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# **Characteristics of Homegrown Violent Extremist Radicalization**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from a one-year study exploring the process of radicalization inspired by Salafi Jihadist foreign terrorist organization (FTO) ideology.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of the characteristics associated with radicalization to violence of United States persons from 2011-2017. In Reports One and Two presented here, our team relied upon a historiometric method (Ligon, Harris, & Hunter, 2012) to obtain historically notable cases of homegrown violent extremists and transform their background information into quantitative indices for analysis. This method has been executed successfully by our team since 2010 for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism (START) and the Department of Homeland Security Science & Technology (DHS S&T) on the Leadership of the Extreme and Dangerous for Innovative Results project (LEADIR; Ligon, 2010). The historiometric method required the development of a content coding scheme driven by the Interactionist Organizational Recruitment Framework, followed by a systematic data collection process of our sample. The empirical analysis is divided into two distinct but overlapping reports.

The goal of the current research is to provide a descriptive piece of knowledge base associated with Salafi Jihadi-inspired extremism in the United States by analyzing open-source data from 261 individuals who were federally charged with terrorism-related activities in order to identify factors associated with extremist recruitment and radicalization. Findings from this project provide historical insights into the complexities of extremist participation and begin to unravel these intricacies by moving beyond the traditional case study methods previously used to explore recruitment and radicalization

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<sup>1</sup> To some Muslims, Salafism and jihad does not necessarily lead to violent extremism. To some, Salafism is simply used to follow the path of the early Muslims. Indeed, many Salafis eschew politics and concentrate their efforts on personal religious experience. Similarly, to some Muslims, jihad is used to mean struggle, not necessarily holy war. In this report, we use Salafi-Jihadist to describe those who justify their violence with reference to literalist interpretation of Islamic ideas and the concept of jihad. The followers of this ideology usually isolate themselves from their social class and national origins and see jihad as holy war. We acknowledge that not all Muslims who consider themselves Salafi or even jihadists are necessarily prone to violence.

processes. These descriptive portraits provide insight into the past and summarize the demographic, situational, and behavioral variables associated with participation in extremist activities. Due to the relatively hidden nature of this population, the sample was derived through open-source data collection and, as a result, is not representative, which prevents generalizing these findings to other extremist and non-extremist individuals. Of course, the goal of this type of historiometric approach is not generalization, but rather identifying the social processes, inductively building theory, and describing causal mechanisms. Lastly, as part of our exploratory analysis, the findings are also limited by problems with missing data. Future research can then build on the groundwork laid in this study.

Report One consists of a comprehensive assessment that statistically classified our subjects into distinct clusters. Based on the data, five clusters emerged: (1) Skilled Significance Seekers; (2) Action-Oriented Clandestines; (3) Accomplice Kin; (4) Disgruntled Naïve; and (5) Troubled Combatants. The first cluster, Skilled Significance Seekers, primarily consisted of individuals who were driven by a need to gain or restore their personal significance. For these subjects, extremist participation was seen as an attempt to achieve something greater than themselves and/or restore their self-image. Overall, these subjects were highly educated/skilled and showed no signs of mental illness, adolescent misconduct, or histories of family extremism.



Figure 1.  
Skilled Significance Seekers



Figure 2.  
Action-Oriented Clandestines

The second cluster, Action-Oriented Clandestines, is comprised of individuals whose actions were unknown and surprising to most who knew them, and did not follow a lengthy radicalization trajectory. Instead, many took action (e.g., offering material support, planning travel to a foreign conflict) prior to any overt social media participation. In addition to traveling out of the

U.S., many subjects made financial donations, recruited members to fight abroad, and/or sent weapons and supplies to foreign terrorist organizations.

The third cluster, Accomplice Kin, consisted of individuals whose extremist involvement was influenced by close kin relationships. These individuals were the most likely to have immediate relatives and/or romantic partners involved in extremism. As part of these relationships, subjects received extremist socialization. While most individuals were not raised by extremist members, a large portion were exposed to ideas consistent with Salafist ideologies. This exposure, in turn, provided individuals with cognitive frames encouraging certain types of racialized interpretations and desensitized them to violent action.



Figure 3.  
Accomplice Kin

The fourth cluster, Disgruntled Naïve, consisted of individuals who were generally predisposed toward violence. These individuals developed apocalyptic worldviews and a preference for violence. Moreover, relative to the other clusters, these individuals were more likely to seek out extremist networks. Finally, these individuals generally did not show signs of documented mental illness, documented adolescent misconduct, or need for belonging.



Figure 4.  
Disgruntled Naïve

The final cluster, Troubled Combatants, is comprised of individuals who were distinguished by their extensive histories of crime and misconduct. These individuals generally lacked conventional social bonds with society and were the most likely to contain histories of mental illness. Moreover, these individuals were more likely to convert to Islam as an adult.



Figure 5.  
Troubled Combatants

Findings from Report One underscore the complexities of extremist participation. In particular, our analyses begin to unravel these intricacies by moving beyond the

traditional case study methods previously used to explore recruitment and radicalization processes.

Overall, this study finds that violent extremist participation is influenced, in part, through ideological and non-ideological risk factors prior to entering an extremist group and that foreign terrorist organizational influence online and offline increased the likelihood of extremist participation and violence.

Report Two contains a description of the organizational and cyber behaviors with each cluster type. Specifically, we draw on an interactionist framework to examine the relationship between cluster types and extremist organizations to which they were attracted and/or influenced. Our findings suggest that the subjects in our sample were attracted to and/or influenced by 12 different extremist organizations. Most of those groups were older (>10 years old), large (>1000 members), and were characterized as having a “hub-and-spoke” structure. The overwhelming majority of the subjects in our sample, regardless of cluster type, were attracted to the ISIL (69.3 percent). There were also two unique interactions between cluster type and extremist organizations. First, there was a significantly disproportionate number of extremists within the Action-Oriented Clandestines cluster who were attracted to al-Shabaab. Second, there was a significantly disproportionate number of extremists within the Accomplice Kin who were attracted to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

In addition to the description of organizational and cyber interactions, Report Two contained an analysis of our subject’s online, digital profiles. While previous studies have examined extremist online behavior, these investigations often focus on individuals who posted publicly to social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Carvalho, 2014; Scrivens, Davies, & Frank, 2017). While helpful, such an approach tends to overlook extremist members who generated content, communicated with extremist members abroad, or who merely viewed radical content. To address this gap, we applied Li and Bernoff’s (2011) taxonomy of digital participation to our sample of Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists.

This typology includes six categories: (1) “creators,” (2) “critics,” (3) “collectors,” (4) “joiners,” (5) “lurkers,” and (6) “inactives.” In general, creators exhibited the highest level of online behavior, whereas inactives displayed the least amount of online activity.

Based on available unclassified data, 169 subjects (65 percent) were classified into one of the six digital profiles. Across the six categories, “critics” (N = 111; 65 percent) accounted for the largest portion of our sample, followed by “joiners” (N = 22; 13 percent), “creators” (N = 19; 11 percent), “lurkers” (N = 12; 7 percent), “collectors” (N = 4; 2 percent), and “inactives” (N = 1; 1 percent). Subjects in each category visited a variety of social websites like Facebook (55 percent), Twitter (30 percent), and YouTube (5 percent); blog sites like Revolution Muslim (6 percent); and other online applications like email, WhatsApp, Ask.fm, and Tumblr (4 percent). Application of this taxonomy allowed us to analyze digital behavior beyond posting on Facebook or viewing YouTube videos. The inclusion of these various behaviors permitted us to examine propaganda and narratives our subjects were prone to consume, as well as study the content of social media posts, blogs, poetry, or original videos our subjects produced. Most importantly, such an approach provided us a greater understanding of the interaction our subjects had with extremist organizations.

Report Three contains findings from fieldwork research in Minneapolis-St. Paul, working with the Somali-American communities to understand how existing factors in the community contribute to resilience against extremist recruitment and radicalization efforts. The report relied on an ethnographic research methodology to observe, record, and interpret fieldwork findings and subject interviews. Pairing observations, conversations, open source data, and the authors’ knowledge after five years of fieldwork, Report Three presents multi-year trends since 2014 that reveal how the Minnesota Somali-American communities have developed resilience factors across the areas of education and after-school programming, law enforcement-community relationships, civic engagement, and religious leadership.

While the authors found no evidence of extremist recruitment efforts among the Minnesota Somali-American communities, there are community challenges that left unaddressed could contribute to future vulnerability, should a foreign terrorist organization or domestic group invest in recruitment efforts. Challenges in public safety (notably gang violence), human trafficking, and a widespread perception of xenophobia and Islamophobia on the part of federal organizations all carry potential impact on the communities' evident resilience to recruitment and radicalization. Report Three identifies the areas in which this may be the case, offers recommendations for supporting ongoing resilience, and concludes with researcher reflections on best practices for conducting fieldwork in an immigrant community.

## INTRODUCTION

Previous research has shown that there is no single pathway by which an individual embraces Salafi Jihadist-inspired violent extremism in the United States (HVE initiative, 2011; Jensen, James, & Safer-Lichtenstein, 2018). Rather, there are multiple pathways to violence that are impacted by an interplay of factors (Klausen, 2016; Meloy & Gill, 2016; Sawyer & Hienz, 2017). While many people share similar values, personality traits, and life events, only a subset are motivated to extremist violence. The factors that motivate one individual to internalize and act to advance an extremist belief system may have no motivating impact on another (Borum, 2017), and community-level factors may not generalize to other cities where different reasons exist for extremist participation (Boyd, 2017).

The present effort relied on an interdisciplinary research team to employ a mixed-method approach to obtain unclassified primary and secondary data about the nuanced radicalization pathways of homegrown violent extremists, as well as extremist organization messaging and influence strategies. In doing so, we moved beyond individual traits of extremists by evaluating the interaction between their experiences and the messages they consumed. In particular, we conducted a large sample quantitative analysis of extremists combined with ethnographic interviews from a similar sample that was not motivated toward violence. To understand what community and individual barriers exist to prevent violent action, this study looked specifically at Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists who have committed “ideologically-motivated violence or plots, perpetrated within the U.S. or abroad by American citizens, residents or visitors, and who have embraced their legitimizing ideology largely within the U.S.” (Southers, 2013).

## Understanding Homegrown Violent Extremism

Theoretical frameworks, such as social movement theory (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008; della Porta, 1995/2018; Gunning, 2009), social psychology (McCauley & Segal, 1987), and conversion theory (Dawson, 2010; Lofland & Stark, 1965) have been applied to examine radicalization. In general, there is consensus among terrorism researchers that no pathway exists that would apply to all individuals (Borum, 2003; Southers & Heinz, 2015), and researchers have found that radicalization tends to be a gradual process, full of fits and starts, rather than a singular, linear trajectory (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2011). As these explanations illustrate, terrorism scholars have yet to reach a consensus regarding the precise conditions that account for extremist involvement. There are various motivating factors that contribute and influence extremist onset, such as grievances, identity crises, networks, and ideologies. While the following discussion is not an exhaustive list, we provide an overview of the most common ideological and non-ideological factors that have been found to facilitate extremist membership.

***Ideological Factors.*** Ideological factors refer to political, social, or religious concerns in the environment that increase one's susceptibility to extremism (Crenshaw, 1981; Post & Denny, 2002; Silke, 2008). One of the most common ideological factors identified involve grievances, which refer to real or imagined offenses, and especially, unfair treatment. Terrorism researchers have highlighted a variety of grievances, such as perceptions of injustice and discrimination (Goli & Rezaei, 2010; Pauwels & De Waele, 2014; Pauwels & Schils, 2016; Piazza, 2012), direct and war-related trauma (Bhui, Warfa, & Jones, 2014; Weine et al., 2009), personal disaffection, or strong disagreements regarding the foreign policies of states (Hafez & Mullins, 2015; Piazza, 2011; Victoroff, Adelman, & Matthews, 2012). Among populations who perceive themselves as threatened, extremist ideologies that advocate changing the status quo may appear attractive. For these individuals, joining such groups is viewed as a form of "problem solving" behavior (Cohen, 1955). In this sense, bonding together with well-defined collectives

and associating with like-minded individuals can reduce uncertainty associated with managing multiple environmental stressors (Hogg, 2000).

*Non-Ideological Factors.* While ideological factors are important, there is a growing recognition that these influences are not the only, or even primary, factors that explain the onset of extremist involvement (Bjørge, 1997; Horgan, 2008; Klausen et al., 2015; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008). Rather, a variety of non-ideological experiences also influence an individual's predisposition toward extremist involvement (Aho, 1990; Blee, 2002; Borum, 2003; della Porta, 1995; Simi, Sporer, & Bubolz, 2016; Victoroff, 2005). For instance, networks have been identified as an important non-ideological factor influencing extremist participation. Networks refer to preexisting kinship and friendship ties between ordinary individuals and extremists (Lim, 2008). Networks not only offer opportunities for socialization with likeminded individuals, they also have the potential to satisfy psychological needs of acceptance and belonging among peers (Horgan, 2009; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008).

In addition to social networks, terrorism researchers have examined a variety of psychological propensities that predispose individuals toward extremist involvement, such as narcissism, psychopathy, mental illness, and thrill-seeking behavior (Borum, 2014; Silke, 2008; Victoroff, 2005). While early terrorism studies had little success identifying a "terrorist mindset" (Borum, 2003, p. 7) and later developments describe extremists as "normal" individuals (Post, 2005), recent efforts have found substantial evidence of mental illness (e.g., depression) among histories of former extremists (Meloy & Gill, 2016). These authors argue that classifying extremists as normal is premature and more research is needed (Bubolz & Simi, Forthcoming).

Taken together, there are certainly gaps in our understanding of the commonalities among extremists, particularly with Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists. One of the difficulties in theorizing

about extremist participation is that a wide range of people become involved in extremist organizations. These individuals have been found to differ in terms of education, family background, age, gender, intelligence, and economic class (Jensen, James, & Safer-Lichtenstein, 2018; Southers & Heinz, 2015; Windisch, Logan, & Ligon, 2018). Furthermore, the manner in which they become an extremist can vary, and the factors that play a pivotal role in one person's decision to engage in extremist participation can play a peripheral role or no part at all in the decision-making of others. Finally, due to the lack of research examining the interaction of vulnerable persons with extremist content targeting Western audiences (Aly, Macdonald, Jarvis, & Chen, 2016; Holbrook & Taylor, 2017), it is difficult to understand how these indicators vary between local and national regions (Ligon, 2018). In short, there is likely more heterogeneity among individual demographics of Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists than there are similarities, but this particular sample has not been examined to date based on theorized individual-level risk factors.

## OVERVIEW OF THE 2011 HOMEGROWN VIOLENT EXTREMISTS INITIATIVE STUDY

In March 2011, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis (DHS I&A) released an unclassified study produced by the Homegrown Violent Extremist (HVE) Initiative in order "to better understand the threat of homegrown violent extremism and its implications" for national security (HVE Initiative, 2011, p. 5). More specifically, the study sought to "identify a valid and consistent pattern that would lead authorities and the public to recognize radicalization as it unfolds...[that] could enable the authorities—and others—to develop effective prevention, mitigation, or interdiction strategies" (HVE Initiative, 2011, p. 5).

To address this issue, the authors developed a list of 45 individual-level radicalization characteristics from the broader literature on violent extremism. To test the validity of these characteristics, the team assessed the presence or absence of each characteristic in a sample of 62 U.S.-based individuals designated as violent extremists, defined in the report as "U.S. persons radicalized in part in the U.S., inspired by, or aligned with, the ideology of al-Qaeda or with similar Salafist beliefs, and who attacked, targeted, or wanted to perpetrate an attack in the U.S." (HVE Initiative, 2011, p. 11). Only a portion of the 62 subjects, however, fully met the study's inclusion criteria. Those individuals (N = 33) were designated as the primary sample, while the remaining cases were included as a secondary sample.

The authors identified five most common characteristics in the sample including: (1) support by a non-kinship social network engaged in militant Islamist/al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism; (2) abandonment of a social reference group that had conventional or no ideology, aligned with a cohort sympathetic with his or her extremist beliefs, and eventually spent time exclusively with the co-extremists; (3) contact with a charismatic or prominent figure, group, or organization known to be associated with militant

Islamist/al-Qaeda-inspired ideologies or terrorism; (4) strong identification with Muslims perceived as being victimized; and finally, (5) conversion to Islam as an adult.

Despite the prominence of these five characteristics throughout the sample, the authors advised that an effort to seek a universal radicalization pathway based on commonly-held characteristics is “insufficient to support an operationally-useful single model of radicalization from an otherwise ‘normal’ citizen to a radical bent on violent extremism” (HVE Initiative, 2011, p. 6). As such, the authors shifted their focus away from identifying common radicalization pathways toward a qualitative assessment of each case narrative. In doing so, the authors identified common narrative attributes using a process described as an “iterative consensus exercise based on rounds of judgments and reclassification” (HVE Initiative, 2011, p. 14). Overall, the authors of the 2011 study identified the following clusters in the sample of extremists:

***Lost or Damaged:*** Subjects who felt a strong need to belong to a social group or context but had trouble finding a group or context to fit into, and those who were alleged to have suffered from one or more diagnosable psychiatric disorders.

***Predisposed to Violence:*** Violent individuals who, consciously or below conscious awareness, use extremist ideology to channel and justify violent behavior.

***Foreign Policy-Driven:*** Individuals whose personalized outrage over U.S. or Western foreign policy leads to violent extremist ideology to oppose the policies they dislike.

***Jihadi Cool:*** U.S.-raised violent extremists who seem attracted more to the excitement and perceived glory of fighting for a cause than to the strict dictates or ideas of Salafi ideology.

***Somali Nationalist:*** Young Somali immigrants and refugees with a strong attachment to Somalia who primarily join extremist groups to fight in their country’s civil war rather than to attack U.S. persons or property globally.

### **Limitations of the 2011 Homegrown Violent Extremist Initiative Study**

Similar to other studies focusing on extremist radicalization, the authors of the HVE Initiative report were forthcoming with the limitations of their study. For example, the authors encountered a common problem in radicalization research whereby it is difficult to observe radicalization as a process, since the phenomenon can at times seem random, episodic, or non-linear. Moreover, the authors noted difficulties when assessing information on reporters' inconsistent discussion of radicalization and the lack of precise language used to describe the individual cases. When describing sampling limitations, the authors make note of the homogeneity of their cases and suggest that a sample with greater variation beyond only violent extremists (e.g., non-violent extremists, violent non-extremists, at-risk populations, etc.) would yield greater analytical leverage.

In addition, the relatively small size of the sample ( $N = 62$ ) precluded the use of statistical analyses with enough power to make empirically-supported conclusions. Finally, the authors offered the caveat that is inherent in any study that relies upon secondary sources: the possibility of bias and subjectivity among researchers when interpreting sources and assessing themes within the case narratives.

### **Moving Forward**

Based on the findings of the original HVE Initiative study that a single generalizable model of radicalization is not supported by an analysis of literature-derived characteristics and that "clustering" may provide a more fruitful pathway forward in assessing multiple radicalization pathways, the report concludes with a number of suggestions for future research. While some of their recommendations are beyond the scope of this report (e.g., coordinate a meta-analysis of radicalization studies across government and academic communities), we have integrated a number of them into this report in an effort to further this research agenda. Specifically, we (1) refined and tested cluster characteristics

against a significantly larger sample of cases; (2) we applied more robust and consistent inclusion criterion for the sample of study; and finally, (3) we built upon the qualitative approach for sorting cases into clusters by incorporating advanced quantitative methods (i.e., cluster analysis).

## METHODOLOGY

To answer these four research questions, we used a mixed-method approach to understand the interaction between individual differences (e.g., life history, personality) and influence mechanisms (e.g., messages, videos) that suggest potential for radicalization toward Salafi Jihadist-inspired

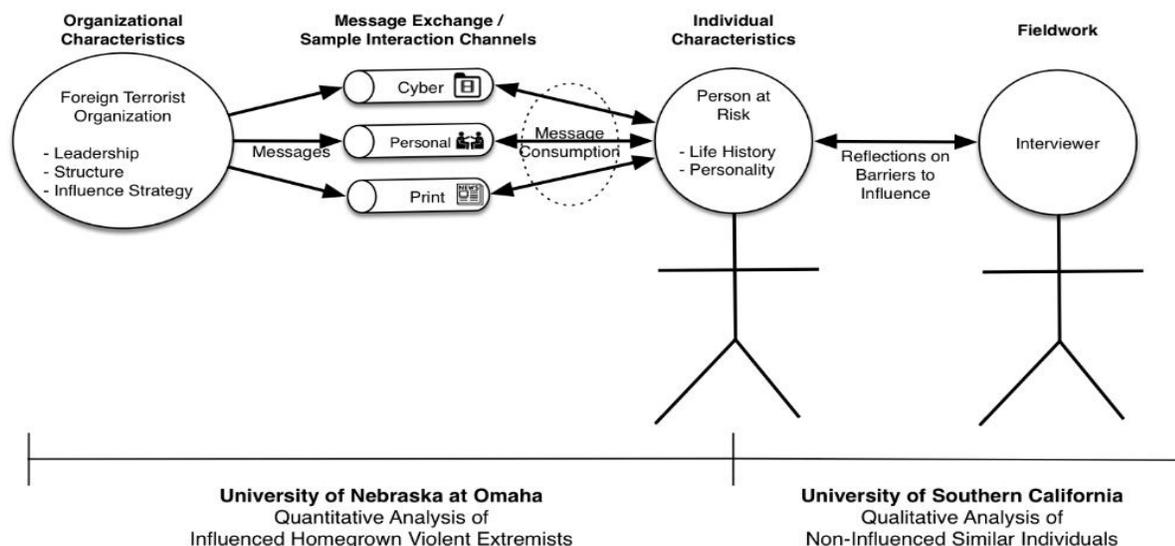


Figure 6. Interactionist Organizational Recruitment Framework

ideological violence in the U.S. To build upon the extensive body of research previously funded by the National Institute of Justice (e.g., Jensen et al., 2016; Klausen, Morrill, & Libretti, 2016) and Department of Homeland Security (e.g., Ligon, 2012/2013; Southers & Heinz, 2015) and overcome the identified limitations of this field of research, this project involves extensive original, interdisciplinary data collection. Specifically, this study uses quantitative and qualitative data at the group- and individual-levels of analysis to examine: (1) extremist organization influence strategies; (2) individual-level characteristics; and, (3) community (or fieldwork) characteristics of Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists (see Figure 6).

The quantitative component of this study triangulates open-source data from four separate datasets, including the Leadership of the Extreme and Dangerous for Innovative Results (LEADIR) project developed by Ligon (Ligon, 2010); Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) developed by LaFree, Jensen, and James (Freilich, Chermak, Belli, Gruenewald, & Parkin, 2014); the Muslim-American Involvement with Violent Extremism project developed by Kurzman (2017); and the Salafi Jihadist-Inspired Profiles and Radicalization Clusters (SPARC) developed by Ligon and colleagues (Ligon, Windisch, Braun, Logan, & Derrick, 2018). Data derived from this mixed-method approach feeds into an integrated analysis of how life history, personality, cyber activity, and/or social networking interact with extremist messaging channels (e.g., print, cyber, personal) to influence an individual's receptivity to extremist beliefs and their subsequent radicalization trajectories.

The benefit of this approach is the ability to capture variation in extremist mobilization patterns while accounting for the interaction at-risk individuals have with the influence strategies of foreign terrorist organizations. Examining the life-histories of at-risk individuals who vary in degrees of willingness to use violence is key to understanding the micro-level differences between at-risk individuals who are influenced by extremist messaging versus those who are not.

There are two primary goals of the quantitative component of this project. First, assessing every incident of Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremism in the U.S. provides a more reliable and valid dataset to examine the scope of the issue. In particular, the quantitative component of this research project focuses on the interaction between the extremist organizations influence strategies that inspired extremist activities (Ligon, Derrick, & Harms 2017; Ligon, Simi, Harms, & Harris, 2013) and the individuals who consumed them (Hunter, Shortland, Crayne, & Ligon, 2017; Windisch et al., 2018).

Second, the quantitative findings directly shaped the sampling and data collection strategies in the qualitative portion of the project conducted by our research partners at the University of Southern

California (USC). As noted in Figure 6, the quantitative component of this project assesses the interaction between extremist organizations and the individuals included in this study. Such an approach highlights the messaging channels and narratives used by extremist organizations, as well as the social and behavioral characteristics of the radicalized individuals.

### **Sampling Approach**

Data for this study was derived from open-source material (e.g., court documents, news outlets, academic reports, etc.). As it is difficult to identify the population of all Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists to serve as our sampling frame, we identified subjects using two previously developed academic datasets, including the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) developed by LaFree, Jensen, and James (Freilich, Chermak, Belli, Gruenewald, & Parkin, 2014) and the Muslim-American Involvement with Violent Extremism project developed by Kurzman (Kurzman, 2017). Furthermore, we conducted our own investigation of cases that transpired between 2011 and 2017 as a method of quality control.

Based on this sampling approach, we identified a total of 2,307 individuals who have participated in Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremist activities in the U.S. since 1980. As it pertains to the current study, we eliminated cases (1) that occurred prior to 2011; (2) that were motivated by far-right or far-left ideologies; and, (3) that were directed by foreign terrorist organizations abroad. Furthermore, researchers examined available media information and removed cases which had little or no information available about the event.

As Figure 7 illustrates, the current sample contains 261 individuals who engaged in Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremist activities in the U.S. between 2011 and 2017. This sample was reviewed and finalized by Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and the

Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Intelligence and Analysis (DHS I&A) over the course of two separate focus groups.

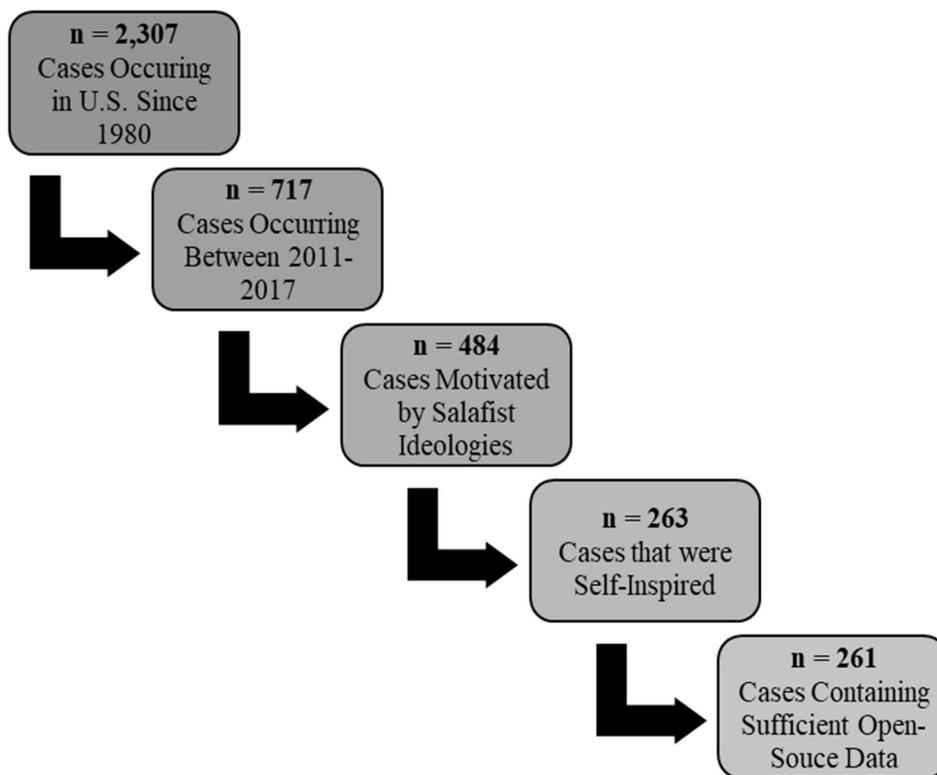


Figure 7. Selection Criteria for Final Sample

In order to provide greater specificity to our analyses, we classified the sample based on criminal charges. Since most subjects were charged with multiple offenses and were accompanied by a terrorism sentencing enhancements,<sup>2</sup> coders adhered to the Hierarchy Rule. Based on the Hierarchy Rule, the most severe of multiple offenses should be identified as the primary offense (Uniform Crime Reports [UCR], 2018). The UCR Hierarchy Rule identifies criminal homicide as the most severe offense, followed by

<sup>2</sup> The terrorism sentencing enhancement is covered by 18 U.S.C. § 2339b., section 3A1.4. and increases sentencing penalties if the defendant is found guilty (Said, 2014).

forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson as lesser severe offenses (UCR Handbook, 2004). Based on these charges, we classified all 261 subjects into either a primary sample or secondary sample.

The primary sample contains individuals who were arrested or killed while engaging in an extremist plot or attack on U.S. soil (18 U.S.C. § 2332a.; 2339b.; 2332f.; 2332h.). Alternatively, the secondary sample individuals were arrested or killed while attempting to travel or successfully traveled abroad as foreign fighters, engaged in activities related to material support of a foreign terrorist organization, affiliated with known members of extremist organization, or were identified to show association with foreign terrorist group (18 U.S.C. § 2332d.; 2339a.; 2339b.; 2339c.; 2339d.). In terms of the current sample, 79 subjects were classified in the primary sample and 182 subjects were classified in the secondary sample.

### **Data Collection**

Researchers who collected open-source material had training in criminology, business, international relations, and industrial and organizational (I/O) psychology. Students devoted approximately 1.5 hours to each subject, gathering open-source data from scholarly case studies (e.g. Kurzman Project, New American Foundation, Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, and PIRUS), watchdog groups (e.g. Counter Extremism Project, The Investigative Project on Terrorism), and public news sources (e.g. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and CBS News). Researchers also relied on information from primary artifacts related to each extremist organization, such as propaganda videos, blog posts from extremist members and potential recruits, and messaging exchanges between the individual and extremist organization.

Additionally, the research team filed Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) requests to obtain court documents and investigative files related to each case (George Washington Program on Extremism, 2018). Among the court documents, criminal complaints contained a substantial amount of information pertaining to the offender and case details. These documents outlined the State’s case against the individual, presented a linear timeline of facts pertaining to the case, and utilized the testimony of expert witnesses, highlighting their training and expertise to prove their legitimacy (see Figure 8 for an example of a criminal complaint). The second tier of our credibility hierarchy contained uncorroborated statements from people with information pertaining to the case, scholarly articles, media reports (e.g., ABC, CNN, *The New York Times*), watch-group reports (e.g., Southern Poverty Law Center, Anti-Defamation League), and personal accounts expressed in blogs, websites, and/or editorials.

14. A review of publicly available information on the social networking site Iphonegram/Instagram revealed several communications connected to [REDACTED] indicative of his desire to conduct violent jihad and to be a part of America’s “down fall.” The individual posting under “[REDACTED]” is believed to be [REDACTED] because in the initial post referenced below, a picture was posted of [REDACTED] standing in front of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineering Sacramento sign ([REDACTED]).

15. On or about May 31, 2013, user [REDACTED] posted: @ [REDACTED] lol “don’t get me wrong I despise america and want its down fall but yeah haha. Lol I been part of the army for two years now and I would love to join Allah’s army but I don’t even know how to start.”

16. On or about August 5, 2013, user [REDACTED] posted: Anyone know where I can get the “lone Mujahid pocket book” #alqaeda#jihadist#jihad #islamicpride#muslim#mashallah#islam#allah#AllahuAkbar#thelonemujahid.

17. Based on my training and experience, I am familiar with the “Lone Mujahid Pocketbook.” It is an how-to guide for becoming a lone wolf terrorist, available online, and includes articles like: “Torching Parked Vehicles,” “Bomb Making,” “Remote Control Detonation,” “Training with the AK,” and “Tips for our brothers in the United Snakes of America.” It is, in essence, a compilation of prior articles scattered through previous issues of Inspire magazine. Inspire magazine is an English-language online magazine associated with foreign terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. It has been published on multiple open source websites.

Figure 8. Example Criminal Complaint

To analyze source credibility, we applied Freilich and colleagues’ (2014) approach, and ranked appellate court proceedings as the most reputable open-source material, followed by court proceedings subject to cross-examination (e.g., trial transcripts); court proceedings or documents not subject to cross-examination (e.g., indictments); and corroborated information from people with direct access to information provided (e.g., law enforcement, key informants). As one indication of the depth and detail of our data collection, Table 1 specifies the average document count for each criminal classification regarding court documents, academic sources, news reports, and other material such as blog posts. On average, researchers obtained the most information pertaining to “other” subjects ( $M = 3.6$ ) followed by plotters ( $M = 3.1$ ), attackers ( $M = 3.0$ ), material supporters ( $M = 2.9$ ), and foreign fighters ( $M = 2.1$ ). As Table 1 illustrates, most of our open-source material was obtained through court documents ( $M = 6.7$ ), followed by news reports ( $M = 3.9$ ), other material ( $M = 0.9$ ) and, finally, academic sources ( $M = 0.1$ ).

*Table 1. Document Count- Criminal Classification*

	<b>Court Documents</b>	<b>Academic Sources</b>	<b>News Reports</b>	<b>Other (e.g., blog posts)</b>	<b>MEAN</b>
<b>Attackers</b>	5.6	0.3	6.0	0.1	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Plotters</b>	8.3	0.0	3.5	0.6	<b>3.1</b>
<b>Foreign Fighters</b>	3.2	0.0	3.3	1.8	<b>2.1</b>
<b>Material Supporters</b>	8.2	0.1	3.0	0.1	<b>2.9</b>
<b>Other</b>	8.2	0.3	3.8	2.1	<b>3.6</b>
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>0.9</b>	

In addition to open-source material, data were also derived from three established datasets, including: (1) Leadership of the Extreme and Dangerous for Innovative Results (LEADIR), (2) Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS), and (3) Salafi Jihadist-Inspired Profiles and Radicalization Clusters (SPARC).

*LEADIR.* Because our view is that the HVEs in our sample consumed organizational material from foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) via cyber channels (e.g., social media), a novel component of the present effort is the examination of the organizational material each HVE consumed. To do this, we relied upon the Leadership of the Extreme and Dangerous for Innovative Results (LEADIR) dataset, which uses an industrial and organizational (I/O) psychology approach to assess violent ideological organizations' features (e.g., structure, leadership, and influence strategies) in relation to their capacity for innovative organizational performance (Ligon, Derrick, & Harms, 2015; Ligon et al., 2013; Logan, Ligon, & Derrick, 2017; Windisch et al., 2018). Using archival data about FTOs, we have collected organizational and leadership data on extremist groups active from 1970 to the present. For example, Salafist organizations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and al-Shabaab are represented in this dataset in a yearly unit of analysis, along with 120 other violent extremist organizations. Data are captured at the year level for each organization of interest to describe each organization's leader, organizational structure, and influence strategy. As one indication of the depth and detail of the data collection, source material for organizational leadership and structure quantified in LEADIR averaged 3,454 words per extremist group.

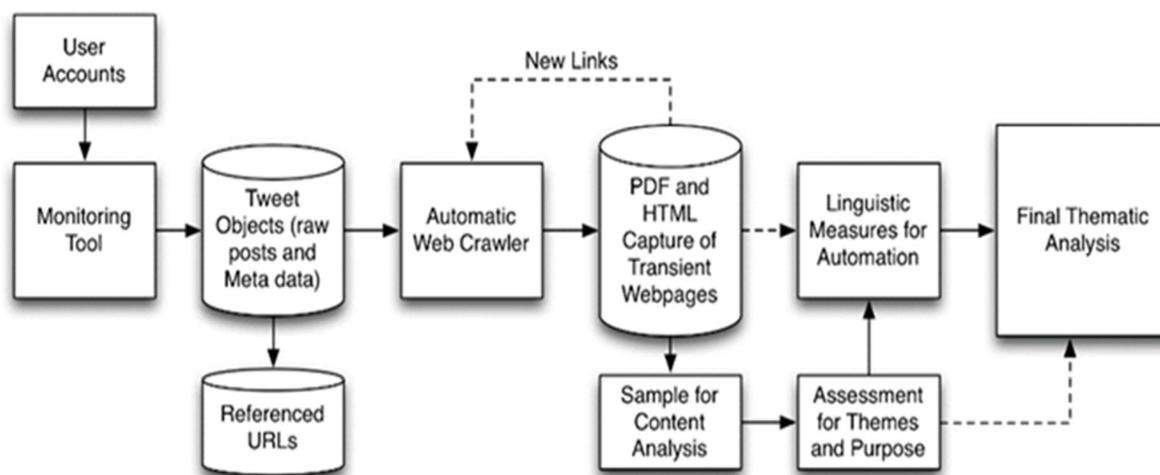


Figure 9. Method of Capturing Cyber Influence Channel Content

To capture the influence strategy and messaging footprint of inspiring FTOs, we also triangulated organizational-level data with information on cyber channels and content consumed by extremist members. For example, our research team utilized a suite of tools to continuously monitor selected social media feeds and permanent websites. In doing so, we implemented an automatic web crawler to capture and store digital content and webpages, and leveraged Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) from social media sites to capture the organizations’ posted digital content history (Derrick, Ligon, Harms, & Mahoney, 2017). In addition, we developed a custom web crawler to follow known user accounts and harvest the web content they direct followers to download on open content publishing sites (e.g., justpaste.it, Archive.org) (see Figure 9).

Using this approach, we successfully harvested 6.4 million Salafi Jihadist-inspired (e.g., ISIL, AQAP) user tweets, and more than 40,000 unique transient webpages to which they direct followers (Derrick, Sporer, Church, & Ligon, 2016). One benefit of this method is it allows for the rapid storage of web content before it is taken down by site administrators. In previous studies, we have used data on social media and open content publishing sites to examine English-based ISIL messaging strategies

(Derrick et al., 2016), justifications for violence among ISIL supporters (Sporer, Logan, Ligon, & Derrick, Forthcoming), and cyber sophistication across ten high-performance extremist organizations (Ligon et al., 2017). Overall, both the LEADIR dataset and the custom method for capturing the influence channels used by violent ideological organizations helped provide a comprehensive analysis of the pull factors for at-risk individuals who were inspired to engage in extremist activities. In other words, the combined datasets provide insight into the interaction between FTO messages from abroad and individuals vulnerable to violent extremism in the United States.

**SPARC.** Using the preliminary profiles of Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists outlined in the HVE Initiative (2011) study, we developed the Salafi Jihadist-Inspired Profiles and Radicalization Clusters (SPARC) dataset to assess the interaction between individual life-histories (e.g., childhood risk factors, personality, education) and Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremist influence. Creating this new dataset was important to the sponsor for at least three reasons. First, it was important that we capture the exact variables assessed in the 2011 Cluster Study to compare and contrast a more modern sample (i.e., 2011 – 2017) to the sample in the original 2011 study. Collaboration with DHS I&A stakeholders resulted in the need to create a new dataset tailored to this effort. Second, as other organizations also have a vested interest in the empirical characteristics that differentiate HVEs in the United States, a new dataset (i.e., SPARC) was required to incorporate HVE mobilization indicators. Finally, given that the overarching goal will be to share our findings with federal, state, and local law enforcement and other safety personnel, it was important to tailor our dataset for the eventual learning outcomes associated with the present effort.

While the present effort is not as comprehensive as the individual-level PIRUS database that samples individuals from every ideological background who have radicalized in the United States, SPARC is a custom dataset that was developed in partnership with the security and intelligence

personnel directly responsible for the HVE mission in the United States. Thus, integrating extremist scholarship indicators with guidance from the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and the Homegrown Violent Extremist (HVE) branch of the Department of Homeland Security Office of Intelligence and Analysis (DHS I&A), we have 92 indicators<sup>3</sup> of collected life-history data on 261 verified U.S. Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists active between 2011 and 2017.

To our knowledge, this is the first empirical examination of indicators established by these agencies in an unclassified dataset. Data include individual-level information on childhood and young adult risk factors, engagement in political and criminal activities (other than terrorism), social networks, cyber behaviors, known extremist affiliations, and individual's criminal charges. While ideology, biographical availability, and social networks have been found to play significant roles in radicalization processes, it is ultimately the combined interaction of several factors that predispose an individual toward extremism. Examining a specific region as it compares to the broader national sample allowed us to better understand the interaction between social context, extremist organization, and individual characteristics.

For the past year, our team has constructed this dataset in close coordination with government end-users directly responsible for the prevention of Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremism in the United States. While the primary function of SPARC is to provide quantitative data about all Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists, the nuanced information available in SPARC also allows for the generation of unclassified forensic biographies to be constructed of individuals in our sample. Thus, SPARC compares extremists in a specific regional context to others that occurred in a similar timeframe, allowing for the identification of pathways to violent radicalization across regions.

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<sup>3</sup> The original HVE Initiative study (2011) relied on 45 characteristics that identified historical information about the individual, and behavioral and social changes that occurred during the radicalization process. Appendix A outlines variables from the original HVE Initiative study and identifies complementary variables captured by SPARC's coding scheme.

LEADIR and SPARC datasets rely on the transformation of qualitative historical information into quantitative data, or historiometry (Parry, Mumford, Bower, & Watts, 2014; Simonton, 1990/1999). Historiometry is widely used in micro-level studies and political psychology (Simonton, 2008), as well as industrial and organizational (I/O) psychology (Ligon, Harris, & Hunter, 2012; Mumford, 2006), to examine historically notable instances of the interaction between people and organizations (e.g., Dean Simonton uses the approach to study U.S. presidents during their terms in office; Simonton, 2003). This rigorous, quantitative method has been executed successfully by our team on the LEADIR project since 2010, resulting in tailored briefings to end users such as the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis (DHS I&A), the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology (DHS S&T), National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Department of Defense Strategic Multilayer Assessment (DoD SMA), and the National Academy of Sciences (see Appendix B for a description of our historiometric coding procedures and scale development).

***PIRUS.*** As a means of triangulation, we compared data from the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) dataset. PIRUS contains individual-level information on the backgrounds, attributes, and radicalization processes of 1,867 violent and non-violent U.S. extremists (Jensen et al., 2016). The PIRUS data include individuals who adhered to far-left, far-right, Islamist, or single-issue ideologies and radicalized in the U.S. between 1948 and 2016. PIRUS has 154 individuals who satisfied inclusion criteria for all Salafi Jihadist-inspired violent extremists who planned or executed an attack and 301 additional individuals who committed lesser offenses (e.g., provided material support to a terrorist organization versus tried to perpetrate an attack in the U.S.) in their entire dataset (Jensen et al., 2016). Thus, because they have sampled from 1948-2016, their data has cases that are outside of the time scope of our present effort (i.e., we examined all of the cases from 2011-2017).

## Coding Strategy

After data collection, a research team consisting of subject matter experts (SMEs) from the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis (DHS I&A) assisted in developing behaviorally-anchored rating scales (BARS) for individual-level predictors over the course of two focus groups (Ligon, Simi, Harms, & Harris, 2013). These scales included operational definitions with readily observable and concrete examples as a reference point to facilitate reliable, valid ratings for each category of variables (i.e., demographics, entry processes, attack characteristics) and were developed with the same practices used in psychometric test development (Osterlind, 1983).

The development of BARS requires an initial oversampling from the population of interest to identify low, moderate, and high behavioral examples of a given construct. We oversampled by 10 percent and then randomly selected 10 percent of that sample to a priori identify benchmark behaviors to exemplify constructs (Ligon, Harris, & Hunter, 2012). These illustrative examples provide a sample-bound reference for raters to use in assessing individual constructs relative to those of other outstanding subjects. This approach is commonly employed in the use of historical records to examine organizational behavior (Simonton, 1990/2009; Woods, 1911). These BARS were also defined, iteratively reviewed, and edited to ensure clarity, parsimony, and unidimensionality.

The central purpose of this methodological approach is to reliably assess individual constructs of interest across independent raters based on SME-generated benchmarks to increase the validity of inferences drawn from the historical records of interest (Debnath, Lee, Tandon, 2015; Schwab, Heneman, & De Cotiis, 1975). A benefit of this approach is that it accounts for the context in which each individual conducted his/her affairs. Due to the depth of the investigations, the data are often quite rich. More importantly, as opposed to cross sectional research (e.g., surveys, mailing lists),

historiometric approaches allow us to examine the sustainability of performance (Bedell-Avers, Hunter, Angie, Eubanks, & Mumford, 2009; Mumford, 2006). Because the approach is rooted in the historical significance of these individuals, examining the lasting (and sometimes non-lasting) effects of their decisions provides researchers with a time-tested gauge of performance (Ligon, Harris, & Hunter, 2012).

To assess reliability among judges, raters coded 10 percent of the sample independently, resulting in an interrater reliability of  $\alpha = .93$ , which is higher than the accepted appropriate interrater reliability with historiometry ( $\alpha = .80$ ) (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). Ratings were then averaged across independent judges to lessen the likelihood of spurious errors in any one individual's scores.

### **Analytic Approach**

In terms of quantitative analysis, the research team highlighted key differences and similarities in the life-histories and background characteristics of Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists using three approaches. First, we conducted a series of basic descriptive statistics, correlations, and cross tabulations to identify frequencies across multiple variables using SPSS 24. We also conducted several analysis of variance tests (ANOVA) with significantly-related variables identified in the correlations in order to assess their similarities and differences and to identify an initial set of characteristics to include in cluster analysis.

Second, *k*-means clustering was then performed in order to develop a classification scheme of U.S. Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists based on the original HVE Initiative report. *K*-means clustering is a method commonly used to partition a dataset in *k* groups (MacQuenn, 1967; Wagstaff, Cardie, Rogers, & Schroedl, 2001). *K*-means clustering is beneficial for this study because it organically classifies cases in groups. One challenge of *k*-means clustering is determining the number of cluster assignments. To do so, we determined *k* (i.e., the number of clusters) through two steps. First, we

examined theory and prior research and drew conclusions from the larger literature on radicalization. (e.g., Jensen et al., 2018; HVE Initiative, 2011). Second, we determined  $k$  based on the number of iterations required and by comparing the mean distance between the cluster centers and each data point.  $K$ -means cluster analysis begins by randomly assigning cases to clusters and calculating the mean of the object scores for each cluster. If a case is closer to a mean score of a cluster other than the one to which it was assigned, the case is moved to that cluster and the mean scores and distance measures are recalculated. This iterative process continues until no further cases can be reassigned to clusters. Overall, we ended up with a five-cluster solution using an iterative process that maximized the number of original HVE Initiative (2011) and SPARC variables in the analysis.

Finally, we used a Pearson chi-squared test to check for independence and homogeneity of proportions for variables of interest across clusters (see Appendix C). The findings from these analyses also supported the development of forensic biographies to drive the qualitative portion of the study. We constructed unclassified case files of all extremists who have mobilized to violence in all twelve Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis (DHS I&A) Operational Field regions to prepare our research partners at the University of Southern California (USC) for their qualitative portion of the study.

### **Overall Methodological Strengths and Limitations**

There are several limitations of this study that are important to mention. First, the sample was predominantly male, which may have yielded data subject to gender biases.

Second, due to the relatively hidden nature of this population, the sample was derived through open-source data collection, and as a result is not representative, which prevents generalizing these findings to other violent extremist groups. Of course, the goal of this type of historiometric approach is

not generalization, but rather identifying social processes, inductively building theory, and describing causal mechanisms.

Third, our sample primarily included individuals who joined Salafist extremist groups during adolescence, potentially neglecting differences in entry among individuals who entered during pre-adolescence or adulthood.

Fourth, as part of our exploratory analysis, the findings are also limited by problems with missing data.

Lastly, our data does not allow us to address further developmental factors that may play a major role in an individual's propensity to engage in antisocial behavior (Wright & Beaver, 2005). We see developmental factors as important aspects of violent extremism that future research should explore. Despite these limitations, this report represents an important effort in terms of providing an empirically-informed theoretical explanation for participation in violent extremism.

# **Report 1**

## **Salafi Jihadist-Inspired Profiles and Radicalization Clusters**

## REPORT 1: SALAFI JIHADIST-INSPIRED PROFILES AND RADICALIZATION CLUSTERS

### Descriptive Analysis Across Full Sample

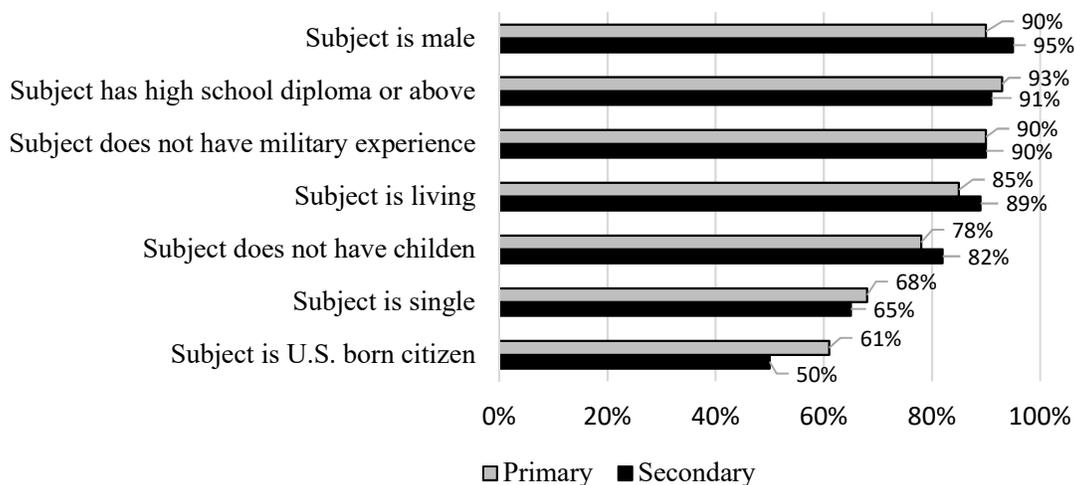
The current sample contains 261 Salafi Jihadi-inspired extremists consisting of 25 (10 percent) female and 236 (90 percent) male participants whose ages range from 15 to 58 years of age ( $M = 28.15$ ;  $SD = 8.76$ ). In terms of nationality, 134 (59 percent) subjects were identified as United States-born citizens; 41 (18 percent) as permanent residents; 35 (15 percent) as naturalized citizens; 8 (4 percent) as refugee or asylum seekers; 7 (3 percent) as other (e.g., green card, illegal immigrant); and 4 (2 percent) subjects as nonimmigrant visa holders. In terms of education, 22 (8 percent) individuals received less than a high school diploma, 173 (66 percent) received a high school diploma or equivalency, 50 (19 percent) attended some college, 1 (1 percent) received a 2-year college degree, 8 (3 percent) received a 4-year college degree, and 7 (3 percent) subjects received a graduate diploma. Regarding marital status, 173 (70 percent) subjects were single, 52 (21 percent) were married, 1 (1 percent) was cohabitating; 8 (3 percent) were engaged but not married, 12 (5 percent) were divorced and 1 (1 percent) subject was widowed.

### Descriptive Analysis Across Primary and Secondary Sample

Prior to establishing our cluster solutions, we analyzed both primary and secondary samples using descriptive statistics in order to identify similarities and differences. In doing so, we are able to establish an initial set of characteristics to include in our cluster analyses (see Appendix C for complete list of descriptive statistics). Our descriptive analyses were separated into five relevant domains: (1) individual traits, (2) motivating characteristics, (3) entry characteristics, (4) indoctrination processes, and (5) willingness to take violent action. Within each of these domains, we identified multiple factors

that were present at such a high rate that they can be considered near-ubiquitous characteristics of the radicalization process of U.S. Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists.

*Table 2. Individual Traits across Primary and Secondary Samples*

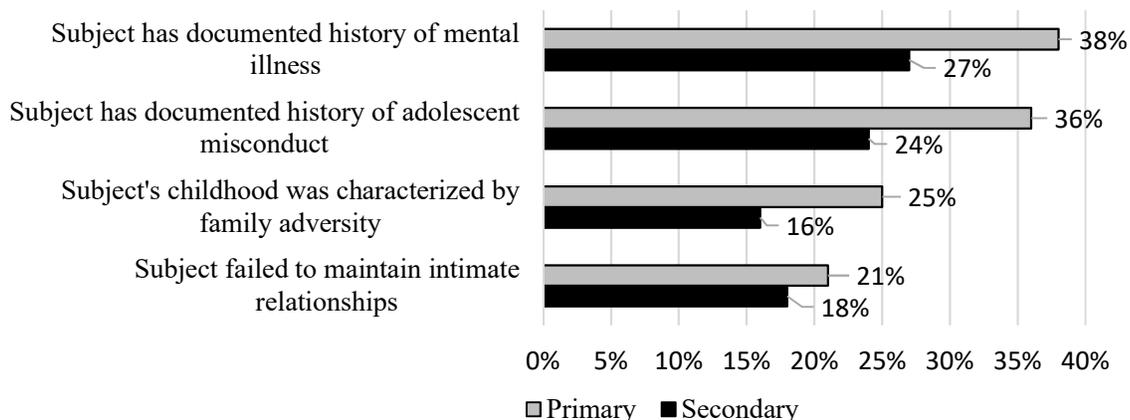


Overall, our findings are in line with prior research regarding general characteristics of violent extremists (Blee, 2002; LaFree & Dugan, 2004). Specifically, the majority of individuals in each sample were:

- Male: 90 percent of the primary sample and 95 percent of the secondary sample were men.
- In terms of education, 93 percent of the primary sample and 91 percent of the secondary sample received at least a high school diploma.
- Subjects in both primary (90 percent) and secondary (90 percent) samples had little-to-no military experience.
- Moreover, 78 percent of the primary sample and 82 percent of the secondary sample did not have children at the time of their arrest or attack.

- Similarly, 68 percent of the primary sample and 65 percent of the secondary sample were not married or in a long-term romantic relationship.
- Finally, 61 percent of the primary sample and 50 percent of the secondary sample were U.S. citizens.

*Table 3. Subordinate Individual Traits across Primary and Secondary Samples*

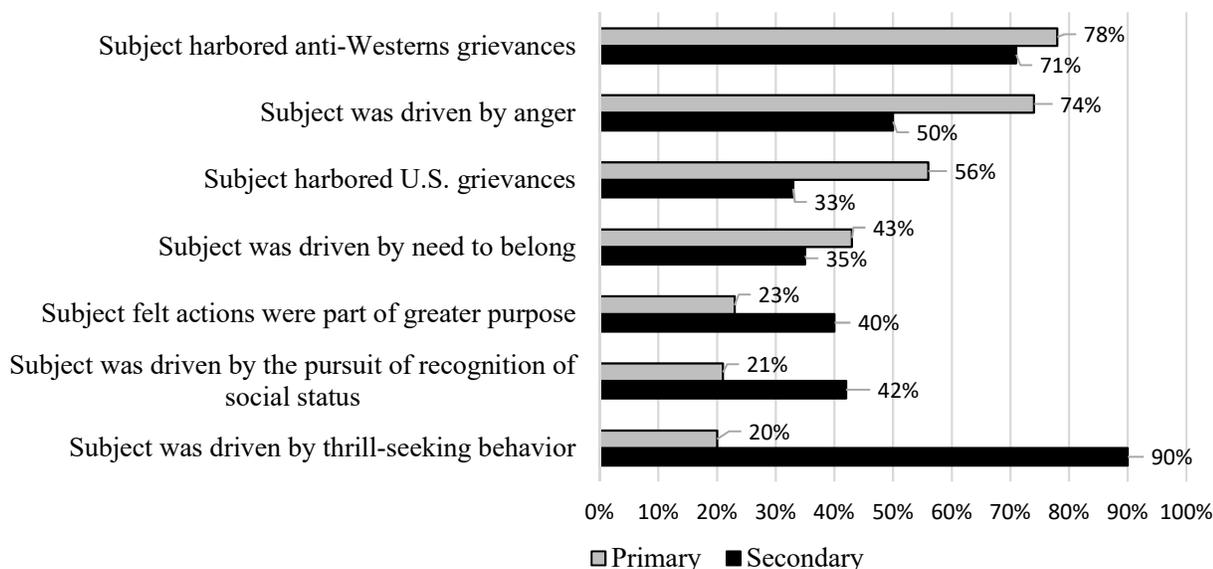


To a lesser extent, subjects in both primary and secondary samples displayed the following characteristics:

- First, both primary (38 percent) and secondary (27 percent) samples displayed moderate rates of documented mental illness (e.g., depression, anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.).
- Second, 36 percent of the primary sample and 24 percent of the secondary sample were found to have documented histories of adolescent misconduct (e.g., theft under \$50, truancy, underage drinking) prior to and unrelated to their extremist participation.
- Subjects in both primary (25 percent) and secondary (16 percent) samples grew up in homes that were characterized by family adversity (e.g., documented parental mental illness, parental substance abuse, parental incarceration, single parent household, etc.).

- Finally, 21 percent of the primary sample and 18 percent of the secondary sample failed to maintain sexually-intimate and long-lasting romantic relationships.

*Table 4. Motivating Characteristics across Primary and Secondary Samples*



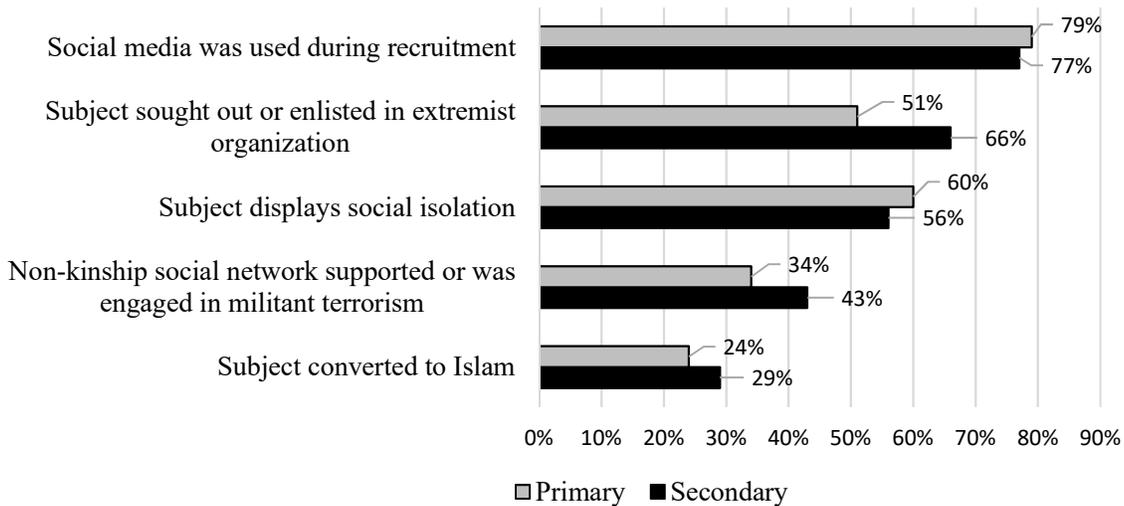
In addition to individual traits, we analyzed the various motivations that prompted these individuals to accept extremist beliefs. As illustrated in Table 4, a variety of characters were relatively common across both samples.

- First, 78 percent of the primary sample and 71 percent of the secondary sample harbored anti-Western grievances such as the sexualization of women, homosexuality, globalization, and the lack of emphasis on religious institutions and/or moral principles.
- Similarly, subjects in primary (74 percent) and secondary (50 percent) samples were driven by anger that stemmed from their anti-Western belief system.

- In conjunction with anti-Western views and anger, 56 percent of the primary sample and 33 percent of the secondary sample harbored specific grievances against the U.S. such as criticisms with foreign policies, presidential leadership, and military occupation in Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

Based on the original 2011 HVE Initiative Cluster study, we were also interested to examine the process by which our subjects joined an extremist organization. Five noteworthy trends emerged across both primary and secondary samples.

*Table 5. Entry Characteristics across Primary and Secondary Samples*

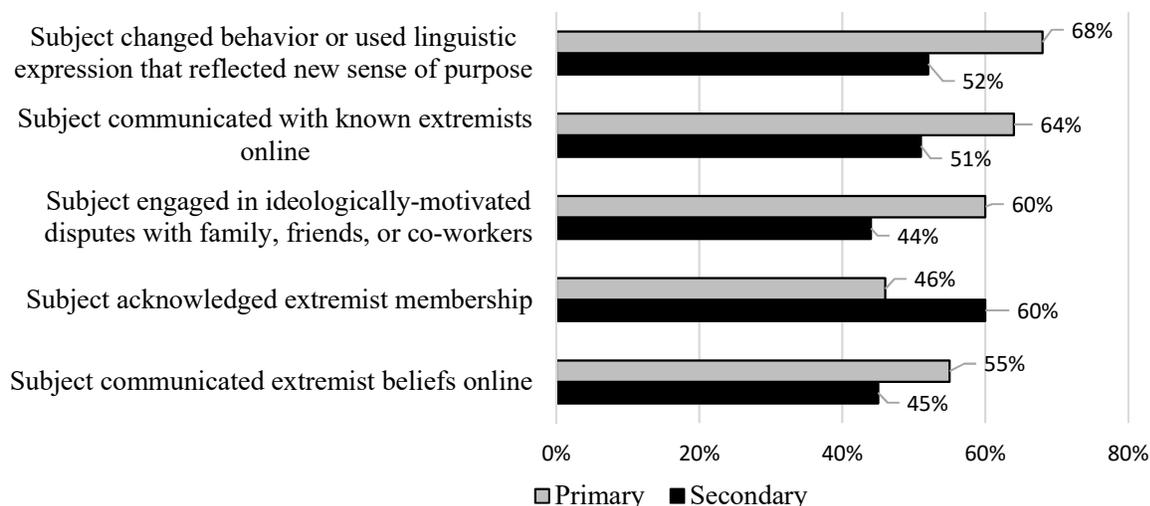


- First, social media was found to be common across both primary (79 percent) and secondary (77 percent) samples.
- Second, 51 percent of the primary sample and 66 percent of the secondary sample sought out or enlisted in an extremist organization.
- Moreover, subjects in both primary (60 percent) and secondary (56 percent) samples displayed increasingly isolated behavior in which they withdrew from close friends and/or family members prior to joining an extremist group.

- In conjunction with social isolation, 34 percent of the primary sample and 43 percent of the secondary sample were found to have non-kinship social networks that supported or were engaged in militant terrorism.
- To a lesser extent, subjects in both primary (24 percent) and secondary (29 percent) samples converted to Islam before joining an extremist organization.

Dovetailing off entry processes, we were also interested to see whether subjects experienced a transformation in their belief system following entry into an extremist group.

*Table 6. Indoctrination across Primary and Secondary Samples*



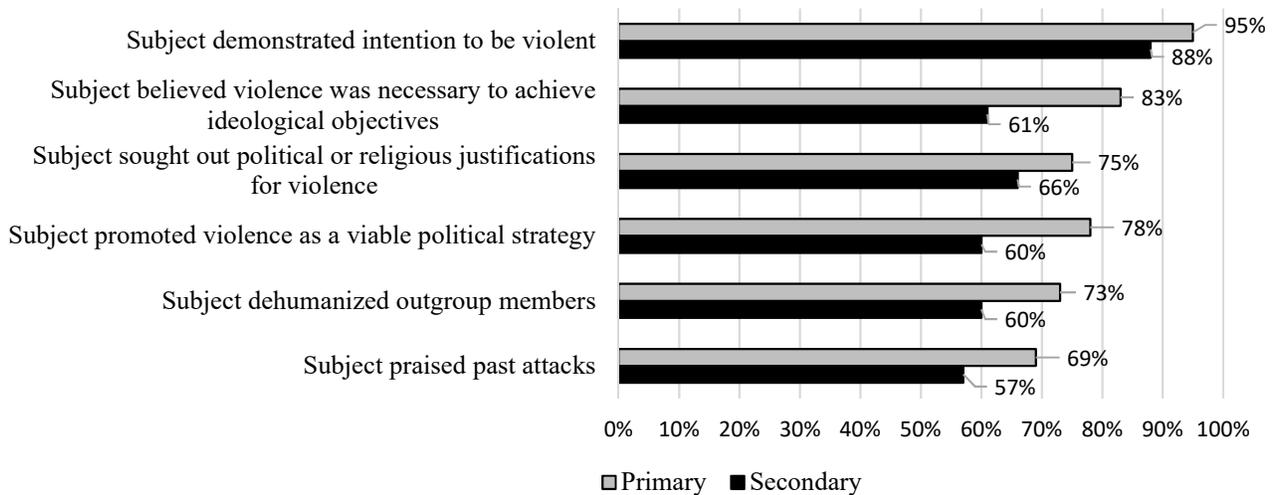
- First, subjects in primary (68 percent) and secondary (52 percent) samples were found to change their behavior and used linguistic expressions that reflected a new sense of purpose.
- Moreover, 64 percent of the primary sample and 51 percent of the secondary sample communicated with known extremists online.
- Subjects in both primary (60 percent) and secondary (44 percent) samples were found to engage in ideologically-motivated disputes with family, friends, and/or co-workers.

- Relatedly, 46 percent of the primary sample and 60 percent of the secondary sample acknowledged membership in a foreign terrorist organization. For some of these subjects, this involved a symbolic expression of loyalty, whereas other times this involved a formal declaration online (e.g., personal blog, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook).
- Finally, across both primary (55 percent) and secondary (45 percent) samples, subjects were found to communicate extremist beliefs online.

While subjects were distinguished by their criminal classification as an attacker, plotter, foreign fighter, or material supporter, we were able to identify considerable evidence of a willingness to engage in violence *prior to their act* of violent extremism across both primary and secondary samples.

Specifically, the majority of individuals in each sample displayed the following characteristics:

*Table 7. Willingness to be Violent across Primary and Secondary Samples*

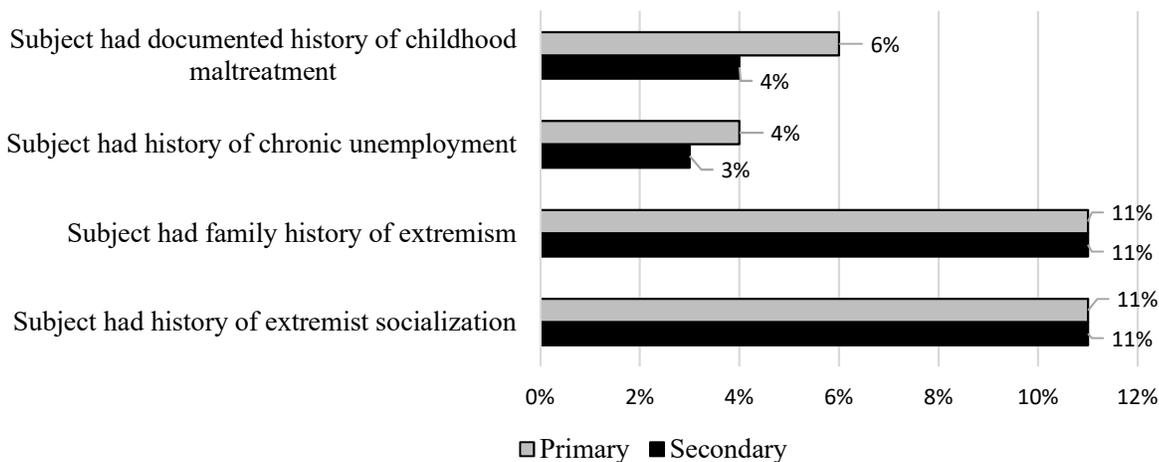


- Across both primary (95 percent) and secondary (88 percent) samples, subjects displayed intentions to be violent (e.g., gathering weapons, communicating threats, generating “hit lists”).
- Moreover, 83 percent of the primary sample and 61 percent of the secondary sample believed violence was necessary to achieve ideological objectives.

- In a similar way, 75 percent of the primary sample and 66 percent of the secondary sample sought out political or religious justifications for using violence.
- Relatedly, subjects in both primary (78 percent) and secondary (60 percent) samples were found to promote violence as a viable political strategy.
- Moreover, among both primary (73 percent) and secondary (60 percent) samples subjects were found to dehumanize outgroup members.
- Finally, 69 percent of the primary sample and 57 percent of the secondary sample praised past attacks.

While these above characteristics were relatively common among both primary and secondary samples, several important trends were less common among subjects.

*Table 8. Comparatively Rare Sample Characteristics/Traits*



- First, very few subjects in both primary (6 percent) and secondary (4 percent) samples displayed documented histories of childhood maltreatment.

- Furthermore, a minority of subjects in both the primary (4 percent) and secondary (3 percent) samples had a documented history of chronic unemployment.
- Similarly, a small portion of subjects in both the primary (11 percent) and secondary (11 percent) samples had family members who were involved in extremism.
- Finally, socialization toward extremist beliefs was only displayed among a few subjects in both primary (11 percent) and secondary (11 percent) samples.

### **Cluster Solutions**

Relying on the information derived from the descriptive statistics analyses, we were able to select the most relevant variables for our *k*-means cluster analyses. Results of the *k*-means cluster analysis show that Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists form five distinct clusters that are separated primarily on measures of entry type, digital role, ideological change, mental illness, grievances against the United States, and documented adolescent misconduct. Before reviewing each of the clusters, however, it is important to make two clarifying points.

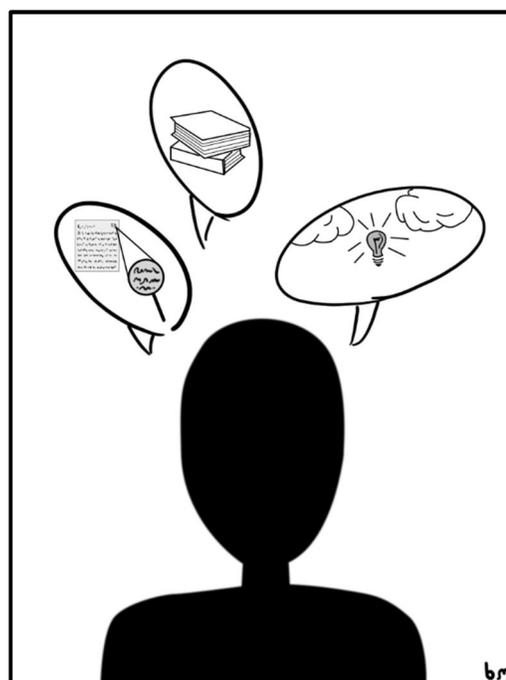
First, the results below show the mean values of attributes that were found to be statistically significant for distinguishing the subjects from one another. These attributes can be thought of as cluster's signature quality. A case is assigned to the cluster that it best fits as calculated by its distances from each cluster's mean score. Therefore, a case may be assigned to a cluster because it displays one or two of the cluster's core attributes, and none of the attributes of the other clusters. Thus, each cluster is made up of subjects who displayed varying rates of the clusters' main features.

Second, cluster analysis highlights attributes that distinguish subjects from one another and, as a result, tends to downplay the importance of factors that are ubiquitous or generally present in all clusters. In this study, variables related to consumption of extremist media content, communicating

threats, violence as an outlet, and praising past attacks were present at such high rates that they were not useful for distinguishing extremists from each other. In other words, these variables were so common for our subjects that they cannot be viewed as unique to any one cluster or group but rather should be considered core components of all clusters. In the following sections, we provide a detailed description of each of our five clusters including: (1) Skilled, Significance Seekers, (2) Action-Oriented Clandestines, (3) Accomplice Kin, (4) Disgruntled Naïve, and (5) Troubled Combatants.

**Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster**

The Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster primarily consisted of individuals who were driven by a need to gain or restore their personal significance. For these subjects, extremist participation was seen an attempt to achieve something greater than themselves and/or restore their self-image. In other words, individuals in this cluster were unique (relative to the other clusters) by their need to belong and by their willingness to publicly acknowledge their extremist affiliations. Individuals in this cluster were critical of western culture and used operational security measures to mask their online behaviors. These individuals



*Figure 10. Skilled Significance Seekers*

also experienced moderate ideological changes and a general turn towards violence. Although individuals in this cluster showed signs of outward anger, these feelings were not driven by specific grievances toward the United States. Finally, these subjects were highly educated/skilled and showed no signs of documented mental illness, documented adolescent misconduct, or family history of extremism.

In order to provide greater specificity to the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster, we discuss key similarities and differences between primary and secondary samples.

***Primary Sample (N = 19)***

- Individuals in the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster were, on average approximately 29.1 years of age at the time of their involvement with extremist activities. Moreover, individuals in the primary sample of the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster were entirely male (100 percent).
- The vast majority of subjects (95 percent) in this cluster participated in online sites (e.g., websites, social media, mobile apps) or groups that promoted violent extremism. Likewise, most subjects (89 percent) were found to communicate with, retweet, or link to violent extremist content online.
- Over two-thirds (63 percent) individuals of the primary sample were also found to conduct sensitive searches related to non-extremist (e.g., pornographic material) and extremist material (e.g., address of elected officials). To a lesser degree, subjects (32 percent) were found to encrypt their social media accounts and/or delete online accounts (37 percent).
- Most subjects who were assigned to the primary sample of the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster changed their behavior or used linguistic expressions that reflected a new sense of purpose related to violent extremist causes. In conjunctions with their behavioral change, subjects in this cluster were also found to be driven by anger (84 percent), dehumanize outgroup members (89 percent), and praise past attacks (95 percent) conducted by extremist groups.
- In contrast to the Troubled Combatants Cluster, individuals in the primary sample of the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster did not struggle to maintain sexually intimate relationships (11 percent) and were less likely to have a history of mental illness (11 percent).

- Finally, individuals in the primary sample did not display warning behavior that violent action was imperative or time sensitive (5 percent).

There are a few notable primary sample individuals who were assigned to the Skilled, Significance Seeker Cluster. For example, Subject 246 is a deceased 32-year-old attacker who openly expressed anti-government and anti-Western sentiment on his Facebook account and repeatedly searched beheading videos. As an indication of his desire to belong, Subject 246 browsed a variety of extremist groups, such as ISIL, al-Qaeda, and al-Shabaab. The majority of his posts emphasized military tactical retaliation, often discussing the oppression of citizens in the Middle East (Celona, Fenton, Conley, & Italiano, 2014). Subject 246 elected to use a hatchet to attack four police officers, which suggests a high level of intimacy associated with violence.

### ***Secondary Sample (N = 38)***

- Individuals in the secondary sample of the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster were, on average, approximately 28 years of age at the time of their extremist involvement. Moreover, individuals in the secondary sample of the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster were predominately male (95 percent).
- Secondary subjects in the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster displayed high rates (97 percent) of participation in online sites (e.g., website, social media, mobile apps) or groups that promoted violent extremism. Likewise, most subjects (82 percent) were found to communicate with, retweet, or link to violent extremists online.
- Less than two-thirds (61 percent) of individuals from the secondary sample were also found to conduct sensitive searches related to non-extremist (e.g., pornographic material) and extremist

material (e.g., address of elected officials). To a lesser degree, subjects (42 percent) were found to encrypt their social media accounts and/or delete online accounts (29 percent) altogether.

- Most subjects (87 percent) in secondary sample of the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster were also found to dehumanize outgroup members and praise past attacks (84 percent) conducted by extremist groups.
- Finally, in contrast to the Troubled Combatants Cluster, individuals in the secondary sample of the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster did not struggle to maintain long-term, sexually intimate relationships (8 percent) and were less likely to have a history of mental illness (11 percent).

Several individuals assigned to the secondary sample exemplify these distinguishing characteristics. For instance, Subject 41 was identified as a 20-year-old male who was charged and imprisoned for providing material support and resources to a designated extremist organization and transmitting communications with the intent of causing bodily harm. Subject 41 operated 72 separate social media accounts which he used to facilitate the travel of ISIL recruits. Specifically, Subject 41 served as a liaison between potential foreign fighters and facilitators in Turkey by sharing location and contact information between ISIL sympathizers and recruiters. He also offered potential recruits advice on how to travel to Syria without raising suspicion. Additionally, the accounts were used to share pro-ISIL rhetoric, calling for violence as a necessary action. He frequently encouraged the killing of non-Muslims by tweeting the hashtag #killallkuffar. Subject 41 also possessed a cache of military tactical equipment at the time of his arrest, which suggested a desire to join ISIL in a capacity beyond online recruiter.

Another example involves Subject 55, a 38-year-old resident of Washington D.C. charged in May 2017 with illegally purchasing a firearm. Subject 55 was prominently active on Facebook, where he habitually posted pro-ISIL rhetoric and expressed a fascination with weapons. As evident in his Facebook activity, his narrative expression escalated from anti-white racism to pro-extremist ideology. In a 2016 post, Subject 55 discussed a strong desire to incite a violent revolution against whites in an effort to start a race war by writing, “Let’s put bullets in them.” (Gresko, 2017).

**Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster**

The Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster is comprised of individuals whose actions were relatively covert (clandestine) until they acted, and people closest to them often reported feeling surprised by their extremist actions in interviews. Subjects in this cluster were often (but not always) material supporters and foreign fighters. Over 75 percent of these subjects were focused abroad versus in the homeland; in addition to traveling out of the U.S., subjects made financial donations, recruited members to fight abroad, and/or sent weapons and supplies to foreign terrorist organizations. Relative to the other clusters, these individuals were



*Figure 11. Action-Oriented Clandestines*

the least likely to use cyber as a platform for publicly sharing their extremist views. Rather, cyber was used pragmatically as a way to support extremist operations, but not participate in extremist networks or engage with extremist propaganda. Although the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster were the second most likely to acknowledge their extremist affiliation, this willingness did not derive from increasingly violent or apocalyptic worldviews anger, U.S. grievances, nor other ideological shifts. Furthermore, these individuals did not have a history of family extremism, documented mental illness, documented

adolescent misconduct, or need to belong. In order to provide greater specificity to the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster, we discuss key similarities and differences between primary and secondary samples.

***Primary Sample (N = 16)***

- Individuals in the primary sample of the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster were, on average, approximately 26.8 years of age at the time of their involvement with extremist activities. Moreover, 94 percent of individuals in the primary sample of the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster were male.
- The majority of these subjects worked an unskilled job (69 percent) and only one subject (6 percent) graduated from college.
- Around two-thirds (63 percent) of individuals from the primary sample were recruited alone.
- Approximately a quarter of individuals (25 percent) believed violence would bring ideological success, although few subjects in the primary cluster justified violence (6 percent), praised attacks (6 percent), or promoted violence (13 percent).
- Few subjects in this cluster participated in online websites that promoted violent extremism (19 percent) or communicated their extremist political views online (6 percent).
- Finally, individuals in the primary sample of the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster did not struggle to maintain long-term, sexually intimate relationships (6 percent); experience employment frustrations (0 percent); blame others for their problems (0 percent); or use linguistic expressions that reflected a new sense of purpose (0 percent).

There are a few notable primary sample individuals who were assigned to the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster. For example, Subject 251 is a 27-year-old attacker from New York. He viewed extremist content, such as bomb-making information, online but exhibited minimal digital involvement on social sites, which suggests a low degree of online participation. Following his arrest, law enforcements agents were able to review his internet browser history and found multiple searches for extremist content such as images, videos, and pamphlets. This suggests that Subject 251 neglected to mask or otherwise encrypt his online activities on his personal computer.

***Secondary Sample (N = 66)***

- Individuals in the secondary sample of the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster were, on average, approximately 27.4 years of age at the time of their involvement with extremist activities. Approximately 11 percent of these individuals were female, and 14 percent had children.
- Slightly over half (55 percent) of subjects worked unskilled jobs, and the majority 76 percent did not attend college.
- Around 39 percent of subjects previously traveled abroad, and 32 percent were recruited alone.
- Approximately 30 percent of the subjects in the secondary sample of the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster participated online, 11 percent were found to conduct sensitive searches related to non-extremist and extremist material, and 3 percent were found to encrypt their social media accounts.
- Subjects in the secondary sample of the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster were unlikely to experience employment frustrations (0 percent) or blame others for their problems (0 percent).

These individuals were, however, more likely to dehumanize outgroup members (17 percent) and justify violent action (18 percent).

- Lastly, subjects in the secondary sample of the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster did not use linguistic expressions that reflected a new sense of purpose related to violent extremist causes (11 percent), nor did they engage in ideological disputes with friends, family or co-workers (6 percent).

Several individuals assigned to the secondary sample exemplify these distinguishing characteristics. For instance, Subject 15 is an 18-year-old male U.S. citizen who maintained both Twitter and Instagram accounts that were often filled with sports updates, popular culture references, and family photos. Quite rapidly, however, Subject 15 began posting critical comments and anger toward the United States. Subject 15 did not attempt to encrypt or alter online activities; instead, he openly expressed praise for Allah (Yuen, 2015). Subject 15 was charged and imprisoned for providing material support to ISIL in conjunction with three other subjects from the same city (Department of Justice, 2015).

Another example involves Subject 261, who attempted to travel abroad as a foreign fighter. He exhibited high levels of online stealth by directing his associates to erase multiple hard drives, which contained numerous issues of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) *Inspire* magazine and a propaganda video that showed the bombing of U.S. military vehicles in the Middle East (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013). Subject 261 had a low degree of online participation beyond viewing content and did not openly post his support of extremist activities online.

### Accomplice Kin Cluster

The Accomplice Kin Cluster consisted of individuals whose extremist involvement was influenced by close kin relationships. These individuals were the most likely to have immediate relatives and/or romantic partners involved in extremism. As part of these relationships, subjects received extremist socialization. While most individuals were not raised by extremist members, a large portion were exposed to ideas consistent with Salafist ideologies. This exposure, in



Figure 12. *Accomplice Kin*

turn, provided individuals with cognitive frames encouraging certain types of racialized interpretations and desensitized them to violent action. The Accomplice Kin Cluster individuals were online critics and showed signs of using stealthy online behaviors. In addition, these individuals were more likely to view the world apocalyptically and used violence as a last resort. These subjects were also found to experience a turn toward violence, moderate ideological change, and high levels of anger. The source of these behavioral and attitudinal changes was not, however, based on grievances toward the U.S. Individuals in the Accomplice Kin Cluster also did not have documented indicators of mental illness or adolescent misconduct. In order to provide greater specificity to the Accomplice Kin Cluster, we discuss key similarities and differences between primary and secondary samples.

***Primary Sample (N = 9)***

- Individuals in the primary sample of the Accomplice Kin Cluster were, on average, 28.7 years of age at the time of their involvement with extremist activities. All but one subject was male, and almost half (44 percent) had children.
- Each of the individuals in this cluster experienced family socialization into extremism (100 percent), had at least one extremist family member (100 percent), and thought violence was necessary for political gains (100 percent).
- The majority of subjects (89 percent) used media during their recruitment process, and 67 percent were supported by non-kinship networks.
- Over three-fourths (78 percent) communicated their political views online, and close to two-thirds of subjects (67 percent) had grievances toward the U.S.
- Only one of the subjects in the primary sample of the Accomplice Kin Cluster had prior military experience (11 percent), and none engaged in virtual attack simulations (0 percent).
- Lastly, none of the subjects in the secondary sample of the Accomplice Kin Cluster were recruited alone (0 percent) nor driven to extremism for excitement, glory, or thrill-seeking behavior (0 percent).

There are a few notable primary sample individuals who were assigned to the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster. For example, Subject 77 and his cousin, Subject 78, intended to attack the Joliet Armory in Will County, Illinois, in 2015 (Meisner, 2016). Subject 77, a former National Guard specialist, and his cousin planned the attack to be carried out using grenades and AK-47 assault rifles, and then would travel abroad together in an effort to become foreign fighters. He expressed anti-military views during his trial, stating, “They would’ve strapped a bomb to your chest and sent you out to kill

Shiites. They are not holy warriors. They are murderous bullies, and you would have just been a pawn to them” (Meisner, 2016). This narrative expression indicates a high level of anger and ideological change from electively joining the military to condemning its participants.

### *Secondary Sample (N = 14)*

- Individuals in the secondary sample of the Accomplice Kin Cluster were, on average approximately 24.4 years of age at the time of their involvement with extremist activities. Moreover, 71 percent of these subjects were male, only one had children (8 percent), and less than half were single (43 percent).
- Each of the individuals in this cluster experienced family socialization into extremism (100 percent) and had at least one extremist family member (100 percent). Furthermore, all the subjects in the secondary sample of the Accomplice Kin Cluster sought political or religious justifications for violence and showed violent intentions (100 percent).
- Most subjects (86 percent) used media during their recruitment process, and 64 percent were found to conduct sensitive online searches related to extremist and non-extremist material.
- Close to one-third of subjects had grievances against the U.S. (29 percent) and less than one-quarter (21 percent) were recruited alone.
- Lastly, none of the individuals in the secondary sample of the Accomplice Kin Cluster thought violence was a time-imperative action (0 percent).

Several individuals assigned to the secondary sample exemplify these distinguishing characteristics. For instance, Subject 50 was convicted as an accessory to terrorist activity as a result of radicalizing in conjunction with a close friend. He provided financial support to an intended attacker,

loaning the individual money to store explosive materials prior to the attack and failing to report the plot to law enforcement (United States of America v. Subject 50, 2015). In addition to providing material support to another individual in our sample, Subject 50 shared jihadist views with his friend, which suggests he radicalized in conjunction with his friend.

**Disgruntled Naïve Cluster**

The Disgruntled Naïve Cluster consisted of individuals who were generally predisposed toward violence. These individuals developed apocalyptic worldviews, a preference for violence, and displayed the highest levels of anger across the five clusters. Moreover, relative to the other clusters, these individuals were more likely to seek out extremist networks, despite their unwillingness to publicly acknowledge their extremist affiliations. Although these individuals displayed critical views online, the source of their anger was not based on U.S. grievances. Finally, these individuals generally did not show signs of documented mental illness, documented adolescent misconduct, or a need for belonging. To provide greater specificity to the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster, we discuss key similarities and differences between primary and secondary samples.



*Figure 13. Disgruntled Naïve*

***Primary Sample (N = 24)***

- Individuals in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster were, on average, approximately 29.0 years of age the time of their involvement with extremist activities. Similar to other clusters, the vast majority (92 percent) of subjects in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster were male.
- Subjects in the primary sample of the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster displayed the highest degree of violence and anger. Specifically, all subjects in this cluster (100 percent) felt the use of violence would be a successful political and tactical strategy, expressed an intention to be violent, and used extremist violence as an outlet for their anger and frustration.
- Subjects in the primary sample of the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster sought out extremist material and propaganda that justified the use of violence (92 percent) and promoted the use of violence (96 percent) to others on social media and in face-to-face interactions.
- In conjunction with their willingness to be violent, most subjects in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster were driven by anger (83 percent); were found to dehumanize outgroup members (88 percent); and praised past attacks (88 percent) such as the Paris Attacks, and the San Bernardino and Orlando shootings.
- Unlike subjects in the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster, individuals in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster were not driven by a need for greater purpose (17 percent); thrill seeking behavior (4 percent); or social status (17 percent). These subjects did not intend for their actions to restore personal significance or worth but rather were characterized as possessing a maladaptive coping strategy to deal with negative emotions such as anger and frustration.
- Unlike the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster, only a small proportion (8 percent) of subjects in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster did not express a desire to act or travel abroad.

- Finally, although subjects in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster had extensive histories of anger and frustration, only a quarter of them (25 percent) displayed a documented history of adolescent misconduct (e.g., petty theft, underage drinking, property damage).

Several individuals assigned to the primary sample exemplify these distinguishing characteristics. For instance, Subject 2 was arrested in 2011 for plotting an attack on military personnel in the United States. This individual had military experience, and his time deployed to Afghanistan informed his decision to consciously object to military action in the Middle East. Subject 2's narrative expression was predominately anti-military, rather than based on grievances against U.S. culture. Islamic materials regarding war and peace influenced his anger against the West and predisposed him for violent action. This is evident by the cache of tactical military equipment and bomb-making materials that were found among his belongings at the time of his arrest (Finn & Fordham, 2011). Throughout his trial, Subject 2 continued to express anger and radical worldviews as he praised the actions of Major Nidal M. Hasan, who murdered 13 people during the Ft. Hood shooting in 2009.

### *Secondary Sample (N = 45)*

- Individuals in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster were, on average, approximately 30.1 years of age at the time of their involvement with extremist activities. Similar to other clusters, the vast majority (84 percent) of subjects in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster were male.
- Subjects in the secondary sample of the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster displayed the highest degree of violence and anger. Specifically, all subjects in this cluster (100 percent) praised past attacks.
- To a lesser degree, subjects in the primary sample of the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster sought out extremist material and propaganda that justified the use of violence (96 percent), felt the use of

violence would be a successful political and tactful strategy (96 percent), and expressed an intention to be violent (98 percent).

- In terms of social media activities, over three-quarters (87 percent) of subjects in this cluster used media (e.g., videos, music) during their recruitment process. In conjunction with media use, a little less than two-thirds (62 percent) of these individuals were found to search sensitive information online, including bomb-making information, pornographic material, and violent content (e.g., beheading videos).
- Unlike subjects in the Troubled Combatants Cluster, individuals in the secondary sample of the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster were less likely to display social isolation (47 percent) or have a desire/need to belong to extremist and non-extremist social networks (24 percent).
- Lastly, although individuals in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster displayed critical views online, only a small portion of these individuals (29 percent) held grievances against the U.S.

There are a few notable secondary sample individuals who were assigned to the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster. For example, Subject 143 is a first-generation Pakistani-American who became rapidly devout to Islam and openly hateful of America after watching numerous ISIL propaganda videos online (ISIL documents, 2016). His cousin recalled how extreme Subject 143's hatred of the West developed, stating, "He'd say that we live in a country with non-believers. And he said we're surrounded by a bunch of sinful people, and we should move to a Muslim country" (Engel, Plessner, Connor, & Schuppe, 2016). Subject 143 also produced videos in 2010 of him wrestling with family members, talking about how he was suffocating his victim with a blanket over their face, saying "... do something. I'm killing you... I've got you begging for mercy." These statements suggest a predisposition for violence when he was a teenager (Dremann, 2016).

### Troubled Combatants Cluster

The final cluster, Troubled Combatants, is comprised of individuals who were distinguished by their extensive histories of crime and misconduct. These individuals generally lacked conventional social bonds with society and were the most likely to contain histories of mental illness. Moreover, individuals in this cluster displayed the highest rates of ideological change and were more likely to convert to Islam as an adult. As critic/collectors, the Troubled Combatants Cluster had higher levels of online influence compared to the other clusters and engaged in stealthy actions to mask their online

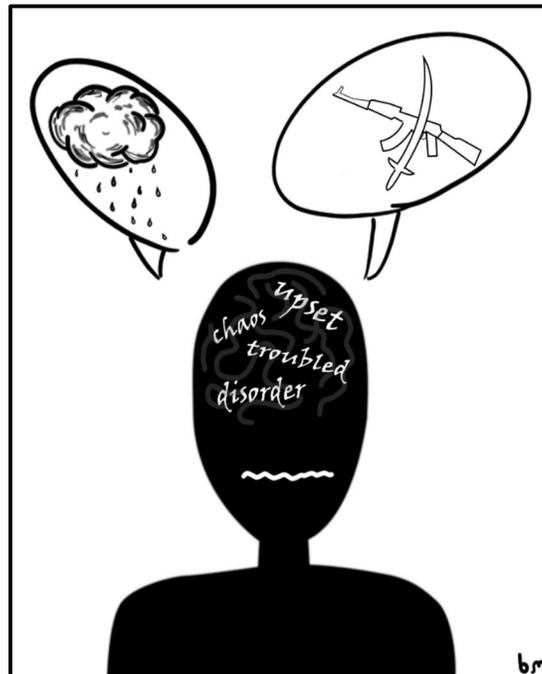


Figure 14. Troubled Combatants

participation. Individuals in this cluster were also the only subjects to express United States grievances. Thus, it is plausible that their anger and turn toward violence was, to some degree, related to their U.S.-based grievances. These individuals did not experience family socialization into extremism nor develop an apocalyptic worldview. In order to provide greater specificity to the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster, we discuss key similarities and differences between primary and secondary samples.

#### **Primary Sample (N = 12)**

- Individuals in the Troubled Combatants Cluster were, on average, approximately 25.6 years of age the time of their involvement with extremist activities. Moreover, individuals in the primary sample of the Troubled Combatants Cluster were entirely male.

- These individuals displayed the highest rate (58 percent) of Islam conversion as adults.
- In conjunction with Islam conversion, the clear majority of subjects in the primary sample of the Troubled Combatants Cluster were also found to change their linguistic expression (100 percent); engage in ideological disputes with friends and co-workers (100 percent); eschew mainstream beliefs in favor of extremist action (100 percent); and were most likely to dehumanize outgroup members that did not adhere to their belief system (92 percent).
- To a lesser extent, these individuals were found to be driven by anger (83 percent); hold grievances against the U.S. (67 percent); and blame external factors (e.g., boss, friends) for personal failures and inadequacies (33 percent).
- Similar to subjects in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster, individuals in the primary sample of the Troubled Combatants Cluster were likely to promote violence as a viable political strategy (100 percent) and expressed a willingness to be violent themselves (100 percent). Furthermore, these individuals were also found to rely on violence as an outlet for their anger and frustration (100 percent).
- In terms of motivation for extremist participation, subjects in the Troubled Combatants Cluster were likely driven by a need to satisfy a desire for thrill-seeking behavior (42 percent) and personal glorification (42 percent).
- In addition to expressions of anger, subjects in the Troubled Combatants Cluster were most likely to have a history of mental illness (100 percent) and live in a domestic household characterized by parental adversity (42 percent) (e.g., parental incarceration, parental substance abuse, parental mental illness, divorce).

- In addition to high rates of mental illness, subjects in the primary sample of the Troubled Combatants Cluster were the most likely to display documented adolescent misconduct (77 percent) such as assault, property destruction, illicit drug/alcohol use, and vandalism.
- Finally, unlike the Accomplice Kin Cluster, individuals in the Troubled Combatants Cluster were less likely to have non-kinship relationships (17 percent) involved in extremist activities. Moreover, these individuals were less likely to travel abroad (8 percent).

There are a few notable primary sample individuals who were assigned to the Troubled Combatants Cluster. For example, Subject 201 converted to Islam when he was 19 years old. At age 27, Subject 201 told detectives from the Joint Terrorism Task Force in New York about his history of hallucinations in which he saw witches and spirits (Goldstein, 2012). Subject 201 was charged the following year with plotting an attack on military personnel. Law enforcement agents stressed his resentment of U.S. troops in the Middle East during the trial, providing highlights from his own website, TrueIslam1.com (Flock, 2011). The site contained numerous posts by Subject 201, which praised Anwar al-Awlaki as an inspirational spokesperson for AQAP and expressing overt anti-Western sentiment.

### ***Secondary Sample (N = 18)***

- Individuals in the Troubled Combatants Cluster were, on average, approximately 28.8 years of age the time of their involvement with extremist activities. Moreover, individuals in the secondary sample of the Troubled Combatants Cluster were mostly male (94 percent).
- Similar to the primary sample of the Troubled Combatants Cluster, these individuals were mostly likely to have histories of mental illness (100 percent) and social isolation (83 percent). Furthermore, subjects in the secondary sample of the Troubled Combatants Cluster were found

to display high rates of documented adolescent misconduct (66 percent); experience failed intimate relationships (44 percent); and come from households characterized by family adversity (33 percent).

- Virtually all subjects in the secondary sample of the Troubled Combatants Cluster participated in virtual attacks (100 percent) such as going to a shooting or paintball range, taking martial arts courses, and/or playing violent videogames that villainized Westerners.
- Unlike the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster and the Accomplice Kin Cluster, subjects in the Troubled Combatants Cluster were less likely to delete online accounts (17 percent) or express frustration with their current employment situation (6 percent).
- Finally, subjects in the secondary sample of the Troubled Combatants Cluster were the least likely to have children (6 percent) or display warning behavior that violent action was imperative or time sensitive (0 percent).

There are a few notable secondary sample individuals who were assigned to the Trouble Combatants Cluster. For example, Subject 180, an adult convert to Islam with an extensive criminal history, was arrested for material support in 2012. Subject 180 experienced abuse as a child and often attributed his rejection of American culture and pursuit of a new identity to the lack of social support he received as a child. He created a popular jihadist website that several subjects visited, which demonstrated his high level of digital influence. The site hosted extremist propaganda and was notably the first platform to publish works from Samir Khan, the creator of AQAP's *Inspire* magazine. Moreover, Subject 180 openly expressed criticisms against the U.S., often publishing content on how to carry out attacks or providing "hit lists" of potential targets.

### Cluster Comparison: 2011 vs. 2018

The results of the cluster analysis reveal some notable similarities and differences with the results of the original 2011 HVE Initiative study. First, four of the five clusters that were identified in the original study are also present in the results of this report. Both studies identified a cluster of extremists who were distinguished from one another by their predispositions for violence and lack of strict dictates or ideas of Salafi ideology (i.e., 2011: “Predisposed to Violence”/”Jihadi Cool” vs. 2018: “Disgruntled Naive”). These individuals developed apocalyptic worldviews and used extremist ideology to channel and justify violent behavior. Furthermore, these individuals were often more attracted to the excitement and glory of fighting for a cause than adhering to an ideological belief system.

Second, both studies identified a cluster of individuals who were oriented toward extremist activities abroad (i.e., 2011: “Somali Nationalist” vs. 2018: “Action-Oriented Clandestines”). While the current study was unable to identify specific Somalian connections or motivations, individuals in both studies were found to focus on foreign issues in the Middle East (e.g., Syria, Yemen) rather than in the United States or against U.S. persons or property.

Finally, both reports identified a cluster of extremists whose distinguishing characteristics were related to troubling personal attributes such as trauma, mental illness, family adversity, and/or substance abuse (i.e., 2011: “Lost and Damaged” vs. 2018: “Troubled Combatants”). These individuals were distinguished by their strong need to belong to a social group or context, as well as their extensive histories of crime and history of mental illness.

In terms of key differentiators, one cluster from the original HVE study did not appear in the results of the current analysis. Specifically, we were unable to distinguish a cluster of individuals who expressed outrage over U.S. or Western foreign policies that led to extremist action against the U.S. or

their allies (referred to as “Foreign Policy-Driven” in the original HVE study). We speculate that anger over U.S. foreign policies does not appear to separate extremists from one another but rather is a universal feature of most U.S. Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists. It would be useful to determine how this compares to non-violent extremists to determine if this is indeed predictive of HVE.

Based on the data, two unique clusters emerged from the current analysis. First, we identified a cluster of extremists who were distinguished by their need to gain or restore their personal significance (referred to as “Skilled, Significance Seekers”). For these subjects, extremist participation was seen an attempt to achieve something greater than themselves and/or restore their self-image. Overall, these subjects were highly educated/skilled and showed no signs of documented mental illness, documented adolescent misconduct, or histories of family extremism.

Second, we also identified a cluster of individuals whose extremist involvement was influenced by close kin relationships (referred to as “Accomplice Kin”). These individuals were the most likely to have immediate relatives and/or romantic partners involved in extremism. While most individuals were not raised by extremist members, a large portion were exposed to ideas consistent with Salafist ideologies.

As mentioned above, it is important to clarify that a case may be assigned to a cluster because it displays one or two of the cluster’s core attributes, and none of the attributes of the other clusters. Thus, each cluster is made up of subjects who displayed varying rates of the clusters’ main features. Moreover, cluster analysis highlights attributes that distinguish subjects from one another and, as a result, tends to downplay the importance of factors that are ubiquitous or generally present in all clusters. In other words, some variables may be so common for our subjects that they cannot be viewed as unique to any one cluster or group but rather should be considered core components of each cluster. As such, while it is helpful to classify subjects into distinct clusters, it is important to keep in mind that certain aspects of

our subjects' life-histories may be present in more than one cluster assignment. In the remaining sections, we examine the interaction of these clusters with foreign terrorist organization messaging and influence strategies.

## **Report 2**

### Individual and Organizational Interactions

## REPORT 2: INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL INTERACTIONS

In accordance with the interactionist framework, we examined the relationship between cluster types and the violent extremist organization in which they were attracted to and/or influenced by. To identify the interplay of Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremist and extremist organization messaging influences, we examined the interactions between the organization and the individual. It is difficult to grasp a phenomenon as complex as understanding why some individuals will attack their homeland without examining both the organization and the individual. As such, we filled this gap in the current literature by applying an interactionist organizational recruitment framework (Hsieh, Weng, & Lin, 2017) to examine Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremism. While this approach may be novel in the study of homegrown radicalization, it is hardly new in the field of organizational psychology as a trusted approach for predicting individual outcomes (Barnard, 1938).

### Organizational and Cyber Influences

The interactionist framework considers individual cognitive processes through which organizational recruitment sources influence outcomes such as attraction (Phillips & Gully, 2015). For example, Breugh and Starke (2000) suggested that when organizational messaging provides specific, personally-relevant recruitment information to potential applicants, those individuals are likely to engage in more systematic consumption of the information. Furthermore, an interactionist perspective suggests that individual difference variables and situational variables interact to predict individual and organizational outcomes (Downes, Kristof-Brown, Judge, & Darnold, 2017; Swider, Zimmerman, & Barrick, 2015).

Before examining the interactionist framework in-depth, it is important to examine the organizational and leadership characteristics of the extremist organizations in our sample. Table 9 shows

that the extremists were influenced by 12 extremist organizations. Of those 12 organizations, the average age was approximately 20 years. The oldest groups included Hezbollah (37 years old), al-Qaeda Central (31 years old), and Lashkar e-Tayyiba (30 years old), while the youngest groups included the ISIL (5 years old), Nusra Front (7 years old), and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (12 years old). It is important to note that extremist organizations were considered “new” if they underwent a rebranding effort that had a substantive change on the group’s characteristics or mission (Windisch et al., 2018). For example, we argue that ISIL began in 2014 – the year in which they broke away from al-Qaeda and rebranded as an independent organization. The age of an extremist organization is an indicator of organizational resources and strength. Older organizations have been found to intentionally recruit members with specialized skills or training, whereas younger organizations focus on “filling the ranks” and are less selective in their recruitment (Bloom 2017; Hunter et al. 2017; Windisch et al. 2018).

Moreover, Table 9 shows the size estimate for each organization. The largest organization since 2011 was, by far, ISIL. After ISIL, several groups had access to thousands of fighters including al-Shabaab, Nusra Front, the Taliban, Hezbollah, Lashkar e-Tayyiba, and al-Qaeda in Iraq. Finally, modern-day al-Qaeda Central, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Islamic Jihad Union, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb had hundreds of foot-soldiers, while the Revolutionary Muslim Organization was the smallest group with less than 100 members.

*Table 9. Organizational and Leadership Characteristics*

<b>Foreign Terrorist Organization</b>	<b>Age (2018)</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Leader(s)</b>
ISIL	5.00	Tens of Thousands	Bureaucracy	Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi
al-Qaeda Central	31.00	Hundreds	All-Channel	Ayman al-Zawahiri
Al-Shabaab	13.00	Thousands	Hub-and-Spoke	Amir Ahmed Godane; Ahmad Umar
AQAP	10.00	Hundreds	Hub-and-Spoke	Nasir al-Wahayshi; Qasim al Raymi
Nusra Front	7.00	Thousands	Hub-and-Spoke	Abu Muhammad al-Julani
IJU	17.00	Hundreds	All-Channel	Unknown
IMU	21.00	Hundreds	Hub-and-Spoke	Usman Ghazi
Taliban	25.00	Thousands	Hub-and-Spoke	Mullah Mohammad Omar; Mullah Mansour; Haibatullah Akhundzad
Hezbollah	37.00	Thousands	Bureaucracy	Hassan Nasrallah
LeT	30.00	Thousands	Hub-and-Spoke	Hafiz Muhammad Saeed
AQI	10.00	Thousands	Hub-and-Spoke	Abu Ayub al-Masri; Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi
AQIM	12.00	Hundreds	All-Channel	Abdelmalek Droukdel

*Note: AQI was active from 2004-2013*

Like age, the size of an organization also reflects their strength and resources. For example, large terrorist organizations (>1000 members) have the resources and human capital to engage in coordinated

attacks on hard-to-reach targets (Asal, Gill, Rethemeyer, & Horgan, 2015). From a human capital perspective, organizations with robust resources are more likely to include members who are skilled with a high degree of tactical expertise, are capable of raising funds, and who have access to restricted information, places, and material (Asal & Rethemeyer, 2008, p. 439). In addition to age and size, the structure of the organization may also tap into recruitment patterns of extremist members. Table 9 shows that the majority of extremists in our sample were attracted to organizations characterized by a hub-and-spoke structure. The hub-and-spoke structure is characterized by the presence of leadership and functional differentiation, but a lack of centralized command and control (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001; Kilberg, 2012).

Next, Table 10 shows that three groups had an all-channel organizational design. The all-channel structure is characterized by leaders with little hierarchical authority, no central command and control, and no functional differentiation (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001; Kilberg, 2012).

Finally, only the ISIL and Hezbollah were designed in a bureaucratic fashion. The bureaucratic structure includes leaders with clear unidirectional authority, formal decision-making procedures, departmental specialization, and a dense command structure (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001; Kilberg, 2012). However, the cyber presence of these organizations is not as rigid with these structures.

Table 10. Salafi Jihadist-inspired Clusters across Foreign-Terrorist Organization

Foreign Terrorist Organization	Skilled, Significance Seekers	Action-Oriented Clandestines	Accomplice Kin	Disgruntled Naïve	Troubled Combatants	Total
<b>ISIL</b>	45 (78.9%)	54 (65.9%)	15 (65.2%)	48 (69.6%)	19 (63.3%)	<b>181 (69.3%)</b>
<b>al-Qaeda Central</b>	5 (8.8%)	3 (3.7%)	--	8 (11.6%)	2 (6.7%)	<b>18 (6.9%)</b>
<b>al-Shabaab</b>	1 (1.8%)	13 (15.9%)	--	2 (2.9%)	--	<b>16 (6.1%)***</b>
<b>AQAP</b>	--	3 (3.7%)	4 (17.4%)	4 (5.8%)	2 (6.7%)	<b>13 (5.0%)**</b>
<b>Unaffiliated</b>	2 (3.5%)	2 (2.4%)	2 (8.7%)	4 (5.8%)	2 (6.7%)	<b>12 (4.6%)</b>
<b>Nusra Front</b>	2 (3.5%)	2 (2.4%)	2 (8.7%)	1 (1.4%)	2 (6.7%)	<b>9 (3.4%)</b>
<b>IMU/IJU</b>	1 (1.8%)	3 (3.7%)	--	1 (1.4%)	--	<b>5 (1.9%)</b>
<b>Taliban</b>	--	1 (1.2%)	--	1 (1.4%)	1 (3.3%)	<b>3 (1.1%)</b>
<b>Hezbollah</b>	--	1 (1.2%)	--	--	--	<b>1 (0.4%)</b>
<b>LeT</b>	1 (1.8%)	--	--	--	--	<b>1 (0.4%)</b>
<b>AQI</b>	--	--	--	--	1 (3.3%)	<b>1 (0.4%)</b>
<b>AQIM</b>	--	--	--	--	1 (3.3%)	<b>1 (0.4%)</b>
<b>N =</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>261</b>

Notes: \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 10 describes the relationship between the Salafi Jihadist-inspired clusters and each extremist organization. A chi-squared test of independence indicated that there were no significant differences between cluster type and ISIL. This suggests that, regardless of cluster type, ISIL had a broad appeal and a general influence on extremist members. In fact, the vast majority of our sample was

attracted to ISIL (69 percent). We suspect that ISIL had such a large influence for two reasons. First, ISIL had a strong cyber sophistication and brand dissemination strategy, which set them apart from other global jihadist organizations in their industry. From a media relations perspective, ISIL adopted several “best practices” from other industries, such as Photoshop and glossy magazines (*Dabiq* is similar to *Inspire* in production value); the use of traditional social media like Twitter, YouTube, and Vine; and the adoption of new, pioneering peer-to-peer technology. While *Inspire* focuses more strongly on training, *Dabiq* is notable because its emphasis is on maintaining a strong media brand and disseminating highly ideologically-congruent propaganda to promote radicalism among distant operatives, sympathizers, and foreign fighters (Ligon, Harms, Crowe, Lundmark, & Simi, 2014).

Second, there is some evidence that ISIL tailored its messages to multiple segments of potential followers (Costello et al., 2016; Ligon, Harms, & Derrick, 2015; Pelletier, Lundmark, Ligon, & Kilinc, 2016). This strategy is in accordance with recent work on e-recruitment or recruitment that uses Cyber Communication Technology, as content may be tailored to individual brand consumers (Thompson, Braddy, & Wuensch, 2008). For example, Derrick and colleagues (2016) examined English-based propaganda produced by ISIL and trusted on open content publishing sites. The authors found that ISIL focused on two dissimilar themes: one focused on violence and the other on a combination of ideological and pragmatic themes. Such a diverse messaging portfolio would help explain why ISIL was so successful with extremists in this study.

Results from the chi-squared analysis also revealed two significant cluster-by-organization differences. First, there was a significantly disproportionate number of extremists in the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster who were attracted to al-Shabaab. Second, there was a significantly disproportionate number of extremists in the Accomplice Kin Cluster who were attracted to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. These relationships were also supported through a separate correlational analysis

in which there was a significant positive relationship between the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster and al-Shabaab ( $\rho=0.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ) as well as the Accomplice Kin Cluster and AQAP ( $\rho=0.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In summary, these findings suggest that al-Shabaab had a disproportionate influence on the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster, whereas al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula had a disproportionate influence on the Accomplice Kin Cluster.<sup>4</sup>

### **Action-Oriented Clandestines by al Shabaab**

To better understand the relationships highlighted above, we examined the characteristics of the extremists from each significant cluster-by-organization interaction. More specifically, we explored the profiles of the 13 extremists from the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster who were attracted to al-Shabaab as well as the four extremists from the Accomplice Kin Cluster who were attracted to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (see Table 11). When analyzing extremists influenced by al-Shabaab, five trends emerged.

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<sup>4</sup> These findings are from a Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation analysis.

Table 11. Demographic Characteristics of Cluster by FTO Categories

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Action-Oriented Clandestines by al-Shabaab (N = 13)</b>	<b>Accomplice Kin by AQAP (N = 4)</b>
<b>Cluster Assignment</b>		
Primary Sample	0.00%	50.00%
Secondary Sample	100.00%	50.00%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	76.92%	75.00%
<b>Average Age</b>	30.54 years	29.00 years
<b>Occupation</b>		
Service	15.38%	25.00%
Unskilled	76.92%	25.00%
Student	0.00%	25.00%
Unemployed	0.00%	25.00%
Retired	7.69%	0.00%
<b>Education</b>		
Less than HS	12.5%	0.00%
HS Diploma	87.5%	50.00%
Some College	0.00%	50.00%
<b>Family Background</b>		
Childhood Maltreatment	18.18%	0.00%
Family Dysfunction	18.18%	25.00%
Family Extremism	0.00%	100.00%
Family Socialization	1.00%	5.00%
<b>Background Characteristics</b>		
Military History	7.69%	0.00%
Islam Convert	23.08%	0.00%
Social Isolation	53.85%	100.00%
<b>Recruitment</b>		
Recruit Alone	30.77%	0.00%
Radical Clique	46.15%	50.00%
<b>Online Behaviors</b>		
Participate Online	38.46%	75.00%
Online Stealth	0.23%	1.25%
<b>Other Characteristics</b>		
Violence Turn	1.15%	3.75%
Anger	0.85%	2.00%
Identity Search	30.77%	25.00%

First, each of the 13 subjects from the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster who were attracted to al-Shabaab were from the secondary sample. As such, these individuals consisted of foreign fighters and material supporters, not attackers or plotters. Second, individuals from the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster–al-Shabaab interaction were mostly unskilled workers with relative low levels of educational attainment. Third, individuals from the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster–al-Shabaab interaction experienced relatively low levels of adverse childhood events and family socialization into extremism. Fourth, roughly a quarter of those in the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster–al-Shabaab interaction participated online and, of those individuals, even fewer used stealth to hide their online activities. Finally, individuals from the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster–al-Shabaab interaction were not motivated by anger nor indicated a turn toward violent action.

In sum, the subjects from the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster–al-Shabaab interaction appear to display secondary extremist roles (e.g., material support), a lack of prosocial skills, little evidence of exposure to adverse childhood events or socialization into extremism, infrequent online participation with fewer attempts to mask their behaviors, and no inclinations that they were motivated by anger nor violence. Based on the data, we suspect that the subjects in the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster–al-Shabaab grouping were shaped by two key influences.

First, many of the subjects in the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster–al-Shabaab interaction were influenced by primary social ties. More specially, these individuals were likely to be influenced by older community members or significant others. For example, one female provided funding to al-Shabaab at the behest of her husband. Evidence suggests that she had very little commitment to al-Shabaab outside of pleasing her husband. In another case, the subject explained that they were persuaded to travel to Somalia by “charismatic, devoted older men” in the community.

Second, of those subjects who did participate online, Omar al-Hammami was viewed as key influencer. For example, one subject described al-Hammami as a friend and wanted to reunite with him in Somalia. Born in Alabama, al-Hammami traveled to Somalia 2006 and emerged as the English-speaking face of al-Shabaab in 2007. Al-Hammami was active across several online platforms (e.g., Twitter, YouTube, Ansar al-Mujahidin forum) and had a prominent role in the propaganda arm of al-Shabaab (Anzalone, 2016). Al-Shabaab militants killed al-Hammami in 2012 after he denounced the group. Although he is no longer a direct threat, al-Hammami displays the type of influence American jihadists have on cultivating extremists for extremist-specific recruitment.

#### **Accomplice Kin by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)**

Next, five trends also emerged when examining the extremists from the Accomplice Kin Cluster influenced by AQAP. First, individuals from the Accomplice Kin Cluster–AQAP interaction were split between the primary and secondary sample. As such, there is little evidence that extremists were attracted to and/or served different roles in AQAP. Second, individuals from the Accomplice Kin Cluster–AQAP interaction were likely to have a history of family extremism and socialization into extremist beliefs. Third, those in the Accomplice Kin Cluster–AQAP grouping were unlikely to be recruited alone. Fourth, the levels of online stealth utilized by the Accomplice Kin Cluster extremists attracted to AQAP were low despite the majority of them participating online. Finally, extremists in the Accomplice Kin Cluster–AQAP grouping were motivated by anger and experienced observable shifts in their attitudes toward violence.

Overall, the subjects from the Accomplice Kin Cluster–AQAP interaction appear to have diverse extremist roles, have a history of family extremism, are recruited with others, participate online with few attempts to conceal their activities, are motivated by anger, and show signs of favoring violence. Based

on this information, we suspect that the extremists in the Accomplice Kin Cluster–AQAP grouping were shaped, to some degree, by al-Qaeda propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki. In fact, each of the subjects from the Accomplice Kin Cluster–AQAP grouping mentioned being influenced by al-Awlaki.

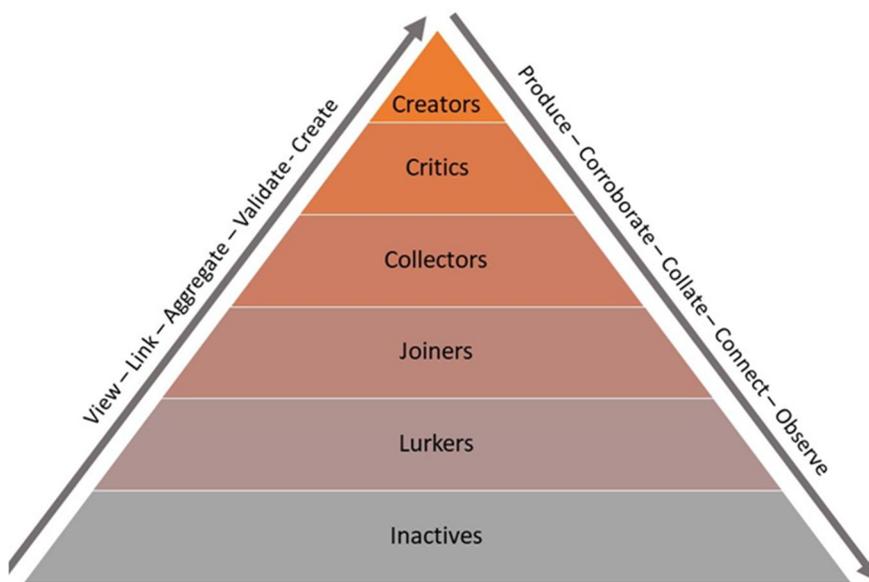
This is not to say that al-Awlaki’s influence is limited to these individuals; however, it appears his impact was profound among these subjects. Born in New Mexico, al-Awlaki served as an imam in both California and Virginia before relocating to Yemen in 2004 after a brief stint in the United Kingdom. While in Yemen, al-Awlaki became the spokesman for AQAP and a key strategist in the Global Jihadi Industry. In 2011, al-Awlaki was killed by a U.S. drone strike, which may have paradoxically increased his appeal. Some go so far as to argue that al-Awlaki’s popularity increased after he died a martyr. For instance, the number of hits for “Anwar al-Awlaki” on YouTube nearly doubled between 2013 and 2016 (Shane, 2016). For the subjects in the Accomplice Kin Cluster–AQAP group, we believe al-Awlaki offered an exciting, refreshing brand of extremism different from the type of extremist adopted by their family members. In other words, “al-Awlaki appears to have served as a sort of bridge, carrying fervent young believers from mainstream Islam to the apocalyptic violence of Raqqa” (Shane, 2016, p.16).

### **Digital Participation**

In recent years, terrorism researchers have begun to investigate how violent extremist organizations relying on cyber and social media (e.g., Facebook, justpaste.it, Twitter) for branding, recruitment, and disseminating propaganda (Ligon, Harms, & Derrick, 2015). While scholars had dedicated a considerable amount of energy to understanding the manner in which extremist organizations utilize cyber, far less research has been aimed at understanding the behavioral patterns of extremist members themselves. Research investigating cyber behavior often focuses on individuals who

comment or post to social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook (Carvalho, 2014; Scrivens, Davies, & Frank, 2017). While helpful, such attempts often overlook extremists who generated media (e.g., music, videos) or viewed the content but refrained from commenting or engaging with others. To address this gap in the literature, we classified our subjects' cyber activities using a universally accepted classification taxonomy derived from Information Science and Technology (Li & Bernoff, 2011). This taxonomy contains six overlapping cyber profiles including: (1) creators, (2) critics, (3) collectors, (4) joiners, (5) lurkers, and (6) inactives.

According to Li and Bernoff (2011), the relationship between social content creation and consumption is not binary. Rather, digital participation is an escalating process, highlighted by increasing skill and individual interest. In light of this, reliance of these six cyber profiles allows us to identify accelerating levels of participation and consumption of extremist propaganda (see Figure 15). Moreover, the application of this taxonomy to extremist participants allows terrorism scholars to better profile online behavior, which provides significant information beyond merely examining the channels these individuals consume and visit. Having said that, we acknowledge that this taxonomy exclusively examines online behavior and recognize that radicalization can manifest as a combination of both online and offline interaction, or exclusively through offline exposure.

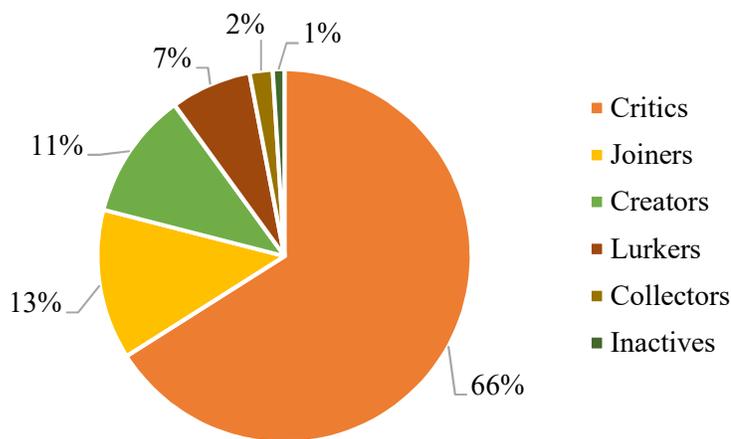


*Figure 15. Li & Bernoff's (2015) Digital Participation Pyramid*

The key differentiator among these six categories is the degree to which subjects are “sensemakers,” which refers to individuals who utilizes critical interpretation of cues to make sense of their environment (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1979/1995). In other words, sensemaking is how individuals give meaning to their experiences based on how others have historically interpreted something or how they know others might interpret an experience. It is the interpretation of these cues that suggests action, signifying sensemaking as both a determinate and social process of human behavior (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). For purposes of the current study, sensemaking behavior is characterized by the consumption of extremist messages. Rather than produce content or communicate with other extremists online, sensemakers maintain their online accounts, watch videos, and read blog posts.

In contrast, “sensegivers” are individuals who attempt to shape or generate a narrative by producing original content, posting statuses/reviews, or assembling information for other people to use or share (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).

They differ from sensemakers in that they influence how others may interpret a situation by producing content underlain with narrative, whereas sensemakers merely consume content. Sensemakers view radical propaganda material or posts and utilize them to shape their worldview, as suggested by sensegivers.



*Figure 16. Digital Roles Distribution*

While the application of sensemaking is less prevalent among criminologists and terrorism scholars, this theory is well-established among business management and organizational psychologists (Zelinsky & Shubik, 2009). In recent years, it has evolved to identify foreign terrorist organizations to share structural characteristics with businesses. This proposes sensemaking framework to be operationally analogous between businesses and FTOs, comparing network structure to identify a centralized or decentralized arrangement. Moreover, criminologists have recently applied this theory to better understand how law-enforcement officers respond to emergency situations (Desouza & Hensgen, 2007; Zelinsky & Shubik, 2009). Despite these advances, however, the use of the sensemaking perspective to study terrorist online behavior and radicalization processes remains substantially underdeveloped.

Figure 16 presents an overall breakdown of our subjects' digital profiles. Across the six categories, critics (N = 111; 66 percent) accounted for the largest portion of our sample, followed by joiners (N = 22; 13 percent), creators (N = 19; 11 percent), lurkers (N = 12; 7 percent), collectors (N = 4; 2 percent), and inactives (N = 1; 1 percent). It is important to mention that these classifications are not mutually exclusive, as a large portion of our sample could be classified in multiple categories. Having said that, as part of our coding protocol, we classified participants based on the highest level of sensegiving or sensemaking they displayed, meaning if an individual both collected materials and posted status on social media, they were identified as critics. In the following sections, we examine each digital profile in greater detail.

### **Creators**

Creators are identified by their production and authorship of original content, such as making videos, writing blog posts, or uploading content (Li & Bernoff, 2011). Creators provide sensegiving for others through production of extremist content that they view and interpret. Online participation is identified to be a looped dependency, with participants needing a platform to host their content and platforms needing content to exist (Bishop, 2007; Malinen, 2015). Creators are distinguished by original material and innovative development, suggesting they are the highest tier of influential power across the six digital participation categories.

Based on the data, four creators were classified in the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster, two in the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster, four in the Accomplice Kin Cluster, one is the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster, and eight creators were classified in the Troubled Combatants Cluster. Of the 19 creators, 13 made propaganda videos that contained anti-Western narratives calling for violent action and a willingness to become martyrs. The other six creators wrote poetry, composed training guides that

detailed weapons handling and attack procedures, or created original websites such as Revolution Muslim or TrueIslam1, which hosted pro-terror articles, “hit lists,” and violent imagery.



*Figure 17. Example Post from Subject 48*

Subject 48 best illustrates the creator classification. He often wrote graphic poetry and produced videos of himself singing songs that called for violent action against the U.S. As Figure 17 illustrates, Subject 48 posted lyrics of a song that graphically depicted different methods for murdering Jewish people in the U.S. and praised the leadership qualities of Osama bin Laden. In addition to posting lyrics on his blog, Subject 48 also recorded himself singing the song and posted the video to Ansar al-Mujahideen English Forum (AMEF, 2010). In producing this video, Subject 48 was able to give sense to his viewers by providing information on how to engage in violence and glorifying violent action as rewarding. Both instructions on how to engage in violence and signifying the behavior as rewarding are capable of influencing the sensemaking processes in consumers by shaping their narrative. If a

sensemaker views the content and is susceptible to radicalization, the anti-Jew narrative and glorification of violence can influence the sensemakers, ultimately leading to them sharing the same views of the original content.

**Critics**

Critics are those who comment on social media posts, submit reviews, and rate content. Within the current sample, the most prevalent online expressed the promotion of violence as a necessary strategy, retweeting or linking to known violent extremists online, and expressing political views online. Of the 111 critics within our sample, 84 percent (N = 93) communicated their political views online, which commonly manifested as criticizing U.S. involvement in the Middle East and U.S. foreign policy. Approximately 89 percent (N = 99) promoted violence as a political strategy, posting calls for action or pledges for martyrdom. Most of our critics (N = 103; 93 percent) retweeted, were linked to, or had direct communication with violent extremists online.

Some studies elect to examine extremist participants on a singular social media platform (e.g. Facebook or Twitter) and identify those who fail to maintain accounts as a hidden population (Carvalho, 2014; Scrivens, Davies, & Frank 2017).

Our sample of critics are solely comprised of those who are outwardly vocal about their

radical beliefs, eliminating concerns regarding those who are silent online and analyzing participation across multiple platforms. Across the five clusters, critics were the most prevalent classification,

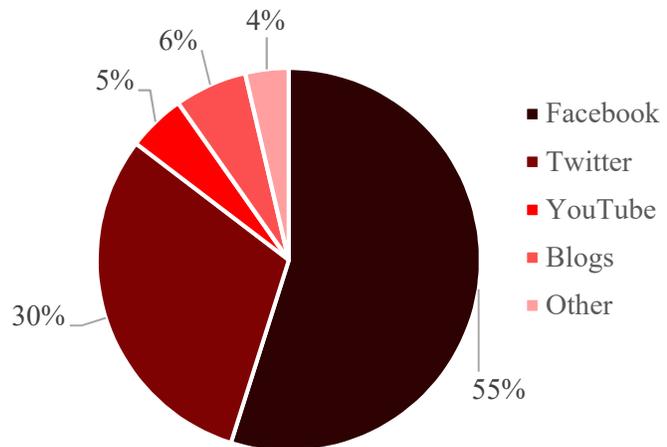


Figure 18. Websites Visited by Critics

accounting for over two-third of the sample (N = 169; 65 percent). Specifically, 26 critics were classified in the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster, 32 in the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster, 30 in the Accomplice Kin Cluster, 9 in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster, and 14 critics were classified in the Troubled Combatants Cluster. As Figure 18 illustrates, critics visited a variety of social websites like Facebook (55 percent), Twitter (30 percent), YouTube (5 percent), blog sites like Revolution Muslim (6 percent), and other (e.g. email, WhatsApp, Ask.fm, and Tumblr) (4 percent).

Figure 19 contains a post from Subject 166, who posted on several social media platforms (e.g.

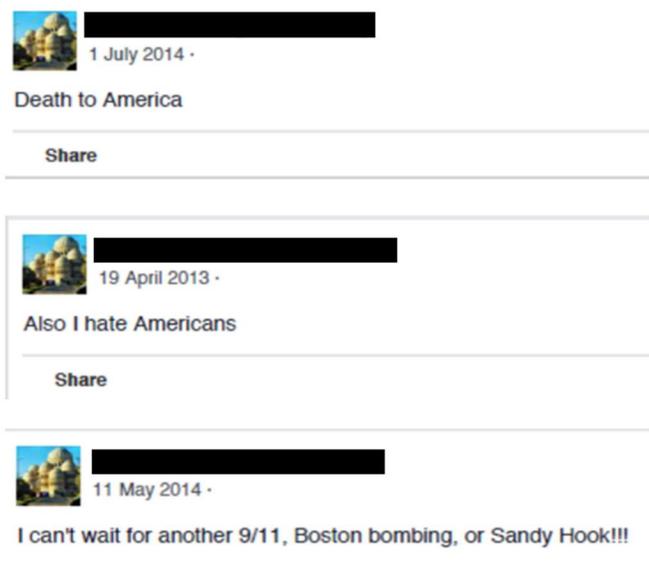


Figure 19. Example Post from Subject 166

Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter). The image is a screenshot of Subject 166’s Facebook, which highlights posts with anti-Western rhetoric and a call for violence against the West (George Washington Program on Extremism, 2015).

Subject 166’s post was publicly viewable and was intended as a call for action, which suggests his content was capable of influencing the sensemaking processes in others.

Figure 20 contains another post from Subject 166’s Tumblr, which shows a bloodied handgun behind a slogan calling for martyrdom. The slogan, “you only die once,” or “YODO,” mimics the Western phrase “YOLO,” which stands for “you only live once.” Using common Western slang permits the



Figure 20. Example Post from Subject 166

material to be accessible to Western audiences and influences their sensemaking processes in making the material relatable (Hunter, Shortland, Crane, & Ligon, 2017). Critics exhibit a lower level of influential power than creators yet are successful in influencing others' thought and action by freely sharing radical ideology on commonly used social media platforms.

### **Collectors**

Collectors organize links and content for either their personal use or to disseminate information to others who are active online. Collectors are a lower level of participation than critics in that they do not outwardly vocalize their original thoughts, instead organizing the extremist content others have created in a congregate way (Li & Bernoff, 2011). This particular digital role is important for non-indexed websites such as JustPaste.It, which is a platform that allows users to post text (Fisher, 2015). In order to view posts, users must have direct access to the link. Of the 169 individuals in our sample who displayed online behavior, four emerged as collectors. Across the five clusters, one subject was classified in the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster, two within the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster, and one was classified in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster.

Collector behaviors manifested in the present effort as collecting bomb-making guides and bomb-making materials. Each of the four were found to have a bomb-making guide titled, "How to Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom," printed in *Inspire*.<sup>5</sup> Figure 21 is the first page of the guide,

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<sup>5</sup> The bomb-making guide stems from the first issue of *Inspire Magazine*, which is a publication created by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Lemieux, Brachman, Levitt, & Wood, 2014; Torok, 2010). In total, *Inspire* has 16 issues, published from January 2010 to November 2016.

which details how to create a bomb using household objects, including sugar and Christmas lights. The foreword details how the guide is among the best to use because purchasing household items does not raise draw unwanted attention from law-enforcement, which allows would-be attackers to covertly make a bomb (*Inspire*, Issue 1). Other issues of the publication have included the consistent narrative calling for attacks against the West, placing an emphasis on recruits engaging in acts of martyrdom.

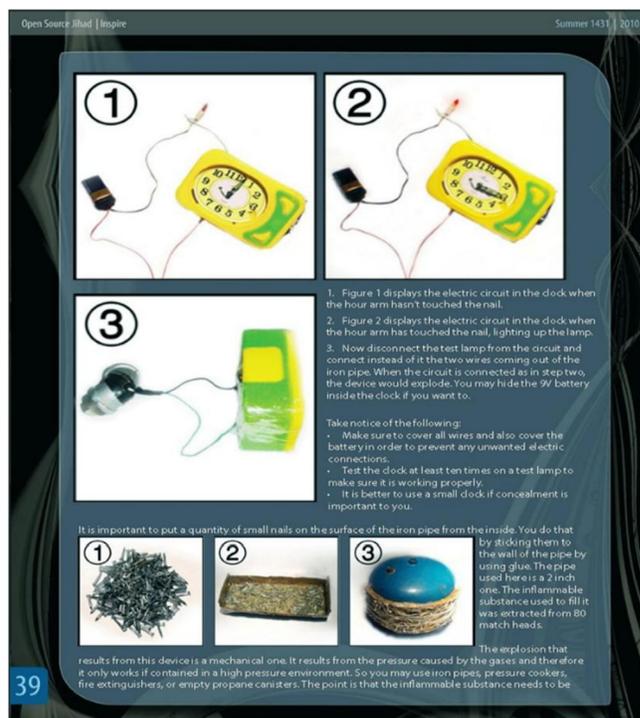


Figure 21. Bomb Making Guide

### Joiners

Joiners are those who maintain accounts but do not comment or post publicly available content. While this digital classification does not display sensegiving, it is important in determining which websites are most attractive for extremists, as these individuals are still signing up for and maintaining accounts (Li & Bernoff, 2011). Across the five clusters, five subjects were classified in the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster, six in the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster, three in the Accomplish Kin Cluster, seven in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster, and one subject was classified in the Troubled Combatants Cluster.

An exemplar of a joiner is Subject 142. A 23-year-old male who attempted to flee abroad as a foreign fighter for ISIL, Subject 142 maintained an account on Facebook with the purpose of using the messaging feature to contact other extremists. This individual did not openly post status updates or

comment on others' content, meaning his extremist views were not publicly expressed in the same manner as collectors, critics, and creators in our sample. Joiners were less likely than other digital classifications to attempt to encrypt or alter their online activities, suggesting they did not feel the need to change their behavior because they did not feel messaging on common social platforms was attracting attention.

### **Lurkers**

The fifth online profile involves lurkers, who watch videos, visit social media platforms, or read blogs without making accounts. According to the 2017 Studies of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) technical report, most violent extremist online sites require login information. This suggests that those websites which require a login to view content are not visited by these extremists. Similar to joiners, lurkers are important in contributing to which websites are popular because of their repetitive visitation and viewing of content. Within the five clusters, there were three subjects classified in the Skilled, Significance Seekers Cluster, five in the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster, three in the Disgruntled Naïve Cluster, and one subject was classified in the Troubled Combatants Cluster.

Subject 156, a 58-year-old Kansas born Islamic convert, was identified as a lurker in our sample. He did not have any accounts on social media sites but regularly visited Revolution Muslim, a site that promoted pro-ISIL extremist ideology, condemned the west, and praised violence (Levin, 2015; New America Foundation, 2018). The majority of the lurkers in our sample, more than any other classification of digital participation, exhibited behaviors related to encrypting media applications to conceal their activities online, searched or attempted to access sensitive information, or deleted or manipulated social media accounts. It was common to see lurkers utilizing anonymous browsers, deleting a computer's history after performing a search, or covering the webcam of a laptop with a

sticker. These variables suggest an attempt to cloak online participation, indicating that our sources could be missing information about lower level digital participants because they were successful in hiding their behavior.

### **Inactive**

Finally, inactives are those who do not participate in social media related activities. Across our sample, one subject was classified as inactive and was categorized in the Action-Oriented Clandestines Cluster. While the inability to identify participation on social media sites inhibits the examination of online interactions with violent extremist organizations, it provides important information about face-to-face recruitment processes. Inactives are likely experiencing their radicalization offline and often in conjunction with another extremists. This was most prevalent among those in the Rocky Mountain Region, specifically in Minnesota. Several subjects were exposed to extremist propaganda during normal social gatherings, like basketball games, where a digital participant brought extremist videos to show the group. This suggests that only one in a peer-to-peer group needs to be active online, permitting others to avoid creating an online footprint.

### **Digital Participation Conclusion**

The interaction between online behavior and extremist organization messaging is a dynamic and multifaceted process. While previous studies have examined extremist online behavior, these investigations often focus on individuals who posted publicly to social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Scrivens, Davies, & Frank, 2017; Carvalho, 2014). While helpful, such an approach tends to overlook extremist members who generated content, communicated with extremist members abroad, or who merely viewed radical content. Based on the data, subjects in the current

sample were found to display a variety of online behavior including, but not limited to, watching propaganda videos, praising past attacks and known attackers, tagging and pledging allegiance to extremist organizations on social media platforms, sharing photos of radical imagery or extremist symbols, downloading sensitive information such as bomb-making guides and/or creating poetry that romanticized violent action.

In light of this, we applied Li and Bernoff's (2011) digital profile taxonomy to the current sample, which allowed for both a more comprehensive examination of online radicalization and the identification of digital participation. Out of the 261 subjects, we identified 169 individuals who displayed an identifiable digital profile. Based on the data, subjects displayed a variety of escalating online behaviors, with critics being the most common, followed by joiners, creators, lurkers, collectors, and inactives. The application of Li and Bernoff's (2011) taxonomy permitted a greater behavioral analysis of digital participants by investigation the reciprocal relationship between subjects who generate sensegiving information and material (i.e., creators, critics, and collectors) and subjects who consumed and made sense of this material for others (e.g., joiners, lurkers, and inactives). In doing so, we improved our understanding of how online content contributed to our subject's initial exposure to extremist material, as well as the impact this had throughout the radicalization process.

It is important to note that a portion of the sample (N = 92; 35 percent) were unable to be classified in a digital profile. We speculate their online footprint was not a significant part of their radicalization process or extremist career. It is possible some individuals were successful in hiding their online activity by encrypting online behaviors (e.g., concealing identities through surveillance software such as Tor or Bitlocker) or utilizing computers that could not be linked their personal accounts. As such, it is difficult to accurately capture the number of individuals with an online presence.

## PROJECT DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This report presents findings from a one-year study exploring the process of radicalization inspired by Salafist foreign terrorist organization (FTO) ideology. The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of the characteristics associated with radicalization to violence of United States persons from 2011-2017. In doing so, our team relied upon a historiometric method (Ligon, Harris, & Hunter, 2012), and it required development of a content coding scheme driven by the Interactionist Organizational Recruitment Framework. The empirical analysis is divided into two distinct but overlapping reports.

The goal of the current research is to provide a descriptive piece of knowledge base associated with Salafi Jihadi-inspired extremism in the United States by analyzing open-source data from 261 individuals who were federally charged with terrorism-related activities in order to identify factors associated with extremist recruitment and radicalization. Findings from this project provide historical insights into the complexities of extremist participation and begin to unravel these intricacies by moving beyond the traditional case study methods previously used to explore recruitment and radicalization processes. These descriptive portraits provide insight into the past and summarize the demographic, situational, and behavioral variables associated with participation in extremist activities. Due to the relatively hidden nature of this population, the sample was derived through open-source data collection and as a result, is not representative, which prevents generalizing these findings to other extremist and non-extremist individuals. Of course, the goal of this type of historiometric approach is not generalization, but rather identifying the social processes, inductively building theory, and describing causal mechanisms. Lastly, as part of our exploratory analysis, the findings are also limited by problems with missing data.

Report One consists of a comprehensive assessment that statistically classified our subjects into distinct clusters. Based on the data, five clusters emerged: (1) Skilled Significance Seekers; (2) Action-Oriented Clandestines; (3) Accomplice Kin; (4) Disgruntled Naïve; and (5) Troubled Combatants. Findings from Report One underscore the complexities of extremist participation. In particular, our analyses begin to unravel these intricacies by moving beyond the traditional case study methods previously used to explore recruitment and radicalization processes. Overall, this study finds that violent extremist participation is influenced, in part, through ideological and non-ideological risk factors prior to entering an extremist group and that foreign terrorist organizational influence online and offline increased the likelihood of extremist participation and violence.

This cluster classification informs our conceptualization of what makes extremists similar and different to other extremists and advances our understanding of the relative importance of ideological and non-ideological factors in generating susceptibilities toward extremist and delinquent activities. In terms of commonalities across clusters, the vast majority of subjects across all clusters were male, received at least a high school diploma, had little to no military experience, did not have children at the time of their arrest or attack and were not married or in a long-term romantic relationship. Moreover, most subjects in the current sample were U.S. citizens. In terms of ideological views and grievances across all five clusters, most subjects harbored anti-Western grievances such as the sexualization of women, homosexuality, globalization, and the lack of emphasis on religious institutions and/or moral principles, used social media during their recruitment and radicalization process, believed violence was necessary to achieve ideological objectives, sought out political or religious justifications for using violence and displayed intentions to be violent (e.g., gathering weapons, communicating threats, generating “hit lists”). Finally, across the entire sample a minority of subjects had family members who were involved in extremism or displayed histories of chronic unemployment.

Report Two contains a description of the organizational and cyber interactions with each cluster type. Specifically, we draw on an interactionist framework to examine the relationship between cluster types and extremist organizations to which they were attracted and/or influenced. The interactionist framework takes into account individual cognitive processes through which organizational recruitment sources influence outcomes such as attraction (Phillips & Gully, 2015). There were also two unique interactions between cluster type and extremist organizations. First, there was a significantly disproportionate number of extremists within the Action-Oriented Clandestines cluster who were attracted to al-Shabaab. Second, there was a significantly disproportionate number of extremists within the Accomplice Kin who were attracted to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

In addition to the description of organizational and cyber interactions, Report Two contained an analysis of our subject's online, digital profiles. In doing so, we applied Li and Bernoff's (2011) taxonomy of digital participation to our sample of Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists. This typology includes six categories: (1) "creators," (2) "critics," (3) "collectors," (4) "joiners," (5) "lurkers," and (6) "inactives." Application of this taxonomy allowed us to analyze digital behavior beyond posting on Facebook or viewing YouTube videos. The inclusion of these various behaviors permitted us to examine propaganda and narratives our subjects were prone to consume, as well as, study the content of social media posts, blogs, poetry, or original videos our subjects produced. Most importantly, such an approach provided us a greater understanding of the interaction our subjects had with extremist organizations.

### **Limitations of Clusters**

Before moving on to the benefits of this study, there are several important limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the sample was predominantly male, which may have yielded data subject to gender biases. Second, due to the relatively hidden nature of this population, the sample was derived

through open-source data collection and, as a result, is not representative, which prevents generalizing these findings to other violent extremist groups. Of course, the goal of this type of historiometric approach is not generalization, but rather identifying social processes, inductively building theory, and describing causal mechanisms.

Third, our sample primarily included individuals who joined Salafist extremist groups during adolescence, potentially neglecting differences in entry among individuals who entered during pre-adolescence or adulthood. Fourth, as part of our exploratory analysis, the findings are also limited by problems with missing data.

### **Theoretical and Policy Implications**

Despite these limitations, there are at least three important contributions from the current effort. First, the present effort relied on an interdisciplinary research team to employ a mixed-method approach to obtain primary and secondary data about the nuanced radicalization pathways of homegrown violent extremists, as well as extremist organization messaging and influence strategies. Previous research has shown that there is no single pathway by which an individual embraces Salafi Jihadist-inspired violent extremism in the United States (HVE initiative, 2011; Jensen, James, & Safer-Lichtenstein, 2018). Rather, there are multiple pathways to violence that are impacted by an interplay of factors (Klausen, 2016; Meloy & Gill, 2016; Sawyer & Hienz, 2017). While many people share similar values, personality traits, and life events, only a subset are motivated to extremist violence. The factors that motivate one individual to internalize and act to advance an extremist belief system may have no motivating impact on another (Borum, 2017), and community-level factors may not generalize to other cities where different reasons exist for extremist participation (Boyd, 2017). Since extremist participation has been

found to be influenced by individuals' cognitive and emotional state, the current investigation provides useful information for understanding of the psychological antecedents of radicalization.

Second, these results further terrorism research by providing a comparative analysis that offers insight into radicalization processes across different types of extremists. Such a comparison informs our conceptualization of what makes extremists similar in terms of organizational connections (e.g., acceptance) and highlights a variety of behavioral patterns involved in extremist engagement. This study advances our understanding of the relative importance of identity in generating feelings of acceptance and significance associated with extremist activities. In doing so, we moved beyond individual traits of extremists by evaluating the interaction between their experiences and the messages they consumed. In particular, we conducted a large sample quantitative analysis of extremists combined with ethnographic interviews from a similar sample that was not motivated toward violence.

Finally, our results highlight important implications for practitioners. At the federal, state, and local levels, ambiguity surrounding violent extremist mobilization hinders the ability to identify and intervene with at-risk individuals. One way to counter this ambiguity would be to develop and implement a pilot training program and transition the empirical findings from this study to public safety personnel. This training program will inform end-users about region specific trends and markers of radicalization to violence, which can assist members of the Homeland Security community in disrupting the flow of extremist activities that have transpired in or around their state as compared to national trends. In addition to educating national trends, this training will aid local security analysts by informing them of threats unique to their area of responsibility. For instance, subjects living in different regions of the U.S. (e.g., Mid-Atlantic) possessed unique characteristics that increased their susceptibility toward extremist recruitment messaging. In doing so, this training program will provide law enforcement

agencies with information for both national and region-specific trends and empirically supported evidence pertaining to radicalization processes unique to their region.

**Future Research**

Future research should build on the groundwork laid in this study. Moving forward, terrorism scholarship should conduct more cross-case comparison studies between different ideological groups to expand empirical observations and strengthen theoretical conclusions. Conducting more comparison studies allows researchers to distinguish patterns from anomalies, identify methodological and historical trends as well as inconsistencies between empirical studies (e.g., survey reports, ethnographies) and official police reports. Moreover, DHS I&A should continue to support and prioritize empirical investigations that rely on both primary and secondary data sources as a way to reduce the possibility of bias and subjectivity among subject matter experts when interpreting sources and assessing themes within the case narratives.

*Table 12: Research Questions Pertaining to Cluster Type*

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
<b>Skilled Significance Seekers</b>	Individuals in this cluster exhibited a need for personal significance by being part of or contributing to something greater than themselves.	How would the intervention and/or prospect of conducting prosocial activism (e.g., Peace Corps) sway these individuals away from violent extremism? What is the impact of terrorism prevention programs on fear, anger, and trust in government among this cluster?
<b>Action-Oriented Clandestines</b>	Individuals emphasized action above material support by traveling, making financial donations to extremist organizations, and/or sending weapons and supplies.	How can we better develop indicators for recognizing action-oriented extremists—by measuring stress levels of voice and of facial expressions? What role can terrorist defectors play in countering terrorism policies?

<b>Accomplice Kin</b>	Individuals whose extremist involvement was influenced by kin relationships, often romantic partners or siblings. Many of those within this cluster were exposed to Salafist ideologies during their upbringing.	Which familial or kin relationships are most frequently influencing extremist involvement? What commonalities in the life-histories of sibling pairs are emerging to inform their extremist affiliation?
<b>Disgruntled Naïve</b>	Individuals in this cluster indicated predisposition to violence, displayed apocalyptic world views, and were likely to seek out extremist networks.	What intervention methods may disrupt their affinity to seek out extremist networks to enact violence? Alternatively, researchers may consider the effects of such intervention programs, namely in how intervention may cause these individuals to seek out alternative means of violent expression.
<b>Troubled Combatants</b>	Characterized by individuals who displayed a history of mental illness, criminal misconduct, and lacked conventional societal bonds.	What could be the impact of mental health resources on Troubled Combatants?

Table 12 highlights several research questions terrorism scholars may want to consider as it relates to the current classification of Salafi Jihadi-inspired extremists. For example, researchers may consider how the intervention and/or prospect of conducting prosocial activism (e.g., Doctors Without Borders, Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, Teach for America) would sway Skilled Significance Seekers away from violent extremism. Moreover, what is the impact of terrorism prevention programs on fear, anger, and trust in government among Skilled Significance Seekers? Finally, what is the effectiveness of bulk messaging compared to direct face-to-face communications at the micro-level in terrorism prevention initiatives among Skilled Significance Seekers? In terms of the Action-Oriented Clandestines cluster, researchers may consider how scholars can better develop indicators for recognizing Action-Oriented Clandestines by measuring stress levels of voice and of facial expressions. Finally, what role can terrorist defectors play in countering terrorism policies?

In regard to Accomplice Kin, researchers may want to examine the types of social networks that are influencing extremist conversion and explore the radicalization process experienced by sibling pairs

in an effort to disrupt family extremist socialization. For the Disgruntled Naïve cluster, future research should consider what is influencing these individuals' preference for violence as well as the types of strategies that could be implemented to disrupt the preference toward violence and whether such disruption will cause the individual to seek out alternative avenues for violent expression. Moreover, in what ways could social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) update their security policies to further disrupt the ease in which individuals are able to contact extremist members? Lastly, in terms of Troubled Combatants, researchers may want to consider the impact of mental health resources on these individuals and how health care providers may be able to provide counseling and/or intervention resources to families and at-risk individuals.

Finally, instead of adopting a “one-size fits all” approach toward extremist participation, it is important to explore heterogeneity among extremists. As such, to fully understand participation in violent extremism, future research should also investigate whether there are important factors that differentiate violent and non-violent extremist from one another. While Salafi Jihadist-inspired extremists contain similarities that bring them together, members in these groups may have unique individual and behavioral differences that separate them from one another. In light of this, we suggest that a sample with greater variation beyond only violent extremists (e.g., non-violent extremists, violent non-extremists, at-risk populations, etc.) would yield greater analytical leverage.

## **Report 3**

Resilience Factors to Extremist Recruitment and Radicalization in Minnesota  
Somali-American Communities

*An Ethnographic Field Study*

## REPORT 3: RESILIENCE FACTORS TO EXTREMIST RECRUITMENT AND RADICALIZATION IN MINNESOTA SOMALI-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

### Introduction

The Somali-American communities in Minnesota have long been targets for extremist recruiters. Al Shabaab, al Qaeda and the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS) have all sought to draw young people into their extremist fold, and over two decades, there have been some who traveled abroad to join FTOs. Yet, these foreign fighters (as well as material supporters and homegrown attackers) constitute a miniscule percentage of Minnesota's Somali-American population. Even as it is important to identify the factors that may lead someone to embrace an extremist ideology, just as important is understanding why individuals *do not* embrace an ideology, despite being directly targeted. In this, the Minnesota Somali-American communities have much to share and teach.

Early in 2018, the report authors met with one of many Somali-Americans pursuing public health, wellness and education initiatives in the Minnesota communities. After learning of the research focus for this report and agreeing to facilitate further connections in the community, this subject said: “*We* must be the ones to tell *our* story.”

That is, those from outside the community will always fall short of appreciating the truest sentiments, beliefs and intricacies of a rich and complex culture and community of which they are not a part. The report authors agree. Despite (or perhaps by virtue of) working in the Minnesota communities for more than five years, the authors appreciate that there is no way to fully capture all of the attributes, diversities, histories, challenges and successes that constitute the uniquely Somali-American immigrant experience.

Rather, this report describes and explains why the Minnesota Somali-American communities have displayed a particular resilience against violent extremist recruitment and radicalization. In an

effort to understand the pathways that lead to terrorist, we must also develop “a complementary knowledge of why individuals resist the influence of violent extremism.”<sup>6</sup>

After a year-long ethnographic study involving hundreds of hours of fieldwork, this report delivers the insights needed to understand resilience and vulnerability to violent extremist recruitment in the Minnesota Somali-American communities:

1. Trends in public safety, health, productivity, and other areas between 2014 (the height of foreign fighter departures) and today.
2. Current community sentiment and reflections with regard to extremism and other challenges.
3. Ongoing community challenges that could contribute to recruitment and radicalization “push factors” at a future point, if ignored.

The research and conclusions reveal strong resilience factors, as well as some vulnerabilities, in the Minnesota Somali-American communities. Understanding these factors in their full ethnographic context reveals positive trends and resiliencies that should be supported to continue to buttress the communities against future foreign terrorist organization (FTO) recruitment efforts, or those by homegrown extremists. What is more, a clear understanding of the points of progress and success in Minnesota delivers valuable insights and approaches that other communities under threat may find useful in resisting extremist recruitment and radicalization.

Ultimately, and as this report shows, the resilience seen in Minnesota is largely the product of the Somali-American communities’ own efforts. Through education and wellness initiatives, strong religious leadership, partnerships with public offices, and myriad other endeavors, Somali-Americans

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<sup>6</sup> R. Kim Cragin. Resisting Violent Extremism: A Conceptual Model for Non-Radicalization. *Terrorism and Political Violence*. December 7, 2013. pp. 337-353.

are the principal authors of their own successes. In this report, the authors strive to let the community tell its story and the lessons therein.

## METHODOLOGY

The report authors spent 19 days in Minneapolis-St. Paul over the course of five visits throughout 2018. With more than 350 hours of fieldwork research, the authors spoke with 40 subjects, conducting 11 structured interviews, two focus group discussions, and hours of unstructured interviews in the field. The report authors also spent substantial time in the Somali-American community, including: observing primary voting in predominantly Somali-American neighborhoods; visiting multiple Somali-owned businesses repeatedly for impromptu conversations with patrons, staff, and owners; observing outdoor activities for Somali youth and interacting with parents and families; and meeting with elected officials and local and federal law enforcement professionals whose work has a nexus to the Somali-American communities in Minnesota.

The study was submitted to University of Southern California's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for an exempt status review. Exempt review indicates that the research involves the use of educational tests that (1) do not collect identifier information from participants, and (2) do not collect any information that would put the participant at risk. The study was approved for exemption in October 27, 2017.

In line with the IRB exempt status, sources' identifier information was not collected. The only identifying qualities recorded were the sources' age, gender, and place of birth. When possible, interviews were digitally recorded with the sources' permission.<sup>7</sup>

Using a mixed-methods approach and working in conjunction with project research partners at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, the study used a large sample quantitative analysis of Homegrown Violent Extremists (HVEs) combined with ethnographic interviews from a similar sample that was not

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<sup>7</sup> Most sources declined to be recorded.

motivated toward violence to understand how a variety of trends impact the Minnesota Somali-American community's evident resilience to targeted extremist radicalization and recruitment.

This study was intended to be based on a grounded theory approach to qualitative data analysis,<sup>8</sup> using an iterative analysis strategy that codes patterns in qualitative data to describe categories and typologies, leading to the creation of various model outputs. However, and as this report describes, the tenor of the Somali-American community toward research regarding homegrown violent extremism (HVE) and FTO recruitment and radicalization has shifted dramatically in the last two years. The report authors have conducted HVE research in the Somali-American community in Minnesota since 2014, at the height of ISIS recruitment efforts.

The community ties and trust built over many years, most of it not funded by federal programs, have provided the authors deep insight into the Minnesota Somali-American communities. Yet, even with these relationships, the authors encountered a new reticence to speak about HVE and FTO recruitment. Dozens of potential sources declined to be interviewed, and most of those who accepted declined requests for the interviews to be audio recorded. By comparison, in prior years, all but one of tens of interview subjects accepted requests to record interviews.

This dramatic shift in community sentiment toward HVE research became a point of investigation throughout 2018, and it necessitated a change in methodological approach. The result is an ethnographic study in which the authors present the insights of Minnesota Somali-American individuals who have achieved success across multiple professions, despite sharing a similar background as many of the individuals who departed to join an FTO. Interviews focused on capturing: the individual's

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<sup>8</sup> See, Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (London: Sage, 2006); Michael Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002); and, Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007).

background and challenges; their motivations and opportunities; and their perceptions of internal community challenges, including those unrelated to extremism.

Concurrent with fieldwork and content analysis, researchers reviewed open source data specific to the Somali-American communities in Minnesota to understand population demographics, economic and education trends, and academic and media sources examining HVE and countering violent extremism (CVE) programming in Minnesota.

## MINNESOTA SOMALI-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES IN CONTEXT

Since the 1990s, the United States and other countries have been safe havens for Somalis fleeing conflict in their home country and refugee camps in neighboring nations. The Somali diaspora is widespread, and there are sizable populations throughout the United States, Europe, and elsewhere. The largest Somali population in North America is found in Minnesota.

The size, make-up, and demographic details of the Somali-American population in Minnesota have long been difficult to calculate. There are several reasons for this:

- There can be a reticence to answer census questions, fearing participation may somehow imperil immigration status.<sup>9</sup>
- Homelessness is often absorbed by the community, whereby homeless individuals live temporarily with families and others affiliated by clan, obscuring an accurate count of total population size.
- The way in which data is gathered and coded by many organizations is often insufficiently nuanced, counting Somali-Americans in a larger demographic cohort, generally African American. The inability to distinguish data on Somali-Americans from the broader African American population frustrates efforts to precisely identify the details of the Minnesota Somali-American communities.

Recognizing these limitations, there are some data and research that yield critical detail.

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<sup>9</sup> Erroll Southers and Justin Hienz, “Foreign Fighters: Terrorist Recruitment and CVE Programs in Minneapolis-St. Paul,” CREATE, University of Southern California, April 2015.

## Minnesota Somali-American Population Makeup

Using 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS) data, there are nearly 48,800 Somali-Americans living in Minnesota.<sup>10</sup> Of current residents, 59 percent were foreign born, and 41 percent were born in the United States. For the foreign born 16-64 age cohort, 42 percent had lived in the United States for a decade or less, while 58 percent had lived in the country for 11 years or more.

The share of the population born abroad continues to grow. In 2017, according to Department of Homeland Security data, 2,662 Somalis were granted lawful permanent resident status in Minnesota.<sup>11</sup> The Minnesota Department of Health reports 446 Somali refugees were resettled in Minnesota in 2017, and an additional 509 Somalis with refugee status moved to Minnesota from their initial county of resettlement.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the U.S.-born Somali-American population is also growing, as many Somali adolescents today are second- or third-generation American.

Somali-American households in Minnesota, of which there are 14,764, typically contain more than one resident (74 percent), with 41 percent of households containing 4 or more people. Throughout Minnesota, 58 percent of households contain at least one child younger than 18 years old. The share of householders who own their home is 10 percent, the lowest of any demographic cohort in Minnesota. The next closest ethnic cohort is African American, with a 22 percent home-ownership rate.

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<sup>10</sup> Minnesota State Demographic Center, “The Economic Status of Minnesotans 2018,” Minnesota Department of Administration, 2018, 8.

<sup>11</sup> “Persons Obtaining Lawful Permanent Resident Status by State or Territory of Residence and Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Year 2017 (Supplementary Tables),” 2017 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> “Primary Refugee Arrival to Minnesota by Initial County of Resettlement and Country of Origin, 2017,” Minnesota Department of Health.

## Economic Realities for Somali-Americans in Minnesota

Economic wellbeing continues to be a significant challenge. Some 80 percent of Somali-Americans in Minnesota live in or near poverty, and 57 percent of children live in poverty.<sup>13</sup> Of the 16-64 age cohort, 37 percent are either unemployed or do not participate in the labor force. The median household income is \$20,600, which for a family of four (41 percent of households) falls below the federal poverty line.<sup>14</sup>

While anecdotal evidence gathered during research suggests there has been an increase in employment by virtue of a strong state and national economy, the proportion of Somali-Americans in Minnesota struggling to derive a livable income remains high. There is reason to think this trend will continue, recognizing that high school graduation is a predictor of future employment. In the Minnesota Somali-American community, 37 percent of residents in the 25-64 age cohort lack a high school diploma or GED.<sup>15</sup> The only community with a higher percentage is the Minnesota Mexican-American community, where 40 percent of individuals lack a high school diploma.

## Education Trends

The Somali-American population in Minnesota is young, with a median age of 22 years. About half of the population is juvenile. Looking to Minnesota schools, there is a growing proportion of students who speak Somali at home, a reflection of a growing Somali-American student body.<sup>16 17</sup> According to the Minnesota Department of Education, in 2015-2016, there were 21,287 public school

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<sup>13</sup> “Economic Status of Minnesotans,” 26.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>16</sup> While ethnic heritage is often insufficiently tracked in many datasets, with data on primary language use at home, it is possible to infer population characteristics.

<sup>17</sup> “2015-2016 Student’s Primary Home Language Statewide and All Districts,” Minnesota Department of Education.

students across the state whose home language was Somali. Of these, 3,620 attended schools in the Minneapolis district, 1,295 attended St. Paul public schools, and some 10,600 students attended districts in the county metro area. By that, inferring population size by language, 72.8 percent of Minnesota's Somali-American students attending public schools do so in the Twin Cities or in the surrounding suburbs. This number has grown, as late 2018 data reveals there were 23,066 students in just 10 counties whose home language was Somali.<sup>18</sup>

About a third of Somali-American families in Minnesota elect to send their children to public charter schools, which can be more accommodating to English language learners and the cultural and religious practices that are at the center of Somali society and history.<sup>19</sup> Minnesota also hosts several Somali Islamic schools (*dugsi*), which offer a Western academic curriculum within the context of Somali culture and tradition.

By some measures, the Somali-American student population is finding success. For example, about half of Somali students in Minneapolis public schools are enrolled in advanced classes. Yet, just 6 percent of these students receive a 21 or higher on the ACT standardized test, which is the national average.<sup>20</sup> Given the size of the adolescent Somali-American population in Minnesota, low high school graduation rates, chronic poverty, and a range of other challenges, the Minnesota Somali-American population contains a sizeable allotment of the age cohort typically most vulnerable to violent extremist recruitment and radicalization.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, despite the state's Somali-American demographic make-up and past challenges with HVE and support for FTOs, the extremist threat is not currently manifest, particularly as it relates to support

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<sup>18</sup> "Fall 2018 English Learner Education in Minnesota Report," Minnesota Department of Education.

<sup>19</sup> "Somali Student Achievement in Minnesota: A Report on the Largest East African Community in Minnesota," Minnesota Education Equity Partnership.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Southers and Hienz, "Foreign Fighters," 6.

for ISIS. Indeed, since a series of arrests and court trials in 2015, which charged nine Somali-Americans with terrorism-related offenses, there has not been a single Somali-American departure to join a FTO, according to publically available information. A review of terrorism trends and counterterrorism efforts in Minnesota over the last decade reveal why this is remarkable.

## HVE THREATS AND COUNTERTERRORISM EFFORTS IN THE TWIN CITIES

The Somali-American communities in Minnesota have faced FTO and HVE threats for more than a decade, from departures to support ISIS, al-Qaeda, and al-Shabaab to indiscriminate homegrown attacks. However, the types of threats and the way they manifest have not been static, and there are clear trends showing two waves of departures to join FTOs, followed by infrequent and local HVE attacks.

### **Al-Shabaab Recruitment and Radicalization in Minnesota**

In 2008, after the al-Qaeda affiliate al-Shabaab seized control of Mogadishu, Somalia, there was preliminary support in the Somali diaspora for the movement, due largely to ignorance. The early assumption was that the group was an Islamic nationalistic movement focused on rebuilding the failed state, and by that, there was not initially community resistance to the terrorist group's call to the Somali diaspora for support; indeed, al-Shabaab was not initially believe to be a FTO.

However, when stories of al-Shabaab's atrocities were relayed to U.S. Somali-American residents and citizens, there was a rapid and immediate shift in community sentiment. As the report authors noted in 2015, "One primary reason al-Shabaab recruiting decreased after 2009 was that the community became more aware of al-Shabaab's true, terrorist nature and rejected it." Indeed, whereas 20 individuals left the Twin Cities between 2007 and 2009 to join al-Shabaab, there were zero departures in 2010, with one departure in 2011, one in 2012 and two in 2013.<sup>22</sup>

### **Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Recruitment and Radicalization**

In 2014, there was a substantial increase in Somali-Americans who departed the United States to join a FTO, specifically ISIS. There were eight known departures in 2014, many attempted-but-

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<sup>22</sup> Southers and Hienz, "Foreign Fighters," 12.

unsuccessful departures, and an unknown number of departures that eluded domestic law enforcement and official confirmation of departure. During research in 2014, the report authors regularly were informed by the community of departures unknown to law enforcement.

One of the most perplexing aspects of ISIS' successful recruitment of Somali-Americans is that the population shares no ethnic or cultural relationship with populations in the Levant, among them, those in Syria. Many community members reported at the time that, with regard to ISIS recruitment, they did not understand why young people would join a group that had no nexus to Somalis, their country, or their history.

As reported in the authors' 2015 study, the al-Shabaab recruiting network was in some ways appropriated by ISIS, a finding confirmed by then-U.S. Attorney Andrew Luger. As we wrote:

*Sources reported that the recruiters who sent young people to Somalia are the same recruiters now sending young people to Syria. One Cedar-Riverside source, who has known several young people who departed the United States to join a terrorist group, said: "A kid who left [for Somalia] sent a text message to say the new order is to go to Syria. They are using old friends as the messengers."*<sup>23</sup>

The report additionally found that recruitment efforts took place face-to-face and not exclusively through online media, as was commonly assumed at the time.

### **Somali-Americans Arrested on Terrorism Charges**

In November 2014, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Minnesota charged two Somali-Americans with conspiring to join ISIS.<sup>24</sup> One man, Abdi Nur, successfully departed and was believed to be in

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>24</sup> "Two Minnesotans Charged with Conspiracy to Provide Material Support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant," Minnesota U.S. Attorney's Office, U.S. Department of Justice, November 25, 2014.

Syria; the other, Abdullahi Yusuf, was stopped at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport before boarding a flight to Turkey. In February 2015, the FBI arrested Hamza Ahmed, who, along with several other people, was part of a circle of friends interested in ISIS propaganda and traveling to Syria.<sup>25</sup> Then-U.S. Attorney Luger used the term “peer-to-peer recruitment” to characterize the group’s interactions vis-à-vis violent extremism. Ongoing FBI investigations surveilled the group, and in April 2015, the state’s U.S. Attorney’s Office charged six more Somali-Americans with conspiracy and attempt to provide material support to a designated FTO.<sup>26</sup> Mr. Luger said, “To be clear, we have a terror recruiting problem in Minnesota.”<sup>27</sup>

Interestingly, attempts by Somali-Americans to travel abroad to join an FTO ceased almost entirely after the nine arrests and the ensuing trials. While Minnesota may have had a terror recruiting problem, if attempted departures reflect how effective recruiters are in drawing new adherents, then terror recruiting after 2015 either was ineffective or not present. The compelling question then is why, which this report in part seeks to answer.

In May 2016, the authors traveled to Minnesota to observe the terrorism trial and explore the community’s reaction, sentiment, and concerns. Presiding over the case was U.S. District Judge Michael J. Davis, who sought to develop a deradicalization program, offering spots to four of the defendants who pleaded guilty. Judge Davis consulted with Daniel Koehler, Director of the German Institute on Radicalization and Deradicalization Studies (GIRDS), who worked as a deradicalization and family counselor in multiple programs and developed several methodological approaches to deradicalization.

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<sup>25</sup> “Hamza Naj Ahmed Indicted for Conspiring to Provide Material Support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant,” U.S. Department of Justice, February 19, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> “Six Minnesota Men Charged with Conspiracy to Provide Material Support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant,” U.S. Department of Justice, April 20, 2015.

<sup>27</sup> “U.S. Attorney: We Have a Terror-Recruiting Problem in Minnesota,” NBC News, April 20, 2015.

Judge Davis ordered the defendants to undergo evaluation by Koehler for the purpose of helping him understand their motives and the potential for rehabilitation, based on the adaptation of an intervention model for neo-Nazis. The program would have been the first of its kind in the United States. In 2015, Judge Davis placed defendant Abdullahi Yusuf in a halfway house under the supervision of a team of mentors, teachers, and religious scholars. The endeavor unraveled when a box cutter was discovered under his bed, resulting in Yusuf being returned to jail.

The trial dominated conversations within the Somali-American community. Residents regularly questioned the legitimacy of the terrorism charges. A community program leader stated, “Ninety percent of the community believes the terror arrests are entrapment. They need to fight terrorism equally. Christians get probation, while Muslims go to prison. A white guy got arrested for planning to bomb a synagogue, and he gets probation.”

While the 90 percent figure is likely hyperbole, the subject’s sentiment and frustration were widely shared in the Minnesota Somali-American community, which in some cases boiled over into conflict. For example, during one day of the trial, hours before the doors of the Minneapolis Federal Court building opened, there was already a significant line of people waiting, including journalists, community members and relatives of the accused. There was a looming tension in the crowd, and a fight between two women in line broke out. The altercation ended quickly and had concerned defendant Abi Warsame’s intention to offer testimony in support of the government. Oddly, the women were the mother and wife of the defendant.

Warsame’s testimony was sobering and revealing as he explained how he and his co-defendants conceived of their role with ISIS and prepared to depart Minnesota to join the FTO. He offered deep detail on his process of accepting ISIS ideology, noting that he watched hours of ISIS videos online and listened to deceased American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki. He “saw photos on Twitter and Instagram of a

friend fighting for ISIS, weapons, other fighters, and heavy artillery, encouraging people to leave the Land of the Kuffar.”

Convinced the defendants were more than misguided youth, Judge Davis removed the deradicalization option, sentencing them from time served for one defendant to up to 35 years in prison for another. As the Judge concluded the proceedings, he remarked, “Everyone talks about Brussels or Paris having cells. We have a cell here in Minneapolis.”<sup>28</sup>

### Terrorism Charges Against Somali-Americans Since 2015

While departures have ceased since 2014, it is important to note the few instances of HVE that have occurred in Minnesota since then.

- **Dahir Adan:** On September 17, 2016, Dahir Adan, a Somali-American living in St. Cloud, Minnesota, perpetrated a knife attack at the Crossroads Center shopping mall.<sup>29</sup> Using two steak knives, he injured 10 people. Adan was shot and killed by an off-duty police officer. Soon after the attack, ISIS claimed responsibility, calling Adan a “soldier of the Islamic State.”<sup>30</sup> Some reports from people who witnessed the attack say Adan was using religious language (e.g., “Allahu Akbar”). The FBI’s investigation into Adan’s attack has not conclusively determined his motive, nor that he had any contact with a FTO.
- **Tnuza Jamal Hassan:** On September 19, 2017, the FBI stopped St. Paul resident Tnuza Jamal Hassan from flying to Afghanistan where, as she said, she intended to join al-

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<sup>28</sup> Stephen Montemayor. “Terrorist cell is alive in Minneapolis, U.S. judge in ISIL case says.” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. November 19, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> John Mueller, “Case 94: Minnesota Mall Stabbings,” Ohio State University, December 8, 2017.

<sup>30</sup> “ISIS Claims Responsibility for Minnesota Mall Stabbing Spree,” *CBS News*, September 19, 2016.

Qaeda and marry a fighter. She was not charged with a crime, despite admitting her intent, and was released. Then, in January 17, 2018, Hassan was arrested for setting small fires at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, which she said hoped would cause large structural fires that would kill people.<sup>31</sup> No one was injured. She has been charged with attempting to provide material support to a FTO, making a false statement, and arson, and at the time of this writing, her trial is ongoing.

- **Mahad Abdiaziz Abdiraham:** On November 12, 2017, Mahad Abdiaziz Abdiraham stabbed two men in a dressing room at the Mall of America Macy's store. Abdiraham pleaded guilty and in a statement said he conducted the attack in support of ISIS, noting in particular, "I am here reaffirming that it was indeed an act of Jihad in the way of Allah." He was sentenced to 15 years in prison.<sup>32</sup>

These cases reveal two realities about violent extremism in Minnesota among the Somali-American community. First, Minnesota faces a HVE threat, but at least for the last several years, that threat has manifested in unsophisticated individual attacks that have not caused loss of life. It has not prompted continued attempted departures on the scale seen in 2014 and before. Second, while any terrorist attack is serious and demands an aggressive criminal justice response, there have been three attacks since 2014 motivated by a Muslim Identity extremist ideology,<sup>33</sup> which is not indicative of a strong or growing HVE threat. To the contrary, as this report investigates, the HVE threat in Minnesota

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<sup>31</sup> "Minneapolis Woman Charged with Terrorism Offenses, Arson, and Making False Statements," Minnesota U.S. Attorney's Office, U.S. Department of Justice, February 7, 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Randy Furst, "Man Sentenced to 15 Years for ISIS-Inspired Knife Attack at Mall of American," *Star Tribune*, February 16, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Erroll Southern, *Homegrown Violent Extremism*, Routledge, 2013, 32-35.

appears to be substantially weaker than it was previously, indicating the presence of resilience factors and trends.

### Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Pilot Programs

In 2015, the Justice Department launched countering violent extremism (CVE) pilot programs in Boston, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles. These pilots grew out of the Obama Administration's 2011 Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) strategy, "Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States."<sup>34</sup> The pilots were intended to focus on three primary objectives: enhancing federal CVE community engagement; cultivating public sector expertise in CVE; and countering extremist messaging.

In Minnesota, 12 Somali-Americans joined a taskforce with then-U.S. Attorney Luger to develop grant programming that could fund educational and professional development programs.<sup>35</sup> Six organizations that work with Somali youth were awarded \$300,000 in grant funds.<sup>36</sup> The grant recipients included a youth soccer program, a program that empowers Somali parents, an organization planning to enhance youth employment opportunities and a group that addresses mental health issues for refugees.

While ostensibly well-intentioned, the CVE pilots encountered strong resistance in the three cities where they were implemented, and this opposition was particularly acute in Minnesota. As one of the subjects for this study said, "CVE had a good heart, but it fumbled. The leaders resisted CVE." The reasons for this community rejection are many, and understanding them gives important insight into the

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<sup>34</sup> "Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States," Office of the President of the United States, December 2011.

<sup>35</sup> "Memorandum of Understanding Between the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Minnesota and the Somali American Taskforce," Minnesota U.S. Attorney's Office, May 2015.

<sup>36</sup> "Whether It Works or Not, U.S. Anti-Radicalization Plan Can Benefit Communities," National Public Radio, April 3, 2016.

sentiments of the Minnesota Somali-American community today, particularly as it relates to HVE and foreign fighter departures.

In its implementation, the CVE pilot programs made several missteps. First, the pilot programs were run through the U.S. Justice Department, which is principally concerned with matters of criminal justice. Yet, the pilots' intent was to enhance programs that build resilience against recruitment and radicalization to violence. There is an inherent tension in attempting to build community partnerships and trust while at the same time executing the DOJ's primary criminal justice mandate. This conflict was immediately recognized by many in the Somali-American community, and it created an enduring perception that the CVE pilots were actually an intelligence gathering effort intended to cultivate community informants. The arrest and trial of the aforementioned nine Somali-Americans only served to underscore the perception that the Minnesota U.S. Attorney's Office was using the CVE pilot as cover for criminal probes.

The second fault in the way the pilots were implemented is how they focused only on Muslim communities. Despite the true breadth of extremist ideologies driving America's HVE challenge, the CVE pilots narrowly focused on predominantly Muslim communities. Intended or not, this polluted the premise that the pilots were in the community's interest. Instead, in Minnesota and elsewhere, communities perceived the pilot programs to be endeavors to profile and investigate individuals on the basis of their religious beliefs, and to a degree, their ethnicity.

The third fault was that the pilots took a narrow focus on one type of community threat (i.e., HVE). However, in Minnesota, Somali-American communities have never considered HVE to be the primary community concern. In the authors' 2015 report, every subject interviewed reported urban street

gangs were the greatest public safety threat to the Somali-American population in the Twin Cities.<sup>37</sup> Additional reported threats and challenges included narcotics sale and use, economic opportunity, and public health matters specific to the Somali-American community. (Importantly, these reported primary threats have remained consistent through the conclusion of the fieldwork for this report.) Thus, while community members were principally interested in addressing those immediate and large-scale challenges, the CVE pilot, by virtue of its purpose, focused on only one community threat—one which, despite outsized potential consequences, nevertheless has affected approximately 0.1 percent of the Minnesota Somali-American population.

Weighing the merits and failings of the Minnesota CVE pilot program is not the purpose of this report. However, the aftermath of the pilot’s implementation and the reaction and developments since reveal why many in the Minnesota Somali-American community are suspicious of federal counterterrorism programs.

In 2015, several members of the Somali-American and East African communities published an opinion-editorial in the *Minneapolis Post*. With regard to the Minneapolis Public Schools partnering with DOJ for the CVE pilot, they wrote: “This partnership means that our young people will fall prey to surveillance in the very institution that parents entrust to educate them.”<sup>38</sup>

This belief continued to grow, not just with regard to the pilot but to the entire concept of CVE. On July 10, 2015, 48 organizations from across the country, including Minnesota, sent a letter to the U.S. House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee, stating their concerns over CVE and the proposed bill H.R.2899, “The Countering Violent Extremism Act of 2015.”<sup>39</sup> In 2016, civil rights and

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<sup>37</sup> Southers and Hienz, “Foreign Fighters,” 17.

<sup>38</sup> Abdi, Kadra, et al., “The ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ program institutionalizes injustice against Somalis,” *Minneapolis Post*, May 1, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> “Re: Expansion of Countering Violent Extremism Programs,” Letter to the U.S. House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee, September 7, 2017.

religious leaders met at the Minnesota State Office Building to voice concerns over the CVE program. Executive Director for CAIR Minnesota said, “The CVE program is being used as a vehicle for systematic and large scale profiling that plays into the hands of our enemies.”<sup>40</sup>

Meanwhile, the organizations that received funding through the CVE pilot were increasingly demonized in the community, considered by some to be willing agents of a federal counterterrorism and intelligence effort. For example, as one of the report authors wrote in *U.S. News and World Report* in 2016, there was a concerted local effort to condemn and discredit every organization that received funding via the pilot.<sup>41</sup> Two notable examples are the West Bank Athletic Club, run by Ahmed Ismail, and the Average Mohamed Foundation, run by Mohamed Ahmed. Both organizations existed before the CVE pilots were implemented, and more than that, they were respected in the community. In the report author’s 2015 study, Mohamed Ahmed and Ahmed Ismail were considered by many to be true community advocates addressing the threat from extremism. In that report, the authors recorded 135 statements championing Ahmed Ismail and his program, with multiple people stating that “Coach is doing the real work.”<sup>42</sup> Within two years, he was listed as someone collaborating with the federal government against the community’s interests.

By this, the very organizations that aspired to affect positive change by engaging the CVE pilot potentially limited their capacity to affect that change absent community buy-in. Thus, the pilots and the community response had a chilling effect on readiness to engage CVE efforts, and this reticence continues today.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibrahim, Mukhtar, “Local leaders speak against Islamophobia, federal anti-terror program,” *MPR News*, April 5, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Justin Hienz, “In Times of Suspicion, Trust Your Community,” *U.S. News and World Report*, Oct. 7, 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Southers and Hienz, “Foreign Fighters,” 26.

## RESILIENCE FACTORS TO EXTREMIST RECRUITMENT IN MINNESOTA

Throughout 2018, subjects for this report noted several themes as points of progress for the community. From a counterterrorism perspective, each of these issue areas contains resilience factors that may make the Minnesota Somali-American communities better able to withstand focused HVE and FTO recruitment and radicalization efforts. These include education and after-school programming, community-law enforcement partnerships, civic engagement, and religious leadership.

### Trends and Challenges in Education

The challenges Somali-American students and parents face in education are complex. Students face obstacles in the public school environment, including English language proficiency, cultural differences and conflicts, equity in opportunity, and a range of other factors. Indeed:

“Most Somali students in Minnesota have no experience with the Somali system of education. They have either had their schooling interrupted or have never been to school at all. Most Somali parents remember how Somali schools were supposed to work, but the expectations were so different from those of American schools that Somali parents usually need help in understanding what teachers and administrators expect of their children.”<sup>43</sup>

The challenge of navigating new systems and a new language has an impact on identity and familial relationships. As Somali-American immigrant children learn the English language, or as first-generation Americans are raised in U.S. society, young people sometimes become interpreters for their parents. This gives them an opportunity to avoid parental oversight, as they can capitalize on weak

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<sup>43</sup> Mohamed Farid and Don McMahan, *Accommodating and Educating Somali Students in Minnesota Schools – A Handbook for Teachers and Administrators* (Minnesota: Hamline University Press, 2004).

English use to obscure things like low grades, absences or behavior issues. A student's desire to hide school struggles may be motivated in part by a common parental presumption that the U.S. education system guarantees academic success. As one source for this report said, "Parents don't believe you can fail in America, specifically in math."

At the same time, students attempt to navigate the new school system and the social and cultural challenges that arise. One source said that in her early education after immigrating to the United States, "public school was traumatic." At once, she was expected to adapt to a new culture and system, succeed academically, and persevere in the face of teasing and other challenges socializing with students. The source then attended a *dugsi*, a Somali school that offers a Western academic curriculum within the context of Somali culture and tradition. These schools are able to tailor their offering to the specific challenges facing Somali immigrants. Of her time in the *dugsi*, the source said, "*Dugsi* was a place to belong. It grounded me."

Importantly, these student challenges are not only apparent in younger grades but throughout students' educational career. The same source noted that when she attended public high school, she felt that she did not fit in and for a while removed her hijab after leaving home but before arriving at school. This shows the severity of the sense of isolation that Somali-American students encounter in the American education system. As another source noted of Somali-American students, "Going to school in the morning, they suffer anxiety and depression. They feel they are a target and that no one likes them."

Given the environment in which Somali students attempt to learn, there can be conflict between their adolescent struggles and teachers' understanding of what their Somali students are facing. By this, students who act out or who experience other school challenges do not suffer behavioral problems but instead environmental problems. No surprise then that, as one source reported, Somalis are suspended from school at a higher rate than other ethnic cohorts, leading to more time spent out of school—the

very thing students need to continue their development. Higher suspensions correspond with the high Somali drop-out rate, which creates significant economic challenges in the future.

One point of progress is that students who previously struggled in public school are today returning to those same schools as teachers. An increasing number of Somali-Americans in Minnesota are choosing careers in education.<sup>44</sup> While these teachers begin to satisfy the growing demand for licensed teachers with a competency in Somali language and culture, finding and recruiting Somali-speaking teachers remains a daunting task. For example, in 2016, only one of the St. Cloud district's 700-plus teachers is Somali.<sup>45</sup>

Yet, there are several state initiatives focused on increasing the number of teachers of color, including Somali-Americans. The Collaborative Urban Educator (CUE) program provides funding to recruit teachers of color, while the East African Student to Teacher (EAST) program facilitates licensing of K-12 teachers of East African origin. Those people who enroll in the EAST program are eligible for a 100 percent tuition waiver. The Minneapolis Residency Program (MRP) is a partnership with the Minneapolis Public Schools and the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and the University of Minnesota, intended to increase teacher diversity.

### **After School Programming Continues to Expand**

In the authors' 2015 study, providing after school programs was the third-most mentioned community suggestion for programs that enrich and support young people who may be vulnerable to FTO or HVE recruitment. Today, there are a plethora of opportunities for young Somali-Americans after

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<sup>44</sup> Ibrahim Hirsi, "More Young Somali-Americans are Choosing Careers in Education," *Minneapolis Post*, November 12, 2015.

<sup>45</sup> "How One Minnesota School District Handles a Rising Immigrant Population," *PBS News Hour*, March 23, 2016.

the school day is over. As one source noted, “After school programs, faith programs, there’s always an option to do something.”

There is programming for after-school tutoring for high school students. Bikes, helmets and bike locks have been donated by businesses and also funded by the Twin Cities. And soccer programs have grown tremendously, offering not just exercise and discipline but also mentorship and strong community bonds.

For all these and other programs, however, funding and sustainability remain a challenge. The resources required to satisfy growing demand from young Somali-Americans strain available resources. Organizations such as the Somali American Parent Association have advocated for programming offering enrichment activities, such as debate club, tutoring, and leadership groups. These offerings were recognized early on as risk-reduction strategies to mitigate FTO recruitment efforts. However, ever-mindful of the penchant for outsiders to paint the community with a broad brush when it comes to the HVE threat, sources in the community emphasized that radicalization should not be the justification for program funding. Instead, what’s needed is a focus on cross-cutting, systemic issues, such as high youth employment and homelessness, making a needs-based case linking the lack of resources to any number of Somali youth challenges.

### **Community-Law Enforcement Partnerships**

As described throughout this report, recent federal actions appear to have had a chilling effect on the Somali-American communities’ readiness to engage counterterrorism research. Immigration policies and Immigration and Customs and Enforcement (ICE) deportations have troubled a federal-Somali-American collaboration, potentially obscuring critical insights that can bolster resilience to extremism. At the state and local levels, however, relationships between the communities and public servants are

profoundly stronger, most visibly in the communities' relationships with law enforcement. A strong relationship between law enforcement and a threatened community is essential for creating a community resilient to extremism.

When the report authors first visited Minneapolis-St. Paul in 2014, they met with a Minneapolis Police Department community engagement officer, whose work entailed, in part, building relationships with the sometimes closed Somali-American communities. The officer, who is African American and female, reported some progress in building community relationships but admitted ongoing difficulty cultivating the trust needed to report crimes and advance public safety.

At the time, there were several Somali-American sworn officers, five of whom established the Somali-American Police Association (SAPA) in 2012. Since then, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Somali-Americans serving in a law enforcement capacity, leading to a cohort of "firsts" in Minnesota law enforcement. In 2015, for example, Kadra Mohamed became the first female Somali-American officer, joining the Metro Transit Police. Her badge was awarded to her by Waheid Siraach, the first Somali sergeant in the United States.<sup>46</sup> In 2017, Mohamoud Ibrahim became the first Somali-American police officer in the Eden Prairie Police Department,<sup>47</sup> and in 2018, Columbia Heights Police School Resource Officers Mohammed Farah and Ibrahim Farah became the first Somali-American certified D.A.R.E. Officers.<sup>48</sup>

These and other notable examples all support a more positive community-police relationship, a point of inspiration for young people, and a safer community overall. What is just as important is that this Somali-American participation in law enforcement is achievable without divesting one's cultural

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<sup>46</sup> Parker Lemke, "Metro Transit Police Welcome New, Diverse Class," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 30, 2015.

<sup>47</sup> Patty Dexter, "Ibrahim Sworn in as Eden Prairie Police Officer," *Eden Prairie News*, March 7, 2017.

<sup>48</sup> "Minnesota New DARE Officers/First 2 Somali DARE Officers," Press release, Minnesota D.A.R.E., March 14, 2018.

and religious heritage. Case in point is St. Paul Police Officer Kadra Mohamed, who wears hijab. The St. Paul department is one of the few that allow female officers to wear the religious head covering.

As a Somali-American law enforcement source described for this study, “Police should go to the community with the people the community respects. Not assimilation but integration.” This is critically important as it relates to extremist recruitment. Instances of integration-without-assimilation are evidence that a Somali identity and culture and an American identity can safely co-exist in an individual. FTOs argue that a young Muslim in America has no identity but that provided by their faith; that message falls flat in the face of a female Somali-American police officer wearing hijab while also enforcing U.S. law. FTOs are likely to pivot messaging in this case to denigrate the authenticity of the officer’s faith, but at a minimum, the broad extremist argument, as it has been made in the past, that Somali-Americans cannot nurture an American identity without betraying their faith is false.

This is buttressed by the buy-in of Somali elders in the Minnesota communities, facilitated by Somali-American liaison officers. In Somali culture, elder leaders are viewed with deep respect, and communities turn to their familial, clan, or neighborhood elders for guidance. A law enforcement liaison source told the report authors that focused outreach to Somali-American communities initially began in response to increased gang violence and human trafficking. The outreach was in part intended to help new immigrants understand the U.S. legal system. During the height of al-Shabaab foreign fighter departures, the liaison noted people in the communities asked whether the outreach was about counterterrorism or even whether the outreach effort was an FBI initiative.

The problem, the source noted, was that the outreach coordinator at the time, while Somali-American, was not religious and held limited respect in the community. His replacement was a known leader in religious communities, and this profited huge return as the liaison officer brought together community elders and imams to drive community acceptance of police outreach. The source said: “Now

there are monthly meetings with the mosques, and the chief goes as well...the chief will even say, ‘Let’s go to that café and talk with the elder there.’” This pro-active, respectful engagement, working with the many stakeholders throughout the Somali-American communities, forges the kind of trust that is indispensable in law enforcement, whether that be reporting gang violence, human trafficking, or violent extremism.

Trusting relationships have been particularly important in guiding Somali-Americans to rely on the U.S. legal system for dispute resolution and criminal punishment. During the 2015 study, the report authors were routinely reminded of the Somali custom of *xeer*, a centuries-old system of dispute resolution that allows different clans to settle a conflict or crime without intervention from authorities; this includes crimes up to and including homicide.<sup>49</sup> Under this practice, the offender and the victim’s clans agree on a settlement, often monetary, sometimes called “blood money.” This practice was a large obstacle in police investigations and prosecution, as Somali-Americans, adhering to their cultural tradition, did not often report crimes or share details with police officers. This has changed. Today, by virtue of community trust, as well as growing concerns about gang violence and an inability to stop it through internal community resolutions, *xeer* is less often practiced.

### **Law Enforcement-Community Programming**

While general police presence and engagement yields critical public safety value, the law enforcement organizations and Somali-American communities are using a variety of programming to address the challenges the communities face.

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<sup>49</sup> Hienz and Southers, “Foreign Fighters,” 8.

Throughout the summer, for example, the St. Paul Police Department hosts a “Safe Summer Night,” which is an outdoor gathering with grills, a trampoline, halal food, dogs, horses and other animals, and a range of activities, all of which simultaneously achieve three ends:

1. It creates a safe place for young people to have fun in their community, rather than being potentially attracted to groups or places with a criminal element.
2. It fosters positive community-police interaction, building trust and strong relationships.
3. It gives non-Somali-American police officers an opportunity to explore and appreciate the Somali culture in a setting that is not related to crime or law enforcement. Effective policing requires an understanding of those who law enforcement officers aspire to protect and serve, and that understanding is unlikely to be built while officers are pursuing an arrest or investigating a crime.

St. Paul also hosts a city-wide Junior Police Academy, offering a one-week camp for three age cohorts. The results are inspiring. A law enforcement source noted: “One guy went through the academy, joined the army, and now he wants to be a police officer. He is finishing a degree in criminal justice.” The aforementioned Officer Kandra Mohammed is also a graduate of this academy, and in her role, she and other female officers have in turn encouraged girls and women to join a private swimming program. A source noted:

“During swimming and gym time, the female police officers were the trainers, volunteering to show [Somali-American girls and women] how to swim. Now when St. Paul police are in their neighborhood, people want to come say hello...People look forward to getting something from police. [They ask,] ‘What good thing have you brought me today?’”

Another source noted how successful these and other kinds of exercise activities have been in reaching and motivating Somali-American women. He said: “Local gyms are packed with Somali women. The kids go to bed, and they go to the gym.”

### Recent Set-Backs for Somali-American Law Enforcement Relationships

Despite this progress, a recent incident has served to dampen community sentiment and potentially could lead to fewer Somali-American applications to become police officers. In March 2018, Somali-American Minneapolis Police Officer Mohamed Noor shot and killed an Australian woman who called 911 to report a possible sexual assault occurring in the alley behind her house.<sup>50</sup> Noor was fired and has been charged with murder and manslaughter. He is the first police officer statewide in recent memory to be charged with murder for an on-duty killing.<sup>51</sup>

During this study, several references were made to this incident and how numerous white officers who shot and killed unarmed black men across the United States had been acquitted or not charged at all. The general consensus was that the system was going out of its way to find fault with the Somali-American officer before the investigation was complete. Additionally, just days after the shooting, Minneapolis Police Chief Janee Harteau described the officer’s decision to shoot as “the actions of one individual,” distancing the department from the officer’s actions.<sup>52</sup>

The Somali-American Police Association responded, “We don’t feel that officer Noor was treated the same as other officers were treated that were in similar situation as him.”<sup>53</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>50</sup> “Civil Rights and Policing Practices in Minnesota – A Report of the Minnesota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights,” March 2018, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Libor Jany. “Ex-Minneapolis police officer Mohamed Noor will stand trial in April for Justine Damond shooting.” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 27, 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Mukhtar M. Ibrahim, “Somali-American police group says Noor has been treated differently,” *MPR News*, March 23, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

objectively, between 2006 and 2012 in Minneapolis, the city paid \$14 million for alleged police misconduct, and very few of these cases resulted in disciplinary action for the officers.<sup>54</sup> Members of SAPA believe the case of Noor may adversely affect recruitment efforts for new officers, as young men and women who are in college and studying law enforcement “are not sure whether they want to continue to pursue this path or not.”<sup>55</sup>

The case of Mohamed Noor occurred with wide community awareness of a previous Minnesota police shooting of an unarmed individual. In summer 2016, 32-year-old Philando Castile was pulled over by St. Anthony Police Officer Jeronimo Yanez, who ultimately shot and killed Castile in his car while his wife and 4-year-old daughter watched. Yanez, who is Latino, was tried for second-degree manslaughter and was acquitted.<sup>56</sup> He has since been fired from the police department.

The contrast between both police encounters, which even without criminal culpability can both be called “bad shootings,” led to broad public perception that punishment for black police officers is greater than it is for officers of other ethnicities and that the consequence for killing a black person is less than that for killing a white person. In a time when there is an ongoing national debate about police use of force, these two cases served to dampen community confidence that participating in law enforcement delivers on the equality America promises and all Somali-Americans want and deserve.

The implications for tracking and addressing extremist recruitment and radicalization are starkly evident. With strong police-community relationships and Somali-Americans serving in law enforcement, the Minnesota Somali-American communities are in a strong position to solicit help if extremism is discovered and to report crimes (of every variety). Without these important trusting relationships, the

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<sup>54</sup> Alejandra Matos and Rany Furst, “Minneapolis cops rarely disciplined in big-payout cases.” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, June 3, 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Ibrahim, “Somali-American police group.”

<sup>56</sup> Emily Shapiro and Julia Jacobo, “Minnesota Officer Fired from Police Force After Acquittal in Philando Castile Shooting,” *ABC News*, June 16, 2017.

communities are more challenged to address and prevent extremism and the information they might otherwise share will not be, frustrating counterterrorism efforts at every level of government.

### **Increasing Civic Engagement and Aspirations for Public Office**

Throughout the fieldwork for this report, nearly every interview and casual conversation included reflections on the community's engagement in the political process. One fieldwork experience was particularly poignant.

In the late summer of 2018, the report authors traveled to the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood on primary election day. At midday, there were dozens of people on sidewalks and in parks. Some were displaying campaign signs; some were driving people to the polls; others were the candidates themselves greeting residents and working to "get out the vote." The mood was positive and excited. Everyone appeared to be smiling.

That primary day, one that preceded the election of several Somali-Americans to public office, was resilience in action. Political participation instills a sense of community ownership and fair representation. Seeing a Somali-American in public office inspires young people and most essentially allows them to see themselves reflected in the local, state, and federal governments. This is a powerful tool for undercutting extremist messaging.

When a population feels empowered and that they control their own political destiny, it erases some of the lures FTOs use, such as that Somali-Americans are not American at all, that the U.S. government *and all of its members and leaders* are anti-Islamic, and that Somalis are unwelcome in the United States. Today, each of those lures can be, if appropriately framed, rejected with evidence. Somali-Americans participate in government, and thus, not every aspect of the U.S. government is anti-

Islamic. In government, Somali-Americans can influence legislation on immigration, civil rights, equal treatment under the law, and all the responsibilities and capabilities afforded elected leaders.

Political participation begins to erase the line FTOs draw—that the recruitment target is *other* than the American population. Put another way, electing Somali-Americans to office converts the us-versus-them paradigm to simply, “us.” Consider the Somali-Americans who have run for public office or an official position in their community.

**Osman Ahmed** unsuccessfully bid for election to the Minnesota House of Representatives in the 2018 primaries. He previously worked for former Senator Al Franken.

**Siad Ali**, a doctoral candidate who serves as Sen. Amy Klobuchar’s Outreach Director, successfully secured his second four-year term on the Minneapolis School Board.

**Hodan Hassan**, a single mother, mental health clinician, community activist, and first-time candidate, was elected to represent Minnesota House District 62A, one of the most diverse in the state.

**Fardousa Jama** was the first Somali-American woman to run for a city council seat in Mankato, Minnesota.

**Mohamud Noor**, a Somali-American computer scientist, business owner, activist, and politician, was appointed to the Minneapolis School Board in 2013 and is the first Somali-American man elected to the state house. He represents the diverse District 60B, which includes the University of Minnesota and the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood.

**Ihlan Omar** was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2018, making her the first Somali-American elected to congress and the first representative who wears hijab. Previously in 2016, Rep. Omar was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives, the first Somali-American elected to legislative office in the United States.

The number of Somali-Americans who have run for a public office reflects the communities' hunger to be at the decision-making table. Increasingly, Minnesota Somali-Americans see the U.S. political process as a means to further their wellbeing and better craft the laws and policies that affect them. Yet, this hunger is not sated, and it is certain that more Somali-Americans will see public office as a means to affect the change they and their communities want. Consider the community response when informed of a local government policy.

A community meeting with Minneapolis city officials in Cedar-Riverside in late 2018 concerned a community engagement policy. The city officials were not Somali, but they were joined by two Somali-Americans who primarily served as translators. One official said the city policy “ensures the city engages all residents to make sure your voice is being heard.”

The meeting almost immediately devolved into an airing of grievances regarding how Somali-Americans are not included in the decision-making process. What became clear was that the community deeply resented the arrival of an official *telling* them about the new policy rather than *asking* them. The resulting community backlash perfectly illustrated the Somali-American conviction to be part of the public offices impacting their communities. The statements are revealing:

- “The community should be the only people making decisions and not something half-cooked.”
- “Residents should be leading all the way through the decision-making process.”
- “We have leaders capable of doing the work.”
- “We don’t need a guy in a suit with a Somali standing next to him.”

Thus, civic engagement in the Minnesota Somali-American communities is simultaneously a sign of resilience and evidence that more engagement is needed. For the same reasons it is empowering for Somali-Americans to see their culture and priorities reflected in elected leaders, increasing collaboration and consultation in the local governing process will cultivate the sense of autonomy and

self-determination that the communities clearly desire and that can mitigate or undercut extremist messaging and recruitment efforts.

### **Religious Leadership Taking an Active Role in Countering Ideology**

Extremist recruiters capitalize on religious ignorance. A strong understanding of Islam and its tenets overcomes extremist messaging that manipulates religious concepts to make a case for violence. Recruiters also prey on crises of identity.<sup>57</sup> Young Somali-Americans can be challenged to navigate the trials of adolescence while creating an identity that weds Somali heritage, American citizenship and Muslim beliefs. The community reports that a youth identity crisis is among the highest risk factors for recruitment. No surprise then that in 2015, religious instruction was cited by community sources as the most important element in youth programming to resist violent extremism.<sup>58</sup>

Some community organizations narrowly focus on the need for religious instruction as a part of addressing extremist recruitment efforts. The Average Mohamed Foundation, for example, creates cartoons and other media directed at young people that dissects, counters and dispels extremist messaging. Organizations like Average Mohamed have an important impact. In a Muslim community, however, the most significant religious impact (outside of parental guidance) stems from religious leaders, that is, imams and Muslim scholars.

There are 34 predominantly Somali mosques within a two-hour radius of the Twin Cities. The overall number of congregants is estimated to be between 25,000 and 30,000. Some congregations are as small as 500 people, while most cater to about 1,000 congregants. The leaders of these mosques have an outsized role in guiding communities toward a peaceful, moral embrace of their faith. Yet, over years,

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<sup>57</sup> Hienz and Southers, "Foreign Fighters," 16-18.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

the imams have also perceived a distinct aggression and suspicion from federal law enforcement, notably the FBI. In this context, religious leaders were charged with leading communities to a proper understanding of Islam, which includes a discussion of what jihad is and is not. Such a discussion, however, particularly in a mosque, could prompt assumptions of ill intent and aggressive (and potentially unwarranted) interest from federal counterterrorism professionals.

The report authors have long encountered difficulties attempting to meet with and interview these religious leaders, for the reasons articulated above. In 2018, the authors finally had an opportunity to speak directly and candidly with one of these imams.<sup>59</sup> The to-date unreported progress that has been made is extraordinary.

In the past, the imam reported, religious leaders were afraid to engage a young person who appeared to be embracing an extreme interpretation of Islam. When young people expressing these ideas came to the mosque, rather than attempt to educate and lead them, out of fear of government and law enforcement action, they instead told the young people to leave. In some cases, they even threatened to call the police and report them for trespassing. As the imam told the report authors: “This was a big mistake by the imams. We could have done something, but we were afraid.”

The challenge for religious leaders was a battle of ideas, some of which they delivered in mosques, others that were delivered online or in secret by extremists. The fear imams had of being targeted by federal law enforcement was rooted in real-world conditions. For example, several sources noted an incident in which FBI agents took a photo of an imam who was known to them by name and then went to predominantly Somali-American neighborhoods, knocking on doors and holding up the imam’s picture, asking, “Do you know this man?”

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<sup>59</sup> The imam did not speak English well, and one of the sources for this report served as translator.

From an investigative standpoint, considering that the imam was known by name to the FBI, seeking identification through door-to-door inquisition makes little sense. However, placed in the context of the aggressive FBI presence in Minnesota at the time, this action was perceived to be intimidating, antagonistic, and counterproductive to cultivating religious literacy.

In another example, most of the imams were formerly on no-fly lists. When then-U.S. Attorney Luger began community outreach and learned that so many imams had been banned from flying, he worked with federal partners to remove 25 of those individuals from no-fly lists. The result of this was a significant increase in trust from the imams, and these years later, it is clear the religious leadership in the Minnesota Somali-American communities is taking purposeful action to better shepherd their congregations. According to the imam, there are several primary factors contributing to greater religious literacy and community engagement.

### **Finances and Morality**

One focus of religious teaching was preventing potentially sinful action by avoiding circumstances that facilitate may it. Reliance on welfare was used as one example. The logic presented in the teaching is that if one is wholly reliant on welfare, they may be less than truthful in cases where reported income, living conditions, and other circumstances would preclude continued welfare assistance. As the imam said, “You can lead a better life, and you need to take part in the community. Welfare leads to lying and cheating, which is *haram* (sinful).”

Another noted example was an encouragement for entrepreneurial Somali-Americans to avoid businesses or organizations that are tied to government funding. When revenue hinges on federal or state funding, there is a high potential for unsustainability. Funding requirements and expectations may change or the funding itself may be cut. The religious teaching is that if one is running an organization

that requires government funding, it could lead to fraudulent activity as organizations struggle to operate in the face of funding decisions that are outside of their control.

### **Unifying Religious Leadership**

As noted, the Minnesota Somali-American Muslim leaders perceived that they were being targeted and intimidated by federal organizations. This, the imam reported, encouraged the religious leaders to unify, standardize their teachings and work together on issues facing the community. As such, the religious leadership is actively collaborating to address and accelerate religious literacy and resilience to extremist recruitment. Yet, fears remain. The imam said:

“The imams are ready to organize for counter-messaging. But they need to feel confident they can raise these issues without a problem. They are willing to act but are scared...I have 500 students and I’m willing to do counter-ideology, but the government believes the imams are producing the ideology. If the government trusts us to do our job, we will.”

The source added that there is unlikely to be any community pushback on the religious leaders for partnering with the government regarding countering extremist ideologies, given that mosques are centers for communities that offer support and programming unrelated to religious instruction (e.g., student mentoring and dispute resolution). This then is a clear opportunity for public organizations to collaborate with religious leaders who already hold the respect and trust of the Somali-American communities.

## **ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES**

Interviews and discussions throughout the research presented in this report revealed trends in economic, public safety, and other challenges impacting the Minnesota Somali-American communities. These challenges are important from a counterterrorism perspective in that when certain environmental factors are addressed, they can impact a community's resilience (or vulnerability) to terrorist recruitment and radicalization.

To be clear: the report authors found no evidence of ongoing terrorist recruiting, heard no reports of such activities, and as noted elsewhere, do not perceive a persistent FTO or HVE threat in the Minnesota Somali-American communities at present. However, it would be foolhardy to assume that the recruiting networks and tools previously employed by al-Shabaab and ISIS could not be re-energized should a FTO invest in foreign fighter recruitment and radicalization. Indeed, while other portions of this report evidence a weakened or absent Somali Nationalist cluster, that does not permanently immunize the Minnesota Somali-American communities from future threats. Rather, given the years-long record of near absent attempted departures and instances of HVE, addressing community challenges *now* may contribute to resilience in the *future*.

### **Gang Violence Remains a Concern for the Twin Cities**

There are several Somali-American gangs in Minnesota, operating primarily in the Twin Cities. These gangs present substantial public safety threats, particularly in terms of narcotics and gun sales, as well as violence between opposing groups. In 2015, gang violence was the primary public safety concern for every subject interviewed. During the 2018 fieldwork, gang violence was somewhat less frequently discussed, though it remained a noted community challenge.

The Somali-American gangs were formed initially as a way to marshal group security in the face of other city gangs and conflict at school. The gangs first emerged around 2000, and gang activity increased starting in 2004. However, as one source noted, when the 2008 recession began, the high school graduation rate for Somali-Americans was 39 percent. Many who dropped out joined a Somali gang, which had cascading ramifications for narcotics sales and violence. One important distinction between the Somali gangs and other gangs in the Twin Cities is that the Somali groups are not oriented around a particular geography (i.e., “turf”). Instead, the Somali gangs are more likely to be oriented around familial or clan affiliation. With some inter-clan conflicts that began in Somalia continuing to endure, as well as a litany of inter-group conflicts, much of the Somali gang violence and criminal activity is directed against other Somali gangs. The total Somali-American gang membership is difficult to calculate, with the most recent estimate falling in the 400-500 range.<sup>60</sup>

There have been some recent trends limiting violence and other criminal activity. One law enforcement source reported how he worked with community elders to visit Somali gang hangouts (e.g., the “Somali malls” 24 and Karmel) and push the gang members to loiter elsewhere. By this, he said, “In St. Paul, there is no place for Somali gangs to hide.”

Nevertheless, gang violence does continue. The same law enforcement source said there is always some gang activity during Somali National Week, a week-long citywide event drawing 40,000 participants for various events and gatherings celebrating Somali history, culture, and diversity. In St. Paul in 2017, there were two homicides and 12 shootings during Somali National Week.

Meanwhile, according to the Minneapolis Police Department, in 2018, the city saw a 16 percent decrease in violent crime for a year before.<sup>61</sup> This is not necessarily felt by neighborhood residents.

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<sup>60</sup> Adan, Shukri, “Report on Somali Youth Issues,” Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights, January 18, 2007.

<sup>61</sup> “Minneapolis Police Department Crime Data Dashboard,” Minneapolis Police Department.

During a community meeting in Cedar-Riverside, one Somali-American community leader said: “There has been a significant neglect in the way this community is treated...A cycle of mismanagement and misinformation, and the mothers feel that crime and safety are not being addressed.”

Evidencing this assessment, one middle-aged Somali-American woman shouted emotionally, “We cannot take anymore losing our sons!”

Thus, the evident decrease in violent crime should not be taken as proof that violence, including gang violence, has been addressed to the satisfaction of the affected community. What is more, Cedar-Riverside is but one Somali-American community among many in Minnesota, and it is incorrect to view the Minnesota Somali-American population as a homogenous group. That said, objectively, gang violence was the primary community concern in 2015, and at the time of this writing, violent crime across the city has decreased. The reasons for this decrease and other positive public safety trends, particularly as they relate to gang activity, deserve ongoing attention and investigation. This is true in large part because addressing crime has a broad impact on other community ailments, such as economic opportunity, education and graduation rates, and the overall outlook of the age cohort typically susceptible to extremist recruitment and radicalization. In aggregate, improving quality of life, supporting strong family bonds and parental leadership, and fostering trusting partnerships and sustainable opportunity all contribute to making communities more resilient.

As in 2015, the report authors did not identify any nexus between extremism and gang affiliation. Indeed, gang membership in some ways seems to inoculate young people from terrorist recruitment and radicalization, in as much as with the exception of one known example,<sup>62</sup> individuals who participated in gang activities did not participate in violent extremist activities. A law enforcement

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<sup>62</sup> Zakaria Maruf, who departed for Somalia in 2008 and was previously affiliated with the Somali gang, Somali Hot Boyz.

gang officer told the report authors in 2014: “They don't want that structure of trying to join ISIS or al-Shabaab where they have someone telling them what to do. They want to be out there on the block, doing whatever they want to do.”<sup>63</sup>

### Human Trafficking Trends and Questions

The threat and presence of human trafficking in Minnesota among the Somali-American population was mentioned several times throughout the research for this report. Based on interviews, data and other research, it seems clear human trafficking does exist in Minnesota and does indeed threaten the state’s Somali-American communities. The question is not one of if there is a threat but rather the degree of that threat, and the answer remains unclear.

Overall, Minnesota has faced the threat of human trafficking for many years. The National Human Trafficking Hotline, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, tracks trafficking data at the state level. Looking at data from 2014 through June 2018 (the latest available), there is a clear upward trend in human trafficking in Minnesota over the last four years. In 2014, there were 34 reported cases of human trafficking in Minnesota, 199 calls regarding the same, and 40 “high indicators” that trafficking was occurring. In 2016, there were 66 cases, 301 calls and 90 high indicators, and in 2017, there were 75 cases, 254 calls and 82 high indicators.<sup>64</sup>

These data align with figures from the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs 2017 human trafficking report to the state legislator.<sup>65</sup> The report’s data is based on a 2016 survey of law enforcement and service providers working with human trafficking victims. Sex trafficking dramatically exceeds

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<sup>63</sup> Southers and Hienz, “Foreign Fighters,” 19.

<sup>64</sup> “Minnesota,” National Human Trafficking Hotline.

<sup>65</sup> “Human Trafficking in Minnesota: A Report to the Minnesota Legislature,” Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, January 2017.

labor trafficking in Minnesota, and in 2016, service providers reported they were working with 239 adult females, 24 adult males, 371 girls and 27 boys who were sex trafficking victims. Meanwhile, law enforcement professionals reported investigating 94 sex trafficking cases and seven labor trafficking cases.

Looking specifically to the Somali-American communities in Minnesota, there was not much reported agreement on the threat posed by sex and labor trafficking. The criminal trend was first noted to the authors by a Somali-American law enforcement officer who characterized human trafficking in the community as a “big problem.” The source also spoke to the length of time human trafficking has been occurring in the community, noting its long-term existence when describing how the police department launched outreach efforts in 2007 in response to gang violence and human trafficking.

Another source for this report who has long-served as a community leader and liaison with public and private organizations working with the Somali-American community offered further detail on how human trafficking manifested in the community. He reported that girls who ran away from home were taken in by a relative or individual the child trusted. Rather than finding shelter and safety, however, they were sold to older men, primarily truck drivers.

The source went on to explain that as this trafficking was taking place, there was an entirely unrelated growth in Somali-Americans seeking a commercial driver’s license to find work in the trucking sector. The source said, “This made the trafficking issue worse. It’s not huge, but it exists.” The source also intimated that the degree of the human trafficking threat and its presence in the community may not be fully visible in part because the community fears a negative label that may cause them to “suffer for someone else’s sins.”

While data and source reporting strongly suggest there is human trafficking occurring within the Somali-American communities, clarity on the issue is hampered by a recent 6<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of

Appeals ruling on a multi-state sex trafficking ring allegedly run by three Somali-American gangs: the Somali Outlaws, the Somali Mafia, and the Lady Outlaws.

In 2010, then-Tennessee U.S. Attorney Jerry Martin charged 30 defendants with participating in a sex-trafficking operation, transporting “young girls” between Minnesota, Tennessee and Ohio.<sup>66</sup> The U.S. Justice Department indictment alleged that the defendants “transported underage Somali and African American females from the Minneapolis, Minnesota area to Nashville, Tennessee, for the purpose of having the females engage in sex acts for money and other items of value. The indictment alleges the females being used by the defendants for the sex trafficking included some that were 13 years of age and younger.”<sup>67</sup>

Ultimately, nine defendants were acquitted of all charges, while three were found guilty of some charges and given prison sentences. All three were Somali-Americans from Minnesota. However, on appeal, these convictions were overturned, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals cast heavy doubt on the veracity of any of the prosecution’s allegations. In March 2016, the court concluded:

“Based on our careful review of the record, we find as the district court did, that the evidence produced at trial...proved only that different and unconnected groups acted with different females at different times in different cities and states. The prosecution did not prove a single, unified conspiracy as it had charged in the indictment, but proved at best multiple separate conspiracies. Moreover, we find that extensive evidence presented about these multiple conspiracies, and the large number of improperly joined co-defendants, likely misled the jury

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<sup>66</sup> “Investigation into Sex Trafficking of Juveniles Results in Federal Indictment Charging 29 Persons,” *Press release*, Tennessee U.S. Attorney’s Office, November 8, 2010.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

into assuming a union of criminal intent, an agreement to cooperate, and an increased degree of culpability, thereby causing significant prejudice to these defendants.”<sup>68</sup>

In short, given the acquittals, it appears the tristate sex trafficking ring never existed. One enduring consequence of this is a perception that any human trafficking in Minnesota among the Somali-American communities is a myth. During a focus group discussion, multiple participants characterized human trafficking as a non-existent threat to the Somali-American community that is being used by law enforcement to secure federal funding. One person stated, “It’s an old story with a new monster used to get funding.”

With regard to cultivating community resilience against extremist recruitment and radicalization, there are several insights from the authors’ human trafficking investigation. While identifying individuals involved in human trafficking should be a criminal justice priority, when it comes to preventing and mitigating the threat of HVE, the more important consideration is the impact on the community overall. Gang violence and foreign fighter departures have long garnered news headlines, perpetually framing the Somali-American community, at least in part, in a negative light. Given that sources noted there is a desire to avoid ongoing negative publicity for the community, one insight is that emerging threats (of any variety) may not always be readily shared with law enforcement and other officials. By this, it is essential for local, state, and where appropriate, federal organizations to cultivate positive, trusting relationships with the Somali-American community. These connections, rooted in trust and cultural appreciation and respect, provide avenues for community members to report concerns and solicit the support they need. Minnesota law enforcement has already made great strides in building these community bridges, and going forward, these kinds of efforts must be a priority.

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<sup>68</sup> United States v Idris Fahra, et al., U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, Nos. 13-5122, 13-6391, 13-6422 (2016). <http://www.opn.ca6.uscourts.gov/opinions.pdf/16a0121n-06.pdf>

In addition, the presence of predatory criminal acts, such as human trafficking, can shade an individual's view of their local community, their relationships with positions of authority, and their view of the United States. The presence of human trafficking, coupled with a broad public suspicion or assumption that it is taking place within Somali-American communities and/or at the direction of Somali-Americans, may create vulnerabilities, insecurities, fears, and anger that recruiters can exploit.

### **Perceptions of the Federal Government – Xenophobia and Islamophobia**

There are many factors that have contributed to a widespread perception among Somali-Americans that Islamophobia and xenophobia are directed at their communities through public sector organizations. Importantly, regardless of whether individuals or organizations *outside* the Somali-American community perceive or believe there to be anti-Islamic, anti-immigrant, and anti-Somali sentiment in government action, it is certainly perceived that way *within* the community—which in the context of counterterrorism is the only perception that is relevant.

In 2015, the report authors found that of the top four reported perceptions of the United States, two were “mistrust of government officials” and “racism.”<sup>69</sup> Today, the nation's entire political climate, and much of the public debate, centers on the presence and veracity of these two factors. Thus, far from seeing steady improvement in the negative factors Somali-Americans perceive with regard to their experiences in the United States, instead there has been an escalation of those very same factors.

Looking at mistrust of government officials, there are two recent actions by the current administration that have had a definite chilling effect on the Somali-American communities' readiness to engage counterterrorism research, even when that research is conducted by an academic institution.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 16.

First, Executive Order 13769,<sup>70</sup> its successor, E.O. 13780,<sup>71</sup> and the superseding successor to both executive orders Presidential Proclamation 9645<sup>72</sup> limits travel to the United States from specific countries by banning certain visas. Somalia is one of the countries included, which bans travel from that country using an immigrant visa. The executive orders were challenged in federal court and the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on June 26, 2018 that the Presidential Proclamation was “a lawful exercise of the President’s authority.”<sup>73</sup> The orders and the federal appeals prompted heavy public debate and discord.

As this report articulates, there have been three Minnesota Somali-Americans engaged in extremist activities since 2015; that is, in a predominantly immigrant community, across four years, 0.006 percent of the Minnesota Somali community had any active engagement with extremism. Yet, the executive orders were rooted in the Administration’s assessment that visa applicants in Somalia cannot be vetted to a sufficient degree to ensure national security.

From the perspective of the Somali-American population in Minnesota (and likely elsewhere in the country), there is scant evidence to suggest Somali immigrants present an extremist threat in recent years. This leads to the community conclusion that rather than the executive orders being prompted by national security concerns, instead, the current administration is motivated by dishonorable philosophies, such as that Islam and foreigners are inherently threatening. There is no data anywhere to suggest that is true, and by that, banning travel from Somalia to the United States is perceived to be, at its core, xenophobic.

The second factor stemming from federal action that has had a chilling effect on trust and partnership with the Somali-American communities is that Immigration and Customs Enforcement

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<sup>70</sup> Exec. Order. No. 13769, 82 FR 8977 (February 1, 2017).

<sup>71</sup> Exec. Order. No. 13780, 82 FR 13209 (March 9, 2017).

<sup>72</sup> U.S. President, Proclamation, "Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry into the United States by Terrorist or Other Public-Safety Threats," Federal Register 82, no. 45161 (September 27, 2017).

<sup>73</sup> Trump, President of the United States, et al., v. Hawaii et al., No. 17-965, 585 U.S. (June 26, 2018).

(ICE) increased removals of Somali nationals by 163 percent in 2017.<sup>74</sup> Nearly 200 Somalis were removed from the United States in 2016, and in 2017, 521 Somalis were removed, according to ICE data. Importantly, while ICE removals of Somalis dropped by 56 percent in 2018, the report authors conducted fieldwork in the immediate aftermath of the 2017 removals, yielding timely Somali-American community reflections on how ICE's increased removals directly and negatively impacted community perceptions.

Most powerfully, when asked about the extent of current FBI investigative activities, a law enforcement source for this report said, "DHS is the new threat because of ICE and [Customs and Border Protection]"—this from an individual who daily risks personal health and safety in service to public safety and criminal justice. This shows clearly the depth to which federal actions have negatively impacted community perceptions. If local law enforcement officers are wary of federal efforts, how much more uncertain are those with a more limited knowledge of criminal justice in the United States?

The perception that government initiatives were not just prejudiced but, in fact, abusive was reinforced with reporting that a plane carrying 92 deported Somalis (most of whom had American spouses and children) refueled in Dakar, Senegal, and such that the flight crew had sufficient time to rest, the detainees were shackled in their seats, some in full-body restraint, for nearly a day.<sup>75</sup> The flight and its passengers were then directed back to the United States. The travel lasted 46 hours, and upon return, detainees reported to have endured inhumane conditions. ICE replied to the reports, stating in part:<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "Fiscal Year 2018 ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations Report," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2018, 15.

<sup>75</sup> Carlos Ballesteros, "ICE Kept 92 Immigrants Shackled on a Plane for Two Days in 'Slave Ship' Conditions, Advocates Say," Newsweek, December 14, 2017.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

“Detainees were fed at regular intervals to include the providing of extra snacks and drinks. Lavatories were functional and serviced the entire duration of the trip. The allegations of ICE mistreatment onboard the Somali flight are categorically false. No one was injured during the flight, and there were no incidents or altercations that would have caused any injuries on the flight.”

In the aftermath, the Immigration Clinic at the University of Miami School of Law filed a class-action lawsuit against ICE alleging “inhumane conditions and egregious abuse.” The Miami Federal Court halted the deportation of the 92 Somalis, and at the time of this writing, they remain in detention centers in Florida while legal appeals are ongoing.

To be sure, many of these detained people had criminal convictions, and the validity of the deportations is not relevant to extremist resilience factors. What is highly relevant is the way in which these actions were viewed by the Somali-American community. Reports of abuse at the hands of ICE personnel are threatening and terrifying to individuals fleeing civil war and violence. Also consider that many Somali-Americans who immigrated did so via long-term residence in a refugee camp in Kenya. Hundreds of thousands of Somalis continue to live in Kenyan camps, and in that environment, their future residence and diplomatic status is in flux and largely beyond their control. Until recently, for example, the Kenyan government planned to close the Dadaab refugee camp and repatriate some 320,000 refugees, almost all of whom are Somali. The potential for violence against returning refugees is extraordinary.

In this cultural and contemporary context, ICE deportations and reports of abuse are easy parallels of the immigration uncertainty Somalis have faced since the 1990s. That in turn only perpetuates a feeling that the United States is less a mother country and more a temporary place of refuge, which is a core argument in FTO recruitment efforts. As the authors quoted a source in 2015:

“There’s a lot of competing threats to a person’s sense of self-worth. And then, within that chaos of ‘who am I,’ it creates an opening for someone else to come in and kind of say, ‘This is who you are.’”<sup>77</sup>

The mistrust of the federal government among Minnesota Somali-Americans is not new. In 2015, the mistrust was most closely linked with how the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screened and interacted with Somali-Americans in the Minneapolis International Airport. At the time, foreign fighter departures were a point of focus for federal law enforcement and counterterrorism efforts, and there were Somali-Americans stopped at Minneapolis International who intended to journey to Syria to join ISIS. On the one hand, aggressive screening by TSA was warranted; on the other hand, because it was precisely focused on the Somali-American community by virtue of previous departures, many in the community perceived TSA’s scrutiny to be evidence of racial, ethnic, and religious profiling.

Similar sentiments were expressed regarding the FBI, which by far garnered the most negative sentiments in the author’s 2015 study. In 2018, the FBI is no longer the primary focus of this resentment and perception of biased law enforcement. Instead, as one source for this report said: “With the FBI, things are quiet since the arrests in 2014 and 2015. But Islamophobia has increased, moving from the TSA to the City Office to public hate.”

There have been some reported political statements by politicians that directly pathologize two core attributes of the Somali-American experience: refugee status and Islamic beliefs and practices. The most insidious aspect of these sorts of comments is that in isolation, they are relatively limited transgressions. But it is the totality of their impact that is relevant to efforts to mitigate risk factors for extremist recruitment. To wit, if Somali-Americans, who are almost exclusively Muslim, perceive broad

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<sup>77</sup> Southers and Hienz, “Foreign Fighters,” 17.

public animosity toward their experiences and belief system, that creates a definite entry point for a skilled terrorist recruiter to target and lure a vulnerable young person.

From social media posts and appearances at events featuring anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim speakers, to federal statements that seem to insult African nations and imply warranted suspicion by virtue of one's belief system, political statements that are perceived to denigrate Somali-Americans serve only to fuel a sense of alienation, animosity, and confused identity, which can be lethal tools in the hands of terrorist recruiters. The core insight is not with regard, necessarily, to current political discourse but instead to the potential and likely impact it will have on preventing violent extremism in the future.

By this, future policy decisions that impact the Somali-American communities should consider the consequences for the critical relationships between the state's communities and those who aspire to support them in resisting extremist recruitment and activity. Aggressive law and immigration enforcement in the Minnesota Somali-American communities achieves only so much before it begins to hinder other essential interests of the federal government. Homeland security is elevated through strong community relationships that facilitate local training, participation, and threat reporting—all of which require strong and trusting public-community partnerships.

## RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

As noted throughout this report, the authors enjoy a five-year relationship with many organizations and individuals in the Minnesota Somali-American communities. This long-term engagement profited the authors with rich and nuanced observations, discussions, and interviews, much of it conducted without any project funding or, indeed, for any research project at all. After the height of foreign fighter departures in 2014, the authors recognized an essential opportunity and responsibility to maintain existing relationships in the Somali-American communities and expand contacts and access such that: emerging and changing trends were tracked in situ; community trust in the authors increased, given visits, correspondences, and other engagements; and when the time came to conduct another study on vulnerability to extremism in Minnesota, the authors were in a position to immediately begin a more expansive research effort.

This multi-year research has yielded insights into how to best conduct ethnographic fieldwork in Somali-American communities. There are a litany of pitfalls, missteps, missed meanings, and other challenges that researchers encounter whenever working in a cultural context that is not their own. The report authors acknowledge their observations and reflections cannot capture the full complexity of Minnesota's Somali-American communities; indeed, the authors cannot become Somali. Nevertheless, there are lessons learned that may amplify and support future research efforts in Somali-American communities.

### **Lessons for Engaging an Immigrant Community**

One important finding from the authors' 2015 study is that the Somali-American communities are research weary. Sources noted they felt like "lab rats" after many years of research efforts conducted by individuals and organizations outside the community. Further, many noted that previous researchers

only engaged the community for a limited time, evidencing no lasting commitment to relationship building, forgetting to share their research publications with the community, and failing to return to the communities they studied. Strikingly, during the second visit to Minnesota in 2015, one source remarked surprise that the authors had returned, saying: “You came back. No one ever comes back.”

This delivers a sobering and important lesson. An ethnographic researcher, even when striving for objective observation, is necessarily a part of the research. Subjects are human beings who require trust, respect, and give-and-take in order to feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics, such as extremist recruitment and radicalization. By this, researchers must continually cultivate strong relationships over time and always recall that the way they work and speak with research subjects has a real impact on what the research can reveal. When it comes to counterterrorism research, given the seriousness of the topic and the implications for Minnesota communities, strong relationships are indispensable.

Long-term engagement supports strong relationships, but it is not on its own sufficient. What is also needed are shared experiences and knowledge between researchers and subjects. In Minnesota, two qualities allow the report authors to establish trust and retrieve deep understanding. Dr. Erroll Southers is African American. Beyond his academic work, his life’s experiences inform an intensely personal understanding of race and prejudice in the United States, which has been an important point of shared understanding when exploring issues of ethnicity and racism in Somali-American communities. Justin Hienz is a religious scholar with years studying Islam in academic and professional settings. This provides a robust understanding of the Somali-American communities’ belief system, and given evident knowledge of religious terms, texts, history, and context, it results in a greater comfort level for sources discussing their faith. The lesson for other researchers is to explore their own histories and personal qualities and find opportunities to use them to forge genuine trust and relationships.

### **Consequences of the CVE Pilots and Other Factors**

Just as researcher qualities and commitment impact source openness, so too do unrelated factors that are outside the researcher's control. In the Minnesota Somali-American communities, the researchers found a distinct reticence among sources to engage the research project, which manifested in several ways. Most sources refused to consent to audio-recording. The report authors were surprised by this, as in previous interactions and interviews, almost all sources consented to recording and mostly with indifference. The reasons for refusing were clearly because of the research subject matter. What is more, the report authors have always been transparent about their work and its intention, and by this, the authors are known to conduct counterterrorism research for CREATE, therefore funded by DHS. One fieldwork experience reveals the existence of an evident chilling effect.

The report authors were meeting with a source in a Somali-owned café, one they had visited previously, including to conduct an interview with the owner. At this establishment and during an interview with another source, the owner approached the authors' table with a Somali dish. It was immediately clear why; he made a point of asking for whom the authors were conducting research. The authors stated, "A research center at the University of Southern California." With a jovial attitude, the owner asked the authors to repeat the institution, ostensibly because he did not hear or understand the statement in the noisy café. The authors said, "For USC." The owner nodded, smiled, and then he leaned in, lowered his voice and asked, "DHS?"

That is but one of many instances where community members showed suspicion of the authors' relationship with the Department, and this reveals long-term consequences of the CVE pilots and recent ICE actions. Early in 2018, during an interview with a community non-profit leader, the authors were instructed to never mention CVE or "countering violent extremism," even if the authors were being

critical of the pilots. The mistrust and anger toward CVE, not just as a pilot but as a concept, is so thorough and widespread that any mention of it is sufficient to preclude a research relationship.

Beyond this rejection of CVE and any affiliated program, there was also a broad wariness of ICE actions and the current administration's immigration policies. The authors have almost no insight into the official immigration status of the sources interviewed, beyond knowledge of their place of birth. However, one should not presume that fear of deportation only erupts in undocumented residents. The U.S. immigration system, like many U.S. state and federal bureaucratic systems, can be opaque to Somali refugees. Even with valid immigration status, the concern that ICE could arbitrarily ignore that status and deport a refugee, resident, or even citizen is real and sufficient to cause a chilling effect on research responsiveness.

## CONCLUSIONS

The community sentiments, statements, and insights presented in this report are the culmination of some five years of research. In summer 2018, the report authors were standing beside a soccer practice field, and there were dozens of young people scrimmaging under the guidance of their coaches. Around the field were families on blankets, children on bikes, another group playing basketball nearby—smiles, laughter, inspiring and evident progress, all in the shadow of the Riverside Plaza towers. Just steps away was the small concrete building where the authors first began their research in 2014, at the height of ISIS recruitment efforts. The contrast between then and today was palpable.

Over the years, the Somali-American communities' growth and progress has been steady, though not without its challenges. Many of those challenges remain, including those related to poverty, economic mobility, criminal activity, education and overall inequity. These are challenges common to many American communities, and in many ways, the extremist threat has been largely conquered, at least for the time being. What is important now is to surge support and cultivate trust and partnerships, such that if the Minnesota Somali-American communities ever again face an aggressive, sophisticated extremist recruiting campaign, they will be in a strong position to collaborate on methods to effectively resist those who would corrupt and lure their young people to violent extremism.

This raises the question: what is the role of the federal government in Minnesota Somali-American communities as it relates to mitigating the risk of extremist recruitment and terrorist action? With departures absent and HVE instances infrequent, aggressive federal law enforcement investigations will serve largely to confirm the Somali-Americans' existing mistrust of the FBI and the federal government more generally. Ongoing investigations and monitoring for terrorist communications are essential, but they must be balanced with evidence of genuine efforts to build trust and collaboration.

Meanwhile, programs like CVE stand no chance of securing community buy-in going forward. While well-intentioned, the damage done via the CVE pilots to the communities' willingness to participate is so severe that any future CVE effort is certain to fail for want of participation. Indeed, the report authors can conceive of no federally-led countering violent extremism program by any name or function that could affect change in resilience to extremism in the Minnesota Somali-American communities.

By this, the report authors recommend that federal counterterrorism efforts in Minnesota be carefully contemplated for their long-term impact on community trust. Cascading consequences are not always foreseeable, but after five years working in these communities, one conclusion is certain: without community belief that a program is in their interest and without total transparency into its purpose, over time, that program hurts the very relationships needed to report and mitigate violent extremism.

At the same time, given the range of other ills and threats to the Minnesota Somali-American communities, there is a role for the federal government (as well as local and state governments) to support what one source for this report called "the economics of opportunity." This may include supporting vocational training programs designed for the unique challenges and assets of the Somali-American communities. It may also be supporting organizations that work with drug dependence or those that provide after school tutoring and mentoring. Multiple sources reported the scarcity of resources for these kinds of programs and the impact that has on the communities. As one source said, "The resources are so small you drop something and everyone jumps." This in turn, as another source reported, can lead to inter-community conflict. He said: "Since resources are scarce, the competition is severe. It's called 'eliminate the competition.'"

As support and resources for community programming are developed, it is important to consider the degree to which it may cause strife within the community. Also consider that in some cases, given

language limitations and other barriers, some in the community may not have the wherewithal to advocate or secure resources for programming. Thus, the distribution of resources should be carefully managed to ensure funds are being given to groups with clear strategies and goals, rather than simply those who understand the federal grant system and can better maneuver to secure funding. In this, it may be fruitful to explore models for community advisory boards that can help oversee how funding is distributed, using inherent community and cultural knowledge to mitigate infighting.

There are myriad resilience factors in place in the Minnesota Somali-American communities. Given improvements in government-community relations, religious leadership, civic participation, educational programming, and a host of other areas, the Minnesota communities are in a much stronger position in 2019 to resist extremism than they were during the height of ISIS recruitment, and earlier, al-Shabaab recruitment. While the threat of HVE and terrorist recruitment can never be fully eliminated, based on the report authors' years-long study and discussions, the Somali-American communities do not appear to have the problems with extremism that they did in 2014. And while many organizations contributed to this success, ultimately, the progress has been the result of the diligent efforts of the Minnesota Somali-Americans themselves.

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**APPENDIX A. RADICALIZATION CHARACTERISTICS COMPARISON**

SPARC Variable	HVE Initiative: Characteristics and Clusters of Radicalization
Adolescent Misconduct	Had a documented history of prior criminal behavior, including any arrests (excluding traffic citations)
	In addition to militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired ideology, had a history of engagement or seeking contact with other extremist, antisocial, or criminal groups or entities
Adventure or Glory	Thrill seeking: Engagement with militant ideology or group appears driven by interest in excitement, adventure, or glory
Angry US	Involvement in extremist ideology or group appears driven by pervasive frustration or anger toward the United States
Anti-Western General	Involvement in extremist ideology or group appears driven by pervasive frustration or anger toward Western culture
Catalyst Extremist Connection	Strongly identified with Muslims perceived as being victimized (Palestinians, Iraqis, Afghans, or Muslim Kashmiris)
	Vile world belief: Expressed a belief (or actions suggested subject believed) there was something wrong with the world and it was harming the group with which the subject identified
Dehumanization	Regarded people who did not subscribe to subject's ideology as “evil,” “other,” or otherwise dehumanized or objectified
Diffused Rage	Engagement with militant ideology or group appears driven by pervasive frustration or anger (subject may regard targets as fungible and may not express a coherent rationale; just seeks an outlet or validation for violence)
Doctrine Manipulation	Lacked grounding or sophistication in Islamic theology and doctrine (could not articulate a cogent religious justification for actions beyond simple references to the Hadith or Quran or expressed no religious/ideological basis for actions or religion was not a dominant factor in motivation/justification)
Enlistment	Sought out contact with a charismatic or prominent figure, group, or organization known to be associated with militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired ideologies or terrorism
	In addition to militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired ideology, had a history of engagement or seeking contact with other extremist, antisocial, or criminal groups or entities
Family Dysfunction	Had a history of prior serious violent behavior not connected to HVE ideology

SPARC Variable	HVE Initiative: Characteristics and Clusters of Radicalization
Family Extremist History	Kinship network supported or was engaged in militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired terrorism (personal/family connection to extremists)
Fight Tyranny	Vile world belief: Expressed a belief (or actions suggested subject believed) there was something wrong with the world and it was harming the group with which the subject identified
	Believed the Muslim collective ( <i>ummah</i> ), with which subject identifies, was morally, culturally, politically, or militarily threatened or under attack by the United States or the West
Grievances US	Harbored a grievance (such as perceived injustice or victimization) and associated anger directed at United States. Perceived victim could have been subject or group with which subject identifies
	Perceived incompatible schism between Islam and the United States, creating an us-versus-them duality
Group Inclusion	Strongly identified with Muslims perceived as being victimized (Palestinians, Iraqis, Afghans, or Muslim Kashmiris)
	Vile world belief: Expressed a belief (or actions suggested subject believed) there was something wrong with the world and it was harming the group with which the subject identified
Higher Purpose	Believed violence would be approved or rewarded by significant others
	Glorified martyrdom and violence against civilian noncombatants (believed these were divinely ordained or mandated or would earn subject a divine reward or heroic stature)
Identity Development	Identity revolved around militant Jihadist/al-Qaida-inspired ideology or subject's affiliation with its associated movement
	Adopted dress, grooming, or conduct increasingly indicative of Muslim identity (paid off debts, observed dietary laws, women donned fuller covering, men let their beard grow)
Identity Seeking	Identity seeking: Engagement with militant ideology or group appears driven by a need to belong and to be a part of something meaningful. Subject identity through group membership or affiliation
Ideological Outburst	Intolerant of or had antipathy toward persons who did not subscribe to subject's brand of militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired ideology
Intimate Failure	Had a history of interpersonal harassment, stalking, or bullying others
Islam Convert	Converted to Islam as an adult
	Left a moderate mosque and joined a radical mosque or one led by a radical cleric
Joiner	Consumed extensive media (websites, videos, or printed materials) inciting or advocating violence in service of a militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired ideology
Last Resort	Believed that violence against civilian noncombatants was necessary to defend the faith or the body of believers

SPARC Variable	HVE Initiative: Characteristics and Clusters of Radicalization
Linguistic Change	Engaged in behavioral or linguistic expressions that reflect new sense of purpose relating to violent extremist causes
Mental Illness	Had a history of prior serious violent behavior not connected to HVE ideology
Military History	Known to possess specialized skill or knowledge, which subject intended to use to prepare for a terrorist attack
	Known to have received specialized ideological or operational training in the U.S., which subject intended to use to prepare for a terrorist attack
Praise Attacks	Glorified martyrdom and violence against civilian noncombatants (believed these were divinely ordained or mandated or would earn subject a divine reward or heroic stature)
Radical Clique	Non-kinship social network supported or was engaged in militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired terrorism (personal connection to extremists)
	Known to have an “action-oriented” group of friends or associates who engaged collectively with a militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired ideology
Religious Protection	Believed the Muslim collective ( <i>ummah</i> ), with which subject identifies, was morally, culturally, politically, or militarily threatened or under attack by the United States or the West
Seek Justification	Socially sanctioned violence: Believed violence would be approved or rewarded by significant others
	“Blamed” victims of militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired terrorism (thought victims brought misfortune on themselves by their own deeds) or explicitly rationalized or normalized damage to others to make it seem acceptable
Simulate Attack	Engaged in domestic self-training (paintball, paramilitary exercises, dry-run detonations) in preparation for an actual attack
	Known to possess specialized skill or knowledge, which subject intended to use to prepare for a terrorist attack
	Known to have received specialized ideological or operational training in the U.S., which subject intended to use to prepare for a terrorist attack
Single Politics	Possessed dogmatic cognitive style (black-and-white thinking); a rigid, closed set of beliefs, organized around an absolute authority that, in turn, dictated intolerance and qualified tolerance toward others (strict rule-based interpretation of Islam)
	Intolerant of or had antipathy toward persons who did not subscribe to subject's brand of militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired ideology
Social Isolation	Seemed largely without any close or supportive relationships outside co-extremists
	Abandoned a social reference group of conventional or no ideology for a cohort simpatico with subject's extremist beliefs; eventually spent time exclusively with the co-extremists

SPARC Variable	HVE Initiative: Characteristics and Clusters of Radicalization
Status Seeking	Status seeking: Engagement with militant ideology or group appears driven by the pursuit of recognition, social status, and esteem from others
Travel Abroad	Known to have traveled abroad to receive specialized operational or ideological training, which subject intended to use to prepare for a terrorist attack
Violence Promote	Believed violence against civilian noncombatants was morally justifiable
	“Blamed” victims of militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired terrorism (thought victims brought misfortune on themselves by their own deeds) or explicitly rationalized or normalizes damage to others to make it seem acceptable
Violence Success	Believed subject (or subject's collective) would be successful in using violence to further the cause and that violence would be effective (expressly considered nonviolent or political tactics as ineffective)
Category was not accounted for in SPARC Dataset	Comes from Muslim immigrant community
	Socio-culturally alienated: Expressed feelings of, or was described as, being marginalized, segregated, alienated from, or incompatible with the society in which subject lived
	Known to have changed roles (from logistical support to emplacing explosives) during engagement with a militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired collective, resulting in more direct involvement in a violent attack
	Known to have sought or assumed a leadership role within a militant Islamist/al-Qaida-inspired cell or group

## APPENDIX B. TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Below, we describe the processes that were used to produce the report's findings, including the methods that were used to compensate for missing data in the SPARC database and the operational decisions that were made in the *k*-means cluster analyses.

### Missing Data

Numerous methods exist for tackling problems of missing data in large datasets, ranging from dropping all cases that have missing values from the analysis (i.e., list wise deletion) to performing complex statistical techniques for estimating missing values (see Safer-Lichtenstein, LaFree, & Loughran, 2017). If variables important in deciding cluster assignments are missing at high rates, particularly when there are discernable patterns to the way the data are missing, cluster assignment can become arbitrary. Thus, in considering the distribution of missing data in our key variables, we decided to employ a mix of methods for replacing the missing values in PIRUS with estimated numbers. This decision was based on previous research using the PIRUS data, which revealed that different methods for estimating missing values in the database did not substantially alter subsequent analysis results (see LaFree et al. 2018 for more information).

We relied on two methods for imputing missing values in this study. First, we used fixed-value imputation to replace missing information on variables for which substantive knowledge or subject expertise suggested a most likely or highly probable value. For instance, missing data for variables that generally leave an evidence trail, such as marriage, or are comparatively rare in the general population, such as mental illness, were replaced with null values when they were not mentioned in open sources. We used the fixed-value scheme for the following variables:

- Work\_history = employed

- Education = finished high school
- Psychological = not mentally ill
- Marital\_status = not married
- Radical\_friends = no evidence of radical peers
- Radical\_family members = no evidence of radical family members
- Group\_competition = no evidence of group competition

APPENDIX C. CHI-SQUARE ANALYSES

Table 13. Chi-Square Analysis between Cluster Classification and Criminal Classification

Variable	Variable Description	Skilled, Significance Seekers	Action-Oriented Clandestines	Accomplice Kin	Disgruntled Naïve	Troubled Combatants	All Clusters	Chi-Square Value
Specify Criminal Classification	Attacker	8	8	4	12	2	34	.027 (p = .037)
	Plotter	11	8	5	12	10	46	
	Foreign Fighter	9	22	0	5	2	38	
	Material Support	27	39	13	35	14	128	
	Other	2	5	1	5	2	15	

Table 14. Chi-Square Analysis between Cluster Classification and Family Dysfunction

Variable	Variable Description	Skilled, Significance Seekers	Action-Oriented Clandestines	Accomplice Kin	Disgruntled Naïve	Troubled Combatants	All Clusters	Chi-Square Value
Was subject's home characterized by disorder and dysfunction?	No Evidence	50	68	17	58	19	212	9.199 (p = .056)
	Evidence of	7	14	6	11	11	49	

**Characteristics of Homegrown Violent Extremist Radicalization**

*Table 15. Chi-Square Analysis between Cluster Classification and Frustration and Blame*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable Description</b>	<b>Skilled, Significance Seekers</b>	<b>Action-Oriented Clandestines</b>	<b>Accomplice Kin</b>	<b>Disgruntled Naïve</b>	<b>Troubled Combatants</b>	<b>All Clusters</b>	<b>Chi-Square Value</b>
<b>Did subject express frustration with employment?</b>	No Evidence	57	82	21	63	27	250	13.180 (p = .010)
	Evidence of	0	0	2	6	3	11	
<b>Did subject blame external factors for failure in school, career or relationships?</b>	No Evidence	57	82	21	62	23	245	26.720 (p = .000)
	Evidence of	0	0	2	7	7	16	

**Characteristics of Homegrown Violent Extremist Radicalization**

*Table 16. Chi-Square Analysis between Cluster Classification and Relationships Failure*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable Description</b>	<b>Skilled, Significance Seekers</b>	<b>Action-Oriented Clandestines</b>	<b>Accomplice Kin</b>	<b>Disgruntled Naïve</b>	<b>Troubled Combatants</b>	<b>All Clusters</b>	<b>Chi-Square Value</b>
<b>Did subject fail to maintain intimate relationships?</b>	No Evidence	52	72	19	50	18	211	18.125 (p = .001)
	Evidence of	5	10	4	19	12	50	
<b>Was subject recruited alone?</b>	No Evidence	27	51	19	43	12	152	13.489 (p = .009)
	Evidence of	30	31	4	26	18	109	

Table 17. Chi-Square Analysis between Cluster Classification and Media Use

Variable	Variable Description	Skilled, Significance Seekers	Action-Oriented Clandestines	Accomplice Kin	Disgruntled Naïve	Troubled Combatants	All Clusters	Chi-Square Value
Was media used during recruitment process?	No Evidence	10	28	3	11	7	59	10.040 (p = .040)
	Evidence of	47	54	20	58	23	202	
Did subject participate in online sites or groups that promoted violent extremism?	No Evidence	2	59	3	15	6	85	89.666 (p = .000)
	Evidence of	55	23	20	54	24	176	

Table 18. Chi-Square Analysis between Cluster Classification and Catalyst Event

Variable	Variable Description	Skilled, Significance Seekers	Action-Oriented Clandestines	Accomplice Kin	Disgruntled Naïve	Troubled Combatants	All Clusters	Chi-Square Value
Did subject have catalyst event for FTO involvement?	No Evidence	26	41	9	41	9	126	8.475 (p = .076)
	Evidence of	31	41	14	28	21	135	

Table 19. Chi-Square Analysis between Cluster Classification and Extremism Propaganda

Variable	Variable Description	Skilled, Significance Seekers	Action-Oriented Clandestines	Accomplice Kin	Disgruntled Naïve	Troubled Combatants	All Clusters	Chi-Square Value
<b>Did subject communicate political views online?</b>	No Evidence	16	79	8	22	10	135	98.102 (p = .000)
	Evidence of	41	3	15	46	20	125	
<b>Did subject communicate with, retweet, or link to violent extremists online?</b>	No Evidence	9	72	7	17	10	115	98.235 (p = .000)
	Evidence of	48	10	16	51	20	145	

Table 20. Chi-Square Analysis between Cluster Classification and Attack Preparation

Variable	Variable Description	Skilled, Significance Seekers	Action-Oriented Clandestines	Accomplice Kin	Disgruntled Naïve	Troubled Combatants	All Clusters	Chi-Square Value
<b>Did subject engage in virtual attack simulations?</b>	No Evidence	46	79	22	64	25	236	12.436 (p = .014)
	Evidence of	11	3	1	5	5	25	

**APPENDIX D. BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS**

*Table 21. Bivariate Relationship between Clusters and Variables from Cross-Tabulations*

Variable	Skilled, Significance Seekers	Action-Oriented Clandestines	Accomplice Kin	Disgruntled Naïve	Troubled Combatants
<b>Sample</b>					
Primary	--	-0.16*	--	--	--
<b>Criminal Classification</b>					
Attacker	--	--	--	--	--
Plotter	--	-0.14**	--	--	0.15*
Foreign Fighter	--	0.24***	-0.13*	-0.12*	--
Material Supporter	--	--	--	--	--
<b>Dysfunction/Blame</b>					
Employment Frustration	-0.11 <sup>^</sup>	-0.14*	--	0.13**	0.10 <sup>^</sup>
External Blame	-0.14**	-0.17*	--	--	0.26***
Family Dysfunction	--	--	--	--	0.17**
Intimate Failure	-0.14*	-0.12 <sup>^</sup>	--	0.13**	0.19**
Recruited Alone	0.12 <sup>^</sup>	--	-0.15**	--	0.13*
<b>Media Use/Propaganda</b>					
Media Use	--	-0.19**	--	--	--
Online Participation	0.33***	-0.57***	0.13*	0.14*	--
Communicate Views	0.25***	-0.60***	0.11 <sup>^</sup>	0.23***	0.14*
Communicate Violence	0.31***	-0.59***	--	0.22***	--
<b>Other</b>					
Attack Simulation	0.18**	-0.14**	--	--	--
Catalyst Event	--	--	--	-0.13**	0.13**

Notes: <sup>^</sup>p < .10; \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001

Table 22. Bivariate Relationship between Clusters and Additional Variables

Variable	Skilled, Significance Seekers	Action-Oriented Clandestines	Accomplice Kin	Disgruntled Naïve	Troubled Combatants
<b>Demographics</b>					
Male	0.11 <sup>^</sup>	--	-0.13 <sup>*</sup>	--	--
Unskilled Worker	-0.12 <sup>^</sup>	--	--	--	--
Less Than HS Diploma	--	--	--	--	0.15 <sup>**</sup>
HS Diploma	--	--	--	0.12 <sup>^</sup>	--
Some College	--	--	0.13 <sup>*</sup>	--	-0.13 <sup>*</sup>
<b>Behaviors and Actions</b>					
Radicalized Siblings	--	-0.11 <sup>^</sup>	0.21 <sup>***</sup>	--	--
Travel Abroad	--	--	--	-0.13 <sup>*</sup>	--
Recruited with Others	-0.12 <sup>^</sup>	--	0.15 <sup>*</sup>	--	-0.13 <sup>*</sup>
Extremist Peers	--	--	0.11 <sup>^</sup>	--	--
<b>Motivating Factors</b>					
Social Isolation	--	--	--	--	0.14 <sup>*</sup>
Thrill-Seeking	--	--	--	--	0.15 <sup>*</sup>
<b>Specific Catalysts</b>					
Afghan/Iraq Wars	--	--	0.14 <sup>*</sup>	-0.12 <sup>*</sup>	--
U.S. (In General)	--	-0.12 <sup>^</sup>	--	--	0.16 <sup>**</sup>
U.S. (Leadership)	--	-0.15 <sup>*</sup>	--	--	--
Extremist Ideologies	0.11 <sup>^</sup>	--	--	-0.14 <sup>*</sup>	--

Notes: <sup>^</sup>p < .10; <sup>\*</sup>p < .05; <sup>\*\*</sup>p < .01; <sup>\*\*\*</sup>p < .001

APPENDIX E. FACTOR ANALYSIS

Table 23. Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

Variables	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>Factor 3</b>	<b>Factor 4</b>	<b>Factor 5</b>
	<b>Last Resort Language</b>	<b>Online Stealth</b>	<b>Violence Expression</b>	<b>Ideological Change</b>	<b>Angry</b>
<b>Last Resort</b>	0.86	--	--	--	--
<b>Communicate Threat</b>	0.86	--	--	--	--
<b>Sensitive Search</b>		0.73	--	--	--
<b>Altered Activities</b>		0.88	--	--	--
<b>Encrypted Activities</b>		0.81	--	--	--
<b>Seek Justification</b>			0.87	--	--
<b>Dehumanization</b>			0.83	--	--
<b>Praise Attacks</b>			0.89	--	--
<b>Violence Promote</b>			0.92	--	--
<b>Violence Commitment</b>			0.57	--	--
<b>Linguistic Change</b>				0.89	--
<b>Ideological Outburst</b>				0.93	--
<b>Eschew Opposition</b>				0.89	--
<b>Doctrine Manipulation</b>				0.54	--
<b>Diffuse Rage</b>					0.85
<b>Violent Success</b>					0.69
<b>Violence Outlet</b>					0.72
Eigenvalue	1.49	1.97	3.39	2.75	1.73
% of Variation	74.92%	65.68%	67.92%	68.72%	57.66%
$\alpha$	0.64	0.71	0.88	0.84	0.59

Note: Items were selected with factor loadings at least .5 and with Loadings of less than .4 on other factors. Loadings and proportions of variance reported are from a principal components analysis and varimax rotation.