey a picture of security, stability, and simple answers, which was based on Kinnvall's argument.

Specifically those positions, I argue, are experienced to be under threat. Because of various factors related to globalization (i.e., not solely factors related to Islam and Muslims), all of the participants reported to experience uncertainty. This, I argue, is important to understand in analyzing interviewees' feelings about Muslims and Islam, as this further influences their experience of uncertainty as well as their feeling to be 'othered' by people who do not experience the same uncertainty.

Because of the uncertainty that individuals experience, individuals may respond in various ways. I have argued that specifically three out of the five strategies that Hermans and Hermans-Konopka present help explain as to how someone comes to support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims. These strategies may follow each other up in one's lifetime, or influence each other.

The first way that individuals may respond to uncertainty that accounts for their support of Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims is by retreating from society. As discussed, individuals may retreat from society to decrease the positions in their repertoire and to find a quieter way of living. In this strategy, some positions may be pushing to become dominant, but have not (yet) taken over the repertoire. Studies, including my own, have suggested that Trump supporters are more likely to live in places where there are

fewer people from first or second generation migrant backgrounds, and with fewer people per square mile. Many people who I interviewed had left the city for suburbs and the country side. Everyone who had left the city (nine people) said that living in a city had been a negative experience, with several people directly referring to the influence of migration or terrorism.

Moreover, studies have shown that individuals are more likely to oppose Muslims and Islam when they do not know any Muslims personally. Leaving places where the chances of meeting Muslims are smaller, can therefore further influence people's ideas about Muslims. Similarly, this process implies coming in contact with likeminded people, with many participants saying that people in cities are too liberal (both people who live in cities as those who do not).

Another way to deal with the uncertainty that one experiences can be to give the lead to one or a few positions. In this strategy, an individual may let one or a few positions become dominant. In some ways, all individuals have only a few positions that take the lead, but in these cases it means that dialogical exchanges among positions can no longer develop. I have argued that specifically religious and national positions can be 'identity-signifiers' that become dominant, as they provide stability and safety.

Individuals feel that particularly those positions they prefer to see as more stable, are, in their opinion, being threatened. Because of this, and because of the uncertainty they experienced, many people responded by giving even more attention to these positions. Although not every one of the participants had religious beliefs, everyone (including the Jewish interviewee) expressed that Christianity is an important element of the United States, and everyone felt very strongly about 'being American'.

As explained, these 'identity-signifiers' can be intertwined, as there are sometimes no clear boundaries between religion and nationalism. Although Donald Trump originally did not present himself as being very religious, he has increasingly put more focus on his Christian and American values. Both religion and nationalism can be portrayed as resting on solid ground, or as being true, which is why they may create a sense that the world is really what it appears to be. This was visible in many of the participants' statements that have been discussed in the third and fourth chapter. Several people also referred to chosen

traumas and chosen glories to interpret new situations, in particular when looking at the attacks on September 11, 2001.

Apart from how this process may comfort individuals by providing purpose and organization, people also find strength in knowing that they are part of a large group with similar beliefs. All interviewees described how they feel 'othered' or 'neglected' by several groups. As suggested by other data as well as my own, Trump supporters are more likely to feel 'voiceless', which increases their experience of uncertainty. Therefore, individuals seemed to find strength in knowing that they belong to a group with similar ideas.

The final strategy to deal with uncertainty that accounts for their support for the 'othering' of Muslims and Islam is to sharpen the boundaries between 'Self' and 'Other'. In this process, and by placing one's group above the other group, individuals can construct an identity that augments positive positions and diminishes, in their opinion, negative positions, which increases self-esteem and pride. In the theoretical framework I described how within this process, 'Self' and 'Other' are both seen as essentialized bodies, which means that both 'Self' and 'Other' are reduced to a number of cultural characteristics that come to be seen as natural and unified features for describing a group.

As many people were not very acquainted with Islamic views or Muslims, it was easy to generalize this group. Moreover, as my research suggests, apart from sharpening the boundaries with Islam and Muslims because of a certain perception that individuals had of Islam and Muslims, individuals felt upset that, in their opinion, Muslims are being protected at the cost of Christians. This further allowed participants to sharpen the boundaries between 'Self' and 'Other', as, in their opinion, this process had already been started by the 'Other' or groups that support the 'Other'.

Everyone reported that Muslim extremists are one of the biggest threats to the United States. The series of events from militant versions of Islam, as discussed earlier, and the way the media covers these topics, seems to have allowed individuals to generalize Islam and Muslims. As explained, this has become easier since many people do not come into contact with Muslims.

This thesis suggests that these three strategies that individuals use to cope with the uncertainties that individuals experience account for their support for the 'othering' of

Muslims by Donald Trump. Individuals experience uncertainty through globalization directly, in their position repertoire, and they feel that these struggles are not being taken seriously. This causes people to increasingly feel as if their identity is being threatened. More particularly, individuals experience that specifically the positions they prefer to see more stable are under attack. Religious and national positions, that are integrated, for example, in their political support for Donald Trump feel to be threatened. People may respond to this uncertainty with the three strategies as I have discussed, that, I argue, help account for the way that individuals may support Donald Trump's 'othering' of Muslims.

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8 Appendices

8.1 Interview Dan

Interview with Dan (D), 20, from North Dakota, conducted by Tessa (T) on February 22, 2016 on Facebook Video

T: So, would it be okay if we start by talking a little bit about your background, you know, to get an idea who I am talking to?

D: Sure. I go to Minot State University in North Dakota. I'll also send it as a message so you have a written record I guess, and you know what it's spelled like (types). Oops I misspelled university

T: Oh that's okay

D: But I spelled the rest right. I'm a sophomore here, I'm twenty years old. I just turned twenty in November. So, I'm originally from Chicago but like, well. There's a thing that's actually funny about me. My dad works for the state department so I have been moving every two years of my life until now. Before here, I was in like you know where Oman in the Middle East is?

T: Yeah, I've actually been there, next to the UAE right?

D: You have?! You're kidding, that's really awesome!

T: So you were saying you lived there?

D: Yeah I used to live there for two years and before that I was in Brazil for two years. And before that I was moving around in the US. Like from place to place. And I'm a pretty big fan of American football: 'Go Bears'! I'm a part time worker at Kohl's, as a store associate, not much. And I guess I should tell you a little bit about Trump.

T: Sure but we will get to that later, if it's okay with you we'll talk about some other things first.

D: Well I'm not sure what else to tell you, I live a pretty boring life (laughs).

T: Oh I wouldn't say that, we'll see then I guess (laughs). Could you maybe tell me a little bit more about growing up?

D: I have two younger sisters, one who is eighteen, and she's in her first year of college and she's actually, I don't know if you know where [McGingo] College is in Maryland?

T: No I don't think so.

D: She's actually not in Maryland but she's in, like, a satellite campus in Budapest. Yeah I think that's a little interesting. She's actually overseas right now, she's not too far from where you're from. And I have another sister who is sixteen. So my dad is actually in Jordan now, so she's going to the American school there in Jordan. So I am the only one in my immediate family who is in the US right now.

T: That's interesting. I'll ask you a little bit more about that later, if that's okay.

D: Sure!

T: Okay, so I was wondering, do you have a religious background? Like, are you religious, or is your family religious?

D: I'm not super religious, but I'm a Christian. I go to church maybe a few times a year, I'm definitely not atheist. I have family members who are very religious. Like I have an aunt and uncle who are very religious down in North Carolina, I visit them and we go to church all the time. I have an aunt in New York who's Catholic. My dad, he's not really religious, but he did grow up in a religious household. My mom actually died about six almost seven years ago.

T: Oh I'm sorry to hear.

D: Yeah, she was pretty religious. She used to take us to Sunday school. She didn't push it down our throats, but just kind of let us see what church was all about so that when a friend or cousin said: Oh in Sunday school we learned about blah blah blah that we know what they're talking about so she just wanted to give us a little bit of [that] just to see what it's like. Also just because it's part of everyone's life here, so it's just automatically part of growing up I guess.

T: Was that part of a certain church or..?

D: It was a Methodist church, but because we moved a lot, I did go to different churches. I got baptized in a Methodist church as well when I was very little.

T: So in which ways would you say religion plays a part in your life today?

D: Well like I said it's not the most important thing, but I do care about it you know. Of course it's how I was brought up and it is just a part of who I am, which I think is a good thing. And I really do like going to church, it's just that the past years with my mom gone

it has become a smaller part of my life. Simply because my dad cared less about it, but I do pray and think about it, I think it's important.

T: So you grew up in Chicago, and then moved around a lot, how do you remember that?

D: Like I didn't always like it that we were moving, but I know we had to because I mean my mom didn't work so we always depended on my dad. I mean sometimes it was cool, because we saw some nice places and so I appreciate that I guess. But it was also really chaotic to live everywhere and make friends again. And like, I'm a bit shy so that's not always the best you know? So yeah. And I didn't love some of the places we went to, like everyone has their own things going on and then maybe you don't want to deal with new kids. So that was kind of rough sometimes. I didn't always love that, and of course my dad works a lot so that wasn't the best, but I mean I guess most people would be happy to see the world and it was good that my dad at least worked and that all that was going okay, you know? He's always worked a lot and I guess I never had to worry as much about money as other people, but still. It's not always easy and it's not as if I can just go visit them all the time now, like it's not that easy. And especially now that I'm back in the U.S., sometimes it just doesn't feel like I really belong, I don't know if that makes sense.

T: Like as American, or what do you mean?

D: Yeah. I mean, I am definitely American, but I wouldn't really be able to tell you where I am really from if that makes sense. It's okay though because I know I'm American, although sometimes I feel some people maybe think that I'm not real American because we moved around so much. But I know for myself that I'm a real American so I just focus on that you know?

T: Yeah I understand. And how do you like it at your school now?

D: Yeah I mean I do like it, but it's annoying too. Like my program is pretty interesting I guess, and there are some people I kind of get along with, but I mostly keep to myself if I'm being honest with you. And like I don't really have my family around right?

T: Yeah that must be difficult sometimes. Do you miss them a lot?

D: yeah, like I see them every six months or so, and I see them every Christmas and at least for a month or so over the summer. There are times when I do miss them but I know that it's only a couple of months until I do see them again. And so it's not like I'm sitting in bed thinking: oh God I wish they were here, but I do miss them a little but I know I get to see them in the next few months so it's not too bad.

T: I get that, it can be difficult sometimes, I lived abroad too for a while and I would Skype and FaceTime with my family and friends all the time.

D: Yeah. I wish I could do that more but it's kind of difficult to, like, call my dad when he is overseas, so it's easier for him to call me because it's easier to call an American number than, like, a Jordanian number. And I talk to him a lot through Whatsapp? (looks at me if I know what he means as it is not as popular in the U.S.)

T: Yeah.

D: So yeah I use that a lot.

T: Yeah, I understand that, well then that's good to stay in touch. When is the next time you're going to visit your dad and your sister?

D: I'm going late May, early June, when summer holiday starts. So that'd be good. It'll be super-hot there though, I hate the weather there. In North Dakota we don't really get those temperatures, you know? But it'd be really good to see my dad. We'll probably talk about the elections too.

T: Yeah?

D: Well you know, my dad, he's not really a Trump supporter, he's more of a Democrat, but he hasn't really said who he'll be voting for. He saw my Trump sticker, he wasn't too happy.

T: That's interesting that you feel different from what your dad says and that you found your own reasons to support Trump.

D: Thanks, and to be honest with you, it was like when I was growing up I kind of followed my parents and kind of their democratic ideas. Like for example in 2004, I remember watching a Bush rally with my mom, and then she was just kind of like booing at the TV and I was kind of going along with her. And then in 2008 I was kind of going for Obama. In 2004 I was eight turning nine, in 2008 I was twelve turning thirteen, so not really understanding politics as maybe now. And then 2012 I was sixteen turning seventeen, still just a little too young to vote but by then I already had more of a republican point of view. After the first four years of Obama, or actually I don't think the first four years were as bad as the last three and a half years so far. But yeah, so if you would have asked me five years ago I would have said I kind of support democratic views, but then I kind of figured out myself what I want for myself, or what works for me and that fit more with the republican ideas.

T: Okay, so do you think something happened that changed your mind?

D: I think it's just kind of developing over time. Like a little over a year ago, not this past November but the year before, so like 2014, I remember that Obama went out and gave

amnesty to like I think it was like 5 million illegal immigrants. I saw that and I just thought 'wow' and I just lost faith in anything Democratic.

T: So that was like a big turning point, you think?

D: Pretty much, and by that point I was already pretty against Obama but that was just like the final smack on the nail I guess.

T: What about it specifically bothered you so much?

D: I'm just not a big fan of illegal immigration. I'm all for legal immigrants. Like you seem like a nice person, like I would love to have you live around here. But just someone from Mexico, like comes up here illegally, demands welfare, demands free hand-outs, doesn't want to work, demands that we all learn Spanish for them. That just pisses me off. So then when Donald Trump says that he wants to end those problems that just hit me like: bam I want this guy as my president. Like, I guess in Europe it's kind of like with you guys with all the middle-eastern and Africans who keep coming up right? (pauses and looks at me)

T: Mhmhm

D: Well so for those reasons. Like that's just not fair you know, like all that shouldn't be part of my life or my problems. We have enough going on here without all of them (laughs).

T: What kind of problems are you talking about exactly?

D: Like so many Americans have a lot of problems. Like financial struggles, there are really poor people in America, you know? Not just in third world countries, like we have some real things going on and it's really bad. But at the same time no one is really doing anything about it because we can't seem to agree on anything because the country's so big. I mean, on the one hand, that's the beauty of it, and I know that, but sometimes it just doesn't seem like it's working you know? Too many ethnicities, too many cultures, or too many states even. And then with all the threats we're facing at the moment, and our government that's just not doing something about it.

T: What do you mean?

D: Well you know terrorists and like the same problems that you all have in Europe.

T: Okay. And seeing that you have lived in a Muslim country, how do you feel about Islam or Muslims in the United States?

D: Well because I lived in a Muslim country, I might have some different ideas about that than someone who, let's say, lived in Kansas his whole life. I mean I feel it's a little extreme but I think it's a good call. I mean like. Let's face it those terrorists are Muslim and you can't really tell the good ones from the bad ones. Like I used to have people in my school who had very, like, common Al-Qaeda names like that you know. I knew this one guy named Osama. I mean he was a nice guy, but you know. Or a lot of people had 'bin' in their names. They were all good guys but it's hard to tell the difference, so it's good to do something about that. Take a look and see who's coming into the country. Like it's just so easy to come in cause terror. So I think it might seem a little extreme but I think that his general idea is probably good.

T: Okay. And how did you feel about Islam when you were living in Oman?

D: When I first got there I was pretty pissed off and I was just like this sucks I don't want to be here why are these people wearing rags on their heads, so a little ignorant I guess. But after a while when I got to know them they seemed like pretty nice people. They're all pretty nice, down to earth good people, probably a lot better than the media makes it seem like. And it's a pretty safe country compared to some of its neighbors.

T: That's interesting that you've lived in a Muslim country and felt comfortable there after a while when you got to know people, but that you still support someone who opposes Islam like that.

D: Yeah I just think most Muslims who live abroad are probably good, but like what happened in Paris. Like that was just. We had no idea how to like cipher them out. Let's say we have a hundred Syrian refugees come in the town and they're all happy to take most of them and they all seem like good people, people might be glad to help them out. It's just so easy for someone who works for ISIS to just throw on some rags, I know that's not really nice but that's what they do, and just put them in clothes to look like anyone else and then they come over here, and cause some terror. Like it's just too easy and there's definitely some things in their culture that are just different from how we do things and they do get really angry about our culture so that's just not really fair.

T: Ok I think I understand what you're saying. So you think they're not bad people, but the times right now make it difficult which is why such measurements that Trump suggests become an okay thing to do, is that what you're saying?

D: Right, that's how I feel. It's kind of like an airport when you have to go through security, like, most people who go through that, like you and I, are perfectly fine. Most people maybe are perfectly fine, it's just a way to see who the bad guys are. And they are definitely there because some of them are just really angry at us and we can't risk that. If I were

just to be let through and go to the plane, that would be a total like wrong thing. Like I can get in trouble, even though I'm posing no threat whatsoever so people who are flying even when you're innocent it's just part of the rules and how people have caused terror in the past. Like you need to be careful of a threat everyone can pose if they have the right weapons or equipment. So I feel it's kind of the same way with people from certain parts of the middle east. We just can't deny those problems are there, and there are some serious things going on that you just can't ignore. I mean it has always been like that in the Middle East, like I don't think there was a time they had peace but we need to protect ourselves that they don't bring it over to us.

T: Do you know any Muslims in the United States?

D: No, not really. I mean, in Oman it just makes sense, you know? And I guess in some ways we are very mixed with all religions as a country, but it's not really like that, you know? Also because, like I said, everyone has their own things and then it's hard to care about all these other people as much.

T: Okay, so yeah, we talked about that a little bit, but what kind of things are you then specifically talking about?

D: Well we're definitely not in the best situation. I mean, it seems like every two or three weeks on the news you hear about a mass shooting. I mean that's the kind of thing you expect to hear from like Kenya or something like that but not the US. So I mean we definitely have some things that need to be fixed. We've had some big problems over the past few years. So I feel that we're close to the top of the world, but we're definitely not where we need to be. I think we should compare ourselves to Europe like we're definitely not as good as some places in Europe. Like Switzerland for example, or even your country, the Netherlands. Those seem like pretty good places that we should compare ourselves to where we should be but yeah. We're definitely better than what we could also be but I feel that there's definitely a lot that could be fixed.

T: Okay, like what kind of things could be better, for example?

D: Well I think gun free zones need to go. I heard one statistic and it could be wrong but I heard that in Switzerland like that over 40/50 percent of the citizens are armed and when's the last time you heard about a mass shooting there? So I feel like mass shooting could be taken care of a lot better if gun free zones would get rid of. But also other issues. Like welfare. I remember two years ago I heard about this one guy in California who is, like in his twenties and he is in better shape than I am and he just lives on welfare, he has no job, and he eats lobster all day and he goes out surfing and he lives a perfectly good life, thanks to

all the American tax payers. And there's probably many more people like that. And that's just something we need to fix in the welfare system.

Other issues, Donald Trump, something that he did mention that the liberal media didn't point out is that the super-rich people like the rich companies, including himself, he pointed that out, need to be taxed a little bit more. Just to help contribute, so I think that's a good idea. Some tax cuts for the middle class would be good and I think some of the fees that we're paying are a little ridiculous. Like I look at my cell phone bill and I see federal taxes, state taxes and some of those taxes just go to people who are too lazy to work yet they're on government care and getting government pay-phone so that just kind of pisses me off if I see how that works.

T: You know that in the Netherlands we do that a lot different right?

D: Really?

T: Yeah here you can pay up to 52 percent taxes.

D: You're kidding. Holy shit and I thought the 10 dollar tax on my cellphone was bad!

T: Yeah I mean it's just different everywhere but it's always funny to tell Americans this because it's so different.

D: Yeah that's insane.

T: Okay so anyway, we were talking about other things that you think are not going well in the US right now?

D: Well another obvious thing is immigration, that we already kind of talked about. I think we need a wall. Maybe not with Canada, but I've been to some other countries where I've seen better security precautions and, like, I know Saudi Arabia is thinking of building a wall with I think it was Iraq maybe? I mean look at like the wall between the Koreas, or like I assume they have a wall. So I think to put up a wall with unwelcome neighbors we need to take care of that. And they say that you're splitting up families, but what I say is that if you don't want to see your family split up then just don't come here illegally. And I guess another issue is drinking age, like it's something minor but like I'm 20 years old. Like I actually flew through Amsterdam, your country, last summer on my way to Oman and then I had a four hour layover and I went out and had a beer, and I thought that was pretty nice. But like, here I can't do that until my next birthday.

T: Yeah I get that that's an interesting issue too, especially because people start drinking earlier anyway so it could be good to regulate it. It's different in the Netherlands, it used to be 16 and now it's 18.

D: Yeah here it's different by state but here I can't even step foot in a bar until I'm 21.

T: Is that something Trump cares about specifically, or is that just something you would like to see changed?

D: Oh yeah no I just want to see that changed. I actually don't know the candidates' ideas about that. But I've been joking that if Hillary or Bernie win that I would move to Canada, dig a hole and live there for the next four years (laughs).

T: Could you tell me what exactly is so awful about them?

D: Yeah I think like a lot of college students, people, I guess my and your age, who really want him to get elected so that they can get free college but that will cost 70 trillion dollars and then other costs will go way up. All the other free stuff and then that guy in California I mentioned earlier, there will be so many more of him. And so then I just think that our national debt will just go up and then I think we'll all just go to hell. He's just a nut bag in my opinion. And then with Clinton, I don't know if it will be quite the same situation but she has her own problems like Benghazi thing, I think that she has lied to the American people. And like Bill Clinton, he was president when I was young, but I don't really like remember him at all. But like he has a whole thing with his affair and apparently Hillary said that she bought the condoms for them and I just think: Wow she can't even control her husband and her husband doesn't even respect her enough so I'm thinking how can we respect her as a country? I just think that she'll be lying and she would probably also go a little bit to what Sanders wants with socialism so I just don't trust her as a president. It has nothing to do with that she's a woman it has nothing to do with that at all. Like Carly Fiorina, I don't know how to pronounce her name, like I would much rather have her than Sanders, Clinton, or even some of the other Republicans. But Clinton I just don't want her as president. Can I tell you some fears about the other Republicans?

T: Yeah sure.

D: Ted Cruz, he had, like, this whole thing that Ben Carson dropped out of the race and all of a sudden he tried to take his votes and to me that's just wrong, and you just don't have any respect for other people who you're dealing with, so I don't think that's right to become president. And with Ted Cruz, we're not even sure if he's eligible to be president, being born in Canada. So we have to figure out I guess. And he just lied about that so I don't think that's good. Marco Rubio, he doesn't seem too bad, but I just don't think he's quite ready and his attendance record isn't quite the best. Like I heard he was supposed to be at, like, a few critical votes in congress but instead he was just at campaigns and fundraisers so I don't think that's good.

T: And so what about Trump, as a person, then do you like most or what do you trust?

D: He doesn't give a shit about political correctness, to put it like that, he just goes up and says it how it is. What else? I think he's a true American. I know that he's been rich all his life and he came from a very well-off family, that's an understatement, but he knows what Americans want. Some people say oh he's just doing it for himself, he just wants more profit but I say: Look at how much money he already has, look at how much money he's already making. If he becomes president, the money he made from that is probably poverty compared to what he's making right now so there can't be nothing moneywise why he would do this. And I just don't think a lot of people realize that. And he's also self-funding his campaign, and with some of the other candidates, Republican or Democrats, who say okay, so here is 10,000 dollar now go out there and say that you hate abortion. So I'm sure there's a lot of that going on, but not with Trump, nothing like that at all because he's completely self-funding his campaign so he can't be corrupt or whatever.

T: So you're saying that Trump is a true American, what do you mean by that?

D: Like he just knows what Americans want, and I think he can take us back to give us what we, as a country, deserve. Like I don't think Obama gives us what we deserve, or even cares about the real American people. With like, well what I said, that he gives amnesty to all these illegals. So yeah, that's just not right. Trump says that he just doesn't care about all those countries, and now, you shouldn't be stupid of course, but why are we paying so much money on other countries, when our own country is in trouble? I think he realizes that right now this is what we need to focus on, and he knows how to protect us. I don't think there's anything that's more important right now. Like if bad people want to kill you and your people, what do you expect? You need to take action. You should know too, right, with everything that's going on in Europe. Like we can't have other people take over, or we can't take another religion take over. I don't understand that not everybody just understands that. We need to fight for our own beliefs and our own country and the rest just has to come second. Like most people I know don't seem to feel the same, now that's just weird, like what do you want? That's why the group is good, or Facebook in general, because then I realize there are some people who think the same and are, you know, realistic.

T: Yeah, so we're both members of the Donald Trump Forever 2016 group, are there other ways that you show your support for Trump?

D: Yeah definitely. I have a Trump shirt, which I proudly wear, and on my car I have a Trump bumper sticker. And I try to talk to a lot of people about him.

T: Okay. And how do you feel that the media has been covering Trump, in general? And which media?

D: I feel the media has been pretty unfair. Especially like, CNN well, CNN is honestly the most like unbiased American news network. MSNBC, which I can't stand, is very liberal based and. Oh I'll share this one quote that I'll share with you that was on MSNBC. It's a little vulgar, they had this one idiot who came on and they claimed he was Republican and he said that Trump supporters are childless single men who, here's the bad part, masturbate to anime and I heard that and I just thought 'wow'. I mean, you don't see people going on Fox saying that kind of stuff about Sanders or Clinton supporters so I think MSNBC is a bad station just very liberal based. And they trash Trump most. I like Fox, it is a little more conservative biased but they, they're all a little harsh on Trump and like Fox. Megyn Kelly at the first debate I thought was a little unfair I mean she and Trump have a lot of very similar beliefs but just one belief that Trump said and Megyn Kelly didn't agree with, she grilled him on that and I didn't think that was right. Overall I think they treated him okay but they had many moments that they could've been better. So I think the media overall is really harsh on him and like New York Daily news on their news cover they made Trump look like a clown and his supporters they called them zombies and that just pissed me off so the media has just been very unfair to Trump I think.

T: Have you had comments like this personal?

D: Yeah, I'll share one example. I helped out with the football team here last fall, like I pretty much was doing things to help out, like checking helmets stuff like that, and I was wearing a Trump shirt and there were some guys on the team and they really don't like Trump and this one guy came over and he said: 'You probably shouldn't be wearing that shirt out here'. And I'm like: 'Tim, come on man, I'm just wearing this shirt to support my candidate'. And he's like: 'Yeah I get that and I respect all that but the guys on the team just don't like your shirt so it's probably best not to wear it'. So, like, the person who hated it had someone sent to me to talk about it. There's obviously some people who don't like it, and my bumper sticker. Do you know what Yick Yak is?

T: No

D: Oh it's this app that college students can use it came out a few years ago you can post stuff anonymously, like pictures or posts. Like certain pictures, you can't post nudes or so. But you can post pictures of what you see around you or you can post pictures, all anonymously on this anonymous message board. And I've seen a lot of stuff about 'Trump bumper sticker guy' (laughs). So some people went on there and said they don't like it.

T: Do they know that that's you?

D: I think some of them do. Yeah I mean, some of them definitely do. They've called me by my first name on that app which you're not supposed to do, but some of them do.

T: How does that make you feel?

D: Like it pisses me off. I should be able to do whatever I want and I don't see why people have to be so judgmental about it. I try not to worry about it, but I know it's not a very popular thing to say, especially in colleges. Like it makes me feel bad sometimes, but also like they shouldn't be a part of how I feel. But honestly those people are already not my friends.

T: And how does it make you feel when you think of your support for Trump?

D: It makes me feel stronger in some sense. Especially when I go on Yick Yak and I see like: 'Please don't vote Donald trump I don't have money to move out of the US', and it has like 50 or 60 likes and then I'm like: 'Ohhhh I'm so voting Trump' after seeing how much hate there is for him. Like all these kids have no idea of the problems America is facing, and they just want to pretend like everything's fine. I just think that's stupid. Like they're Americans too, I don't get why they don't see that we're not doing well and that we need some serious changes if you look at threats we have to deal with.

T: Okay I understand that. Okay and there is something else I'd like to discuss. We talked about it a little bit but I think it would be interesting to hear your perspective on it.

D: Sure

T: So we discussed Muslim extremism a bit, and with most people I talked about 9/11 too, but I guess you were still a bit young, right?

D: I was about two months away from turning five and I don't remember that much, I just remember seeing things on TV like towers burning and I remember asking my mom like why did the planes hit the towers and I remember her saying that there were 'bad pilots' but I didn't even realize that she meant like 'evil-bad' instead of bad pilots, I just thought they flew into the towers accidentally. That's what I thought then. Funny thing is that I actually lived in Dubai when it happened and then we moved to England a month later and I asked my dad if it had to do with 9/11 he says: 'No it didn't', but I know he's lying. You're a little older than me, right, so I guess you have a better memory of what happened.

T: Yeah, I was, I had just turned eleven, my birthday is September ninth

D: Oh that's funny

T: So yeah I remember it pretty well, like that my dad came to pick me up from an after school program because my parents both worked. And it was already three in the afternoon here, right?

D: Oh right yeah. I don't know, I mean it's still a big deal, because I remember how important it was to my parents. Like sometimes they would say things are never the same after that moment, but of course I can't really judge that, but it does seem that things used to be a lot better for the country, before people started hating on us so much. And then having leaders who can't really seem to fix the issues you know, so yeah.

T: How do you think Trump is going to deal with that, like with IS for example?

D: I know that some people think that Trump is giving IS what they want but I think that's BS that people would get that in their heads, because. Just some quotes from Trump: 'I would bomb the shit out of them', he said that about ISIS, which I know we already have airstrikes going on over there, but not as intense as it needs to be. And there's one comment a while ago on Facebook, I forget where he's from, I think it was maybe Denmark. This one guy said that electing Trump is the only way we can survive if we don't want to turn into what some European countries have turned into. And of course that comment got like 700 or 800 likes. So yeah I think that Trump is probably the only one who could really put an end to ISIS. I know Vladimir Putin, I know he endorsed Trump. And I know Obama would never get anything like that from Putin, so that's really good I think.

T: Okay thank you, I have asked everything I wanted to ask. So I want to thank you, because I really appreciate you taking the time to talk to me. It's been really interesting. Of course I had some ideas when I started this, but it's interesting to hear so many perspectives so it's been really good.

D: No problem

T: Do you have anything else that you want to say?

D: I hope you get some more interviews, if you want, I don't have a lot of friends around here that like Trump but I have a cousin who is a Trump supporter, so I can see if I can get him to get in touch with you. He's fifteen, but it could be interesting to talk to him.

T: Sure, yeah I actually talked with my brother that it would be interesting to speak to younger people. Obviously not for this project but sure I'd talk to him to get background information if he wants to speak to me. So feel free to refer him to me.

D: I'll make sure I'll tell some people about you. It was really good talking to you and I hope you enjoy your stay in America.

T: Thanks, sure, let me know and have a nice evening. And thanks for meeting me earlier, my friends appreciated I didn't have to reschedule dinner. So thank you.

D: No problem, good luck!

8.2 Interview Kerron

Interview with Kerron (K), 38, from Washington D.C., conducted by Tessa (T) on April 4, 2016 in his photography studio.

T: So of course I know some things already, but just to get a full picture, could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

K: Yeah, I grew up in Washington DC. I lived there with my two aunts. My adopted mom, which is my aunt, and her sister. When I say I'm adopted I mean that my mom's sister adopted me, just because it was much more easier for school and stuff like that, so, I grew up around them, so it's like having two moms that's all.

T: Oh okay. Do you have any siblings?

K: No, no siblings, I'm an only child. And I grew up in Washington D.C. Or more really Maryland but because most people, they don't know where Maryland is. So in Europe it is best to say Washington D.C. but basically Bethesda Maryland. I am still ten minutes from the White House, I just live on the border line. So I grew up and went to school there, black, my area is mostly white. White folks. But it's white, Hispanic, Asian, that kind of mixture so I grew up around that. And there I didn't have any issues in school with being black or being around. I never had any issues growing up in this area. D.C. was my favorite place to just be in the weekend I was down right by the White House, which is why I later moved there. Also better for work. Everywhere in that neighborhood. I know politics. I lived not too far from some of the supreme court judges, which is cool. So D.C., life of D.C. and politics and what's happening and who's the president and who's who is the art of living in the Bethesda area.

T: So was politics a big part of your life?

K: Yeah we all talk about politics because you go to the supermarket and there's supreme court judges just shopping in the lane next to you and you say hi you know. I dated a, I don't want to say her name, but I dated a congress man daughter. You know what I mean. So I mean politics is politics you know what I mean.? That's how it was. It's always around you, you know, it's you know.

T: Was anyone in your family in politics?

K: No actually no. Not, no.

T: What did they do?

K: My aunt was in the medical field and many others in my family too and they were all strong Democrats.

T: That's interesting. We'll definitely get to that later.

K: Yeah they are very strong Democrats.

T: And when did you leave that area?

K: I left Washington D.C. seven years ago. As a photographer to just travel around the world and to experience something more than the United States, so I lived in Poland, I lived in the Caribbean.

T: So you started traveling for work?

K: Yeah work, and experience, to grow as a photographer. In Washington D.C. everyone is doing the same thing and I wanted to experience something different than the same thing than everyone is shooting, so that was the main focus for leaving. And exploring new, or the rest of the world.

T: Had you always been a photographer there?

K: Yeah I had always been a photographer. Went to school in Maryland for architecture, but photography was basically my thing in high school. I always connected to photography. Lot of my, actually a lot of what made me want to get in photography is being around the Washington D.C. photographers. Like Kristin Bow, she was my favorite White House photographer. During the years of Clinton. So I used to have a part-time job just so I can be around photography and around cameras and all that. I liked being around people who did all that. So a lot of times I would process a lot of their pictures, of a lot of their works so I could be around the White House and all that. So yeah that's all part of growing up in Washington D.C.

T: Okay, and did you grow up with a religion?

K: Yeah. When I was fifteen I started going to church. I got invited to a church; International Church of Jesus Christ and it became a very important part of my life. Like I was in church twice a week, I teach Sunday school. Three to four year olds, that was my thing. I go out and share my faith about Jesus Christ and what I believe in and it was a major part of my life so yes, I do have a background in church and sharing my faith, traveling, all that, that was also a big part of growing up.

T: Okay did that come more from your mom and your family?

K: No it wasn't, I was on my own because they didn't go to church and they didn't understand why all of a sudden I was going to church in my teenage years.

T: Why was it?

K: Well I connected to the people, I mean I always was curious about religion and I was getting all the information that I needed and I was reading it and they were showing me how to find information by myself. Like, they would not just tell me, but I ask a question and they would tell me you can look for it here or here, so I just started studying and that was what it was about. Studying with people who are studying the same things you are trying to understand.

T: That's interesting that you became interested in religion when your family was not necessarily religious. Do you remember that there was a specific moment that you became interested?

K: My family, I mean they Christians, but they are not practicing Christians, you know? I think there was just a point in my life that I was looking for answers and someone just happened to talk to me on the subway and I talked back and I just started to think wow you guys are really cool and you all believe in the bible and reading the bible and they were like yeah, and that life style was just interesting and that just got me. The D.C. chapter was like one of the major chapters of the church so yeah the church was, religion was, or I wouldn't say religion but maybe also the church itself was just an important part of me.

T: Okay, and is it still?

K: No it's not anymore. I mean, you know, not like that.

T: How did that happen?

K: Well it actually grew apart because of a girl. That wasn't part of the church. Yeah, it just grew apart and things happened and I no longer or, not that I no longer believe, I just don't go to church as much or do all that, you know. But I still pray and I still believe in praying and you know. The whole Jesus Christ thing is still an important part but maybe more for myself now. Like not yelling at top of my voice at everyone but I still believe in Jesus Christ.

T: Do you feel that's an important part of life in the United States? Being Christian?

K: It used to be such an important part, but it's not anymore, because I feel a lot of Christians came under fire for what they believe in. Like it's okay to be Muslim, it's not, it's not

okay to say something bad about somebody who's Muslim. But it's okay to say something bad about Christians. It's okay to tell 'em you can't pray here it's okay to tell 'em, or you make fun of 'em because of the bible, or make fun of them because you can't say Jesus Christ on TV, or you can't say I believe in Jesus Christ, but you know certain things. But it's okay for them to say 'Allah is great' and you can't say anything about it because, you know, then you are racist. And they're making it seem like it's such a bad thing but yet they are glorifying other races, especially Muslims. Muslims are the main one that everybody focuses on right now. You have to tip-toe around them which is not cool I think

T: Have you experienced something like that yourself that you felt that people see you as like different?

K: What do you mean?

T: Well, that you say Christians are put in a bad light.

K: Well yeah, of course. People make fun of Christians, now, they think I'm crazy for voting Trump. But listen, America was built on all Christians, they were part of fundamental rights but now you can't even pray in churches anymore you can't do you can't, no sorry you can't pray in schools anymore you can't use Jesus Christ in certain things in your job, you know what I mean, if I go to my cafeteria in my company I can't put my head down and start praying because I'm offending people, but if the Muslim guy drops a rug on the ground and drops on his knees it's okay because we don't want to offend them. You know? So I see a change as how people view Christianity. Like, Christianity is kind of under fire right now. And it's not even that I have a problem with a religion I just have a problem with people who are not treating it equal and that it's okay to shout out 'Allah' and it's not okay to, if you know, if I say something bad about a person and he happens to be Muslim, then I'm racist, then I'm a big, big bigot, you know what I mean?

T: Why do you think that happens, that Islam and Christianity are being viewed differently?

K: I think because of all the violence that happened and the violence that comes with it now and people are trying to not come across as being hatred towards it or not respecting it. So in doing so Christianity is shut aside and it's okay. That's not cool.

T: And how do you react to that, or how do you feel about that?

K: Like I'm an American, right? I know we have a million religions and ethnicities here and that's great. But you should respect who built this country, who made it what it became. And now the opposite is happening, it's just a joke. Like I love my country and it's a big part of my life, you know what I'm saying? But I just get angry when all these random

people who did not earn a place as much are treated like that and Christians are treated like shit and we can't do anything. Makes no sense.

T: Okay, I see what you're saying. I want to take, like, one step back because I do want to get into this more but I want to make sure we discuss this part too. So apart of this, like we talked about a little bit already, my research is about how globalization has changed a lot of things like how they used to be and how they are today. you know what I mean? Of course a lot of changes already started in that things are more connected. Certain things we discussed, too, were able to happen. Like such terrorist attacks you mentioned you know? So I want to ask some more questions about some topics and how you have experienced that.

K: Terrorism?

T: Well globalization, in general but that too, yeah. Have you experienced anything with that?

K: Yeah, I lost my uncle in the pentagon.

T: Oh really? Wow I'm sorry.

K: It's okay, it is thirteen years ago. Yeah, I mean it pisses you off but it happened a long time ago.

T: How did you experience it then?

K: At the time, that uncle was a very important part of my life. And yeah, he was first, he was a musician. Two of the brothers were musicians, and he has always liked the fact that I was part of technology, and that I was always doing something with technology other than their kids, so he was always inspired by that. And he went back to school and got his degree in IT, and he got a job working for the pentagon doing IT and I was so proud. When September 11 happened, and the plane crashed into the building, we know something happened but we know he works in some of the underground bunkers so we assumed that he was fine. But then three days after we couldn't find him or talk to him and we were told during the attack that certain people were still working in the bunkers of the Pentagon and they weren't allowed to make contact. Because technically it was the first time that the United States had been under attack. But then we find out that maybe something had happened and I was the point person for the family to talk to the Pentagon and talk to the mayor. And every time he would call me and talk to me with information and to double check. So I was the point person to find out what happened. And we never got a body to bury. Apparently what happened when the alarm goes off that a plane was coming they were told to leave the building so when he was leaving the building and someone fell and

he turned back to help the person and he never made it. So we never got a body to bury because he was disintegrated.

T: That must be very intense.

K: Yeah at the time it happened I was very fucking upset, it was very intense. I mean, I was into politics and I knew what was happening, but I didn't know that the Taliban was so angry at the U.S. or that they was so willing to do something else. I was pissed off. A lot of my friends were pissed off. A lot of them joined the army because they wanted revenge. And my friends were all in college studying architecture. Sean was my best friend, he was pissed off too. And he, one day: 'Yep I signed up!' 'Signed up for what?' 'Signed up for the army', and I'm like: 'What?'. So a lot of my friends, they joined and went to fight war and just time it was called a just war but yeah.

T: How did you feel that, because you said before that you know how much the U.S. was hated, so how did that make you feel?

K: Yeah I wasn't aware that there was so much hate. You have to understand, when you grow up in America, that you don't care about the rest of the world in way, because there is so much things you have to worry about. Your school, paying bills, going to work on time. You didn't care what China thinks, you didn't care what UK thinks you don't care what the rest of Europe thinks. All we know about Europe is that the French like croissants and tea and they always happy. We didn't care what was happening anywhere else. It was a major change, so when people say Americans are so stupid it's not that, it's just that they have so much happening in their world right now, they can't afford to worry about you in the other side of the world.

T: What kind of things did you have to worry about, for example?

K: College tuition, finishing my college degree, going to school, church, that my parents were giving me hell about because they didn't understand. There are certain things that as a young man in America you have to worry about. I wanted to play basketball. I wanted them new Jordan's, there's so many things that personally and to our neighborhood that we were worried about. More than about what's happening in Europe and what's happening in the world.

T: Did you follow any media to keep up with those things?

K: Yeah I followed CNN but CNN, like, when we watch news, we watch local news. Maybe they mention oh yeah a bomb blew up in the American embassy but the focus is on 'Bob lost his cat down the street and the cat saved you know', you know, local news. I

know all the local news like we didn't watch CNN that much like that. Like, we're watching Channel 4, Fox news, Washington D.C. Bob Ryan.

T: Okay, and how did you feel about the things that you were seeing at the time, or just the things that were going on within the United States at the time?

K: Back then what was the main concern we had? The main concern we had was more educational, and the big deal was the deficit. That was a major thing. Education. Everybody was trying to figure it out. Yeah we were worried about crime. In D.C., summertime crime is a thing. More money for education from social security, who's stealing money that was a major concern, that was a big deal, you know what I mean. I was still into politics then too. I think at that time I was helping Chris Russel. He was running for election and I was working on his web campaign, which back then was a big deal because he was one of the first people to have like an actual website. So yeah I mean we had a lot to worry about, but life was still okay you know what I mean, a lot different from how it is now.

T: So what do you feel changed?

K: September 11th changed everything. Changed everything.

T: Okay, so like you explained how it changed for you personally of course, but how do you think it changed the country, or the world?

K: Americans always felt safe and we felt that the only thing that, well you know, that countries always worried about their neighbor countries invading them or something. But no, we all felt safe. That was the first time I think people realized that the government can't protect us. Because there's always that saying like: 'Oh the military will do something about it they're the best', but you know that was a major part because even going to school going to work, you're on a train like watching people. I remember a woman got on the train just a couple of months after September 11, she sat in front of me and started talking in Farsi and I'm just watching because they told us be aware of people around you. The train had stopped and there was a strange odor in the train all of a sudden. And everyone is looking around like is it a chemical attack, but it was the brake fuel leaking and coming in but we were all ready to blame those people. You know? Because now we start noticing the hijab and it was always there but we never, it never bothered us. That was interesting too. The same Muslim guy lived across the street. It never really bothered me that he lived there, I didn't care. I don't care he's not from here. But after September 11, you start looking to see where people are from. Which is interesting because the battle was always black and white and it went from you know to us and them way more.

T: And then who is here us and them in your opinion?

K: When we say us and them it means something's bad, but now it is who is Muslim and who is not Muslim. One of my best friends was Muslim, I didn't really know that and he's my best friend. His dad is one of the number one brain surgeons in the west coast so he lived a comfortable, really nice life, and I remember introducing him to another one of my friends and they knocked it off so good they were talking and having a good conversation. My two, my best girlfriend and my best, best friend, guy friend and then she says something like I remember back in Israel when I was growing up and he says: 'Israel? You're a baby killer?'. And she looked like: 'What the fuck you said? You call me a baby killer?', he's like: 'I didn't know you're a baby killer. Kerron you didn't tell me that you're friends with a Jew?'. His background was Egypt even though he's never been to Egypt and he's American as far as I'm concerned but he saw himself as, you know, and he made a stupid comment, like: 'I would strap a bomb to my vest and I would blow your people up', and I was like 'Youssef, I know you? We ain't that way'. It's so strange to hear him say that, it's that serious. And of course they never talk. So you start looking at people, you know, and where their affiliation was. After September 11 everything changed. Everything changed.

T: Are you still friends?

K: No I'm not friends with him anymore. Definitely not. I mean, we grew apart, we both went somewhere.

T: Did it have something to do with the incident?

K: After that I was still friends with him, but I couldn't connect. I had to keep those two friends apart. He's hating on her, she's hating on him, and that's probably one of the reasons as to why I started paying attention to what's happening around the world. Why he hates her why she sees nothing wrong? And I start, you know, researching everything from Israel and what's happening in Palestine and all that.

T: Yeah, and before you were saying that also you feel that Christians are being put as a 'them' group by, for example, people who try to not offend Muslims.

K: Yeah when people try so hard to not offend Muslims they actually put the Christians in the back of the bus. Look, Christians can't pray in school anymore, they can't say Jesus Christ anymore. If you work for the federal government and you want to say Jesus Christ you have to say 'word of silence'. If you want a private time to pray you say: 'word of silence'. Kids were getting sent home because they used their prayer and they used Jesus Christ. It was strange it was like: 'What the hell?'. Christians can't pray but he can get on his rug and say blah blah Allah Allah because we don't want to offend them, so it's okay. You know? But you don't want to offend the guy who's wearing a hijab because you don't want to let him know, you know, you don't want to offend the guy. They want to show

them that they are not trying to offend them, but at the same time they're pushing the Christians to the side.

T: And who do you feel is doing that?

K: It's just part of the whole government. Government. And I think I probably do it too sometimes. You know, when I think I do it to some extent, just because you know wait. Okay, who is doing that? Democrats. Now I remember one reason why I switched. Democrats are leading that call. They are trying so hard not to offend Muslims that they even changing our laws and for school kids just to appear that they are not being a bigot or whatever. That was it, a Democrat thing back then. Republicans wasn't about that shit. Republicans are not willing to push aside their Christian beliefs because they know that Christians [vote for them]. Democrats had black people majorities. Republicans have Christians. That's how it's always been in a way. Black people and Latinos or even Latinos are mostly Republicans now. But [Democrats] depended on the black votes and stuff like that so that was a major thing. We support black people and we, Bill Clinton, you know, and Republicans couldn't even claim that, because at that time they didn't have too many things going on to say we're doing this or we're doing this so what could they cling on to in large numbers? Christians? Whether you're black, Chinese, or what. When you're a Christian. That's the difference, you realize that right?

T: So when did you start becoming interested in what Trump has to say?

K: I have always been interested in Trump. I have been following him since high school. We used to learn about Trump's father and what he was doing in high school, he is part of history. You know Trump Towers. He has always been a part of history. And then as a photographer I worked for the Miss Universe in the Caribbean, owned by Trump. So Trump has always been a whole part of us, you know. So I followed him a long time, even since I was young. I always been interested by what he has done, by going bankrupt, he filed for bankruptcy so many times and coming back on top, so yeah I have always been a fan of Trump.

T: So when he announced he was going to run..

K: I thought it was a far fetch but I like to analyze. I started analyzing who would be the other candidates. The strongest one was Bush. Bush senior and Bush junior were also good. I always liked Jeb Bush. I always thought he was different from his father but I didn't think people would see that. Who else we had. Cruz? I don't like him I never liked him. I never liked the way he looks I don't trust him by how he looks. He looks, you know, like a cars sales man that is selling me a bad car, trying to convince me it's a Mercedes.

T: And did you know a lot of other people who wanted to support Donald Trump?

K: No. A couple, a couple of us, but no. Mostly they don't say anything. Most people are surprised that I support Bush, I mean Trump. Because they make it seem because I'm black, one. Because I'm a creative, two. I'm supposed to be liberal and be a Democrat, but it's not. I see the Democrats as preying upon usually a relation to control the masses you know. And that's why I never liked Bill Clinton. I always felt Bill Clinton was playing his game with black people for votes. I always felt he was leading the pack, I'm sorry. He thinks: 'I'll play trumpet on MTV', (using a 'black woman's voice':) 'Oh look at that white man, is that Bill Clinton playing the trumpet?. He is fighting for us you know? Because the Republicans doesn't'. And then I look at the agendas and then I'm like: 'I just refuse to follow the mainstream, I need to look objectively. Democrats don't feel the need to prove anything to black people anymore, because they have the black people's votes. Black Americans are so stupid that they don't see it I'm sorry.

T: So then you think that Republicans have better intentions?

K: No there's two Republicans. The Republican Party has changed over the years. Because they were all white man, racist. I will say it, racist white man. They probably had no black friends but then their kids started growing up and joining the party and that's how I always saw the new generation and I saw it change. The new old guard is McCain, and although I like McCain, but you know Newt Gingrich remember him?

T: Yeah.

K: During his era that whole crew. I couldn't stand them, but after they all retired and got voted out, there was a new generation that I felt was more in touch with culture. They listened to the black music, they grew up listening to the hip-hop and everything like that, and now they went to college and have a suit and run for president and for congress. So I always felt the Republican Party had the old guard and it had the new guard and I fell in with the new guard. It's just hard for them to get people to see that now. Because everybody, like, we don't have a Clinton.

T: Yeah, and on the liberal side they also don't take that seriously maybe?

K: Exactly. The only Republican that helped that image is Powell. Colin Powell. And I liked Condoleeza Rice, because she was really smart.

T: So how does that make you feel?

K: I mean it's weird, I know everyone thinks that we're dumb but like that's just weird because I actually spend a lot of time thinking about it and I'm not like, stupid. Like I mean great on you that you want to be nice and try not to offend anybody but it's just not realis-

tic, like there's some serious shit that's happening now, you know? Like we need to take real measures and protect our country, protect our people. I mean, that's only natural.

T: And how do you feel about some of the statements that Trump has made, about Muslims for example?

K: The best way to describe that statement is that Europe had just been attacked by the same Muslims that they let into the country in open arms. What Trump was saying, you cannot... Obama's reaction of taking in Muslims is great. That's great charity, I'm sure you're awesome for doing that. It's still very little compared to what Europe is taking. But you can't just take anybody in without full screening. All Trump was saying was you need to stop taking in Syrian Muslims. Not stop letting Bob who's a Muslim from Canada travel to the United States. I don't think he meant stop all Muslims. Stop taking in Syrian refugees, until you figure out how we're going to do the process of screening them. Media just took that and just fly with it. And Clinton and so more because that's like her anthem. Like: 'Oh he hates Muslims, he hates Muslims'. The man never said he hates Muslims. Trump has a lot of Muslim working friends. All he said was: 'Until you figure out what's happening you cannot..' Trojan horse. That's all. And I don't believe trump is racist I'm sorry. I think he is very smart. For instance, that Mexican thing. The Mexican thing. The states that needed to win the election where are they? They are like Ohio they are at the border of that. Of course for the people who live there, that's a major problem. Trump is very smart he is doing campaign and so what you say: 'I'm gonna build a wall and I'm gonna keep the Mexicans out'. In those states that's a major concern for those states. Europe doesn't understand that. People say that's stupid, but that's a major concern for them. Immigrants run across the border, immigrants taking their jobs, immigrants doing crime. When he made that statement, I don't think he made it for all of America, he means that statement specifically so that he can win those states and it worked! People still trying to blow it up and saying: 'Oh Trump hates all Mexicans'. By the way most Latinos vote Republican. And why is that? When they were immigrant they were immigrant. When they come over illegally and they get the paper to become American citizens, somehow they all vote Republican to keep the other immigrants out.

T: So we discussed it a little bit, but I'd like to go into more details if that's okay. How do you feel about Muslims personally?

K: I don't really have a problem with Muslims, but I definitely think that policies have to be adjusted. I mean Europe. Look at Germany taking freaking a million of them. That's great, but now they have a problem. Who's good and who's bad that's all. Don't think that's realistic.

T: Yeah.

K: There should have been a way of filtering. Either you take families but a lot of times they look and they cross and I see a lot of young men that are fleeing. I'm thinking: 'Why are they not going back, trying to help their country?'. Why are they not trying to join the army and fight? Because if it's so bad, and it's so horrible then why do these people not sign up? When September 11 happened, what they do is they went and they joined the army. Some of them may have regretted it now, but that's what they did. Why these young men are fleeing? I'll go live in Germany, come on man? Something is wrong with that. They have to see they have to turn around. I'm not saying don't take Muslims, I'm just saying I'm seeing a lot of young healthy men on boats coming across when they should be doing something to help their country. And in Israel every young man at the age of 18 joins the army, right?

T: And women too, actually.

K: Yeah women too you're right. Why do they not do that? Anyway, that's how I see it.

T: Actually, I think I asked everything I wanted to ask.

K: Oh really?

T: Yes, I think we touched upon all the topics I wanted to discuss.

K: I mean, yeah sure, it's cool. You can always call me if you have more questions later.

8.3 Agreement Form between Researcher and Interviewee

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Tessa Veerman for her Master thesis in Religion, Conflict and Globalization at the University of Groningen. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about Trump supporters' backgrounds and their views on Islam and that I will be one of approximately 25 people being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
2. Participation involves being interviewed by Tessa Veerman, and the interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes. Notes will be made during the interview, and the interview will be audio recorded.
3. Recordings and transcripts that will be made will stay in the interviewer's (Tessa Veerman) possession and will not be shared with third parties.
4. All data will be processed anonymously. The researcher may use only my first name OR another name of my choice _____ to guarantee anonymity. The same is the case for other people who are mentioned in the interview.
5. I give permission to the researcher to use the interview for the research and I have until a week after the interview to withdraw from the research. After that, the interview will be transcribed and added to the database (and I can receive a copy of the interview).
6. I understand that my story might be put in a broader context and explained by the researcher who will do her best to represent my vision and ideas.
7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Name Interviewee _____ Signature Interviewee _____

Date _____ Signature Interviewer _____