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Criminology and Violent Extremist Radicalization

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

Starlett Michele Martin

MS, University of Cincinnati, 2012

BA, University of Georgia, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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Abstract

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, research on foreign terrorism became extensive in the

United States while research on domestic terrorism and violent extremist radicalization

was lacking. Despite the research that has been done, there was a lapse in scholarship

analyzing terrorism radicalization and its relationship with criminology. The purpose of

this general qualitative study was to analyze the perceptions of experts in terrorism and

criminology about how factors of criminology can explain violent extremist

radicalization. This study used two conceptual models of terrorism radicalization: (a) the

staircase to terrorism and the (b) 4-stage model of the terrorist mindset. In addition, the

study employed four social science criminological theories, including (a) social learning

theory, (b) social control theory, (c) strain theory, and (d) differential association to gain

the perceptions of experts on terrorism and criminology about how criminology is

relevant to violent extremist radicalization in Minnesota. Guided interviews with 15

experts in criminology and terrorism, notes from direct observations, journal data, and

document analysis were coded and analyzed, which revealed four emergent themes. The

results empirically supported and identified de-radicalization initiatives such as

community-oriented policing, civil society programs, youth groups, and community-led

initiatives among others as a critical step in understanding the importance self-identity

and image perception among at-risk individuals. This study contributes to positive social

change by highlighting how civil society programs promote resilience and tend to a

myriad of social issues found in vulnerable populations in general, not just countering

violent extremism.

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Dedication

It is in my genuine gratefulness and warmest regard that I dedicate this work to my family for their unwavering support. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, Willie and Geraldine Martin, whose munificent words of encouragement and push for steadfastness will never leave my heart or mind. To my sister Brandee, who has consistently aided me throughout my academic endeavor, may it be trips to the library or trips to the bookstore. Additionally, to my excellent husband Spencer Carter, M.D., who has been supporting me on my doctoral journey even before we started dating and throughout our marriage.

I dedicate this dissertation to the many wonderful friends I have met at Walden University and past universities I have attended who have supported me during this process. I will always appreciate those who have assisted me with proofreading, locating articles, and making sure I stay motivated.

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I would like to thank the university, the Department of Public Policy and Administration, and the College of Social and Behavioral Science for their accessibility and assistance in completing each stage of the dissertation. Lastly, I would like to thank the doctoral program for allowing me to conduct research on a topic I am very passionate about.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

On April 15, 2013, in Boston, Massachusetts, the terrorist attack, now known as the Boston Marathon Bombing, occurred. Brothers Tamerlan Tsarnaev and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev perpetrated the attack using a homemade pressure cooker bomb. Originally from Chechnya, the brothers immigrated to the United States in 2002 as refugees. Living in the United States as Muslim immigrants, especially in an era where anti-Muslim sentiments and Islamophobia dominated public opinion (Ogan et al., 2014), the brothers began to turn to radical Islam because of their growing sympathy towards the political circumstances involving Muslims and an inability to fully integrate into American society (Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015). With this incident occurring in the United States 12 years after the September 11th terrorist attacks and its perpetrators actively classified as naturalized American citizens, the field of terroristic studies focusing on the United States started shifting to produce reports trying to explain and analyze domestic (homegrown) violent extremist radicalization (Qureshi, 2020).

Domestic and *homegrown terrorism* are terms used to describe violent acts directed towards people and property perpetrated by a country's citizens or residents to promote political, ideological, or religious objectives. Although individuals deemed to be domestic or homegrown terrorists do not have to integrate into a centralized command structure (e.g., lone wolf terrorists), those involved tend to have a source of inspiration from an entity that has centralized command and become radicalized by some form of propaganda and communication campaigns, such as those on social media (Chorev,

2017). In the past, the United States primarily focused on studying international terrorists, such as the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks (i.e., the perpetrators were citizens of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Lebanon) as opposed to homegrown terrorists. The reason for this can be attributed to American bias, the inability of being able to rule out religion as a sole motivator in terror, and how public perception of individuals who practice Islam or "appear Muslim" has shaped the social climate of the United States post 9/11 (Nagar, 2010). U.S. foreign and national security policy since 1991 has been shaped by the United States fully emerging from the Cold War as the only remaining superpower, therefore taking on the role as the top security power as well.

However, some have argued that China is now poised to be a superpower due to having the world's largest population, second-largest economy, second-largest military size/budget, largest foreign exchange reserves, and largest producer of broad range goods (Silver et al., 2019). Still, China has only reached the status of "global player" and not "global power" due to its political, economic, military, demographic, and civic shortcomings that must first be overcome (Kaplowitz, 2015). Thus, the United States is, as of now, the only unanimously recognized superpower and has taken on the role of hegemon possessing global hegemony, which means taking on the dominant leadership role of political, economic, and military influence (Huntington, 1999). Because the United States has global influence stemming from its status as the only remaining superpower after the fall of the Soviet Union, several security concerns in the nation have focused on a "us versus them" dynamic (Little, 2016). However, the danger in studying security concerns from an "us versus them" rhetoric lies in objectivity. How a sovereign

government decides to analyze political violence and its enemies can offer great insight into how that government works and how its administrative policies ranks, both domestic and foreign. Terrorism is a complex phenomenon, and it is not exclusive to the United States or American culture; therefore, there are different perspectives on terrorism across the globe that needs understanding. If different types of terrorists (i.e., homegrown domestic terrorists and international terrorists) are not analyzed and researched, literature coming out of the United States will be flawed and more prone to sound like propaganda rather than critical analysis.

Violent extremism and radicalization are key components in understanding how and why terrorism appeals to some people. Violent extremism is the actions and beliefs of individuals who use violence to achieve a specific goal or set of goals; therefore, homegrown violent extremists often represent 40% of individuals who reject the American/Western status value (Smith, 2018). Consequently, radicalization is the process in which an individual begins to adopt extremist ideas to undermine and/or reject the status quo and contemporary thought. Radicalization is a complex phenomenon and understanding how individuals living in the United States may evolve into violent radical terrorists is crucial for U.S. national security to create a socially responsible antiterrorist policy. Domestic radicalization is typically rooted in the failure of public policy and civil society as it relates to a cultural group; in other words, radicalization is a form of dissent (Jensen et al., 2020). It would be a disservice to simply consider terrorism radicalization as purely a form of Islamic religious fanaticism and ignore the classic motivators of terrorism, such as nationalism, governmental political structure, and foreign policy, all

elements that form a country's social climate. Nevertheless, before a study on

radicalization takes place, it is imperative to note that all radicalization does not lead to

violence; knowing that fact can prevent faulty assumptions. Understanding and

identifying cases of individuals who do not turn to violence can shed light on possible

important resilience factors that can be beneficial to countering violent extremism (CVE)

but analyzing homegrown extremists and their journey leading to radicalization into

violent extremism (RVE) can expose the lack of those resilience factors. Individuals

living in the Middle East and Northern Africa who radicalize are often in the presence of

constant violence, community destruction, and government corruption, in addition to

having anti-American/Western/Christianity propaganda reinforced to them through media

and technology (The Carter Center, 2015). The sociopolitical environment of the

countries located in the Middle East and Northern Africa can facilitate violent extremist

radicalization very quickly and successfully as a result to how they have viewed Western

civilization's foreign policy actions towards them and how people treat individuals

(immigrants and visitors) from these Islamic regions when going to "Western countries"

(Wiktorowicz, 2005). Hence, when an individual who identifies with having an Islamic

background (e.g., ethnicity and/or religion) is living in an area that does not have the

same environmental stressors and influences as a country in conflict. Their process of

radicalization is different (Jenkins, 2010). However, when it comes to studying

radicalization, conceptual models take precedence as opposed to using theoretical

frameworks (Borum, 2011a, 2011b). Conceptual models are schemas that show how

certain factors can lead to a target condition. Theoretical frameworks, on the other hand,

contain concepts and existing theories that show relevance to a topic and can relate on a broader scale.

Even though the impetuses of individuals intertwined with terrorism can be intricate, socially based criminological theories can offer insight into the motivations and influences of potential homegrown terrorists. Evolving over the past 250 years, criminology has become an interdisciplinary field that draws upon behavioral sciences and studies criminal behavior on both social and individual levels (Ellis et al., 2009). Criminological approaches on terrorism studies are often undertheorized (Borum 2011a, 2011b), and several classic influential social criminological theories exist. Criminology is typically ignored in the realm of terrorism studies because many critics feel that terrorism is much broader than any explanations that are used to describe the "common criminal" (LaFree, 2007). Furthermore, the terrorism that is displayed in the 21st century often gets mislabeled as "new terrorism" that tries to contribute the killing of innocent civilians as an act of religious fervor by Islamic zealots instead of understanding the psychological forces that can influence a vulnerable population (Githens-Mazer & Lambert, 2010). Often, terrorism is misclassified as an act of war rather than being classified as a crime (Fry, 2002). The definition of war is reserved for a conflict between sovereign nation-states, not nation-states versus nonstate actors; therefore, terrorism is indeed a crime and should be studied as such. If acts of terror are broken down into the specific criminal acts that are associated with terrorist organizations (e.g., murder, theft, extortion, and kidnapping), the criminal activities are the same; the difference is in the scale and scope of the attack and expected gain. Moreover, criminology seeks to look at why individuals

commit crimes in the first place. By examining Muslim Americans and analyzing potential vulnerabilities, it became much clearer to understand why some fall victim to terror recruitment and radicalization (Saghaye-Biria, 2012).

Muslim Americans were the focus of this study because this group is largely vulnerable to radicalization (Vidino, 2009) even though recruitment and radicalization can affect and attract individuals with non-Islamic backgrounds. Jihadist terrorist organizations have expressed interest in individuals with Islamic backgrounds for recruitment in hopes of establishing terror cells in countries across the globe and gathering foreign fighters to assist in establishing a worldwide caliphate (The Carter Center, 2015). Specifically, the overarching goal of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is to convince Muslims everywhere that Western civilization will never accept them; therefore, participating in Jihad is an honor to fight the oppressor (The Carter Center, 2015). As expressed in the official ISIS propaganda magazine *Dabiq*, eliminating the "grey zone" where Muslims reject the idea of coexistence with the West is when a true caliphate can take root (The Carter Center, 2015). Seeing as this ideal is the primary narrative for radicalization, it is the responsibility of terrorism researchers to understand how and why social despair brought on by racism, isolation, deprivation, discrimination, and more is valid for the discussion of terror as it has already been proven that these elements are valid in why individuals engage in criminal behavior through criminological studies.

Problem Statement

Considering fatal attacks, attempted plots, and the arrest of Muslim Americans both domestic and abroad, the United States has emphasized the importance of CVE regarding recruitment and radicalization among the Muslim American community living in the United States. The threat of violent domestic terror radicalization stemming from radical extremist Islamic ideologies is becoming discernible as noted in the United States House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security report (2011) outlining the increase of the Al Shabaab recruitment of Somali-Americans in addition to the most recent phenomenon of "foreign fighters" joining the ranks of ISIS. Considering the threat, substantial literature describing domestic radicalization and their motivations/processes such as Crone and Harrow (2011), King and Taylor, (2011), and Kleinmann (2012) have emerged. In addition to a general acceptance of studies emerging from numerous disciplines to explain the phenomenon of homegrown terror and to offer insight into why homegrown terror occurs. While terrorism studies have evolved over the years to study and analyze the changes in patterns of recruitment, radicalization, the formation of new cells, and other dynamics associated with jihadist terrorism, researchers have reached into sociology and psychology to look for theories and/or have created their own theories to explain why individuals may join the ranks of terror.

However, a discipline widely ignored in terrorism studies is that of criminology. Terrorism is classified as a criminal act on both domestic and international levels. Therefore, those who perpetrate terrorism ought to be analyzed from a perspective/discipline that understands criminal activity and its actors such as

criminology. This is problematic because neglecting disciplines rich in theory is detrimental to the field of International Relations (IR), which terrorism is categorized into due to the ability to reflect reality. Unobservable features such as an individual's mental state that is susceptible to radicalization need proven theories to accurately reflect reality stemming from causal logic. IR is conceptually complex and diverse. Sometimes finding data is difficult; therefore, in social science theory especially the study must be suited to focus upon creativity, imagination, and interpretation to understand a significant social phenomenon. Theory is invaluable to studies that revolve around uncertainty and complex human behaviors such as terrorism because identifying pivotal developments to understand recurrent behavior and how it relates to each other is how researchers determine their next steps and gain new knowledge. In a study, theories provide (a) overarching frameworks, (b) the ability to transform the understanding of critical issues, (c) the ability to enable prediction, (d) methods to facilitate the diagnosis of policy problems/decisions, (e) policy evaluation, (f) perspective to consider the past to understand the future, (g) means to guide analysis when research is sparse, and (h) the guidelines to conduct future research and empirical tests (Measheimer & Walt, 2013).

Criminology is a behavioral science that aims to prevent criminal behavior, and those involved in terrorism studies can learn to apply criminology theories to move from ideology to prevention strategies. While the variables of terrorism and common crime (which criminology expounds) are unique, there are still general theories of motivation, rationality, and influences that depict the actor of the crime within criminology that can be applied to terrorists. Because my focus in this study was on domestic violent terror

radicalization, the application of criminology was even more relevant because the individuals being analyzed do not reside overseas, and explanations that have already been accepted for Americans committing crime can also be used to explain Americans committing terrorism. A couple of the most recent terror attacks in the United States including the San Bernardino, California attack in 2015 and the Orlando, Florida Pulse nightclub shooting in 2016 were a result of radicalization from individuals who suffered a similar sense of estrangement (Salyer, 2016). Therefore, bridging the gap between terrorism studies and criminology can not only facilitate improved cognizance but also assist in the creation of better policies to encourage domestic counterterrorism methods (Hughbank & Hughbank, 2007).

Background

Providing the background on the topic of the qualitative study and the issues it currently faces was a starting point before the dynamics of the study were introduced. As the topic of homegrown terror and the process of radicalization has become a major conceptual model in security studies, there has been literature emerging from numerous authors (see Litmanovitz et al., 2017; Lynch, 2013; Mandell, 2010). Additionally, on top of the rise in interest concerning radicalization, there are also authors who have advocated the use of criminology components and have requested its collaboration to improve security policy (see LaFree, 2007; LaFree & Dugan, 2004; Laqueur, 2000). Because I used both a conceptual and theoretical framework, the literature samples in the introduction depicted various features of the qualitative study to prepare the reader for the

premise of the study. Before radicalization can be used in a study as a guiding conceptual framework, the specific type had to be clarified to prevent confusion.

Sedgwick (2010) described how the term radicalization has become a source of ambiguity. According to the article, differences in context are determined by agenda and have resulted in the term being highly contested. However, if there truly is a desire to use the concept, understanding each context and being aware of the multifaceted nature can help bring clarity to the field to prevent discrepancies. To be successful in policy agenda, an author should define the scope of radicalization that is to be addressed for a study. Just as the radicalization terrorism scholar Neumann (2013) has made his career in clearly defining the scope of radicalization in the modern age, to truly get a clear understanding of the processes, one must specifically lay out the factors to be analyzed. To stay in accordance with Sedgwick, the classic studies of Moghaddam (2005) and Borum (2003) were used to explain terror radicalization with respect to this study. Moghaddam explained radicalization as a linear process (i.e., gradual as opposed to instantaneous) using a metaphor of a staircase to illustrate the ascension of levels from psychological interpretation until the terrorist act itself. Borum's (2003) work preceded Moghaddam's (2005) study and was a 4-step heuristic model, making it less complex than its successor; however, it is still regarded as one of the most straightforward models to date. Violent extremism is epitomized once lethal crimes are committed to intimidate noncombatants with a message of political, religious, and/or social goals that are in accordance with extremist ideology (Borum, 2011b). While radicalization is a dangerous process, all individuals experiencing the same conditions do not radicalize violently nor do all

individuals who start the process reach the final stage, as can be seen in Ebrahim's (2004)

research. In addition to Moghaddam's article, there are others including Crone and

Harrow (2011), King and Taylor (2011), and Kleinmann (2012) that explain homegrown

domestic radicalization from "jihadist" ideology. Each of these texts represents studies in

how the model of radicalization can affect populations of Americans and how the

evolution into a violent radical takes place.

As these articles start to form the picture of how homegrown terror and

radicalization in the United States is a strong conceptual model that needs to be

understood to create the appropriate policies, it should be noted that having only

descriptive models that are void of theory ignores important questions. In the second

article of its series, Borum's (2011b) report introduced various studies displaying the

author's analysis of radicalization with respect to violent extremism. From Borum's

(2011b) critique, the studies to date are lacking in theory, among other things. The

premise of this article is that many radicalization models are merely descriptive but have

validity in organizing the concepts, mechanisms, and processes involved. Therefore,

while the authors of radicalization provide an excellent background to introduce the

concept of radicalization because of violent extremism, to fully create policy

implications, the models should be combined with theory. Furthermore, with respect to

violent extremism stemming from radicalization, Borum (2011b) posited that researchers

should know to advance the field by being guided by social science theories detailing the

"how, what, and why" of radicalization.

Given that Borum (2011b) described the nucleus of the research topic's problem, I determined that the gap in the literature is, in fact, the lack of inclusion of criminology theory. Criminology theories, especially those included in the correlates of crime (see Ellis et al., 2009) are essential theories that have proven to have validity in understanding criminal behavior. According to LaFree and Dugan (2004), the message for criminology and terrorism studies to unite is avid. While the authors mentioned how criminology and terrorism are different, they also acknowledged how both are social constructs and the conceptual and interdisciplinary relationship both share, which both disciplines can learn and develop from. Furthermore, Rosenfeld (2002) delivered a passionate argument that linked the common features of "typical" crime to activities notoriously linked to terrorists. Through showing and exposing these connections, there is the hope that scholars will stop dismissing terrorism as a brand-new obstacle in the 21st century, such as Laqueur (2000) had done with his "new terrorism" theory as explained in his text when it is another manifestation of criminal activity and social unrest, but on a larger scale.

As a major component of the study, itis imperative to highlight some examples in the literature that has acknowledged criminological theory within terrorism studies. Hughbank and Hughbank (2007) described a need to bridge criminology and terrorism studies by illustrating how social learning theory can explain the process of domestic terror recruitment and radicalization. Hughbank and Hughbank (2007) used more than one theory to illustrate qualitative trustworthiness, but this article highlighted how to combine a conceptual and theoretical framework. Ryan et al. (2007) also used

criminology's social learning theory to show its relevance to terrorists. Terrorism is a learned behavior, as noted in the conceptual model of radicalization; however, choosing to use social learning theory to accompany the descriptive framework adds stronger validity to the Ryan et al. (2007) study and shows how more theories can be used to highlight some important features in terrorism.

This topic can be beneficial to individuals with the United States' security agenda as a primary focus as an opportunity to view a new perspective. Understanding violent extremism and how to counter violent extremism as a complex phenomenon will come from embracing social science methodologies that allow for researchers to consider terrorism's historical, political, and social contexts, thus making qualitative inquiry a valid approach (see Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011). However, there is a gap in the literature as it relates to linking criminology to terrorism studies, and to move from an ideology into prevention methods, it is time to use topics that already have strong empirical backgrounds and apply them to topics that are emerging in the field. Criminology as a discipline has been around for a very long time within the sphere of social science. The formation of state and national policies, security strategies, and social recommendations have been based on the implications learned from classic criminological perspectives. Therefore, this study can encourage other researchers to (a) consider social science theories and attach meanings to frameworks that have only been descriptive in nature thus far, (b) help individuals wishing to elaborate and add to the literature in the field, and (c) to assist public servants who wish to gather more information and educate themselves on an already complex security concern.

Purpose

The purpose of this general qualitative study was to analyze the perceptions of experts in terrorism and criminology about how factors of criminology can explain violent extremist radicalization. Criminology with respect to terrorism studies was important because it provided an example of how social science and social science theory is useful in introducing informed answers to terrorism literature. Social science was used in establishing empirical evidence in the qualitative study because it can examine the reasons behind human behavior. The act of domestic violent terror radicalization is a criminal human behavior; introducing social science theory with a focus on crime to the topic aided in analyzing the phenomenon. Identifying a specific branch of criminology, which is part of social science, highlighted theories that can assist in exploring and describing the central phenomenon of domestic violent terror radicalization among Muslim Americans in Minnesota. Although the Muslim American population across the United States is dispersed evenly across the country, Minnesota was selected because of the reported instances of ISIS jihadi domestic homegrown terrorists, and activities have primarily emerged from within the state as noticed in Bergen et al.'s (2017) report. With a large Somali-American community and several mosques concentrated within Minnesota, the region illustrated a specific population and religious landscape/density (see Coleman, 2017; Wee, 2017). Informational outlets such as the Pew Research Center, Council on American-Islamic Relations, New America International Security Program, television media (e.g., CNN, MSNBC, Al Jazeera, and Fox), and news articles have all reported on the prevalence of violent attacks and homegrown activities in this locale.

Incidents exhibiting terrorism-related actions within Minnesota were gathered in addition to government reports, textual and visual data, empirical research articles, scholarly documents, and most importantly interviews with individuals with a background and interest in Islamic culture, national security, and/or criminal justice concerns/policies (e.g., experts in the field of terrorism/criminology/religion, law enforcement personnel, military personnel, political activist, religious leaders, Americans who identify with Islamic faith) to accumulate data that were relevant to fulfilling the purpose of the study. Given the purpose of the study, I facilitated and validated the exploration of the phenomenon domestic violent terror radicalization through a lens that is relatively overlooked, social science criminology theories.

Significance of the Study

Criminology is a behavioral science that aims to prevent criminal behavior by using a strong theoretical background to understand criminal inklings. Those involved in terrorism studies can learn to apply criminology theories to move from ideology into prevention strategies, thus affecting the dimensions of public policy by reconsidering current national security policies. Policies are typically modified when there is a change in leadership. For example, 6 years ago, President Barack Obama's term officially ended on January 20, 2017 due to the November 8, 2016 presidential election for a new president and administration in the United States. The presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump had drastically different policy views, with the latter being considered an individual who brought fear/hatemongering to the forefront. After winning the election, President Donald Trump was sworn in on January 20, 2017. On January 27,

2017, a new Executive Order 13769 was signed on the grounds of counterterrorism/national security/anti-terrorism called "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States." The executive order was a travel ban to prohibit Muslims from certain nations within the Middle East from entering the United States. News of the executive order going into effect sparked outrage and increased anti-Muslim sentiments (Timm, 2017). The backlash over the executive order and intensifying hostile social climate in the United States became radicalization and recruitment fodder for Al Qaeda and ISIS, thus encapsulating how rhetoric can lead to violence. President Donald Trump's chief strategist Steve Brannon, who was thought to be the primary force behind the executive order and other new domestic/foreign policy decisions, was featured on the cover of Al Qaeda's publication *Al Masra* and how his policies indeed fed into the desire of Jihad with the West (Salhani, 2017). When counterterrorism policies are created through extreme measures, it can produce more hostility, which in turn becomes potent recruitment material for extremist organizations. Counterterrorism is a public policy specialty that uses research to amend antiterrorism legislation and policies. In order for effective anti-homegrown terrorism policies to be created, the United States government should move away from hard power strategies (coercive means such as continuous bombings, air strikes, and raids) and move towards soft power strategies (noncoercive cooperative means, such as implementing policies that will address social/political grievances of the vulnerable group) to address the intellectually and psychological underpinnings of radicalization so there is a chance to de-radicalize (Abrams, 2021). The objective is that by explaining the relevancy of criminological theory in terrorism studies

using examples of domestic radicalization, new perspectives will be available to national security agencies and researchers, encouraging further study accompanied by the acceptance of criminology in terrorism studies just as other disciplines have been accepted.

Muslim Americans in Minnesota were the scope of the study due to the 2015 reports by the Council of American-Islamic Relations noting a tripled increase of mosques being targeted in the United States (see Burke, 2015), the 2016 Minnesota ISIS trial, perceptions of the Minnesota Somali-American representative Ilhan Omar, and the explosion of hate crimes that have occurred since President Donald Trump's election in 2016 (see Chen, 2017; Mathias, 2017) until the end of his term in 2020. Explaining how that ethnic group is vulnerable to radicalization in the United States using socially based criminology theories could (a) encourage efforts to implement public policy social strategies, (b) facilitate conversations about the current state of politics and justice within the Muslim American community, and (c) address the need for civic unity across ethnic/cultural groups. In view of the atmosphere of post-9/11, American sentiments towards Muslim Americans were negative, which led to numerous individuals standing in the crossroads of acceptance and rejection (Bayoumi, 2009, 2011, 2015). That type of treatment has psychological effects that can lead to the evolution of becoming a violent radical terrorist, just as how any perceived injustice can lead to bellicosity, similar to how history has seen genocide, the rise of Germany's Nazi party at the expense of the Jewish people, and the birth/rise of the Ku Klux Klan and other White supremacist groups in the United States as a response to the fear of immigration, religious bigotry, and minorities,

thus leading to the subsequent trauma and effects on its victims. Consequently, some individuals belonging to the targeted groups affected by hate start to (a) have depression/frustration, (b) turn to crime, and/or (c) have apprehensions about society. Since the Charlie Hebdo January 7, 2015 attack, Friday the 13th Paris, France attacks of November 2015, the Brussels, Belgium airport/subway attack on March 22, 2016, Nice terror attack on July 14, 2016, Germany attack in July 2016, Normandy church attack July 26, 2016, the Louvre knife attack February 3, 2017, the May 22, 2017 England Manchester Arena bombing, the London Bridge/Borough Market attack June 3, 2017 in Europe, London Finsbury Park attack on June 19, 2017, the Spanish terror attacks in Barcelona on August 17, 2017, a "Bucket Bomb" attack in London's Underground on September 15, 2017, an Edmonton, Canada attack on September 30, 2017, the Marseille, France attack on October 1, 2017, and the November 29, 2019 London Bridge stabbing, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments in terms of the Syrian refugee crisis and the fear of ISIS in the United States has made the threat of homegrown radicalization a leading issue again. In addition, on October 31, 2017, in Manhattan, New York, a 29-year-old Uzbekistani man who had moved to the United States in 2010 on the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program perpetrated a terrorist attack by means of using a vehicle to strike pedestrians; the same method that has been prevalent lately in recent European attacks. Once apprehended, the terrorist told investigators he was inspired by ISIS online videos and propaganda, therefore categorizing him as a radicalized "lone wolf" Muslim American citizen (Hirschkorn, 2017). Comparably, Akayed Ullah, a 27-year-old Bangladesh immigrant who moved to the United States in 2011 performed an

unsuccessful terrorist attack with a homemade pipe bomb in the New York City Subway on December 12, 2017, with instructions acquired from terrorist propaganda videos (Department of Justice, 2021). Likewise, on December 6, 2019, Mohammed Saeed Alshamrani, a 21-year-old Saudi military second lieutenant in training, opened fire in a Pensacola, Florida naval air station, leaving numerous individuals wounded and killing three. After some investigation, the motive was determined to be associated with Al-Qaeda jihadist ideology (Tucker, 2020). Similarly, on May 21, 2020, there was a gunman attack on the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station by Adam Salim Alsahli, a Syrian born immigrant who moved to the United States with his mother in 2014 due the Syrian civil war. With Adam's father already having U.S. citizenship status since 1984, Alsahli was able to have that citizenship conferred to him in 2002 with an American passport that was properly renewed, therefore eliminating the need to apply for asylum (Bensman, 2020). Alsahli had no previous criminal record and was seemingly influenced by Jihadist literature, radical Islamic beliefs, and geopolitical issues between the United States and Middle East (Lozano et al., 2020).

Although the focus of this study was placed on Muslim Americans, the conditions that make an individual vulnerable to radicalization can be found across any cultural, ethnic, and/or social group due to radicalization's basis in social unrest, political grievance, and an influencing catalyst, meaning that Middle Eastern culture is not a prerequisite for all forms of terror radicalization. Recognizing the symptoms could stimulate positive changes of not only creating better terror prevention strategies and facilitating quality policy creation, but perhaps the creation of outreach groups (e.g., just

as what was done for minorities and youth at risk for gang violence) to deliver and help

fill the gap of services not being provided by mainstream government, increased creation

of immigrant outreach programs/units that make use of community facilitators, and the

creation of projects to promote social inclusion and participation of minorities and

marginalized groups taking a cue from what is present in Europe (e.g., At Home in

Europe Project) and to expand upon programs in the United States (e.g., National

Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Council of La Raza, and

the Anti-Defamation League). In turn this study could help foster a broader perspective of

social justice. Being able to study the link between emotions, social climate, civic

inequality, and behavior has, without doubt, provided an opportunity to greater

understand the struggles of other ethnic/cultural groups.

Nature of the Study

I chose a general qualitative inquiry that focused on interview data to gather the

perceptions of experts. Qualitative inquiry was chosen for this study because the use of

quantitative methods would have been impractical for this study. Quantitative features

such as measuring instruments, variable relationships, and numerical data would not have

been beneficial to the study because the factors analyzed needed to be examined through

exploratory means. Qualitative methodology enabled me to explore and understand the

meaning of why a cultural group may ascribe to the social problem of terrorism. Within

the process of qualitative inquiry, there were emerging questions and procedures that led

to general themes, categories, and interpretations (see Creswell, 2009; Marshall &

Rossman, 2014). For the study and the research question established, there was no need

to test a hypothesis or measure any variables with the use of statistical procedures. Instead, I rendered the complexity of radicalization through interview data as the primary research instrument.

General inquiry was used as the qualitative approach because it allowed for the examination of real-life systems over time, detailed data collection from multiple sources including government documents, case study reports, articles, and interviews, which brought about details from participant viewpoints (see Tellis, 1997). The study used one-on-one interviews with participants to answer the research question: What are the perceptions of experts on terrorism and criminology about how criminology is relevant to explain violent extremist radicalization in Minnesota? For the study, the target population included individuals from a university in Minnesota, government employees, and other professionals willing to participate in the study. Those individuals were the most knowledgeable about terrorism and criminology and were the best candidates to participate in the study due to their experiences and in-depth knowledge about the topic.

The inquiry approach enabled me to gather relevant materials to fulfill the purpose of the study and consider an analysis of themes to fully understand the complexity of the topics (see Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Identifying issues within the data and finding common themes transcending the data linked the relevancy of criminology to terrorism studies. The research allowed me to explore the perspectives of others and understand key factors linking violent extremism to terrorism and criminology. The Interview Questionnaire, found in Appendix A, consists of 15 open

ended questions, which allowed the participants to fully elaborate and answer each question with complete and thoughtful statements.

Common Misconceptions Surrounding Topic

Before the research question of the study can be introduced, it is imperative to acknowledge the parameters of the complexities and paradoxes of the question of who is considered a terrorist and therefore an agent of criminal activity with respect to this study. In this qualitative study, domestic homegrown terrorists were defined as those who have been motivated by Islamic jihadist ideology while living in the United States (e.g., natural born citizens, naturalized citizens, immigrants, green card holders, and individuals with visas). This specific designation was chosen as an effort to reflect the language conveyed by major national security organizations and documents such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Congressional Research Service Report *American Jihadist Terrorism: Combatting a Complex Threat,* the 2001 USA PATRIOT Act, and the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007. Domestic terrorism/terrorists in this study did not include the acts perpetrated by the 917 hate groups found in the United States recognized by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC, 2017) that some may argue are indeed domestic terrorists because of their use of violence and political opinions to express hate and/or disdain for certain groups of people, politics, and point of views. Nevertheless, for this study, it was important to acknowledge the phenomenon of the United States experiencing a radical 197% increase of anti-Muslim hate groups up from 2015 to present (SPLC, 2017). Given the prevalence of anti-Muslim groups in the

United States, it is rational to comprehend how some Muslim Americans may be lured into violent radicalization due to feeling personally victimized and/or targeted. Thus, terrorism in the study was focused only on religious extremist groups steaming from radical Islam as to keep the topic focused and succinct. Albeit, on Friday September 20, 2019, acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan announced that the DHS Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence will include White supremacist violence in addition to Islamic security threats (Williams, 2019). Broadening the umbrella of domestic terrorism to include acts of violence in the United States stemming from the increase of White supremacist/nationalist motivations and movements was not presented in this paper, notwithstanding that it is a topic that relates heavily to the premise of this study on violent ideologies that can be analyzed through the lens of social criminological theories to examine its radicalization process (see Etehad, 2019). Terrorism, as presented in this study, was not limited to a sole organization; there are numerous factions that are considered terrorist sects associated with jihadist ideology that is of concern to the United States (e.g., ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Al-Shabaab). In defining Muslim Americans for the study, the criteria pertained to individuals who identified and related with Islam through religion, law, and civilization of Islam such as traditions, not racial/ethnic makeup (e.g., Arab Muslim vs. Black Muslim), and identified as American through birth, immigration, and/or naturalization. Ergo, Muslim Americans in this study were not limited to Arabs and possibly included Africans, African-Americans, Caucasians, Asians, and Hispanics living in the United States.

These conditions were clearly articulated in the study because it is easy to slip into faulty ideology and propaganda when addressing a sensitive security topic. The need to clearly define terms, phrases, and ideas were of paramount concern for the study because in American culture, there is strong media and journalistic bias that can distort the context and meaning of language commonly associated with security matters. Failure to clarify what concepts mean to a specific study could lead to flawed conclusions and biased generalizations.

Research Question

Research question: What are the perceptions of experts on terrorism and criminology about how criminology is relevant to explain violent extremist radicalization in Minnesota?

Framework

The conceptual/theoretical framework for this study examining the relevance of criminology in violent extremist radicalization noted the conceptual link between terrorism and criminology. Both are interdisciplinary studies (seeking to synthesize broad perspectives by combining academic disciplines) and both are social constructs (category of perception developed by society). The overarching conceptual framework guiding the study was terrorist radicalization that leads to violent extremism, and then the sub concept of domestic homegrown radicalization was introduced. In the field of terrorist radicalization, Moghaddam (2005) illustrated one of the most comprehensive models of radicalization. As one of the most recognized articles in terrorism studies, Moghaddam used a metaphor of a staircase to explain the radicalization process with respect to

psychology. In this article, radicalization was explained as a linear process and the staircase illustrated the ascension of levels from (a) psychological interpretation (ground floor), (b) perceived options to fight unfair treatment (first floor), (c) aggression displacement (second floor), (d) moral engagement (third floor), (e) categorical thinking and perceived legitimacy of terrorist organization (fourth floor), and (f) the terrorist act itself (fifth floor). Once an individual has climbed each floor and ascended to the final floor, violent extremism is exemplified as mortal crimes are committed to intimidate noncombatants with a message of political, religious, or social goals that are in accordance with extremist ideology. In addition to the in-depth details Moghaddam used to describe each floor, the article concludes with some policy implications to assist governments and security agencies on how to combat terrorism. Near the end, Moghaddam (2005) stated there must be a way to (a) encourage prevention as a long-term solution, (b) include procedural justice toward contextualized democracy, (c) educate against the "us versus them" ideology, and (d) influence inter-objectivity. Moghaddam acknowledged that terrorism is an issue with psychological underpinnings, but he called for the need of government to rely on legal policies and laws as opposed to relying on technology and secret measures.

Generally, the article is very strong in its detailed explanation of the process of radicalization, and the number of steps included in this article is far more detailed than other articles explaining radicalization. Moghaddam (2005) chose to use a gradual linear model to allow readers to fathom that radicalization is not an instant decision, but instead a journey and gradual decision-making process influenced by the environment in which

the individual lives. However, before Moghaddam's linear staircase conceptual model, researchers at the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin published a report featuring a conceptual model only using a 4-step heuristic model to radicalization from the transcript of Borum (2003). His study explored the terrorist's ideological development as (a) context, "it's not right" in terms of social deprivation; (b) comparison, "it's not fair" in terms of inequality and resentment; (c) attribution, "it's your fault" places blame; and (d) reaction, "you're evil" begins generalization, stereotypes, and demonizing the perceived enemy. While there are some literature reviews and researchers that may feel that Borum's (2003) 4-step model is dated and not complex enough (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Kaderbhai, 2017). His work still gets to the core of how and why people may fall victim to violent radicalization. Borum's (2003) work has a greater chance to be generalized so that other forms of radicalization may be compared against it.

After the conceptual framework was introduced to properly describe the concept in its social context, the theoretical framework of criminology was then introduced. To suitably accommodate the concept of domestic radicalization, the theoretical framework used represented collective criminological social theories called the *correlates of crime*. The correlates of crime were used because the theories included described a phenomenon that has underpinnings with social and cultural characteristics. Four theories included in the correlates of crime that were used in the study are (a) social learning theory, (b) social control theory, (c) strain theory, and (d) differential association. This ensured that the issue was not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses, which allowed for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. Burgess and Akers

(1966) are the fathers of social learning theory in criminology, which is a behavioral and cognitive theory that suggests that certain behavior can be a learned experience through observation and reinforcements. This theory supports the idea that terrorism is learned through close relationships and learned behavior; terrorists are created from experiences not born into terrorism. According to strain theory, social structures in society can pressure citizens to crime. After the initial work of Durkheim (1897), several individuals advanced strain theory in criminology to describe how societal pressures are a major influence. This theory is relevant in the idea that terrorist radicalization can be facilitated by the stress of the social climate of the United States post 9/11.

Social control theory states that if individuals have a stake in relationships, commitments, values, norms, and beliefs, there is a low chance to commit crime; however if an individual feels no bond with these elements, committing crime is not seen as a loss. Within the realm of control theory, Hirschi's (1969) sociology-based analysis is noteworthy in his work on social bond theory in addition to strain theory research. This theory is valuable in the implications of social change for this study and how Muslim Americans can be better integrated into society. Lastly, differential association was developed by Sutherland (1947) and proposes that interaction with other individuals can lead to motives for criminal behavior. Furthermore, Sutherland and Cressey's (1970) differential association studies have lasted over time and have set the tone as a major paradigm in criminology. This theory is very closely related to social learning theory and helps in terms of radicalization to explain how some individuals begin to socialize with radical individuals. Differential association theory bridges how technology and travel

play an immense role in domestic radicalization processes. These four criminological theories were critical to the study because they represented a facet of behavioral analysis that bonds with social behavior and developmental models.

Definitions

Given that the language of the research was in accordance with studies that are within the field of national security and criminal justice studies, it is imperative to define key terms.

Al-Shabaab: Translated as the "movement of striving youth," it is a jihadist terrorist group based out of Somalia in East Africa (FBI, 2017).

Al-Qaeda: Literally translated as "the base," it is a global militant Islamist organization founded by Osama Bin Laden (FBI, 2017).

Cold war: A period of hostility between nations, characteristically filled with threats, propaganda, tension, rivalry, and other measures alluding to possible conflict. This occurred between the United States and the Soviet Union from the 1940s until the 1990s (Hirsch et al., 1988).

Contextual conditions: An array of political, social, economic, and cultural dimensions that characterize a country or locality (Dantas et al., 2015).

Correlates of crime: In criminal justice studies, the correlates of criminal behavior are socially based criminology theories that explain the motivators of crime. Theories include strain theory, social control theory, differential association theory, social learning theory, and others (Ellis et al., 2009).

Domestic terrorism (homegrown terrorism): Engaging in acts dangerous to human life that is a violation of the criminal laws of a state or United States intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, influence the policy of government by intimidation or coercion, or affect the conduct of government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping occurring within United States territorial jurisdiction (USA PATRIOT Act SEC. 802, 2001).

Foreign fighters: Individuals who travel and attempt to travel abroad to join any insurgency outside of their country of residence to train, fight, and/or provide assistance (International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2017).

Globalization: The process of worldwide integration using technology, economics, ideas, culture, finances, and trade (Lutz & Lutz, 2015).

Hard power: The use of aggressive military and economic tactics as a means to influence behavior (Nye, 2004).

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS): ISIS is an extremist jihadist militant group mainly composed of Sunni Arabs (FBI, 2017).

Islamophobia: Displaying extreme prejudice, hate, fears, bigotry, and bias against Muslims and those who identify with the religion of Islam (Center for Race & Gender, 2017).

Jihadi terrorist/terrorism: Terrorism carried out in the name of jihad; holy war and religious extremism that is typically violent (Nacos, 2016).

Jujitsu politics: Strategic nonviolence (Sharp, 1985).

McCarthyism: Coined to criticize Republican U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy, this phrase was used to describe the practice of making unfair accusations, investigative techniques, and allegations against others suspected of possibly working against the political system in any way (Hirsch et al., 1988).

New religious movements (NRMs): Religious or spiritual group of modern origins (Dawson, 2010).

Radicalization: The process in which an individual or group come to adopt increasingly extreme ideas to reject the status quo (Borum, 2011a).

Red scare: Advancement of fear of communists and communism entering and influencing the country (Hirsch et al., 1988).

Religious fanaticism: A compulsive devotion and enthusiasm to a particular religion (Lloyd, 2007).

Soft power: Use of collaborative methods to influence behavior such as diplomacy and strategic communication (Nye, 2004).

Superpower: A nation that is regarded as being extremely powerful in its ability to exert influence over other nations and promote its interest through means of military, economics, ideology, diplomacy, and strategic activity (Suri, 2006).

Terrorist cells: A group of individuals who would describe themselves as terrorists and typically operate with a larger unit; usually at least thee to 10. The cells can be used for various levels of operations to be used for the organization such as sleeper cells and self-starter cells (Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium, 2017).

Violent extremism: Actions and beliefs of people who use violence to achieve ideological, political, and/or religious goals (Borum, 2011b).

War on terror: Describes the campaign of ongoing actions implemented by several nations to counter international terrorism, which has led to numerous conflicts in the Middle East and the creation of laws, policies, and measures to encourage national security (Raz, 2006).

Worldwide caliphate: A single theocratic one-world government guided by Islam; global Islamic empire (Mortada, 2014).

Assumptions

In the data selected for analysis, there was the assumption that an extremely high percentage of the Muslim Americans involved with domestic violent terror radicalization were male. Even though the role of women is starting to grow in terms of radicalization and homegrown terrorism as seen in the 2015 San Bernardino, California shooting, men still by far make up a much larger percentage (Younas & Sandler, 2017). In issues related to the generalizability of the study or other pertinent issues not under my control included the way in which interview participants answered questions. I assumed that individuals who participated in the conducted interviews/questionnaires answered truthfully and with sincere honesty.

Scope, Delimitations, and Limitations

The scope of the general qualitative study was the sole focus on domestic violent terror radicalization occurring in the 21st Century as opposed to nonviolent radicalization and homegrown terrorists instead of international terrorists. To define the scope of the

study even more, I used the criminological theoretical framework to analyze a topic that is traditionally dominated by conceptual frameworks. The social science focus of the theories aimed to prove the study's purpose of needed acceptance within terroristic studies. Other boundaries of the study included the decision to narrow the study scope to Minnesota as opposed to expanding the scope across other states because the area defined has a highly concentrated population of Muslims who have emigrated there. The individuals of interest who were studied in terms of domestic violent terror radicalization were people who identified as Muslim Americans, despite the understanding that people who do not identify with Islam can radicalize as well. Furthermore, radicalized women arose in some cases, but due to not enough studies being available at the time and because I did not focus on gender dynamics, incidents explored reflected the behavior and decisions of males predominantly. The time commitment for the completion of this study was based on my ability to advance through each of the university's dissertation steps during each quarter. At the minimum, 7 hours a week was dedicated to completing this study.

Delimitations of the study represented the choices I made in determining what exactly was and was not analyzed, thus limiting the scope, and defining the boundaries of the study. The choice to follow a general qualitative study methodology as opposed to other qualitative methods of inquiry such as ethnography, grounded theory, case study, phenomenological research, and narrative research was the result of examining each of the five approaches and deciding what was both feasible for me to engage in given the limitations of certain resources, institutional guidelines, and time in addition to what

strategy would most appropriately allow me to fulfill the purpose of the study. With respect to the theoretical framework used (correlates of crime), I chose four theories (i.e., social learning theory, differential association, strain theory, and social control theory) to keep the scope of the study from getting too broad. I was highly aware that there are more social science theories within criminology that could be mentioned; however, the ones used were deemed as some of the strongest to introduce why criminology is relevant to radicalization studies with the parameter of doing a general inquiry and to the research question being asked.

The research question examined in the study was created to justify the practicality of the inclusion of criminological social science theories into the study of terrorism radicalization. Focusing on the behavioral influences/motivators of Muslims living in the United States displayed how a population can be affected by social stigma arising from public policy. Moreover, the Muslim American population was chosen for the investigation on domestic violent terror radicalization because that specific ethnic/cultural group has been particularly affected by public opinion, social stigma, and/or administrative policies related to terror prevention, consequently resulting in vulnerability.

Limitations of the study arose from my decision to pursue a general qualitative inquiry methodology to address the research problem. Qualitative inquiries can be limited by the reflection and reliability of the researcher because myself and interview data was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. As an American who has witnessed the dramatic change in American security policy due to the historic events of

9/11 and subsequent acts of terror, having to interpret a topic as provocative as homegrown terrorism through data evaluations can be very challenging to remain completely objective without subconsciously interjecting opinion (bias). Analyzing data, conducting interviews, and making observations were all actions I completed, leaving me no choice but to rely on my own instincts and abilities. Limitations involving qualitative issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability were present due to the difficulty of making causal inferences; however, to combat possible weaknesses, theoretical triangulation was used. In conducting the study as an effort to graduate with a doctoral degree, I did not have the ability to spend several years collecting data nor unlimited finances. Due to restrictions from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), access to participants for the interviews were limited, as this was always a concern in using human subjects in a study. Thereby, recruitment efforts on my behalf were flexible.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to understand how and why criminology is relevant to terrorism studies. I identified a specific branch of criminology that highlighted theories that can assist in exploring and describing the central phenomenon of domestic violent terror radicalization among Muslim Americans in Minnesota. Suitably, the problem associated with this study was that the discipline widely ignored in terrorism studies was criminology, resulting in a gap in the literature. To amend the gap in the literature, the conceptual framework of domestic violent terror radicalization was combined with the theoretical framework of socially based criminological theories to explore how individuals can be vulnerable to homegrown

terrorism. By displaying the significance of criminology in terrorism studies,

counterterrorism policies could start being formed with a social justice component. To

answer the research question, the nature of the study followed that of a general qualitative

study design and its acceptable methods of collecting data. In the succeeding chapters, (a)

I provide an overview of the existing literature on the topic and establish the need for this

study; (b) I define the methodology I engaged in and describe the essential steps I took to

conduct the research; (c) I present an analysis of the research data and results collected;

and (d) I present the summary, implications, and conclusions of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Synthesis of the Literature

Scholars and policymakers have identified terrorism research as a major topic of interest ever since the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States and the July 7, 2005 attacks in London. Primarily, researchers in the United States post 9/11 have focused on international terrorists and terroristic acts, but it was not until the 7/7 bombings in the United Kingdom did the focus of research shift from international terrorists to the phenomenon of homegrown domestic terrorists and domestic terrorism. The phenomenon of homegrown terrorists and terrorism illustrates scenarios in which cells of radicalized individuals rally against their host countries with limited or no material support from foreign terrorist organizations. Instead, homegrown terrorists find inspiration in the ideology, message, and actions of foreign terrorist cells and proceed to plan their own attacks. With the development of homegrown terrorism arising from violent extremist radicalization, empirical studies had to go beyond observing foreign radicalization and into examining the possibility of radicalization occurring in the homeland.

Methodology for Literature Review

Whereas most articles tackling the issue of radicalization have reflected disciplines such as psychology, political science, anthropology, and others, social science and criminal justice tend to be highly underrepresented or conspicuously absent. I located the literature necessary to conduct the review not only in brick-and-mortar public and university libraries but also through electronic databases such as Google Scholar,

electronic libraries (i.e., DeKalb Public Library, Galileo, U.S. Department of State, and Walden University Library), social media (i.e., Twitter and Facebook), media websites such as CNN, government websites, and research databases (i.e., JSTOR, LexisNexis, EBSCOhost, and ProQuest). In addition to those electronic resources, key search terms such as those provided in the definition section of this study and author names were searched (e.g., *counterterrorism, radicalization, extremism, correlates of crime, social learning theory, strain theory, domestic terror, intelligence*). This chapter's purpose is to establish the need for the research study and acquaint the audience with a synthesis of the current research on the topic.

Theoretical Foundation

In the United States, homegrown terrorism stemming from jihadi motivation against the West is a form of terror that targets U.S. citizens while the perpetrator is a U.S. citizen as well. The political aspect of homegrown terrorism is the defining feature that classifies those violent plots and acts separate from standard crime. Acts of terror; while having a political motivation, however, are nothing but standard acts of crime such as theft, hijacking, kidnapping, and murder (Hamm, 2007). Once a terroristic act is performed, the immediate impulse is to bring the individuals responsible to justice as opposed to understanding why a U.S. citizen would turn against the United States and commit those crimes. Nevertheless, sociological criminology theory focuses on explaining the cause of criminal behavior, but it is not widely used in terrorism studies. Due to the sensitivity of the topic of terrorism in the United States post 9/11, it has been difficult in academia to define terrorism within any confine, let alone criminological

discourse. However, if terrorists can be identified as criminals, criminological theory can explain the appeal of forming/expanding terrorist cells and why an individual may become a terrorist and radicalize violently. Because understanding criminal motivation and violent radicalization is a complex process, I used social learning theory, social control theory, strain theory, and differential association as the theoretical framework.

In this study, I elaborate on social learning theory to better understand the individual behavior of a terrorist. Social learning theory examines communal and cultural aspects that result in acquiring criminal skills and behaviors (Breen, 2019). Cognitive behavior and conditioning work hand in hand to influence individuals through their environment and social atmosphere. Radicalization occurs through recruitment, social associations, personal study, and training. An individual who wishes to become a terrorist must first learn how to become a terrorist. Therefore, connecting with others within a terrorist cell, talking to those with radical beliefs, trial and error from online guides, and absorbing radical literature are all learned behavior. Sutherland (1947), in his theory of differential association, argued that criminal behavior is learned through a process of interaction and communication with other deviants over a period, resulting in reinforcement. Besides learning how to become a terrorist, the individual also starts to internalize their behavior and motives. Expanding on Sutherland's (1947) view, Burgess and Akers (1966) argued that behavioral learning is a result of conditioning in both social and nonsocial settings. For violent radicalization, violent behavior is reinforced, and peaceful behavior is ridiculed through propaganda, chat rooms, videos, meetings, and training. Reinforcing violent behavior is socially based to introduce potential terrorist to

other like-minded individuals, thus creating a radical environment. To analyze a

homegrown lone wolf terrorist in a criminological aspect, Glaser (1978) argued that

social learning does not require an individual to meet up or necessarily interact with other

like-minded individuals. The individual only needs to adopt the belief of a deviant

individual or group as a point of reference. Homegrown terrorists are often self-taught

through the internet because they live in the United States with no easy means to travel to

the Middle East without arousing suspicion. A review of terrorist literature has shown

that media portrayals, idolization of charismatic leaders, open-source information on

tactics and instructional guides for terror, and more all contribute to a multitude of

reasons for why individuals may radicalize (Frissen, 2021).

Social control theory proposes the idea that there are multiple controls on

individuals that determine whether they will be deviant (i.e., resilience factors). Social

controls form early in life through family, social institutions, school, and religious

centers. Toby (1957) introduced the idea of "stakes in conformity," which determines

how much a person must lose if they participate in deviant behavior. The more stakes, the

less willing to turn to crime. In terms of potential terrorists, if that individual does not

have a stake in their lives or community, the more vulnerable to radicalization they will

be. Hirschi (1969) is perhaps the most associated scholar with control theory. He argued

that all humans are capable of deviant acts, but having strong bonds such as family and

friends, bonds to social groups, and a commitment to conventional behavior makes one

less likely to commit criminal acts. Because control theory explores bonds individuals

make to groups and like-minded people, terrorism studies can use control theory to

analyze radicalization. If the social bond is positive and follows the status quo,
individuals are not likely to commit criminal acts. However, if the social bonds formed
are with radical individuals, the potential terrorist will mold their behavior to fit in with
the group.

Strain theory assumes that criminal behavior is the result of strain, stress, or
pressure. In this theory, it is assumed that all human beings are inherently good, but
experience "strain" that can push them towards criminal behavior. In criminology, strain
theory is used to highlight an individual's response to societal problems, norms, cultures,
values, and goals. For the study of terrorism, individuals and organizations that view the
United States and Western values as abominations to their own culture and beliefs often
radicalize violently because they feel U.S. foreign policy undermines what it means to be
Islamic. The idea of Jihad and establishing a "worldwide caliphate" are a response to the
strain Western civilization has put on Islamic values. Merton (1938) argued the human
appetites for money, fame, certain goals, and values originate from society as opposed to
naturally occurring. For example, in American society, being rich and popular originated
from the culture of the United States rather than being an innate human desire. Being
pressured to achieve a certain level of success, popularity, and wealth is present in U.S.
society; however, not all groups of people have access or the same opportunities to
achieve these things. Regarding Muslim Americans living in the United States, due to
racism and stereotypes present in American culture post 9/11, not having the same
opportunities and a lack of status can put strain on the individual pushing them towards
terrorism. Agnew (1992) claimed that strain comes from numerous sources. Without

prosocial coping mechanisms, strain can lead to negative emotions and criminal behavior to cope. In terms of radicalization and recruitment, Muslim Americans living in the United States are often met with scrutiny and prejudice. Living in the United States while constantly feeling like they do not belong or are hated simply for their culture is an immense strain that can lead to sympathy and admiration for radical groups.

Differential association, as already mentioned above was developed by Sutherland (1947) as an accompanying theory to social learning theory. However, as a stand-alone theory, differential association is based on the idea that individuals commit crimes based on their association with other people. Sutherland asserted that criminal behavior is learned, but values, attitudes, techniques, and motives are learned through interactions with others.

In differential association, Sutherland (1947) created nine propositions to the theory to explain how someone turns to crime, including (a) all criminal behavior is learned; (b) criminal behavior is learned through interactions with others via a process of communication; (c) most learning about criminal behavior happens in intimate personal groups and relationships; (d) the process of learning criminal behavior may include learning about techniques, specific direction of motives, drives, rationalization, and attitudes; (e) the direction of motives and drives toward criminal behavior is learned through the interpretation of legal codes in one's geographical area as favorable or unfavorable; (f) when the number of favorable interpretations outweigh unfavorable interpretations, that individual will become a criminal; (g) all differential associations are not equal; they can vary in frequency, intensity, priority, and duration; (h) the process of

learning criminal behaviors through interactions with others relies on the same mechanisms used in learning any behavior; and (i) while criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it does not explain the behavior because noncriminal behavior expresses the same needs and values. With respect to terrorism studies, differential association is like both Borum's (2003) and Moghaddam's (2005) models explaining why some individuals commit acts of terrorism.

While each of the four theories mentioned above is different and distinct, they all work together to explain how and why an individual would commit a criminal act. Each theory discussed provides a frame of reference for analyzing homegrown terrorism, violent extremism, and radicalization. The use of criminological theories to examine terrorism studies can help to fill in the gap of literature and expand the discourse of this phenomenon.

Discrepancies in Defining Radicalization and Violent Extremism

In research, the term radicalization and all the components associated with it are not well defined. Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) emphasized the importance of not oversimplifying terroristic acts, which can betray its usefulness to academic and policy discourse when trying to examine the complex realities of cases. Schmid (2013) highlighted common confusion with key terms in terroristic studies such as radicalization versus extremism amongst many others. Radicalization traditionally does not have a negative connotation nor is it a synonym for terrorism, although the two terms are typically presented together when discussing terroristic individuals. Living in American society post 9/11, there are several phrases and terms articulated by the media,

policymakers, and academics alike in which the public perceives as incorrect. In its true definition, radicalization is a political term that implies to the focus of altering a social structure through revolutionary means (no menacing intent implied). Extremism, on the other hand, suggests the belief and support for ideas that are very far from what the general population would consider reasonable or appropriate (Schmid, 2014). Terrorism studies published post-2001 have all adopted the specific language of using terms such as radicalism, extremism, homegrown terrorism, and others without a proper specific definition. If the terms used to describe terrorism and its many features are incorrect, strategies to counter terrorism will be futile. In security studies, context is very important, and if there is not an explicit explanation of what the phrases mean, studies on terrorism will get lost in translation.

In topics surrounding terrorism, radicalization, and extremism, there has been a failure to agree upon a universal definition. Therefore, whenever a researcher wishes to focus on a study containing these topics, the researcher must define what each term will mean with respect to their study. Although these terms have been part of history for several hundred years, the continued development of an evolving phenomenon has caused for a reevaluation of terms, making the effort to conceptualize the phenomenon more problematic to do. The assumption surrounding the use of incorrect terms is that all strategies and suggestions will be flawed if the researcher does not take the time to properly define what the terms will mean in a study. Researchers and practitioners, as well as professionals, must be very careful to avoid the pitfalls of radicalization studies by making sure there is no room for assumption. Increased precision in definitions and

models used to describe the desired processes of radicalization is the only way in which a study can start off suitably. Schmid (2014) emphasized the importance of language through observing patterns and common characteristics in a literature review on radicalization and jihadist terror, and any other researcher who wishes to study those topics will notice the same patterns of false interchangeability of terms. While the terms associated with terrorism and intelligence studies are closely similar, the differences between terms and their nuances must be explicitly stated as to guard against misinterpretation.

Borum (2011a, 2011b) also touched upon the subject of the problems associated with properly defining the term radicalization and its involvement in terrorism. To truly understand the processes, Borum (2011a, 2011b) suggested that each topic should be viewed as a diverse set of processes so that individuals involved with terrorist radicalization are not viewed too narrowly. Radicalization is a gradual process, and it is critical to understand each step of the process. Learning about radicalization and extremism does not produce guaranteed cause and effect relationships; instead, the link between radicalization and violent extremism is more appropriately viewed as a driving force to emphasize the power of situations, social interactions, and influence. As a result, several conceptual models have risen from radicalization studies to illustrate the relationship. In the two-part series, the call for defining radicalization through social science theory, empirical research, and conceptual models are methods in how a researcher must take what is available and put the information towards the field in a new way. The confusion of terms and processes surrounding radicalization comes from

researchers having an entirely too narrow focus. Failing to use social science theories, empirical research that makes use of methods besides intensive fieldwork, and conceptual models that use some sort of theory base has contributed to the shortcomings of radicalization research. To be successful as a future researcher considering this topic, there must be a willingness to branch out and investigate what Borum (2011a, 2011b) has mentioned as major assumptions to know ahead of time and taking the time to understand what type of specific research agenda one wants to embark upon. Nevertheless, there are some authors who take the time to break down the mechanics of radicalization. Southers (2013) was very specific in detailing the definitions of the phrases terrorism, violent extremism, and homegrown. The author did this to set up his study's exploration of ideological motivations and radicalization pathways and to sequentially provide ideas on how more disciplines can be introduced into the counterterrorism profession. Within the book, Southers (2013) mentioned that although security agency organizations (e.g., CIA, Homeland Security, FBI, United Nations, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization) do not have a clear definition of the term, there still must be discretion in how the term is used in a study, report, or article. Neumann (2013), just like other professionals in the field of terrorism, noted the importance of having clear definitions of the terms used when describing concepts related to radicalization and violent extremism. In *The Trouble with Radicalization*, Neumann (2013) discusses how although the word radicalization has been used frequently by academics and policymakers when discussing the current "war on terror" and numerous studies in the field. The lack of clarity of the term has led to strongly alienated ideas between conceptual and behavioral models, thus providing

wildly different policy suggestions. Rather than trying to explain radicalization as either one or the other, Neumann (2013) suggests that researchers look at the term from both perspectives and embrace both completely because it will remain a very important and relevant aspect of security studies as time goes on. Radicalization, in its rise to being constantly used by the media and researchers alike to describe a terrorist attack perpetrated with links to extremist Islam, can be misused when bias and emotional responses get in the way. Providing clear meaning of how radicalization is to be used is paramount, yet it seems that most literature in the field does not define the concept well enough and instead blindly ascribes the word to Muslim culture which is incorrect. Githens-Mazer (2012) argues that for academics to be successful in truly understanding and studying the topic there must be proper conceptualization and utilize methodology and case selection to radicalization research. Likewise, Mandel's (2010) work describes radicalization as being a term that currently has several vague synonyms with extremism that makes up its understanding among security organizations and researchers. The primary goal of his study is to create a valuable working definition of radicalization that acknowledges the psychological, organizational, individual/group dynamics, and social-cultural factors that allow for the expression of extremism to flourish. In his view, understanding radicalization though those elements will lead to improved counterterrorism policies and the development of comprehensive theory building on the topic.

Radicalization Models

Often cited as a conceptual psychological process, terrorist radicalization literature typically outlines how an individual becomes radical and inclined to violence over time. Borum's (2003) classic study explains the process of radicalization in a four-step heuristic model showing how a person can go from (a) feeling an event or social condition is (not right); (b) framing a condition as unmerited and feeling it's not fair; (c) developing emotions of anger due to a perception of injustice, thus starting to place fault, and; (d) the most radical stage of demonizing a perceived enemy. Borum's (2003) article is one of the earliest on radicalization and has been popular among researchers for its simplistic and straightforward approach. However, as time persisted other models of radicalization started to arise that were more in-depth and intricate. Even though Borum's (2003) model should not be discounted, it is essential for any researcher studying radicalization to note how such a complex process could be further defined. Nevertheless, this study is an early example of a researcher acknowledging that ideology in terms of radicalization can, in fact, be a determining factor and not the sole motive to act in violent terroristic acts. The illusion of having to have more than ideology as a way into terrorism shed light on the much-needed inclusion of social science theory. While terrorism in the United States was still relatively a fresh subject to study, this article laid the groundwork for researchers to go further to explore why an individual may turn towards terror when ideology alone is not a guarantee to become violent.

Moghaddam's (2005) archetypal model on radicalization comes two years after Borum's (2003) and treats the phenomenon as a linear process that goes through six

stages. With a metaphorical visual of a staircase the floors represent (a) psychological interpretation of material conditions, (b) perceived options to fight unfair treatment, (c) displacement of aggression, (d) moral engagement, (e) solidification of categorical thinking and the perceived legitimacy of the terrorist organization, and lastly (f) sidestepping inhibitory mechanisms. In addition to the fact, the study gives a general explanation of what each floor represents and the psychological state an individual is going through, Moghaddam (2005) takes the time to express and emphasize that all individuals who start the journey on the staircase will not radicalize to the last stair (i.e., violent extremism). The explicit declaration that not all individuals who start the journey to radicalization will finish and become violent gives hope to public policy goals in countering violent extremism. Nevertheless, the individuals who do turn to terror often have their vulnerability rooted in the personal perception of injustice, relative derivation, and morality. Understanding the origins of how one may feel compelled to turn to radical violence is critical for policymakers and security experts to get a handle on knowing the opponent. Realizing that human nature and mental perceptions are complex and strongly affected by various psychological underpinnings highlight the importance of going back and examining why and how humans make any decision, especially the decision to commit violent acts. Using psychology to create models to illustrate the process a person may go through when contemplating becoming a terrorist was an excellent choice because each person has their own thought process and perceived rationality. The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin's (2014) article talks about a pyramid model on activism and radicalization to illustrate how behavioral components play a huge role in violent

extremism and how it mirrors several social behavioral and developmental models. The model in combination with social science research is the FBI's way of trying to understand the underlying causes and motivations of violent extremism.

Like Borum (2003) and Moghaddam (2005), Silber and Bhatt (2007) created a model to explain home-grown terrorist radicalization motivated by radical Islam. By creating a conceptual framework explaining the domestic radicalization process, the authors formulated a four-step process like Borum's (2003) study. In the study, the four steps include (a) pre-radicalization, (b) self-identification, (c) indoctrination, and (d) jihadization. Once the four main steps of radicalization were identified the authors also noted how the failure to fully integrate into society contributed to the influence of terrorism. Amongst the Silber and Bhatt (2007) model, Wiktorowicz (2005) created a unique conceptual model and the notion of a "cognitive opening;" the precise moment when an individual has an epiphany about their existence and exchanges their old worldview for another one. Subsequently, Sinai's (2012) model takes three distinct phases (i.e., radicalization, mobilization, and action) and then elaborates upon Wiktorowicz's (2005) model to express how individuals evolve into violent extremists created another popular model.

Even though conceptual models in terrorism studies have changed and become more complex over time, (e.g., the introduction of exploratory modeling and analysis-EMA to mix model-based methodology with statistical software) as seen in Pruyt and Kwakkel (2014), there is still a lack of using theoretical foundations. Conceptual frameworks are excellent to express how a human phenomenon is structured and the

stages a person may undergo, but conceptual frameworks do not get to the core of why and how an individual can be motivated to participate in terrorism. Theory is essential to understand intent and how someone may arrive at the thought process to radicalize into violent extremism. Comparably, to have quality discussions on radicalization through models, there should also be models discussing why some individuals do not radicalize. Cragin's (2014) *Resisting Violent Extremism: A Conceptual Model for Non-Radicalization* is a study using a conceptual model of individuals living in high-conflict areas that did not turn to militant terrorist groups. The position of the author of this study is that understanding radicalization will be impossible if a researcher does not understand why some individuals do not go the way of violent extremism. Just as Moghaddam suggests that not all individuals starting the staircase to terror complete the cycle, Cragin (2014) advocates that understanding possible radicalization pathways cannot be done if there is no comparison done with those who do not radicalize. Conceptual models without theory can be useful in making loose interpretations but ultimately fail in terms of truly presenting a picture of how angst can influence decision-making. For that reason, Aly et al. (2014) decided to do a conceptual framework grounded in moral disengagement theory to explain how individuals ultimately allow themselves to radicalize into violent extremism and begin to carry out violence and terror to others. With the addition of moral disengagement theory, the goal of the study is to turn towards the development of intervention strategies to counter radicalization narratives, thus affecting the decision-making process of vulnerable individuals. Kruglanski et al. (2014) present both a radicalization and de-radicalization model that explores radicalization that

turns into violent extremism because of three critical components. Motivational, ideological, and social processes are examined as motivation to enter a quest for personal significance meaning that these components are what ultimately can lead an individual to terror; however, these same components also hold the answer to how individuals can de-radicalize as well.

Motives to Terror

Just as Moghaddam (2005) pointed out the deficiencies in individuals that make them more likely to turn to terrorism versus individuals that do not turn to terrorism in his staircase to terrorism article, more scholars are starting to do the same. Since terrorism is a criminal act on a large scale motivated by political, religious, social, or other extremism influences it is imperative that researchers try to figure out the differences of motivation and characteristics of the terrorists. The research studies by Bartlett et al. (2010) and Bartlett and Miller (2012) aimed to determine the behavioral and psychological deficiencies of terrorists by performing inquiries that focus on homegrown terrorism by doing fieldwork for two years in five different countries. The authors use their studies to compare what they consider permissive factors between radical individuals who become terrorist and radical individuals that do not commit violence and how radicalization can be differentiated between and split into types that lead to violence and those that do not. According to the studies radicalization has the potential to turn violent if four factors exist which are (a) the emotional pull to act to combat perceived injustice; (b) the thrill, excitement, and trendiness of joining a terrorist cell; (c) status and honor code within the terror group; and (d) peer pressure. These four factors contribute to the appeal to become

terrorists by playing upon the desire to feel accepted. Feelings of exclusion in society can take away the confidence of a person living in a country that does not understand their culture. Playing upon psychological vulnerabilities has been a very successful method in recruiting and radicalizing individuals rather than the popular perceived notion of religion as being the dominant factor. The authors were able to go abroad and collect data that was not readily available in the United States at the time by engaging in fieldwork, thus making the study a great early study to model in the U.S. in areas with a high Muslim population. Future researchers should continue fieldwork within Muslim populations to gain a clear perception of vulnerabilities. In Bhui et al. (2014a, 2014b) a population of 608 Muslim heritage men and women aged 18-45 were asked sixteen questions relating to sympathies for violent protest and terrorism to gain an understanding of vulnerabilities. The analysis provided group samples of individuals that were most vulnerable, resilient, and intermediaries. Depression, anxiety, limited social assets, poor health, perceived discrimination, and psychosocial adversity emerged as associations in addition to resilience factors such as social positivity, political engagement, and healthy religious feelings. Taking the information, a statistical test was performed, and the results showed that those vulnerable to radicalization were likely to experience depression, but those less vulnerable had positive social assets. Just as in criminal justice studies, individuals with higher levels of depression and few positive resilience factors are more susceptible to crime; so are Muslims when faced with radicalization material.

Taylor and Horgan (2006) remark that there are pathways both into and out of terrorism thus arguing that an important aspect of radicalization and the integration into

terrorism is a gradual process that revolves around the individual's own personal choice as opposed to psychological vulnerabilities. The authors attest that the set of events, personal factors, and context each leads to the individual's choice of whether to participate in terroristic activities. Lindauer (2009) shares this rational choice view in addition to several other theorists such as Gary Sick, Martha Crenshaw, Richard Rubenstein, Ehud Sprinzak, and Christopher Harmon in the belief that terrorism is strictly political in nature; therefore, the decision to become a terrorist is an act of rational logical choice and not a personal deficiency. Although this view has gained support throughout the years of study, the blatant refusal to accept psychological stress factors as legitimate reasons to radicalize is a dangerous slope. For that reason, scholars take a position in the middle acknowledging both possibilities have often avoided a one-sided view of terrorists being either politically driven or psychologically driven. Scholars have tried to explain terrorism with a simplistic view for too long, despite knowing human actions and motivations are complex manifestations. Trying to place terroristic motivation in a limited context is the precise reason terrorism studies have missed the mark on radicalization literature.

While it is a known fact that terrorism is an act perpetrated by individuals of rather respectable intelligence levels, rational choice, and the conscious decision to join a terror group still speaks upon a certain level of psychological awareness. Seeking out a terrorist group as an individual or with a group of associates expresses the desire to have a mutually contingent serving two-sided rewarding relationship. This idea is based upon both rational choice and social exchange theory. Together these theories illustrate self-

interests and interdependence and even though this perspective does not show vulnerability, it does still highlight psychological processes and a social theory.

Group and Individual Dynamics of Radicalization

When radicalization research shifted from considering foreign threats to looking into threats internally, the 2005 London Bombing became the primary case study for several researchers. Kirby (2007) used the London Bombers case to argue against the belief that domestic radicalization is linked to a series of networks connected to a formal jihadist organization and that rather there are autonomous cells. Self-starting autonomous cells and homegrown terrorists that act on their own draws closer to the belief represented in Sageman's (2004) book *Understanding Terror Networks* in that most homegrown terrorists are motivated by social dynamics such as kinship, friendship, and a need to escape some form of alienation. In this work, he talks about and explains his "bunch of guys" theory which explains how terror cells formed by young men typically aged twenty to thirty-five have loosely based shared ideals and a desire to belong to a group. Individuals on the terrorist level tend to form their violent extremism out of personal psychology while group terror tends to come from shared social realities and influences. Kruglanski and Fishman (2009) explore both individual and group level terror in addition to the organizational level which applies to the training and logistics to evaluate whether an attack will be perpetrated to provide analysis for possible countering measures. Any other method of social interaction such as the internet (e.g., chat rooms, social media platforms) can also play a major role in forming self-starting terror cells. In resemblance to this view, authors Decker and Pyrooz (2011) use their study to explore the similarities

and differences between gangs and terrorist groups with respect to radicalization based on organizational structure, group processes, and the importance of technology for social interaction.

Despite the fact several terrorist cells originate from tight kinships and social influence, there are instances where those factors fail to produce a radicalized cell. In Useem and Clayton's (2009) study on radicalization occurring in U.S. prisons, they interview over four hundred people to gauge the social environment of a corrections facility to see if it would be conducive to breeding radicalization into violent terrorism. With the information gathered it was shown that radicalization within the U.S. prison system is relatively low. Possibilities for that outcome include the level of order within the prison, boundaries between inmates and outside radical communities, anti-radicalization initiatives imposed by executive leadership, and the relatively low level of education that characterizes inmates as opposed to the general intelligence of a terrorist.

In analyzing individual versus group dynamics, King and Taylor (2011) take the position of highlighting the importance of both individual choice and personality characteristics with respect to a single individual's choice to participate in terrorism. In the study, there are five radicalization models reviewed highlighting their similarities and differences, but from studying each model three common themes emerged. The themes that proved important to radicalization were (a) identity struggle, (b) deprivation, and (c) presence of certain personality characteristics. Moreover, in the study, the authors go further in depth to understand how individual extremist organizations can play upon an individual's personal characteristics in undergoing radicalization thus leading to group

inclusion. From that inquiry, the conclusion of the study calls for more research into group dynamics of terrorist radicalization.

McCauley and Moskalenko (2008) call for the need to study group dynamics of terrorism by identifying twelve mechanisms of radicalization: (a) personal victimization, (b) political grievance, (c) joining a radical group-slippery slope, (d) joining a radical group-power of love, (e) extremity shift in like-minded groups, (f) extreme cohesion under isolation and threat, (g) competition for base support, (h) competition with state power, (i) within-group competition, (j) jujitsu politics, (k) hate, and (l) martyrdom and place them on three levels of analysis (i.e., individual, group, and mass). Many of the radicalization mechanisms are reactive in nature meaning that the individual is more influenced by group dynamics playing upon psychological processes rather than acting as an individual exerting conscious decision-making. Jihadi radicalization occurring in groups of like-minded individuals often goes hand in hand with psychological processes such as perceived rewards, opportunity (i.e., criminological motivations), and "rational choice." Rationality in terms of a terrorist's choice to participate in extremism can be motivated by bargaining over desired ideals and goals to achieve their specific ambitions (Lake, 2002). Common features that can draw individuals to terrorist organizations may include gender and age, education, career, marital status, "awakening" to injustice, and more.

Silke's (2008) article reviews and references the lack of available resources to conduct psychological research, but with the information available takes on the position that radicalization is a gradual process and that individuals who radicalize are often quite

similar in nature making joining a group more likely. Granting, group dynamics of radicalization are an important feature of how and why an individual may be influenced to join, but an important factor to address is the influence of leadership on the radicalization process of an individual. Leadership especially charismatic leadership can be very persuasive in radicalization recruitment. Rinehart's (2009) study studies the leadership structure of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and how the leadership hierarchies were the primary motivators to commit acts of terror. Just as the leadership of Osama Bin Laden was a central driving force of Al-Qaeda, leadership and command structure within terror organizations hold immense power with respect to recruitment, radicalization, reverence, and authority. Leadership dynamics involve coaching, consulting, and training; all which are essential in breeding terrorists and without a central leader many terrorist organizations would not exist. Part of the success of terrorist organizations lies in its highly centralized organizational structure.

Individual and group dynamics in terrorism are very interesting because it relates to motivations and how the persuasion to become a violent extremist occurred. Seeking out social interaction, relationships, and bonds all have an immense effect on human nature. The desires to be accepted and respected are both concepts that lie in criminal motivation. Having power and/or prestige are common incentives for individuals who seek to use violence to an end. Peer pressure, control, association, and social strain can each effect individual and group decisions to get interweaved with extremism both abroad and domestically. Conducting research studies to analyze individual and group structures via methods of qualitative inquiry is the best way to determine human

interactions in social settings. Helfstein (2012) uses his study to explore many dimensions of radicalization. Radicalization in his view is explained by his models and shows the phenomenon as both social and ideological forces. However, in addition to using fieldwork and other strategies, the study shows a glimpse of strong theoretical discussions to strengthen findings.

Radicalization in the West

Even though some scholars may argue radicalization is a recent phenomenon in the United States, there is evidence that shows that radicalization and homegrown terrorism has an extensive history within the United States Vidino (2009) cites 20th century examples of Islamic violence in America as the basis of the article and describes the failure to recognize the situation because of the pre-9/11 priority of monitoring activity outside of the nation by the intelligence communities. The United States did not truly analyze the possibility of homegrown terrorism and homegrown radicalization until the 2005 London bombings. Nevertheless, homegrown radicalization levels among Muslims in Europe are much higher than in the United States due to America's geographic advantage, economic state, stricter immigration regulations, and the patterns in which immigrants come into the states (i.e., rate in which they enter the United States). Yet, homegrown terror in the West is important to study for terrorism scholars as well as criminal justice and homeland security professionals because environments that do not pose as many risk factors as the Middle Eastern landscape are becoming more and more susceptible to radicalization. For security agencies, intelligence, and policymakers to detect and stop early terrorists from becoming violent extremists, empirical research on

the matter must be expanded. Hafez and Mullins (2015) explore the empirical research that has been done thus far on radicalization and concluded that most studies point towards (a) grievances, (b) networks, (c) ideologies, and (d) support structures. Although these features are seen in several empirical studies, still each individual case can display drastically different variables. Sageman's (2011) book *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* talks about how Al-Qaeda is no longer the central driving force of terrorism, but instead the source of inspiration among independent local terrorist cells. Sageman (2011) believes that radicalization is a process in which individuals and group dynamics play a part in creating extremism occurring from experiencing traumatic events, interpreting the outrage through ideology, shared moral outrage, and then acting upon that outrage. Violent extremism here is seen as a form of discontent and dissonance, with the keenness of jihadism diminishing once individuals find other outlets to express frustrations. Yet, the impact domestic radicalization will have in the United States is still a major source of concern. Lone Islamist terrorists in the United States are considered an incredible threat to the country due to their ability to exist without a large cell. Individuals and small groups of individuals that can perpetrate attacks in the name of larger groups are a major concern for how terrorism can spread into the West. Pantucci (2011) describes four different types of "lone wolf" to illustrate how people can operate without a formal connection to a terrorist group. This analysis uses case studies to show how domestic radicalization can take place within small groups or alone with the inspiration of extremist ideology. Pushing the ideology of the "lone offender," the FBI (2019) published a report on November 13 drawing its findings from

fifty-two attacks in the U.S. since 1972. The report gathered by the behavioral analysis unit (BAU) analyzes the background, behavioral characteristics, and circumstances surrounding the domestic attacks. As a result, the report concluded the decision to use violence to further an ideological goal are shaped by a complex blend of personal motivators, external influences, internal stressors, opportunity to carry out a plot, and individual capability levels. While the sample size in this report can be considered small, it is fair to say the implications of the offenders lean towards social science explanations and that further research on the matter should without a doubt investigate elements such as criminology.

Bergen et al. (2011) assess jihadist terrorists and their existing threat to America. Like Sageman's position, Bergen et al. believe that while Al-Qaeda may not be the primary threat to America anymore there is still the threat of radicalization arising from groups that have developed in the shadow of Al-Qaeda's influence. Al-Shabaab, ISIS, and other groups have arisen in inspiration from Al-Qaeda despite some terroristic cells breaking ties with the group to pursue other goals. U.S. jihadist groups are highly diversified, and it is no longer clear which group a potential jihadist militant may claim if any at all. This article received all its critical information through interviews with numerous individuals in the field and supplemented with the authors' own research. By having conversations with experts such as scholars, military personnel, and intelligence associates the current situation on radicalization and jihadist terrorism can be correctly placed into context based on how security policy has now shaped the United States.

Two books, *The Accidental Guerrilla* by Kilcullen (2011) and *Inside Terrorism* by Hoffman (2006) both highlight the new role the United States must play in today's battle against terrorism and radicalization. Global terrorism has changed immensely since the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and the series of attacks that happened after. To be effective in the long term, strategies must be flexible and rely less on military force and power. Terrorism and domestic jihadist motivations in the United States presently are primarily the reaction and response of a lack of authority, credibility, and virtue amongst a disenfranchised group. These two books are a comprehensive example of how history and events have shaped the dynamics of terrorism today and how the constant change and growing complexities within the phenomenon must be addressed with well thought out solutions.

Jenkins' (2010) report looks at the status of United States jihadist radicalization post 9/11 and discusses who is being recruited and the domestic terrorist threat it poses. Cases ranging from individuals lending support to foreign terrorist entities, planning attacks in the United States independently, and seeking to join jihadist fronts (e.g., foreign fighters) are all included in the study. Radicalization, because it is still relatively small scale is likely to continue for a long time in the future with foreign recruitment and self-recruitment still prevalent and appealing to individuals who want to a part of something "bigger than themselves." There are several vulnerabilities American society has that are apparent to terror recruiters that make it easy for violent extremist to radicalize individuals for jihad, but ultimately counter radicalization lies with the American Muslim community as they are the targeted population. In seeking to gather

empirical evidence, Kurzman's (2011) article shows an example of eight cases and bar graphs depicting the actual rate of Muslim American instances of terrorism. Even though the reports of Muslim American radicalization and foiled terrorist plots constantly make the news, the data shows that it is overstated. Not discounting the occurrence of domestic radicalization, but there is a strong American perception to exaggerate the threat due to fear post 9/11 and possible Islamophobia. According to Kurzman's (2011) study, terror plots are thwarted most of the time while still in the planning stage, but ones that are stymied in later stages get the attention and have its facts and realities blown out of proportion.

Crone and Harrow (2011) attempt to truly define western homegrown terrorism by suggesting that homegrown terrorism has four types (a) internal autonomous, (b) internal affiliated, (c) external autonomous, and (d) external affiliated. In this mixed method study the researchers look at four cases of Danish homegrown terrorism and then perform a quantitative analysis of Islamic terrorism from the years 1989-2008 to examine if the West has seen a rise in homegrown domestic attacks. The authors determined that the West has most definitely seen a boost in homegrown attacks; however, the attacks have been shown to have influence from external foreign sources. The link to an external source in homegrown radicalization shows how individuals can be drawn to terror to seek inclusion. Focused on the dawn of suicide bombing and the vulnerabilities of people who get recruited, this article is also focused on in the phenomenon of domestic radicalization.

Atran (2003) describes fundamental elements of terrorist radicalization and notes how the failures of public policy solutions are rooted in the faulty public perception of

terrorists and the radicalization process. Too often people think terrorism is a

phenomenon that can only happen to people who are deemed crazy, evil, desperate, or

poverty-stricken when in fact terrorists are highly intelligent and typically well educated.

The way in which people are lured to terrorism is the close-knit relationship building

factor of terrorist groups. When individuals feel emotionally distant, unaccepted socially,

and lack essential psychological and/or cultural relationships with others that person

becomes more vulnerable to manipulation and violent radicalization. Issues such as racial

profiling, isolation, immigration intolerance, and the causal effect of the American

political agenda on Muslim people can all be contributing factors to induce radicalization.

To combat radicalization, Atran (2003) suggests the United States needs to address the

grievances of Muslims living in the United States and pay attention to the sentiments

expressed so that feeling of inclusion are produced. If the American intelligence and

national security agencies concerned with combating terrorism (e.g., Federal Bureau of

Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, Department of

Homeland Security) do not learn quickly how terrorist organizations operate,

countermeasures will continue to fail. As a matter of fact, as ISIS has become a rising

threat Atran once again addressed his concerns with counter-radicalization approaches in

his (2015) article. Some strategies to assist in this include interfaith confidence-building

and intercommunity interactions to encourage civic cohesion.

  Mullins' (2012) study speaks on the lack of civic cohesion from observing some

of the propelling forces behind domestic terrorist radicalization in the United States and

covers important subjects such as: (a) psychological abnormality, (b) individual

adversity, (c) western political environment, (d) comparative conditions between the United States and Europe, (e) identity issues, (f) foreign policy in Iraq, (g) Islamism influence, (h) religion, and (i) social motivators. Overall, the entire article looks at the balance between how Western foreign policy towards the Middle East can influence homegrown radicalization in addition to how lack of integration in Western-based nations can generate vulnerabilities to factors such as religion for Islamic individuals.

Religion as a factor for homegrown terrorism is perhaps one of the most cited motivators of radicalization (Frayman, 2006); because of that, it is often questioned if whether the process of radicalization is the same for people who convert to Islam versus those who do not convert. Kleinmann (2012) takes his study and looks at Sunni Muslims in the United States and focused on the rate of homegrown terrorism for nine years. The data included individual, group, and mass factor rates and determined that the level of radicalization for both non-converts and converts were high because of group level processes such as kinship and friendship. Unity proved to play a strong role in radicalization showing that social connections and interactions are critical in encouraging radicalization.

According to Dawson (2010), new religious movements (NRMs) or religious communities and spiritual groups with modern origins and homegrown terrorism should be a topic of interest. Under the United States Constitution, freedom of religion can be a major contributor to the rise of extreme radical NRMs. How and why people join, how groups maintain popularity, and why some turn violent are all important in examining domestic radicalization. For people, religion often offers a sense of unity, shared culture,

and forming bonds with like-minded people. The same dynamics in understanding who joins these groups can serve as explanations for how radicalization works in terroristic cells that promote religious violence. Rogers et al. (2007) explores the role of religion with respect to the social-psychological factors that can influence violence. Irrationality, grievances, threats, and more are examined with a combination of social factors such as identity, leadership, group dynamics, and individual differences/interpretations through a lens of religion to see how belief systems can affect action and behavior. A possible method of gathering data on the link connecting religion could involve researchers doing fieldwork and observations in places of worship, religious study/outreach groups, and religious communities. Getting a chance to interview individuals in those settings could give a study a more personal realistic feel in understanding how radicalization may stem from religious domains. Still, it is important to be careful not to simply contribute acts of terror to religious reasons. Gunning and Jackson (2011), feel that when terrorism is separated into religious versus secular reasons it is problematic because the big picture is being missed and delegitimized. Political violence has its motivations from numerous avenues and segregating the concepts result in a faulty analytic assessment.

Social Science Theories Emerging in Radicalization Studies

Studies researching violent radicalization in the west have been starting to show trends of sociology from theories such as the social movement theory, social learning theory, and the social network theory. Those theories are identified by Dalgaard-Nielson's (2010) literature review covering the current state of radicalization studies coming from Europe from studies written by Bayat (2005), Meijer (2005), and most

recently in *The Handbook of The Criminology of Terrorism* (2016) edited by Gary

LaFree and Joshua Freilich. Social movement theory is an interdisciplinary study within

social science that explains why social mobilization occurs under social, cultural, and or

consequence. The movement is an action that is typically viewed as a reaction to

deprivation or inequality in relation to their perception of others or their own personal

expectations. Joining in the collective action (e.g., such as joining a group or

organization) is usually viewed as a conscious decision by the individual to benefit from

a maximization of utility by joining the group. In radicalization, individuals may seek to

join a group so that needs of increased ability to enact political change are affected and to

be able to gain access to those in power. Just as social movement theory is starting to

emerge in radicalization studies as a lens, another theory closely linked to it is social

identity theory. Social identity theory is heavily viewed in the socio-cognitive processes

of group dynamics terrorism. The way in individual perceives oneself is usually how the

individual will bond with group identities and social networks. Social identity theory

helps researchers to understand ego, self-esteem, and internalized stereotypes of a person

which often leads to an explanation of behavioral choices. Al Raffie (2013) examines

social identity theory amongst other social theories as a research lens to view the process

of radicalization. At the close of her study, it is suggested that cognitive elements hold

promise to add to radicalization/terrorism literature, thus highlighting the purpose of this

research study to explore social science as a theoretical lens to complement the

conceptual framework of radicalization. Social network theory is the study of how people

interact with others within a network by looking at the network and then at the individual

actors. Applying social networking theory to terrorist networks offers researchers a way to theorize how radicalized individuals would be interconnected into a larger network of a terrorist cell and why. The social structures of relationships and bonds within the network ultimately affects the behaviors and beliefs of all those included within the group.

Borum (2011a) also highlights social movement theory to introduce the possibility of moving towards social theoretical frameworks to help scholars explain radicalization with respect to terrorism. Social movement theory in Borums' (2011a) article can be a reaction to strained environmental conditions as described by strain theory. Strain theory is based on the premise that social structures in society may pressure citizens to commit crime, especially of the social structure is perceived to be inadequate such as the lack of social justice from an ethnic or cultural group. Thereby joining into group terrorism can be a direct result of the strain placed upon the individual. Other authors allude to the criminological strain theory as seen in Rice and Agnew's (2013) article explaining the emotional correlates of radicalization and terrorism. Strain theory in this study is intersected at the basis of criminology and social psychology. When pressure is put on an individual it results in negative emotions. To get rid of the negative emotions such as anger from perceived injustice or lack of social inclusion, there is a reaction from the individual to seek to relieve the pressure that may disrupt rational cognitive processes in exchange for direct relief.

Additional social science theories that have been appearing in terrorism that have a basis in criminology have been social learning theory as seen in Hughbank and

Hughbank's (2007) article as well as Pauwels and Schils' (2016) study. Social learning

theory suggests that any learned behavior is a cognitive process that takes place in a

social setting. Behaviors can be learned through direct interaction or observation, but

some sort of social interaction must be present to instill a learned behavior. Cognitive-

based learning encompasses attention, memory, and motivation; when placed in the

context of terrorism, social learning is learned from the interaction of an already

radicalized individual or group of individuals.

Criminology in Terrorism Studies

The call to include criminology in terrorism studies has been made in the past, but

there is still a major gap in the literature when it comes to having studies with a strong

theoretical foundation in criminological theories (see LaFree, 2007; LaFree &

Hendrickson, 2007). Having said that, although there has been increases in the

contribution of criminologist with respect to terroristic occurrences, the general

application of major criminological theories to examine the individual being radicalized

has been lacking (Wikström & Bouhana, 2017). Deflem (2004) argues that there is

groundbreaking work within the field of criminological sociology that needs to be

explored in terms of terrorism and counter-terrorism studies that offer a variety of quality

theoretical viewpoints. White (2016) comments on the practicality of criminology in

terrorism studies and in radicalization by highlighting the differences between theory and

practice affecting the way data is gathered. Adding criminologist into the study of

terrorism would bring valuable knowledge such as important concerns in social control

and other major focuses criminology already has a rich empirical foundation in. The

authors imply that there has been a distinctly missing feature of including sociology and criminology in terrorism studies, despite the growing number of literatures being produced on terrorism-related studies. Also, LaFree and Dugan (2004, 2015) touched on the subject in analyzing how studying terrorism compares to studying crime in addition to Rosenfeld's (2002) article that suggested criminologist began studying terrorism because of overlapping concepts and theoretical relationships. Most recently, in a scholarly piece, the authors came to defend the relationship between criminological thinking and the understanding of terrorism; displayed in a short essay by Freilich and LaFree (2015). Most studies that cover radicalization and homegrown terrorism cover social science disciplines in fields other than criminology, only mention a single criminology theory, or completely reject having socially based theories at all and go straight to conceptual models and frameworks. Without mentioning the importance of social science theory in radicalization research, terrorism only gets examined from a lens that looks at influences and motive as driving forces outside of the character of the individual who join the terror network themselves.

Countering Radicalization

Vidino's (2010) special report outlines how America can counter radicalization. With the surge of American-Muslims living in the United States due to immigration and other factors, the surge in homegrown radicalization has led the U.S. to seek a more comprehensive counter-radicalization strategy. The path to combat radicalization and violent extremism needs to be flexible since there is no one pathway to terrorism or a centralized theory to explain it. Just as the purpose of this study is to introduce social

science criminological theory to shed light on the importance of social cohesion and civic

unity, being able to strengthen resilience factors to make individuals less vulnerable to

terror and/or de-radicalize can be through public health approaches as noted in Bhui et al.

(2012). Public health approaches in terms of combatting radicalization and terrorism

understand mental vulnerabilities, biographies, identities, socialization efforts,

community, and more that forms a personal identity. Fair access and equal opportunities

to safety, social cohesion, health services, etc. are critical in strengthening communities,

thereby making radicalization less appealing. American policymakers must take caution

not to infringe on religion because it is a sensitive topic and can infringe on fundamental

civil rights in addition to the fact that researchers such as Aly and Striegher (2012), and

Choudhury (2007) have identified religion as not being a major gateway to violent

extremism, but indeed that religion is part of identity politics that can protect against

radicalization. Next, it is imperative for policymakers to make separate strategies for each

possible aspect of terrorism such as a strategy for radicalism and a strategy for violent

extremism. While most individuals may think the two go hand in hand, they are in fact

different dynamics on the path to commit terrorism. Plus, forming partnerships within the

Muslim community is essential to provide a sense of civic unity. However, it must be

proven that the efforts to form a close relationship with the community are genuine or it

could be perceived as racial profiling and unfair monition such as what was seen in the

Vermeulen (2014) study when analyzing suspect communities in Europe. According to

Lankford (2009), creating quality counterterrorism strategies relies heavily on the social

climate in America to drop the "us vs. them" ideology and understand that the Muslim

communities living in the United States are a part of the country too. Overall, for any counter radicalization method to be successful, it will have to be a continuous process given the topic is very complex, controversial, and sensitive to the American Muslim community. Nevertheless, the United States should take cues from European Muslim organizations that have led anti-Islamophobia initiatives such as the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations (FEMYSO) and its Member Organizations as a starting point to create successful socially responsible policies since Europeans have interacted with large Muslim populations longer than the United States.

Taspinar (2009) suggests that an appropriate way to counterterrorism is by fighting radicalization with human development such as social development. Social development is the act of putting people at the center of a development process committed to benefit people and to encourage recognition as to improve the way they interact with society and the status quo. Vulnerability and psychological turmoil are common themes within individuals that are on the cusp of behavioral uncertainty. Husain's (2009) book, *The Islamist: Why I Joined Radical Islam in Britain, What I Saw Inside and Why I Left* is an autobiographical account of how his South Asian Muslim social identity played a part in feeling lost and isolated living in East London ultimately led to the embrace of radical Islamist ideas despite the ensuing rejection of those beliefs. McDonald (2011) and Lynch (2013) study Muslim youth in the United Kingdom due to their vulnerability to radicalization and explore identity as the feature of their lived experience and how it can translate into radicalization. The primary focus of the studies is to build up Muslim youths and their communities so that they may have a stronger

identity at a time of manipulation and vulnerability. It is the action of prioritizing needs to make social cohesion easier for communities through actions such as civic and community activism and even mentoring, as seen in Spalek and Davies (2012). This idea of counterterrorism relates directly to the call of social justice and social change. By altering the dynamics of how Americans and Muslims interact, better cohesion and unity can be built to encourage trust. As Özerdem and Podder (2011) put it, addressing micro-level structural dynamics such as the social and political roles of those vulnerable to radicalization is essential in addressing the push and pull factors of recruitment from radical groups. Still, in addition to building up the social community technological solutions must be made as well.

Weine et al. (2009) examine the Somali population in Minneapolis from a psychosocial perspective in addition to strategies to help combat the risks of radicalization by using a public health platform to reinforce community and family protection resources. Somali Americans are a large population in Minnesota and with the news of multiple young men joining the terrorist organization Al-Shabaab there has been an immediate call to figure out an effective comprehensive counter-terrorism policy. Two years after the study done by Weine et al. (2009) the United States House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security (2011) published a comprehensive report detailing Al-Shabaab and the high rate of radicalization and recruitment in Minnesota in addition to suggestions to combat the threat. Nevertheless, Weine et al. (2009) presents one of the few studies that highlight the importance of social psychology in combatting radicalization by encouraging strategies to build resilience factors and

provide cognitive-based learning therapy to family and community. Some of the most proven strategies in crisis intervention have also come from using risk assessment guides. Pressman (2009), focused on the goal of risk management and developing disengagement and de-radicalization efforts by creating the VERA (Violent Extremist Risk Assessment) instrument as a structured guide. Using the instrument, it is the researchers' goal that experts and practitioners in the field can gain better insight into crucial factors that are considered relevant to start counter methods.

Too, with the rise of globalization, the internet and social media is becoming a crucial factor in homegrown terrorist radicalization. Based on his work on interviews and intensive fieldwork studying Islamist, jihadist, grassroots groups, and sympathizers; Ashour's (2010) article illustrates the need to counter jihadist narratives online (e.g., jihadist chat rooms and web pages) by identifying the message, the messenger, and the media platform to combat the jihadist narratives. Currently, jihadist narratives are targeting the youth so that foreign fighters will have a better chance to indoctrinate for the cause. Internet websites are excellent ways to reach a massive amount of people with a minimal amount of effort, and with the least number of resources. Cyber-space to reach impressionable individuals is very effective, efficient, and easy to remain under the cloak of anonymity. Likewise, Thompson (2011) and Edwards and Gribbon (2013) explain the need for the American government to counter radicalization through understanding how to monitor and use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. Social media platforms appeal right to the social desire for inclusion and unity and using terrorist narratives to reach vulnerable individuals is a direct way to manipulate and

exploit emotional inadequacies. Social media has a lot of users from all over the world and the ability to share videos, media, pictures, documents, and more allow users to post any type of information they wish. The rise in social media has even caused terrorist organizations to seek recruits such as women and children despite terrorist members being typically male. Numerous intelligence and law enforcement agencies are scrambling to discover and implement solutions to counter online-radicalization, but as it stands the primary strategy thus far have been closely monitoring and the removal of jihadist social media accounts. Furthermore, to address counter-radicalization efforts it is worth noting that individuals can become de-radicalized and disengaged to terror as Horgan's (2009) study explored through the interview of several Middle Eastern terrorists. For instance, the newly appointed George Washington University Center on Homeland Security personnel Jesse Morton; formally known as Younus Abdullah Muhammad while he was recruiting for Al-Qaeda is an example of how the U.S. can use individuals who have defected from extremism to help further counterterrorism efforts (Cohen, 2016). Just as in the criminal justice system offenders can be reintegrated into society and rehabilitated, so can individuals that began radicalizing to terror. Gunaratna (2009), Lankford and Gillespie (2011), and Marsden (2017) produced studies that consider the rehabilitation and reintegrating of terrorists back into society. Analyzing the factors of what made an individual fall victim to terrorism can be the same elements rehabilitation and reintegration programs can counter. With the use of social psychological explanations and understanding the social and political context that positioned the individual into terror, then quality research focus can begin. Civil society

led approaches are important to tackling extremism in addition to credible partnerships with law enforcement and policymakers. Nawaz's (2016) book *Radical: My Journey out of Islamist Extremism* tells the story of himself, a reformed radical Islamist who after his time in an Egyptian prison learned that the radicalization narrative was false and devoted his time afterward to combat extremism using his knowledge of recruitment tactics. Working together with numerous organizations and media outlets to spread his message, he has been able to address the pathways of extremism and how it can be overcome. Plus, Ebrahim's (2014) book *The Terrorist's Son: A Story of Choice* describes his personal experiences as an American child growing up with a terrorist father who planned the World Trade Center bombing in 1993 during the Clinton Administration. At seven years old his father and uncles tried to mold him in accordance with fanatical radicalized beliefs, but he never radicalized. The takeaway of this work is that anyone, no matter what the circumstance can resist radicalization. Having strong resilience factors and being able to tap into empathy is the key.

Conclusion

The purpose of the literature review was to show how research on radicalization, homegrown terror, and the application of social science and criminological theories has made an impact on terrorism studies thus far. While the research on radicalization, jihadist extremism, group and individual dynamics, social science theoretical foundations, and descriptive conceptual models has abundant literature; the obvious gap in the literature was the lack of social science theories based on sociology and criminological thought. While most of the studies discussed followed qualitative research

designs in terms of data collection by use of interviews, focus groups, surveys, fieldwork, document analysis, and other methods; the authors still relayed on conceptual models to explain the phenomenon being studied. The literature presented for the most part was a clear representation of how theoretical frameworks are missing from the research. After examining the literature, the research study contributed to the gap in the literature and fulfilled the plea made primarily by scholars (see Deflem, 2004; Freilich & LaFree, 2015; LaFree & Dugan, 2004; Rosenfeld, 2002) to mix terrorism studies with that of criminological studies.

As described in the following methodology chapter, this study serves to extend the body of knowledge by providing research that uses social science theory to illustrate important concepts in radicalization and extremism; just as Borum (2011a, 2011b) have requested more studies do. The study mirrored past studies in using a general qualitative study approach but differed from previous research in that this study focused on the implications of using criminological thought. To understand the social psychological process of American-Muslims who may be vulnerable to extremist radicalization. While every researcher within the terrorism field knows that there is no single profile or theory to predict a terrorist, there are in fact various respectable theories that have credible points in understanding the phenomenon of violent radicalization, especially domestic radicalization. This study's findings are a starting point for researchers to begin using criminological schools of thought to aid in the understanding of domestic violent terror radicalization. Valuable theories from the already empirically evidenced based field of criminology aided in the validity and reliability of terrorism studies.

To conclude, the social change implications of creating this study lied in the possibility to open dialogue on responsible social policy. Counterterrorism methods have been focused on law enforcement and coercive action. While that method may be warranted at times, terrorist prevention methods are way more valuable. Creating a study that looks at the implications of social theory on domestic radicalization shows how there are warning and risk factors that exist in America because of the post 9/11 social environmental climate. Radicalization and recruitment occur when people feel vulnerable and/or feel that there is nothing to lose. Using proven theories that explain motivators to crime were used to explain motivators to terror and by doing so social resilience factor building just as it is done in criminal justice can be done for terrorism. As a result, the social benefit of this study will be for policies to reflect socially responsible anti-terrorism strategies and embrace civic unity and social justice for the American Muslim community and any other population that may feel dissent with the social climate of America. Socially responsible domestic terrorism laws are a way to ensure the basic human rights of Muslim Americans are not encroached (Hamilton, 2018).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to give a synopsis of the literature that has been done on the topic of homegrown terrorism, radicalization, violent extremism, and to expose the gap in the literature that was filled by this study. The current state of literature with respect to the research topic is that while the homegrown domestic terrorism component is heavily researched, the theoretical framework and its application to the study have only been researched scarcely thus far. The following chapter explains the

methodology of the study in terms of research design, data collection processes, the researcher's role, and more.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how and why criminology is relevant to terrorism studies. I executed this purpose by highlighting the four chosen criminology theories, social learning theory, differential association, strain theory, and social control theory to assist in exploring and describing the phenomenon of violent terror radicalization. The principal goal of this study was to answer the following research question: What are the perceptions of experts on terrorism and criminology about how criminology is relevant to explain violent extremist radicalization in Minnesota? To accomplish those tasks, general qualitative inquiry methodology was used for this study and explained in depth about how that choice was ultimately beneficial to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study. The eight purposes of Chapter 3 are to (a) describe the research design of this study, (b) explain the sampling strategy and participant selection, (c) describe my role within this qualitative study, (d) provide an explanation of the data collection procedures, (e) describe data analysis and interpretation methods used, (f) provide evidence of quality within the study, (g) describe the feasibility and appropriateness of doing this study, and (h) acknowledge the need for informed consent and ethical considerations.

Research Design

Qualitative research methodology with a general approach was the framework for the study. Qualitative research, unlike quantitative research, is a means for investigating and understanding when individuals ascribe to a social problem instead of purely testing

variables statistically on predetermined instruments (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Qualitative

methodology has the characteristics of allowing researchers to (a) collect data from

multiple sources such as interviews and scholarly documents; (b) examine the data and

interpret the information on their own because the researcher is the key instrument

themselves; (c) perform data analysis based on specific themes, patterns, and categories

the researcher may see after the data has been organized; and (d) use theoretical lenses to

study concepts acknowledged in the research problem (Marshall & Rossman, 2006;

Patton, 2002). Because I sought to explore perspectives of criminology and terrorism

professionals in addition to those interested in the topics, quantitative methods were not

used due to data collection via interviews with 15 participants. I created an interview

questionnaire with 15 open-ended questions as they related to criminology and terrorism

to allow for participants to expand upon their responses.

Stemming from the constructivist paradigm, the approaches that guide qualitative

inquiry primarily come from Stake (1995) and Yin (2009), albeit Stake's approach leans

heavily towards scientific inquiry. Constructivism is a theory of knowledge that argues

that human beings generate and accept knowledge by interacting with experience and

personal ideas, meaning that knowledge comes from one's perspective. Qualitative

approaches in social science research tend to be the best choice when (a) the focus of the

study is intended to answer "how" and "why" questions, (b) the behavior of the

individuals involved in the study cannot be manipulated, (c) the phenomenon being

studied has contextual conditions that must be addressed due to relevancy, and/or (d)

boundaries of context and phenomenon in the study are not clear (Yin, 2009). Qualitive

research is generally emergent by nature and crucial when analyzing human behavior such as that of radicalization and turning to violent extremism. Examining various social settings, the individuals within these settings, and the general niche, researchers can use qualitative means to understand how people learn and view the topic at hand (Berg, 2008; Crowe et al., 2011).

Therefore, general qualitative inquiries are used when the researcher wants to explore a specific phenomenon in depth yet may not have a way to physically interact with the desired subject group being studied due to certain limitations. To aid in making sure the study did not get too broad with the emergence of numerous objectives, it was best to limit the study by time and activity, time and place, and definition and context, while data collection was the result of acquiring detailed information from a plethora of sources (see Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). Binding a study in this way ensured the research study stayed within the desired scope. In this study, I analyzed radicalization motivators and Muslim Americans in Minnesota post-September 11, 2001.

Qualitative research, in addition to being heavily employed in terrorism studies, has a rich legacy within criminology as seen in the advancement of the Chicago School of Sociology, and by Edwin Sutherland of Indiana University. Because I examined social science principles and prioritized the analysis of human behavior that I cannot manipulate, it was determined that general inquiry methodology was the best fit while using a holistic approach. By gathering explanations, personal experiences, and insight through multiple interviews, the qualitative study allowed me to lay the groundwork for

further research relating to topics generally not well known or understood in terrorism and criminology. Because a holistic approach produces multiple perspectives through interviews, various factors can emerge in any given situation. Therefore, I explored the significance of Minnesota in terms of extremism in order to gain a broader appreciation of the phenomenon while forming a focused connection to the research topic at hand through guided interviews. Having a narrow scope and highly descriptive data gathered through interviews and document examination, this approach allowed me to analyze a particular setting to illustrate the issue being studied with the big picture emerging (see Yin, 2009).

Sampling Strategy and Participant Selection

I used a general qualitative study approach to analyze the perspectives of professionals knowledgeable in fields of criminology and terrorism to better understand the relationship between criminal social theories and extremism. The qualitative research contributed to my own knowledge surrounding the topic and of those individuals sampled. Purposeful selection of interview participants and the selection of terroristic incidents related to the research question was relevant and appropriate to produce an in-depth description of the social phenomenon of extremism and radicalization.

Once a qualitative study is chosen, there are techniques to organize and conduct the research successfully. According to Yin (2009), there are six steps that should be used to structure an appropriate study. A researcher must (a) determine and define the research question, (b) determine both data-collection and analysis techniques, (c) prepare for data collection, (d) conduct field collection data, (e) analyze and evaluate the data, and (f)

prepare the study. Looking at this guide, I collected interviews from multiple participants across different agencies and institutions. All interview participants had an expertise and interest in both criminology and terroristic studies. Qualitative methodology was valid because those individuals were interested and involved with identifying key features that link criminal social theories to violent extremism in the United States to properly answer the research question: What are the perceptions of experts on terrorism and criminology about how criminology is relevant to explain violent extremist radicalization in Minnesota?

I used data from a myriad of sources, such as archival records, documentation, news articles, interviews, electronic data, and more, just as Yin (2009) recommended. To explore criminology and terrorism professionals' perspectives on what can lead to violent radicalization among Muslim Americans living in Minnesota, I used information from the 2016 ISIS trial in Minnesota in addition to multiple sources of data, including government agency reports, news articles, academic journals, and peer-reviewed research. In conjunction with document examination, I conducted interviews using a self-designed questionnaire consisting of 15 open-ended questions to guide interviews to uncover new insights in a uniformed and consistent manner. Due to the nature of the topic and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, I did not employ direct observation as a tool for this study; instead Zoom interviews were conducted. I emailed the questionnaire as a data-gathering tool in preparation for the Zoom interview to supplement document examination to those who expressed interest in volunteering for the study.

In this research study, I used a holistic approach because it was an encompassing view related to the knowledge of the phenomenon and the properties of the elements, their interactions, and relationship. A holistic design was the best choice to use because the terroristic incidents examined highlighted the nature of social criminological theory in the individuals who were vulnerable to domestic homegrown terrorism and turned to violent extremism. Because qualitative inquiry is holistic in nature (i.e., criminological theory is an accepted knowledge that is applicable in a variety of environments to explain a specific set of phenomena), it was the most advantageous design. Geographical region, ethnic community, time, and terror motivations defined the study focus. I chose the most promising and useful data to answer the research question posed, thus engaging in strategic purposeful sampling (see Creswell & Poth, 2017). More specifically, data selected for analysis met certain criteria, including

- taking place in the 21st Century post-2001

- taking place in Minnesota

- individuals who identified as Muslim Americans radicalizing into domestic homegrown terrorists

- radical violent extremism (must have committed or intent to commit violent attacks)

Purposeful sampling, also known as selective sampling, focuses on characteristics of a population of interest in which the researcher relies on their own judgement to select those who will participate in the study. Under the umbrella of purposeful sampling, there are numerous strategies available. According to Patton (2002) there are fifteen various

strategies, including (a) extreme or deviant case sampling; (b) intensity sampling; (c) maximum variation sampling; (d) homogeneous sampling; (e) typical case sampling; (f) critical case sampling; (g) snowball or chain sampling; (h) criterion sampling; (i) theory-based sampling, operational construct sampling, or theoretical sampling; (j) confirming and disconfirming cases; (k) stratified purposeful sampling; (l) opportunistic or emergent sampling; (m) purposeful random sampling; (n) sampling politically important cases; and (o) convenience sampling. Researchers tend to pick the strategy they feel best suits their research needs, is time-effective, and is cost-effective, but in information-rich cases, more than one sampling strategy may be necessary because each strategy fairly serves a different purpose. Nonetheless, the sampling strategy selected must fit the purpose of the study, the research question being asked, the resources and data available, and the constraints faced. Out of the 15 strategies listed, I used two:

- criterion sampling: selection of samples that meet a specific criterion
- theory-based sampling: finding manifestations of a theoretical construct of interest to elaborate and examine the construct

Using two sampling strategies for this research was a method to promote triangulation and flexibility within the study (see Patton, 2002).

Consistent with the qualitative study being conducted, the participants in the study met the inclusion criteria of being an adult aged 18 and above, in addition to having an expertise in terrorism and criminology studies. I obtained 15 interview participants to remain impartial to the respondents, and each participant had their data collected from the

same interview questionnaire. Because the study involved interviews, an interview protocol was developed and consistent across all interviews.

The Researcher's Role

In a general qualitative study, the researcher takes on the role as the primary instrument of analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Therefore, the basic skills I possessed included (a) being able to ask good, quality open-ended questions and interpret the answers received; (b) listening and observing well to avoid pitfalls rooted by one's own ideas and/or perceptions; (c) being adaptive and flexible in the event that new or possible unanticipated circumstances may arise; (d) having a firm grasp on the issues being studied, and (e) being completely unbiased by any preconceived notions (see Yin, 2009). To apply the qualitative standards of credibility, dependability, and transferability, I adequately monitored and reduced my own bias, developed competence in the chosen research methodology, collected the data, analyzed the data, and presented the data. The quality of research relies on the integrity of the data and the individual researcher.

In terms of the criterion to focus on Minnesota, I do not identify with Islamic beliefs nor consider myself a Muslim American. I have never resided in Minnesota. All analysis done within the scope of the study came from an objective point of view because there was a void of shared culture and values with the circumstances surrounding the terroristic occurrences.

To monitor and reduce bias, I had the responsibility to describe relevant aspects of self. Confirmation bias can easily occur during the study because confirmation bias is the tendency to process and seek information that is already consistent with one's own

beliefs (Nickerson, 1998). Qualitative researchers are trained to find meaning and look for ways to connect the big picture, while encountering the data and interview participants. Nevertheless, for this reason, researchers conducting qualitative research must resist the urge of interpreting the data too quickly.

In this study, I remained conscious of my previous knowledge and experiences to control the intrusion of bias by acknowledging the following aspects of my life. During the September 11, 2001 attacks, I was an eighth-grade middle school student who already had an interest in politics and national security due to having a father in the military. Viewing the terrorist attacks that day in class and watching the subsequent coverage of the attacks influenced my motivations to achieve higher education in fields that would analyze security studies. From August 2006 to May 2010, I pursued and earned a bachelor's degree in international affairs from the University of Georgia with a course load focus on security. Then, from August 2010 to May 2011, an associate degree in homeland security and emergency management with an international certificate from Georgia Perimeter College was obtained. Next, from September 2011 to August 2012, I gained a master's degree in criminal justice from the University of Cincinnati.

Once I completed the graduate program, before getting accepted as a doctoral student in the public policy and administration program with a focus on terrorism, mediation, and peace in December 2012, I earned three course certificates from the United States Institute of Peace in conflict analysis, negotiation and conflict management, and interfaith conflict resolution. Moreover, from January 2018 to March 2018, I worked with the United States State Department as a student intern in the Bureau of Public

Affairs Office of the Historian analyzing policy studies and working on manuscripts on the topic of terrorism in U.S. history, as a virtual student intern for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence from September 2019 to May 2020, and as a virtual student intern for the Global Engagement Center from August 2020 to May 2021. Additionally, I have been a federal civilian employee of the United States Department of Homeland Security since February 2020.

My perceptions of terroristic studies and criminal justice/criminology are heavily shaped by personal experiences and the interaction with individuals who are considered experts in the field (e.g., professors, military personnel, and city/state/federal government employees). In this study, I brought years of consistent consecutive educational experiences relating to security, terrorism, and policy studies. Yet, due to previous experiences, there are certain biases I could have potentially brought to the study. Even though every effort was made to ensure objectivity in the study, those biases could shape the way the data is understood and ultimately interpreted. To curb confirmation bias, I practiced mindfulness meditation (i.e., mental training practice to slow down and focus thoughts through deep breathing).

This study commenced with the perspective that domestic homegrown terrorists are not inherently evil. The process of radical violent extremism is effective when the individual is vulnerable to influence due to the exploitation and the exposure of a lack of social acceptance/justice and or civic unity. The social change implications of this study could result in the formation of improved public policy discourse regarding Muslim Americans and a conscious effort to inform the American people of the true nature of

radicalization. Additionally, risks can be reduced by learning to reject propaganda, unreliable media sources, and false preconceptions. By embracing policies and empirical theories that acknowledge the social needs of a cultural group: state/national level policy changes, government legislation, city governments, local law enforcement agencies, and more will be able to learn from this study of how integrating behavioral analysis principles into terrorism prevention policy will aid a larger vulnerable population gain resilience against radicalization.

Data Collection Procedures

The heart of this qualitative study lied in the interviews with the fifteen participants with an expertise and interest in terrorism and criminology. Interview participants were solicited through invitational emails and social media once I obtained institutional review board approval (IRB). The invitational email introduced the researcher, provided a description of the study, the purpose of the study, and an invite brief for the individual to partake in the study. Included as an attachment with the invitational email was the researcher's IRB approved consent form and the researcher-created interview questionnaire. The email instructed potential participants to respond within 12 days to either accept or decline to participate in the study. In the invitational email, individuals who accepted to participate in the study were instructed to reply to the email with "I consent," then further communication between the researcher and participants was conducted through additional emails to discuss plans for a recorded Zoom interview and follow up member checking. If a potential interview participant declined to take part in the study or missed the 12-day deadline to respond, I made note

of that individual and continued to solicit other possible participants until at least 15
individuals accepted an invitation to participate.

I made sure there were at least 15 documented interviews to ensure saturation of
the data occurred. Each interview participant was thoroughly informed of the study and
must have their consent noted before the start of an interview. Once the potential
participant replied to the consent form, the participant and I collaborated on a time to
have the recorded Zoom interview that involved conferring the interview questionnaire. If
I did not hear back from the participant within 10 days of the consent form being replied
to, I followed up via email or phone call to get confirmation of an interview time and
date. Since the questionnaire and consent form was sent with the invitational email, the
participant had ample time to understand what I would be asking and how to engage with
the questions. Establishing a researcher-participant trust relationship was of paramount
importance so all questions were answered truthfully and completely.

The interviews were not face-to-face due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic;
however, the interviews were one-on-one lasting approximately 60 minutes and
conducted via Zoom. If more time was needed to complete the interview, I adjusted time
as needed. Each interview was structured, meaning that each interview question was the
same for all the 15 participants. All interviews were conducted via Zoom, and the order
in which the questions were presented were the same. To ensure greater reliability and
validity than an unstructured interview, I made sure there was a standardized procedure,
so each participant was treated the same. Consistency throughout the interview process
saved me time due to routine and ensured a fair assessment of the data between

participants. Before the interview began, I asked the participant if they agreed to having the interview recorded. If the participant agreed, I verbally administered an informed consent disclaimer to the participant to receive verbal consent.

Data collected for this study was recorded and stored both digitally and physically (e.g., printed hard copies and written notes). Having the data saved digitally via hard drive on a personal computer and flash drives in addition to physically written notes and printed hard copies provided the researcher with flexibility and ease to locate materials needed for the study. The interviews were coded (P1 to P15) to protect the identity of the participants. To reduce potential bias during the analysis stage, I made sure to emphasize confidentiality of all participants and at no time would any participants be identified in the study. Every participant in this study is only known to the researcher. By guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity for the participants, the integrity of the research was upheld. The goal of the study was to receive quality data while protecting participants and ensuring the integrity of this intellectual work.

Using standardized open-ended questions during the interviews allowed me to ask each participant the same questions to be easily analyzed and compared between individuals with different perspectives. While asking each participant their questions, I remained flexible to capture any emergent perspectives (Yin, 2009). While each question I asked to the 15 participants were the same, each participant said certain things that shaped the interview in different ways. It was up to me to pay attention to what the participants said and be able to pick up on cues to follow up, know when to move on, or let a respondent elaborate further (Blackstone, 2018). When interviewing the participants,

I placed an emphasis on making sure they understood key terms, phrases, and acronyms as they relate to terrorism, radicalization, and criminology. I placed a strong emphasis on these factors during the interview because there were several interchangeable terms the individuals may have heard of or use depending on their own personal affiliation. Terminology was critical in this study since the participant had to be able to adequately and fully understand the questions being asked. As a result, I used the common language of the participants while exploring their responses to the questionnaire. Being able to connect with participants through language and terms they understand allowed the interview to flow without disconnect. I followed a semi-structured interview approach that allowed participants the ability to express their perspective on terrorist radicalization and criminal theory in the U.S. In this study, I took handwritten notes in addition to audio recordings to chronical their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions throughout the research process to reflect on the data. By taking notes, I made sure to have a backup of the data, should any of the recording data fails (Creswell, 2009).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Yin (2009), Stake (1995), Merriam (1998), and Miles et al. (2014) all acknowledged the significance of being able to effectively organize qualitative design data to enhance validity and reliability. Data analysis was performed by collecting participant interview data in addition to examining raw data gathered from document review. As a researcher, my goal was to provide meaning and clarification on a topic readers may not understand. By presenting the interview data in conjunction to the

various documents and terroristic incidents that were explored, readers of this study will be able to deepen their understanding of the topic.

This study focused on the social science implications of criminology, so it is important to mention the importance of how qualitative methodology influenced the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the topic. German sociologist Max Weber (1949) and his *"ideal type"* and *"verstehen"* are subjective elements in social theory and research critical to understanding how a researcher may take a set of certain actions, social traits, and social situations to identify a connection. As a qualitative researcher, *verstehen* and *ideal type* were very important as those terms are based on understanding how to classify, understand, comprehend, and perceive the significance of a phenomenon through one's own mental construct. Loosely translated *verstehen* means meaningful understanding and it implies that to see things from another's perspective, the individual trying to understand should put themselves in "the shoes of others." Analyzing data in accordance with *verstehen* means that a researcher would treat their investigation into the terroristic occurrences mentioned in the data, interview participants, and documents as more than just mere observations, but instead as components with complex qualities.

The researcher created *ideal type* based on the characteristics and elements of the percieved phenomenon. However, in creating an *ideal type,* one must also understand that a single *ideal type* will not correspond to all the unique characteristics of a phenomenon or case, nor is it meant to provide a perfect analysis of a phenomenon. Thus, Weber (1949) distinguishes between four basic *ideal types* to describe what motivates social

actions based on rationality and irrationality: (a) *zweckrational* (goal-rationality) is when a social action is chosen for goals and means, (b) *wertrational* (value-rationality) is when a particular goal is strived for which in itself may not be rational but has been pursued rationally, (c) *affektual* (emotional-rationality) is when a social action is rooted in the emotional state of an actor instead of more rational weighing of means and ends, and (d) *traditional* (custom, unconscious habit) is when an actor is guided by habit and relying on means and actions that are always done a "certain way."

Weber's use of ideal types is meant to convey how the researcher uses point of view to create idea-constructs when analyzing social reality. For instance, examining incidents where individuals are vulnerable to violent radicalization, each of the four ideal types can be examined to understand why someone may feel it is necessary to commit an act of terror against their own country of residence and their motivation. As a qualitative researcher, utilizing ideal type provided another avenue for analysis and interpretation. In a sense, those elements were additional qualitative methodological tools because each expresses the researcher's desire to analyze social reality, understand/comprehend the social phenomenon of radicalization, and articulate a critique.

Given that qualitative research studies are known for giving researchers the ability to gather data from a multitude of sources, it is imperative to be aware of the possibility of being overwhelmed since all data must be managed and analyzed (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). Qualitative researchers should transcribe their interviews and code their data into categories to identify and describe themes and patterns that have arisen from the data. In this study, data was transcribed as soon as possible after each interview.

Transcribing the data kept the research accurate because it involved close observation

through careful listening (Bailey, 2008). Written transcriptions allowed me to quote the

interviewees directly with the ability to place specific sections of the interview directly in

the research study. I am the only person who has access to the interview data,

handwritten notes, and audio recorded interviews. Data was transcribed to Microsoft

Word documents and stored securely on a computer with access limited to the researcher.

Data was organized and coded for patterns and themes by me. Coding occurred in

a multiple phase approach. First, I re-familiarized myself with the goal and purpose of the

study, making sure all interview questions have been thoroughly answered. Notes and

reflections were also reviewed regularly to eliminate misinterpretation of the data and to

scan for possible bias. Second, I read all collected data before coding. All transcripts

were read in their entirety to make sure there were no errors present before moving on to

the third phase of breaking the data down into smaller groups. I analyzed the data for

emerging patterns and themes. I made notes and comments within the margins of each

Microsoft Word transcript document. Rereading the transcript data and making notes and

comments was the beginning of organizing themes. Once themes were organized, I

created code categories. Although, the topic explored during the interviews had different

terminology to explain the same phenomenon, I remained aware of word differences and

took this into consideration while coding.

The amount of data collected was copious, so coding by hand alone would be

strenuous on the researcher and the risk of leaving out data would be increased. To avoid

being lost in data, it was necessary to employ the use of a qualitative software program to

assist in organization and analysis. The qualitative software program the researcher used to aid in data analysis was NVivo. NVivo allowed for the organization and secure storage of multiple types of data in a single place (QSR International, 2015). Interview participants were coded for the interview process and their transcribed interviews in Microsoft Word was imported into NVivo. Word documents were given a P prefix and appear as (P1 to P15) to coincide with interview coding. Using NVivo, I analyzed and organized data while maintaining objective judgement.

Evidence of Quality

In a qualitative study, ensuring validity and reliability means having qualitative trustworthiness (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative trustworthiness has four components that must be established, which are

- credibility: exhibits the confidence of truth in findings

- transferability: shows the findings have applicability in other contexts

- dependability: shows the findings are consistent and could be replicated

- confirmability: degree of neutrality and extent of findings in which the study is shaped by the data and not the researcher's bias, interest, or motivations

To achieve qualitative trustworthiness, there are various techniques the researcher fulfilled (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, I achieved qualitative trustworthiness through:

1. Credibility- I achieved credibility by engaging in triangulation of data due to the collection of data from multiple sources such as document review and interview data.

2. Transferability- I achieved transferability by use of thick description, meaning the phenomenon studied was described in extreme detail and background data was presented to establish the context of the study.

3. Dependability- I achieved dependability by describing the methodology in depth to allow for the study to be reproduced and replicated.

4. Confirmability- I achieved confirmability by using triangulation to reduce effects of researcher bias in addition to admission and clarification of researcher's beliefs and assumptions.

I achieved qualitative trustworthiness by making sure the research question was clearly written, the design of the study was appropriate, feasible purposeful sampling techniques were applied, the data was managed appropriately, and finally that the data was analyzed correctly.

Feasibility and Appropriateness

This general qualitative study was feasible and appropriate because it was at low cost to the researcher. I incurred a cost of no more than $600 to conduct the research, gather, and produce the data. NVivo software was purchased for the current student rate along with other software add-ons needed to analyze the data. Zoom Pro was also purchased by me to conduct hour long interview sessions and other features to aid in the study. The research study was cost effective because of the interview approach not being face-to-face due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, thus removing any potential travel related expenses.

This study took existing literature and looked at it from a new perspective. Criminological social science theory is a definite gap in terrorist radicalization studies and identifying that gap opened the doors for qualitative research. Seeing that terrorism and criminology both have descriptive principles, using a qualitative approach was the most plausible option since the researcher neither desired to conduct experiments nor measure any variable or test a hypothesis. The research question and purpose of the study provided no justification for the researcher to use quantitative means. Although, it would be possible to conduct a quantitative study, the lack of readily available data (i.e., sample population of individuals vulnerable or convicted of terror would either be classified or restricted information due to ongoing investigations), costs beyond what is capable of a university doctoral student, and IRB restrictions would make that option unfeasible. I chose a general qualitative approach over other qualitative approaches (e.g., case study, narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography) to allow for flexibility on a topic that is pertinent in today's national security matters. The chosen research methodology provided critical evidence that the phenomenon being described has indeed emerged and that there are numerous complexities.

Informed Consent and Ethical Considerations

I was liable for informed consent and ethical considerations if there were any human participants (e.g., experiments or interviews). Since human affairs are the primary reason for engaging in qualitative research, the researcher must exercise discretion (Yin, 2009). In a general qualitative study, the researcher analyzed a specific phenomenon and its real-life context; therefore, if the researcher decided to communicate with any

individual to gather data pertaining to that phenomenon there was a high regard to ethical standard. In this study, I conducted interviews with participants to gather their perspectives on violent extremism and criminology. Hence, interviews were conducted with care and sensitivity.

This research was conducted in accordance with Walden University's IRB (approval # 04-27-22-0393102). Email invitations to each participant provided the purpose of this study, my contact information, and approval number and expiration from the IRB. I made sure care and sensitivity were exercised by (a) gaining informed consent from each individual to be interviewed by articulating the nature of the qualitative study and formally requesting their voluntary participation through an email solicitation which included the questionnaire and consent form, (b) protecting those involved in the study by avoiding any form of deception or coercion, and (c) safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of interview participants through anonymity in the data report by numbering them as P1, P2, P3, and so on. I made sure that no individual participating was placed in a jeopardized position because of the study, nor will the participant be pressured to participate in future studies. Research records and audio recordings are kept in a locked and secure location for at least 5 years, after which they will be destroyed.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the research design of this general qualitative study. Provide an explanation of the sampling strategy and participant selection used, elaborate on the researcher's role in the study, define the data collection procedures employed, and illustrate how I engaged in data analysis and interpretation.

Additionally, provide evidence of quality, affirm the feasibility and appropriateness of the study, and outline the steps taken to ensure informed consent and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this general qualitative study was to understand and explore how and why criminology is relevant to terrorism studies. The goal of this study was to answer the following research question: What are the perceptions of experts on terrorism and criminology about how criminology is relevant to explain violent extremist radicalization in Minnesota? In this study, I examined violent extremism and radicalization through the lens of criminological theory as key components in understanding how and why terrorism appeals to some vulnerable Americans. Chapter 2 provided a literature review of studies concerning violent extremism and radicalization as conceptual models while a few studies integrated criminological theory. As a result, I sought to analyze the gap in the literature concerning the inclusion of social criminological theory, leading to the creation of this study, which was outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 describes the data collected from 15 individuals with an expertise and interest in criminology and terrorism and their perspectives on criminology, violent radicalization, and domestic terrorism. The feedback from study participants provided insight into the research question the study posed and their perspectives on methods to CVE. In addition to the interview data used, I respectively engaged in analyzing documents gathered from government reports, peer-reviewed articles, and news articles. This chapter also includes a detailed description of the study, the setting, and participant

profile, an overview of the data collection process, evidence of trustworthiness, and results.

Setting

This study took place online using the communications platform Zoom Pro, which allowed the participants and me to connect with video, audio, phone, and chat. Face-to-face interviews were not used due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic; however, all interviews were one-on-one. Fifteen structured interviews were conducted using a self-created 15-question interview questionnaire. The interviews lasted at least 60 minutes for each participant, with a few interviews going on a little longer. The interviews took place where there was ensured privacy and comfort. At the beginning of each interview, the participants were reminded their interviews would be recorded. All interviews were transcribed, followed by coding and analysis.

Demographics

For this study, the target population was 15 participants aged 18 and older with an expertise and interest in criminology and terrorism. The participants came from a variety of backgrounds, locations, and occupations to share their perspectives on criminology and violent extremist radicalization. Each participant shared their personal perspectives for this research question by answering each question presented in the questionnaire. The study's methodology was to obtain nonbiased willing participants on a topic considered to be nuanced. To ensure confidentiality, I assigned each participant an alphanumeric code. To further ensure confidentiality, I did not collect demographic data on the participants besides the requirement of being aged 18 and over.

I sent a total of 43 invitation emails to obtain a study sample of $N = 15$ experts.

Table 1 shows that 43 email invitations were sent to potential participants, resulting in 15

volunteers with an expertise and interest in criminology and terrorism agreeing to

participate in this study. Of the 15 participants, six were academics, three had extensive

law enforcement experience, and six were current federal security and intelligence

personnel. Nineteen potential participants did not respond to the invitational email. Nine

potential participants who received the email declined to participate in the study not for

lack of interest, but due to lack of time or not being comfortable with the topic to produce

a quality interview.

Table 1

Study Participation

Sent emails	Accepted	Declined	No response
43 (100% of potential participants)	15 (35% of potential participants)	9 (20% of potential participants)	19 (45% of potential participants)

Data Collection

The data collection process began once I obtained approval from Walden

University's IRB (approval # 04-27-22-0393102). The process from recruitment to data

collection completion took approximately 5 months. I used a participant pool, social

media, and personal networks to recruit participants through purposeful sampling. I did

not partner with an organization to identify participants nor collect data. Participants were

recruited using low-pressure communication (i.e., email invitation and social media post). It was not ethical to invite a "captive audience" to participate, due to not providing sufficient privacy or confidentiality in the decision to participate in the study. Potential participants were emailed the consent form and interview questionnaire for review and were given the option to opt out with minimal fear. The consent form provided each participant with information about the study's background, purpose, procedures, sample questions, voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of the study, payment, privacy, and contact information for questions and concerns. Participants who wished to volunteer were instructed to email "I consent" if they agreed to participate in the study.

Participants provided a day and a time that was most suitable for their schedule for a Zoom interview. I interviewed each participant one-on-one, and a follow up member-checking step was conducted after all interviews were complete. Each participant was asked the same 15 questions from the provided interview questionnaire to guarantee that the perspectives gained from each participant were produced from the same information. I engaged in structured interviews to explore participants' thoughts on the topics asked and to be able to obtain more objective research outcomes. Each interview was audio recorded using the recording feature in Zoom Pro. Before each interview, the participants were reminded that they could stop or withdraw from the interview at any time in addition to ensuring their confidentiality. I kept a reflective journal to record notes, personal thoughts, and feelings during each interview session and after. The audio recordings created from the interviews were used to create typed transcriptions of each interview that were later imported into NVivo for coding.

I did not deviate from the data collection plan outlined in Chapter 3. There were no unusual circumstances encountered in the data collection process. Correspondingly, I am taking responsible precautions to ensure that paper records, devices, and drives are not stolen. Data collected for the study will be stored for 5 years as required by research standards. After 5 years, paper records will be shredded and recycled as opposed to being thrown into the trash. Records stored on the computer and hard drive will be erased using commercial software applications designed to remove all data from the storage device. Data stored on USB drives will be physically destroyed. Additionally, I will keep records stating which records were destroyed, when, and how so.

Data Analysis

In this general qualitative study using structured interviews, I explored the participants' perspectives on how and why criminology is relevant to terrorism studies. Each participant was asked the same 15 open-ended questions in the same order. I transcribed each recorded Zoom interview before analyzing the data. After the data were transcribed, I imported the data into the computer-assisted qualitative data software package NVivo.

The analysis process began once I listened to each interview and took preliminary handwritten notes. From the handwritten notes, I highlighted words and phrases that looked of interest to record personal thoughts and feelings on the topic. Next, I read each transcribed interview line by line several times. Within the transcribed data, I highlighted some portions on the interviews to add comments, just as what was done in the handwritten notes. After those steps, I began to code the data on NVivo. From the
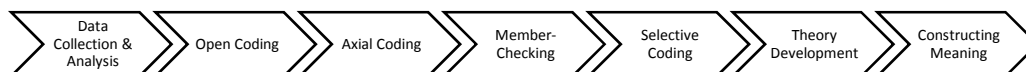
handwritten notes and comments, I created coding nodes from key takeaways of each interview using an open coding technique. Coding nodes consisted of potential themes, common indicators, key words, and phrases. Each transcribed interview document was labeled I1, I2, I3, and so on. Participants were designated as P1, P2, P3, and so on. NVivo helped me organize the data because each interview was a separately imported Microsoft Word document with P prefixes representing the participants and I prefixes representing the interviews. The coding features of NVivo allowed me to color code each coding node and arrange the codes into categories based on their similarities resulting in axial coding. The data were then analyzed based on the study's conceptual and theoretical frameworks in addition to key concepts discovered from the literature in Chapter 2.

For the next cycle of coding, I engaged in member-checking with the original 15 interview participants to prevent personal bias and verify information before moving forward. Member-checking is a tool in qualitative research used to enhance validity, credibility, and trustworthiness by returning data to the participants to check for accuracy (Birt et al., 2016). Once the participants verified their data for accuracy, I went into NVivo and reviewed all the data again along with any extra data that were gained during the member-checking stage. By constantly comparing data, reducing redundant data, and consolidating data, I moved into selective coding (see Williams & Moser, 2019). This study was able to go from open coding to axial coding to selective coding, allowing me to immerse myself in the data and integrate emergent themes to answer the following research question: What are the perceptions of experts on terrorism and criminology about how criminology is relevant to explain violent extremist radicalization in

Minnesota? In Figure 1, there is a synopsis of the phases I went through to engage in the data analysis process, which blends Creswell's (2009) approach and Williams and Moser's (2019) coding approach.

Figure 1

Data Analysis Process

Data Collection & Analysis → Open Coding → Axial Coding → Member-Checking → Selective Coding → Theory Development → Constructing Meaning

Creswell's (2009) qualitative data approach includes (a) gathering all the raw data, (b) organizing and preparing for data analysis, (c) reading through all the data, (d) coding all the data, (e) interrelating themes and descriptions, (f) interpreting the themes and descriptions, and (g) validating the accuracy of the information. I was able to use inductive reasoning to make sense of the data to produce general conclusions.

Interview Analysis

The participants' responses to the interview questionnaire (Appendix A) were based on their own perspectives gathered from experiences and professional affiliations. Nevertheless, every one of the 15 participants shared the same opinions regarding the matters discussed in the interviews. Not every finding was addressed by each participant because each one had different experiences. However, there was an overwhelming number of parallels to confirm saturation of data and identify central themes. Every participant wanted to make it clear to me that a concrete criminal profile for a terrorist or potential terrorist does not exist. All participants argued that trying to place a specific profile on suspected individuals invites bias, discrimination, and prejudice. Violent extremist radicalization was completely recognized as a crime as defined by the many

federal and state agencies within the United States. The participants had explanations

ranging from crimes committed specifically in the name of terrorism and violent crime in

general, such as murder, kidnapping, rape, and bodily harm. All participants asserted that

there is no universal definition of violent radicalization or domestic terrorism but

proceeded to provide examples of violent criminal activity including gang violence,

White supremacist violence, and domestic violence.

All 15 participants characterized violent extremist radicalization as a gradual

process, stating that "no one becomes a terrorist overnight" and "no one is born a

terrorist." Participants argued that anyone has the potential to be vulnerable to terrorism

due to changing perceptions, environments, and/or circumstances. Similarly, the

participants explained that individuals who are vulnerable to terror may go on to commit

a violent act or may drop out of the radicalization process. Additionally, the participants

unanimously argued that threats of homegrown/domestic terrorism are of concern to the

United States as opposed to international terrorist threats.

In terms of criminology being relevant to terrorism studies, the participants

argued that many pathways exist for why an individual may succumb to violent

extremism, just as there are several reasons and individual may be led to a life of crime.

Different factors and indicators may move an individual from extremist thoughts and

ideas to committing violent extremist acts. Just as the guiding conceptual framework

examples from Borum (2003) and Moghaddam (2005) illustrated, the participants all felt

that different factors can determine whether an individual will or will not commit a

criminal act. Looking at the responses given by the participants and analyzing the data

against the criminological theoretical frameworks for this study (i.e., social learning theory, social control theory, strain theory, and differential association) I identified four themes to answer the research question. The four themes identified in this study included (a) social interactions, (b) social environment, (c) emotional state, and (d) residual anger. In Table 2, the relationship between the four themes that emerged, and codes associated with each theme are presented.

Table 2

Themes and Codes

Theme	Codes
Social interactions	Family, friends, peers, co-workers, church
Social environment	Online, local, state, federal, international
Emotional state	Happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, anxiety
Residual anger	Resent, hate, stress, pressure, prejudice

Overall, the analysis of the interview data revealed four major themes that link criminology to violent extremist radicalization. In this general qualitative research study, discrepant findings are defined as participant remarks that do not align with major themes. Even though each participant had different experiences and perspectives, none of the findings in the data differed significantly. There were no discrepant findings in the data.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Qualitative trustworthiness must exhibit credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For this study, qualitative trustworthiness was established using methods such as triangulation, note taking, reflexive journaling, member-checking, mindfulness meditation (i.e., mental training practice to slow down and focus thoughts through deep breathing), and prolonged engagement with the data. The study achieved qualitative trustworthiness by having a clearly written research question, appropriate study design, feasible purposeful sampling techniques, proper data management, and valid data analysis.

Credibility

Credibility in terms of qualitative research is ultimately judged by the participants and the data they present. In other words, credibility is a measure of truth or not the study findings are accurate. Before each interview, the researcher made sure to make the participants feel comfortable enough to speak openly since their confidentiality was guaranteed. The researcher made certain to build an atmosphere of trust and respect to understand the population of the study. Throughout the study, the researcher made sure to take notes and stay neutral to all feedback that was being given during the interview. To prevent potential bias, the researcher had to remain neutral. Comparing the Zoom interview transcripts and the audio recordings, in addition to correcting any errors present were methods to produce accuracy. Once all data was analyzed and preliminary coding was done, the researcher reached out to participants to engage in member-checking by

providing a summary of the interview and asking for feedback if they felt anything needed to be added. All the participants agreed that the summary of data looked accurate.

Transferability

Transferability measures whether a study can be replicated or if the study's results are applicable in other contexts, settings, and circumstances (Creswell, 2009). In qualitative studies the researcher invites the audience into the study by describing the setting, demographics, and other aspects of the study. As a result, the audience should be able to determine if study findings can transfer to other experiences or individuals. This study has provided clear details on every aspect so that the study can be replicated. The researcher described in detail the participants, study settings, the research process, data analysis process, and other qualities essential in a qualitative study. The researcher made sure to strictly adhere to the procedures described in the previous chapters. Therefore, giving readers the ability to judge for transferability themselves.

Dependability

Dependability is used to measure or demonstrate reliability and consistency of the study findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When the researcher is careful and consistent enough to use precise methods for data collection, conceptualizing the study, and analyzing and interpreting the study's findings dependability is achieved. In this study the researcher was consistent throughout the participant recruitment and interview processes. The same interview questionnaire was utilized for all 15 participants and all the interviews were structured and recorded. Themes and codes created from data analysis were clearly acknowledged in addition to the steps the researcher engaged in such as

maintaining transcripts and audio recordings, taking notes, journaling, and reflecting.

Every finding, interpretation, and study recommendations are supported by the data.

Confirmability

Confirmability seeks to confirm the study is neutral and not influenced by bias or

false assumptions; meaning whether findings are truly derived clearly from the data and

the researcher's ability to be objective (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I verified transcripts by

comparing the written data to the audio recordings. During every interview I made sure to

keep a journal to take notes and make entries based on the thoughts and feelings of each

interview. Maintaining the journal and then engaging in mindful meditation was a way to

acknowledge and curb any bias to stay neutral during the analysis process. Keeping track

of all the data, maintaining a journal, and member-checking gave me the ability to cross

check the data. Interpretations derived in this study can be confirmed by other

researchers.

Results

Fifteen participants were asked 15 open-ended interview questions to produce

data to help me answer the research question, What are the perceptions of experts on

terrorism and criminology about how criminology is relevant to explain violent extremist

radicalization in Minnesota? The findings to address the research question resulted in the

creation of four themes. The four themes were (a) social interactions, (b) social

environment, (c) emotional state, and (d) residual anger. In this study, the conceptual

framework of this study (i.e., staircase to terrorism and the 4-stage model of the terrorist

mindset) and the criminological theoretical frameworks for this study (i.e., social learning

theory, social control theory, strain theory and differential association) are directly related to the findings uncovered by the interviews.

Theme 1: Social Interactions

Criminology and terrorism have similarities in terms of behavioral cues. Sudden behavioral changes and body language can often alert individuals who are familiar with one another of a change within a person; either positive or negative. Social interactions can be defined by how people engage with family, friends, peers, co-workers, church members, and any other individuals that can be encountered face-to-face and/or online. All 15 participants agreed that individuals have an identity of self, resulting in an importance of image. Having positive self-image leads to more positive person while a negative self-image leads to more negative person. Carl Rogers (1959) argues self-concept, self-esteem, and self-image are crucial in achieving self-actualization; meaning to be able to fulfill one's potential thus becoming a fully functioning individual with a sense of purpose. However, if an individual feels that the social norm or status quo is unobtainable, anti-establishment and delinquent behaviors can arise.

In terms of violent radicalization, the conceptual models of this study typically frame individuals vulnerable to radicalization as experiencing a grievance or psychological injustice. Even though all fifteen participants argued there was no profile for individuals vulnerable to radicalization or whether they would turn violent, there was a consensus on acknowledging a person's state of mind. Concerning state of mind included being socially alienated, feeling like a loner, and wanting to belong or feel included. An individual's state of mind can be influenced by many things such as having

a change occur in their current life (e.g., death of someone close, change/loss of employment, school life difficulties, difficulties in relationships). As a result, individuals may then turn towards radicalized groups to feel a connection and/or exact revenge on a system that wronged them. P11 elaborated on this perspective by stating,

> We need to acknowledge whatever happened to a human being, to come to the point where they believe that violence is the only option, they've got left to achieve their goals. In between that process where people change to come to believe they have to use violence; that is something that we need to understand in that nothing is inevitable. It's nothing that can only happen to just certain kinds of people, and it can potentially happen to everyone and every society in every country, with many different ideologies. There are many different causes and pathways, and I believe that once we understand the processual nature of it, people will come to see themselves in a process or in certain forces that they cannot control.

Looking at this perspective, the criminological theories this most mirrors are strain theory and social control theory. Strain theory focuses on crime as an individual's reaction to societal norms and a response to personal discrimination while social control theory explores the bonds of an individual to form groups and join in with like-minded individuals. Together these theories are applicable to terroristic recruitment and the motivation to join a terrorist organization in person and/or online. Bonds forged often arise out of a longing to belong or are born from a common hatred of societal and community pressures. Each participant agreed that violent extremism can occur due to

societal pressure and feeling alone, especially in a nation that still has some difficulty with interacting with multiple cultural groups. In the Minneapolis-St. Paul area of Minnesota, Somalis are an ethnic group that makes up the largest Somali diaspora in the United States. While some moved to the United States for their own personal reasons, many emigrated to the United States to escape civil war, conflict, famine, drought, and growing terroristic activity in Somalia. Having such a large population in the area, the Somali community constantly interacts with one another and sometimes struggles with how individuals outside the community perceives them.

Theme 2: Social Environment

Personal influence and environment really have an impact on how individuals are shaped. Social environment can be defined by where individuals interact such as online communities, local communities, state level communities, federal level communities, and the international community. A key feature in understanding social environment is the process of adjustment, especially in communities with a dominant refugee or foreign population. When an individual moves abroad to a new social environment, that individual may have trouble fitting in or being able to locate others that make them feel comfortable. Having a positive social support system within the community is crucial to having a positive outlook, better coping behaviors, and reduced emotional distress (Furukawa et al., 1998). In terms of radicalization, every participant agreed that the youth is primarily affected by the social environment, since they are still forming their own resilience factors. In terms of radicalization P9 stated,

The radicalization process, right? The things we become, you know, always start

from the family, the families, and nucleus of the society, and it is my opinion that

that you know the process can come from all the things that we learn from home,

from school, from the society culture, from the tunes that we listen to, from the

role models that we respect, and from the society, and the people that governor

you know. So, it is a process that affects people in different ways.

In the conceptual models for this study, problems within social environments can be

observed during the perceived options to fight injustice step and the injustice stage. For

instance, in the Muslim American population of Minnesota the impact of radicalization,

terrorism, and racism does affect the community. Being Africans of darker complexion

and Muslim in faith, the community has faced tension from both law enforcement and

political leaders alike. After the killing of George Floyd by a Minnesota police officer in

2020, Al-Qaeda and ISIS has tried to recruit black Muslims through the Black Lives

Matter movement (a group fighting against the systematic oppression of black

individuals) in claims of being "champions of the oppressed" (Abramson, 2020). P4 also

specifically mentioned that these terroristic organizations have tried to take advantage of

unrest within the community to stoke anger at perceived injustice because of "The

instability in the country." Individuals that succumb to the feelings of anger and injustice

and thus begin seeking out terrorist organizations are examples of the criminological

theories social learning theory and differential association.

Social learning theory and differential association attest that learned behaviors can

come from the observed behavior in group setting, or in this case the social environment.

In terms of radicalization, social learning theory relates to individuals who are recruited by other radicalized individuals. Online propaganda, informal associations, and more can contribute to an individual's choice to pursue information on becoming a terrorist. Differential association like social learning theory proposes that behavior is learned through the interaction with others to learn values, attitudes, and techniques to participate in criminal behavior. According to the interview participants, Jihadist terrorism is a phenomenon born out of a culture that is vastly different than "typical" United States culture. When individuals have a hard time blending into a social environment or feel singled out, that failure to assimilate or become cohesive in the environment leads to a type of vulnerability. In turn, that vulnerability makes indoctrination into extremist beliefs much easier by playing upon the emotions of the vulnerable individual.

Theme 3: Emotional State

Emotional state can be defined by what an individual feels at a given time such as happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, anxiety, and a range of many other possible emotions. Participants in this research study stated how emotional factors can impact radicalization through emotional triggers related to social interactions such as anxiety and depression. For instance, when refugees come into the United States and live in camps or specific relocation areas, they are in a country with vastly different psychological organization, sociological structure, and emotional conjugations (Christian et al., 2017). In the case of several Somali refugees in Minnesota, many are survivors of civil war, conflict, and famine. Being able to survive while some others did not can give a feeling of shame, grief, and guilt making them more susceptible to extreme thoughts. Also, within the host

nation that accepts the refugees, there can be feelings of prejudice and resentment from the host population. The manifestation of the "us vs them" mentality arises through bias and discrimination which can be reinforced by news outlets and social media creating emotional instability interfering with identity and self-esteem. In terms of the conceptual models of this study, emotional state can be seen in the stage of target attribution and in the displacement of aggression, moral engagement, and "us" vs "them" steps. In their interview P7 stated,

> Human psychological operations don't change so there's the same parallel types of things that happen. You find people spiritually, mentally, and emotionally broken at some point. They feel slighted or you know their significance in life; they don't have any purpose.

This statement is an example of how identity can promote emotions of sadness, frustration, shame, and guilt. Eventually these emotions can turn into anger and violence there is no form of intervention or resilience factors introduced.

In relation to the criminological theories guiding this study, strain theory is most appropriate to address emotional grievance. Strain theory can apply to individuals turning to terrorist groups for support and lone wolf terrorists. Just as was mentioned previously, strain theory relates to an individual's reaction to society's problems, norms, cultures, values, and goals. Refugees and immigrants can feel they have no legitimate access to opportunities that would allow them to succeed in a foreign nation while preserving their culture. In talking about feeling hopeless, P10 stated,

They're wanting maybe status and they fail to achieve their aspirations. They want

to belong and have relationships in their community. In different context, they

have trouble, maybe sometimes maintaining relationships. Sometimes it's people

that have experienced trauma or abuse or other mental health issues. Sometimes

it's people that are not that naive, but they fall prey to narratives or friends or

influential people. Or sometimes it's people that feel that they're under some sort

of threat, because of maybe the neighborhood or area they live in and there's

different bias or groups. You know sometimes those are race conflicts or culture

conflicts; they get involved in that. And then, when they get to the point in time,

when they get around people that are justifying violence or illegal, excuse me,

illegal activities they assume they are solutions to their problems.

As a result, some people can retreat from society due to feelings of inadequacy and other

social inequality factors resulting in a turn towards crime, gangs, guns, and/or religious

radicalization. Psychological emotional problems prompted from issues with identity,

lack of opportunity, depression, the inability to integrate with others in the community,

and more. are all issues that can ultimately lead to residual anger. Residual anger in turn

can become the breaking point that leads to a violent act.

Theme 4: Residual Anger

Residual anger can be buried within an individual and get triggered, resulting in

resentment, hate, stress, pressure, prejudice, violence and other negative emotions and

behaviors. Becoming a member of a terroristic group or deciding to engage in lone wolf

terrorism may function as a validator of their anger. The interview participants all agreed

that residual anger and pent-up rage is essential to the burgeoning of violence. P3 in their

interview stated,

> I think it's, I guess like a progression. I guess I would consider like if a person is
>
> angered for whatever reason, maybe like a particular policy or administration they
>
> let that anger fester, and it continues to grow, and they become deeply radicalized.
>
> And I think they connect with different people, and that, you know, increases their
>
> network, on top of you know, terroristic activities and whatnot.

Progressive rage, hate, and resentment in this sense does not necessarily manifest

suddenly, but instead bubbles over. Hate speech online for example, can be a route to

violent aggression. Having hate speech fester online through echo chambers can cause

extreme ideologies to intensify as P13 stated,

> But, on the other hand, the fact that when groups create narratives, they do it in
>
> such a way that anything that the media, or our government says, will be self-
>
> fulfilling prophecy of the wrongdoing that the narrative points out and will incite
>
> individuals or group members either to join or to be involved in violence.

In terms of the conceptual model of this study, residual anger can be observed in the

distancing/devaluation stage and the sidestepping inhibitions step. P8 explained the way

in which hate was being broadcast through news and social media giving people the

confidence to turn to violence as, "Come out wherever you are. it's okay to hate now."

With respect to criminological theory, residual anger, and the descent into

committing violent acts is related to social control theory. Social control theory holds that

conformity to the rules and what is deemed as acceptable behavior is only held up by

societal standards. However, when new societal standards can dictate a shift in what is considered morally acceptable, a rise in radicalization and extremist ideas can take root. Control theory tends to lean towards the idea of people being naturally selfish and if left on their own or with enough justification, illegal acts will get committed. Extremist literature, propaganda videos, chat rooms, and more are all measures to pull vulnerable people away from their previous way of thinking, eroding their previous societal controls. For instance, in politics when a candidate starts to move away from respectability politics as P12 states, "Campaigns and how they got less and less, I guess, politically correct so to speak, so more people felt really comfortable to come out and give some of their unfiltered views." In Minnesota, one of the most high-profile Muslim Americans United States Representative Ilhan Omar has been the target of numerous hate speech and accusations of being affiliated with terrorist organizations due to her Somali background. Nevertheless, her position as a highly visible Muslim in power has made her a controversial figure and in turn has resulted in mixed feelings among the Somali community in Minneapolis. Additionally, Representative Omar has received death threats due to her ethnic and racial background. Seeing this type of hate on display has caused anger to some other Muslim Americans to wonder if they will ever be seen as equal citizens. That uncertainty and festering anger can be a catalyst to becoming more accepting to violent extremist thoughts.

Summary

The study answered the following research question: What are the perceptions of experts on terrorism and criminology about how criminology is relevant to explain

violent extremist radicalization in Minnesota? Data collected from 15 experts in

criminology and terrorism explored their perceptions on criminological theory, violent

extremist radicalization, general radicalization, domestic terrorism, and homegrown

terror as it relates to crime in general and acts of terrorism. After interviewing all the

participants, it was clear to see that violent extremism encompasses an array of issues that

life course criminology is well suited to examine (Simi et al., 2019).

The study findings uncovered four main themes discussed by the participants: (a)

social interactions, (b) social environment, (c) emotional state, and (d) residual anger.

The study's findings also uncovered numerous strategies to aid in CVE such as

community and communal efforts, reintegration, rehabilitation, de-radicalization efforts,

securing cyber communities by sweeping for hate speech and propaganda, integrating

more community policing efforts into law enforcement, and overall looking into "soft

power" strategies as opposed to "hard power." In Chapter 5, the study's findings provide

a summary and interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations

for future studies, implications for social change, and the conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this general qualitative study was to understand and explore how and why criminology is relevant to terrorism studies. This chapter summarizes how I executed this purpose by highlighting four chosen criminology theories: social learning theory, differential association, strain theory, and social control theory, to assist in exploring and describing the phenomenon of violent terror radicalization. In addition to the four chosen criminological theories, the topic was analyzed through the conceptual framework of Moghaddam (2005) and Borum (2003). The principal goal of this study was to answer the following research question: What are the perceptions of experts on terrorism and criminology about how criminology is relevant to explain violent extremist radicalization in Minnesota? After careful data analysis from the literature, 15 interviews, and other data sources four themes emerged: social interactions, social environment, emotional state, and residual anger.

This research was intended to determine how much relevance criminological theory has in the realm of radicalization and terrorism studies. Prior research has shown that while there are a few studies that integrate criminology into terrorism studies, overall, there is a gap in the literature. As a federal employee and student, I had access to experts on the topics of terrorism and criminology who had very distinct perspectives on the matter. The results of this study confirmed the link of relevance between criminology and terrorism studies, especially in an area with a highly vulnerable population such as Minnesota. Although there was evidence from the study pointing out that there is not a

specific profile for an individual becoming a terrorist, there are some key characteristics that should be acknowledged to promote de-radicalization and disengagement for CVE. Furthermore, recommendations for future research and the social change implications of this study are addressed.

Interpretation of the Findings

In Minnesota, the Muslim population is rapidly growing. With an estimated number of over 150,000 Muslims, over 20 mosques, and 74 Islamic centers, Minnesota's Muslim American community represents a large diverse population (ISAIAH, 2019). As the community starts to grow within the state, it is essential that Minnesota's economic, social, and political aspects welcome and respect them and their culture. While there have been great strides in trying to integrate the Muslim population into Minnesota, radicalizing events have occurred. There have been incidents of anti-Muslim rhetoric, recruitment efforts made by terroristic organizations (i.e., al-Shabaab), and fear and mistrust of law enforcement exacerbated by constant monitoring and surveillance and the Minneapolis, Minnesota police killings of Black citizens (i.e., George Floyd, Amir Locke, Philando Castile, and Daunte Wright).

In this section, I contextualize the research findings with the conceptual framework and theoretical framework used with the relevant literature previously mentioned in Chapter 2. The conceptual framework findings of this study showed that by using Borum's (2003) and Moghaddam's (2005) models, a complete picture of the gradual process of violent radicalization can be observed. Individuals who are vulnerable to terrorism become indoctrinated slowly, not all at once. Nevertheless, these conceptual

models are not guided by theory nor systematic research (Borum, 2011b). Instead, I used

the conceptual frameworks to set boundaries for the study (see Miles & Huberman,

1994). Maxwell (2013) argued that when used well together, conceptual and theoretical

frameworks provide the researcher with sufficient support to explain the need and

relevance for the study in the field. For that reason, I also used the theoretical framework

of four criminological theories: social learning theory, differential association, strain

theory, and social control theory. I did not analyze every adaptation of these four

criminological theories, nor did I intend to convey that these four theories are the only

criminological theories appropriate in the study of violent extremist radicalization in

terrorism. However, the chosen criminological theories were appropriate in illustrating

why criminology is relevant to violent radicalization, especially within the Minneapolis-

St. Paul area of Minnesota that has a known vulnerability to terrorism recruitment and

activity.

For violent extremism to take root, context is important when identifying push

and pull factors. Push factors are the conditions conducive to violent extremism and the

structural context it stems from, while pull factors are psychological ones that can make

an individual vulnerable to extremism (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,

2018). This research showed that push and pull factors are the characteristics terrorism

and counter-terrorism professionals should be looking at, as opposed to some of the more

harmful troupes such as religion, race, ethnicity, gender, and nationality. From the 15

interviews gathered, I discovered that violent extremism can be motivated by social

factors such as family issues, cultural problems, social inequality, social bonds,

psychological factors, situational circumstances, and online and media influence. Nevertheless, it is important to note the journey towards violent extremism and radicalization does not always end in violence and that the journey within everyone is unique. Not all factors mentioned in this study are present in individuals becoming radicalized for a cause, and the factors mentioned in this study are not the only possible factors. Hence, I made sure not to use a singular criminal justice theory because no individual nor circumstance leading to the path of violent radicalization is the same.

After the data were collected for this study, four themes emerged through interpretation from the experts' perceptions: (a) social interactions, (b) social environment, (c) emotional state, and (d) residual anger. Social interactions highlight how strain and social control theories are applicable to terroristic recruitment and the motivation to join a terrorist organization in person and/or online. Social environments reflect individuals who succumb to the feelings of anger and injustice and thus begin seeking out terrorist organizations; these are examples of the criminological theories of social learning theory and differential association. Emotional state illustrates how strain theory can also apply to vulnerable individuals turning to terrorist groups for support and lone wolf terrorists. Likewise, residual anger and the descent into committing violent acts are related to social control theory.

After acknowledging the relationship between terrorism conceptual models and criminological theoretical frameworks, its link with the four themes uncovered from the interview participants emerged in addition to strategies on how to counter violent extremism. The importance of the community was unanimous amongst the interview

participants. The study revealed that counter-radicalization programs should prioritize the youth because they are deeply affected by social interactions and the social environment. Programs geared toward individuals under 25 are essential to disrupt the trajectory of extremist radicalization. To promote de-radicalization and disengagement, rehabilitation, reducing recidivism from previous criminal activity, and reintegration into society is crucial. The study affirmed how Europe and Canada are stricter on hate speech and tend to lean more on social strategies with their programs rather than more militarized strategies (e.g., UK Prevent, Channel/PMAP, At Home in Europe, ReDirect, & CPRLV). The United States could move away from over policing and incorporating community policing, incorporating more face-to-face interactions in community efforts, creating counter-narratives to combat online propaganda and disinformation, and establishing programs focused on risks and needs assessments. The United States can promote CVE and target general violence and problematic behaviors that arise in any society.

Next, in connection with the literature in Chapter 2, additional interpretations in this section are organized by the four themes revealed in the study results of Chapter 4.

Theme 1: Social Interaction

All 15 participants concurred that individuals have an identity of self, resulting in an importance of image. Even though every participant argued there was no profile for individuals vulnerable to radicalization or whether they would turn violent, there was a consensus on acknowledging a person's state of mind and resulting behaviors. As stated previously, both criminology and terrorism studies have similarities in analyzing behavioral cues. The finding in in first theme, social interaction, is consistent with the

research studies analyzed in Chapter 2 by Bartlett et al. (2010), Barlett and Miller (2012), Sageman (2004), and Al Raffie (2013), who aimed to determine the identity, behavioral, and psychological significance of terrorists.

More studies have observed the relationship between behavior and subsequent actions such as Jasko et al. (2017), confirming that individuals who associate with other radicalized individuals in their social networks have a higher likelihood to use violence. However, if those individuals had associated with individuals who were not radical, prosocial behavior would emerge. A need to belong and the importance of social identity can drive an individual towards various outcomes. Social influence and interaction highlight how strain and social control theories are relevant to this study, and how radicalization feeds on social conditions.

Violent radicalization in the name of terrorism occurs when vulnerable individuals become consumed by terroristic ideals that appeal to their desires, motivations, or resentments. Perceived injustice, financial gain, kinship/friendship, intimate relationships (platonic and sexual), politics, and revenge have all been explored by terrorism experts such as Silke (2008), Sageman (2011), Crenshaw (1981), Burgess (1966), and Kruglanski (2014). The participants' alignment with the experts who identified social interaction as a component of identity and how that identity can ultimately be altered by extremist ideals clearly mirror the literature that was displayed in Chapter 2.

Theme 2: Social Environment

Every participant agreed that personal influence and environment has an impact on how individuals are shaped. In terms of radicalization, the interview participants expressed that the youth (i.e., 25 and under) are primarily affected by the social environment because they are still forming their own resilience factors. The findings in the second theme, social environment, is reflected in studies by Hughbank and Hughbank (2007), McCauley and Moskalenko (2008), Useem and Clayton (2009), Rappaport et al. (2012), Litmanovitz et al. (2017), and Pritchett and Moeller (2022), just to name a few.

Social learning theory and differential association attest that learned behaviors can come from observed behaviors in a group setting, or in this case the social environment, may it be face-to-face interactions and/or virtual engagements. The notion of group think and echo chambers are related to the social environment of this study because they highlight how similar beliefs and opinions are amplified when shared among like-minded individuals. Mills et al. (2021) analyzed hate crimes and violent extremism as learned behavior, with both having similar pathways along the lines of environmental influences. The participants in the study echoed the main ideals of the literature presented in Chapter 2 that maintains the environment an individual is in will without a doubt influence decisions and desires.

Furthermore, with the influence of media and popular culture, there has been the creation of "Jihadi Cool", which is a rebranding of militant jihad movements into something cool and fashionable through social media, music, propaganda videos, and other means to entice foreign fighters (Picart, 2015). Using the allure of popular culture

and online platforms to attract the youth has been an important tool in terroristic

recruitment because it can provide a vast social environment that can be located

anywhere and numerous locations at the same time. Online messaging was one of the

topics each of the participants discussed when talking about radicalization and how it

applied to numerous cases across the United States and especially Minnesota. As a result,

participants' sentiments on countering online messaging aligned with Thompson (2011)

and Edwards and Gribbon's (2013) studies explaining the need for the American

government to counter radicalization through social media.

Theme 3: Emotional State

Participants in this study averred how emotional factors can impact radicalization

through emotional triggers related to social interactions such as anxiety and depression.

The manifestation of the "us vs them" mentality arises through bias and discrimination

that can be reinforced by news outlets and social media, creating emotional instability

interfering with identity and self-esteem. In relation to the criminological theories guiding

this study, strain theory is most appropriate to address emotional grievance. The finding

in the third theme, emotional state, is illuminated in literature found in Chapter 2 by

Crenshaw (1981), Borum (2003), Moghaddam (2005), Wright-Neville and Smith (2009),

Agnew (2010), Ebbrecht (2022), and other scholars over the years.

Several terrorism studies have explored the idea that those vulnerable to

radicalization typically have a grievance of some sort such as unfair treatment and

suffered hardships. When talking about emotional components to violent radicalization,

the study participants often mentioned lone-wolf terrorist manifestos due to the close

similarities seen in serial killers and their manifestos. Simi et al. (2019) and Tehrani and Mednick (2000), along with a few participants, discussed the similarities between genetic criminality (i.e., genetic factors such as mental disorder) and violent extremism. While the studies and participants made it clear to mention that genetic factors are not a guaranteed predictor of violent behavior, having the indicator may elevate the risk of violence when coupled with environmental factors and social interactions.

Generally, the data presented in this study highlighted how each theme overlaps and intertwines with one another to present a clearer picture of radicalization and extremism (see Vidino, 2010). Radicalization is a highly individualized process, but interaction within personal and structural factors help determine if it will lead to violent extremism. People vulnerable to violence can often retreat from society due to feelings of inadequacy and other social inequality factors resulting in a turn towards criminal activity. Psychological emotional problems prompted from issues with identity, lack of opportunity, depression, and the inability to integrate with others in the community stem from the two previous themes of social interactions and social environment and often lead to the last theme to be discussed, residual anger.

Theme 4: Residual Anger

The interview participants wholly agreed that residual anger and pent-up rage is essential to the burgeoning of violence. When new societal standards can dictate a shift in what is considered morally acceptable, a rise in radicalization and extremist ideas can take root. Becoming a member of a terroristic group or deciding to engage in lone wolf terrorism may function as a validator of that anger. Regarding criminological theory,

residual anger and the descent into committing violent acts is related to social control theory. The finding in the fourth theme, residual anger, is shown in studies by Borum (2003, 2011a, 2011b), Moghaddam (2005), Davenport (2017), Trip et al. (2019), Van Stekelenburg (2017), and Jensen, et al. (2020).

Fear, insecurity, anger, and resentment can cause conflict and violence if not properly addressed. In terms of violent extremism and radicalization, progressive rage and hate do not necessarily manifest suddenly, but instead bubble over. Participants in the study mentioned how violent radicalization is a gradual process that has been nurtured by hate learned from influencing individuals, the environment, and the media. Family dynamics and social backgrounds have been named as well by the participants and studies as factors that frequently analyze the topic. For instance, Brown et al. (2021) looked at violent extremism in the United States and interviewed both former extremists and their families to get an idea of why the individual radicalized and what steps can be taken to disengage and deradicalize. The results of the RAND study reflected several conclusions, such as the stigmatization of groups pushing at-risk individuals further towards radicalization, recruitment playing on emotional and psychological vulnerabilities, negative events as contributing to motives to radicalize, and mental health being a critical component in radicalization.

Overall, uncertainty and festering anger can be a catalyst to becoming more accepting to violent extremist thoughts. Extremism in general is multifaceted and while anger is a major driving factor for radicalization, the previously mentioned themes are as well. Each theme builds upon one another and exists within bound of the other themes;

therefore, countering extremism must be adaptable. While anger may be one of the easiest traits to recognize in vulnerable individuals, the study participants and literature presented on the topic have done well to dive further underneath the topic.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this dissertation came from the techniques used in data collection. In this research study there were four limitations including:

1. The study population was restricted to the researcher's personal network and the university's participant pool, thus the option for analysis was limited to this population.

2. The lack of previously collected data about U.S. domestic terror radicalization, which limits a comparison of the study to a nationwide trend for U.S. domestic terror radicalization.

3. The study restricted interviews to 15 volunteer participants, which means responses from any additional participants were not considered resulting in possible self-selection bias.

4. Although violent extremism is not a new phenomenon, previous research highlighted government reports about extremism with limited academic research conducted on criminology; therefore, this study was limited by the lack of previous data.

Recommendations

In this study, experts provided their perspectives on criminology and how it related to violent extremist radicalization. Any future research should build upon the

study's findings and investigate other vulnerable populations since this study examined Minnesota. The research undertaken for this dissertation has highlighted additional topics that are grounded in the strengths and limitations of this current study as well as the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Further research related to this study would be beneficial on (a) white supremacy and violent extremist radicalization and (b) domestic terror radicalization in United States prisons.

When conducting interviews with the 15 participants, all of them mentioned the rising threat of white supremacy and how the U.S. prison system breeds radicalization. Interestingly, in May 2022 the United States Congress introduced the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2022. Nonetheless, it failed on the floor due to its proposed inclusion of adding white supremacy threats, neo-Nazi threats, and other hate-based groups under the banner of domestic terrorism. While this study examined terrorism and criminological theory application through the lens of radical Islamic influence, there are many other types of radicalizations and violent extremism that can be bred from racism, intolerance, and xenophobia. In the United States, there is still a reluctance to acknowledge that white supremacy and other hate groups radicalize in the same way as Islamic motivated terrorist groups; therefore, more research needs to be done on the topic with respect to violent radicalization. In terms of this study looking into a vulnerable community of a particular state, another vulnerable community to investigate is the United States. prison community. There are certain actions and behaviors people engage in while in prison to survive, or blend in. Just as this research highlighted the impact and importance of the social environment an individual is part of regarding vulnerability to

violent extremism. Future studies could use a larger sample population and different methods of data collection such as surveys. While future studies can still be qualitative, the topics above would also make appropriate and feasible quantitative or mixed methods studies.

Implications

Social Change

The essential social change benefit of this study is that civil society programs can help society with a myriad of sociological issues found in vulnerable populations in general, not just CVE. Underlying risk factors such as social inequality can be reduced with community involvement and outreach, employment programs, youth groups, skills development programs, economic development, after school programs, and more. Therefore, establishing social policies are a start to decrease the propensity to use violence as way to address traumas and grievances among vulnerable populations. With societal barriers and policies that result in systematic oppression, personal resilience may not be enough thereby making community efforts critical.

Establishing de-radicalization initiatives such as: community-oriented organizations, mental health programs, community outreach programs, and social empowerment programs in addition to implementing more community-oriented policing to instill trust and unity between communities and law enforcement while forging respect for different cultures. Understanding the importance self-identity and image perception with respect to social attachments & communal bonds produce resilience within vulnerable populations to help de-radicalize individuals; online communities included.

Social media platforms and online media outlets can counter online messaging, disinformation, and propaganda by promoting effective cybersecurity policies through building relationships with online companies (e.g., Google and YouTube) and users to identify red flags. Hate speech, terroristic propaganda and literature, online threats, and more can be reduced by government and community actors in creating awareness, developing counter-narratives, and teaching citizens how to build online literacy.

Theoretical Contribution

As stated in Chapter 2, the literature on terrorism studies and radicalization primarily focused on conceptual models as opposed to theoretical frameworks. By focusing on conceptual models, the field acquired several examples of what changes an individual may go through to become motivated by violence, but not the question of why? Studies of the past rarely employed the use of criminology to understand the psyche of an individual vulnerable to terrorism and violent radicalization. Since the 1970's, research on terrorism has been contently focused on describing terroristic profiles such as motive, activities, cells, country of origin, tactics, and targets; but no in-depth analysis of the terrorist's decision to join.

This study introduced social criminological theories to expand the discourse of terrorism and radicalization studies. Fifteen interviews allowed the researcher to collect expert perceptions on violent radicalization and terrorism which resulted in the findings that radicalization was a diverse process that varies from person to person. The move from non-violent behavior to violent behavior was not the result of a single decision. Introducing criminological theory highlighted the concept of trajectory and transition

within an individual. The four theories explored in this study are part of what is called the

correlates of crime and life course criminology, which focuses on psychology and

personality traits. While the four theories presented in this study are not the only

criminological theories that can be applied to terrorism and violent extremism, this study

acts as a springboard for researchers interested in applying criminology to terrorism and

radicalization studies.

Recommendations in Practice

Given the rise of domestic terrorism attacks in the United States due to

radicalization in various forms (e.g., religious, racial, cultural, and gender based). The

results of the present study should be used by academics, community leaders,

stakeholders, lawmakers, and public safety officials at the local, state, and federal level to

establish and/or enhance counter-terrorism and de-radicalization programs. It is

imperative to begin engaging in strategic visions and creating plans to improve

preparedness, collaboration, response, and recovery. Deterring and preventing violent

radicalization in vulnerable populations comes from acknowledging the social,

individual, and environmental indicators that contribute to human behavior.

Radicalization awareness training and education will prepare United States leadership,

organizations, states, and private citizens how to successfully recognize, react, and report

potential radicalization factors observed. Although no single program is guaranteed to

work for all forms of deterrence, the goal is to generate critical thinking, problem solving,

and rational judgement to implement and provide de-radicalization strategies to those in

need. Furthermore, the best effort toward CVE will take varied strategies to address specific programs.

Developing threat assessment and management teams comprised of homeland security, law enforcement, community leaders, mental health professionals, school and religious leaders, and other important stakeholders is a step major cities and states can implement. It should be noted that to defeat terrorist networks, there must be a network in place to fight radicalization and extremism. These threat assessment and management teams would be tasked with assessing, identifying, and mitigating the threat of violent radicalization. Nevertheless, the teams and groups created to counter violent extremism must be wide reaching to represent various stakeholders represented across the country. In addition to the threat assessment and management teams, local law enforcement must receive better training on counter-terrorism, radicalization, violent extremism, and community-oriented policing. Local and state law enforcement must continue to share information with federal counterparts about terroristic threats and concerns, in addition to sharing strategies to deter and detect violent motives and crimes with communities. Inter-agency trust and dialogue will go a long way in establishing credible intelligence, which can then be passed to community leaders to better create community-based programs such as mental health groups, youth groups, and after-school programs in addition to community security awareness programs. Through the strengthening of partnerships between communities, government, and law enforcement, more data can be collected and analyzed leading to the production of more empirical data to guide actions to reduce risk factors that lead to crime, radicalization, and possible violence.

Conclusion

The general qualitative study was conducted to gain the perspectives of experts in criminology and terrorism on the relevance of criminological theory in terrorism studies. Fifteen experts were interviewed to gain an understanding of their thoughts and opinions of violent extremist radicalization and what makes an individual vulnerable. After the interviews and member-checking was concluded, data analysis was performed to answer the research question, What are the perceptions of experts on terrorism and criminology about how criminology is relevant to explain violent extremist radicalization in Minnesota? The study utilized both a conceptual framework and theoretical framework to uncover information about the phenomenon and the findings based on this were within those frameworks. The guiding conceptual frameworks were Borum's (2003) 4-Stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset and Moghaddam's (2005) Staircase to Terrorism while the theoretical framework included four criminological theories: social learning theory (Burgess & Akers, 1966), differential association (Sutherland, 1947), strain theory (Agnew, 1992), and social control theory (Hirschi, 1969).

Thus, the study findings uncovered four main themes discussed by the participants which were (a) social interactions, (b) social environment, (c) emotional state, and (d) residual anger. While there is no one set profile which will explain an individual becoming violently radicalized, the four uncovered themes reflect on the knowledge that radicalization is a gradual process and not a single occurrence. The findings detail that although an individual may be affected by any one of these factors, it is not a guarantee that they will engage in terrorism or violently radicalize. Furthermore,

individuals that are affected by these factors are individuals could be label as "at risk" for any "common criminal" activity, not just terrorism.

Therefore, recommendations for social change guided by this study not only focuses on CVE, but civil society issues present in any community just as criminal justice aims to reduce recidivism and promote rehabilitation. Rehabilitation has proven merit in public policy due to its empirical based evidence within criminology; it should be extended to terrorism cases as well (Mullins, 2010). Additionally, community-oriented policing and programs such as after school programs, employment initiatives/job creation, cultural events and activities, youth groups, church outreach, and economic development are all ways to achieve social change in the community. De-radicalization and disengagement from violent extremism for convicted terrorists and individuals vulnerable to terrorism are both needed for rehabilitation and re-integration into society.

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Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

Interviewer: Starlett M. Martin

Introduction of Research Objective:

The purpose of this general qualitative inquiry is to understand how and why criminology is relevant to terrorism studies. During this interview, you will be asked to answer fifteen questions from your (own) perspective, not one associated with your professional affiliations. When answering the questions please elaborate on your knowledge, experience, and education with as much detail as possible. The present study should provide public policy officials, law enforcement, homeland security planners, and other criminal justice stakeholders' valuable knowledge about domestic violent terror radicalization. Additionally, the study's findings and recommendations may help encourage social change through the social/civil inclusion of immigrants and improve national security efforts to prevent and counter violent radicalization in the United States that may lead to terrorism.

Questions:

1. Define violent radicalization from your perspective based on your knowledge, experience, and/or education on the topic.

2. Define domestic terrorism from your perspective based on your knowledge, experience, and/or education on the topic.

3. Express your thoughts on the radicalization process and if and why it is important for understanding homegrown domestic terrorism.

4. Identify and describe factors that are conducive to homegrown domestic terrorism and what may lead an individual to become radicalized and commit a violent act of terrorism.

5. According to your perspective are there any signs/factors of radicalization that should be acknowledged in the United States? Why?

6. Are there any common signs/factors of radicalization present mirroring that of classic criminal behavior? Why or why not, please describe in detail.

7. What is your perspective on the idea that radical Islamic literature is the root motivator of individuals becoming radicalized into terrorism; or are there other common motivators (i.e., politics, respect, isolation, rage, longing for acceptance, etc.)? Why does it seem religion has been singled out so frequently?

8. What is your stance on the current social climate of the United States being addressed as a possible factor of increased radicalization? Please elaborate.

9. Is there a particular American population according to your professional perspective, the most vulnerable to violent radicalization (i.e., immigrants and Muslim populations)? Why?

10. In light of the 2016 ISIS trial in Minnesota, discuss what you believe happened to the psyche of the individuals on trial and what the United States should learn from it in order to counter extremist radicalization.

11. Describe your opinion on current measures the United States has in place in efforts to prevent terrorism, (i.e., travel ban, surveillance and monitoring, deportations, etc.). Are they effective in preventing terrorism or do these measures provide fuel for radicalization? Please elaborate.

12. In your opinion describe what is the biggest difference between how Europe reacts and responds to domestic terrorism versus how the United States reacts and responds?

13. What are your thoughts on civil society led approaches (i.e., civil actors such as women, youth, community, and religious leaders utilizing their communities and organizations to engage in advocating the public's rights and wishes of the people) to help prevent individuals vulnerable to terror and to rehabilitate those who were on the path of radicalization? Should this method be a major focus on countering terrorism, why or why not?

14. Describe any ideas, programs, or methods currently used to deter, prevent, and/or rehabilitate criminals in the United States that can apply to possible and former terrorists so that they will be able to resist radicalization and/or reintegrate into society. Would any of these methods work? Why or why not/

15. Is there anything we have not discussed that you would like to add about radicalization/violent radicalization or domestic terrorism/terrorism in general?

Appendix B: Social Media Participant Solicitation Post

Hi, Everyone!

I am conducting interviews as part of a research study for my dissertation, "Criminology and Violent Extremist Radicalization" to understand how and why criminology is relevant to terrorism studies. I am recruiting adults (18+) with an expertise and interest in criminology and/or terrorism as participants for my study.

The interview will take around 60 minutes. I am simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on the topic of terrorism and radicalization. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be coded to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write-up.

There will be no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and findings could lead to a greater public understanding of the relationship between criminology and terrorism.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me via email XXX@waldenu.edu or via phone XXX to discuss the details. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thanks!
Starlett