

2016

# Motivating Factors in Al-Shabaab Recruitment in Minneapolis, Minnesota

Lorrie Flores  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Walden University  
2016

Abstract

Motivating Factors in Al-Shabaab Recruitment in Minneapolis, Minnesota

by

Lorrie Flores

MA, American Military University, 2014

BS, Everest University, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

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## Abstract

Over the past 5 years, a number of U.S. citizens residing in Minneapolis have been reported to have been recruited and radicalized by Al-Shabaab, organization that has played a role in major international terrorist attacks. This, in turn, creates a significant concern related to national security in the United States. Using Hirsch's social bond theory and Merton's theory of relative deprivation, the purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore the factors that motivate radicalization of young males aged 18 to 25 in Minneapolis. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 6 Somali American adults between the ages of 18 to 25 years old and 6 Somali American community leaders. Data were coded using Posteriori word coding and analyzed using a thematic analysis procedure. Findings indicated participants perceive that social inequality among American Somali participants contributes to motivation to radicalize. Similarly, the level of attachment and commitment to family and other social units the participants experienced played a role in the decision to radicalize or not. To deter this phenomenon, recommendations to the United States government include developing empowerment programs to provide educational and employment opportunities to American Somali communities. Both groups suggested in using media to help effect positive social change through unbiased news reporting, which does not aggravate the sense of social injustice against Muslims. By creating programs or educational campaigns against terrorism, the media can be used to educate young Somali Americans.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Recruitment and radicalization of young Somali Americans in Minneapolis constitute an issue that has increasingly alarmed American Public over the past decade. There has emerged a series of intolerant Islamic teachings in other countries whose proponents seeks to estrange a section of people from society by immersing them into an ideology that is not widely shared (Weine et al., 2009). Historically, these movements have been guided by beliefs that demonize others in society, often resulting in violence ostensibly aimed at “solutions” that would promote the group's ideologies and perceptions (U.S. House of Representatives, 2011). There are regions where radicalization has infiltrated modern societies. In these regions, groups use religious beliefs as the foundation of their ideological platforms. Research indicates that some communities have been established based on religious inclinations to fight for causes that are enshrined in their religious persuasions and interpretations of the Holy Writ (Weine et al., 2009). Such communities set up structures and platforms by which they educate sections of the general public but always with a view toward recruiting new members. In doing so, the communities not only increase their following, but also popularize their causes.

One such organization is Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab seeks to fight for Islamic causes with extreme means that involve suicide bombings and dropping bombs and grenades in public places; the radical group uses children and women in its attacks

(Shinn, 2011). In this dissertation, I seek to identify motivating factors that influence young adult males aged 18 to 25 in Minneapolis to join Al-Shabaab.

According to Post (2010), the success of radical groups such as Al-Shabaab is attributable to the continued differentiation and specialization in the methods that these groups use to lure young people into their folds. Radical group members champion their cause through use of pretentious promises of serving a higher purpose that is more important than their own lives (Post, 2010). The success of the radicalization process is in most instances influenced by its members' ability to convince potential recruits that transgressions have occurred against the cause/movement, thus warranting fighting and attacks by the members of the cause/movement. In most instances, outrage is the emotion that fuels animosity against others. The members of the group feel a strong sense of betrayal that propels them into wanting to seek justice through extreme vengeance outside stipulated national and global laws, which they see as retributive justice (Post, 2010). In this regard, the laws are seen as being inadequately equipped to deal with the transgressions or injustice, or as favoring the governments that are targets of the outrage itself (Pape, 2005).

One core objective of the radicalization process is driving the message into the minds of the targeted audience. This happens in two different ways, according to Pape (2005). First, the message may be built through an individual (usually very charismatic and talented in some way) who starts as a loner but over time becomes popular for preaching radicalization messages targeting a given establishment. Secondly, the radicalization process may occur through spontaneous activity whereby like-minded



individuals connect at points of interest, define a mutual core message that they want to build their radicalization process upon, and start spreading the message among their peers to increase their following (Pape, 2005). Pape further argued that after devising the core message that informs a given radical movement, such an organization then shifts its attention to developing structures that enable it to grow its following and sustain itself. The development of such structures may happen formally or informally, depending on the nature of the group and the composition of its leadership. The main focus of this stage of the group's development is spreading the message and recruiting more members, who further expand its agendas and propaganda.

During the radicalization process, the organization may be forced to be hierarchical; alternatively, such an organization may start diffusing as long as there is a plan for continuity to facilitate the spread of the required information and message (Pape, 2005). In most cases, this happens through the creation of cells, which are separate groupings within the organization that help spread the message about the core attributes of the radicalization process covertly within the target audience without being detected by authorities.

In most instances, radicalization processes begin as relatively peaceful campaigns against a perceived grievance from an establishment, usually a government; however, over time, such campaigns take on a more focused viewpoint. When the radicalization process gets to this stage, mere talk is perceived as inadequate, necessitating action from the members (Post, 2010). In order to achieve its objectives, the organization sets up activities that may include public rallies that at times turn violent if members feel that

that is the best way to get their grievances heard. In most instances, during this stage, such organizations tend to split as different sections opposing each other emerge, which in turn leads to the self-destruction of the organization. Basically, this explains why there are many radical groups that do not end up having any meaningful impact on a global, national, or even regional level (Post, 2010).

To spread their message, obtain followers and increase the numbers at their rallies and campaigns, radical groups tailor their core message to appeal to the section of the public whose members feel the same sense of injustice. Radical groups usually target marginalized populations such as members of minority religions, the economically disadvantaged and unemployed youth (Pape, 2005). The message is usually tailored to take advantage of the vulnerability of the weak or disadvantaged. Consequently, peaceful groups advocating solutions for similar grievances may provide a base of recruits who are easily won over with the forceful radicalized message (Pape, 2005). Information is communicated to the target audience by preaching, one-on-one calls, emails, posters, public rallies, and demonstrations.

Concurrently, polarization is an additional factor driving the radicalization process of recruits. The central method is the urgent need to demonize the other side, dehumanizing and objectifying the “enemy” as being less than human. Pape (2005) states that “at this point, values about not harming others can be bypassed as they become ‘things’ that can be safely harmed or killed without any guilt about breaking social or personal rules” (p. 122). In other words, polarization uses negative stereotypes and simplified schemas to justify implementing the radical messages being peddled within the

group. The leadership reasons that the other side is so extreme and unreasonable that the only way of countering it is through force and violence, thereby ensuring that the “enemy” is treated as it should be (Pape, 2005).

The overall objective of any radicalization group is to socialize its message so that it attains a normalized and acceptable tone within the society. The message thus becomes part of daily conversation and perception. These groups usually seek to build an “us versus them” mindset that seeks to establish unity and greater commitment to the cause among the members of the group, without leading them to feel alienated or offended by what is being preached. Doubt is harshly treated with punishment or the threat of ostracism; aggression is used to frighten those who appear to waver in their belief in the cause or ideology. Abandoning the cause is made to appear tantamount to losing one’s worth in life. Such members are perceived as having no importance—as being better off dead than alive. Perpetuating this ideology reaffirms members’ self-worth by enhancing their commitment to the cause, as it increases the hope that they have more relevance by participating in what is considered a transcendental cause of eternal importance (Post, 2010).

### **Background to the Problem**

The term *Al-Shabaab* originated from the Arabic phrase *Harakat Al-Shabaab al-Mujahdeen*, which simply means “Movement of Striving Youths.” This term was initially set up to represent groups fighting causes affecting young people in the Horn of Africa. It slowly evolved into a term referring to a military group that later descended into a terrorist group (U.S. House of Representatives, 2011). *Al-Shabaab* is based in

Somalia; in the year 2012, the movement pledged its full allegiance to the Islamist militant organizations associated with Al-Qaeda and started imposing strict Sharia Law in all of the areas of the country that it controls. According to Shinn (2011), Al-Shabaab's troops have grown significantly from its inception; by 2014, the group had between 7,000 and 9,000 militiamen. The increasing troop numbers stem from a rise in radicalization initiatives around the world recruiting young people. Al-Shabaab initiatives are implemented through extremist teachings and lead to not only radicalization, but also brain drain (Weine et al., 2009). Originally, Al-Shabaab was a splinter group from the former Islamic Courts Union (ICU); it later disintegrated after its defeat by the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2006, consequently setting itself up as group waging a jihad against "enemies of Islam" (Merton, 2010, p. 681).

Al-Shabaab was initially established to operate within Somalia, waging war with the TFG and the African Union Mission of Somalia (AMISOM). AMISOM is a group of African peacekeepers helping to stabilize war-ravaged Somalia. Following what was considered foreign interference with the operations of Somalia as a country; Al-Shabaab in due course forged partnerships with other extremist organizations around the world so as to strategically attack different foreign interests within and outside the country (Merton, 2010). In this quest, Al-Shabaab has intimidated, kidnapped, and killed foreign workers considered to be collaborators of foreign forces that are opposed to its operations. These actions have led to attacks against foreign countries such as the United States, Britain, Germany, and Australia. In response, these countries, in boycotting the attacks by Al-Shabaab, have suspended humanitarian operations, departed the region and

demanded that this radical group halt its attacks on relief personnel and infrastructure.

With the withdrawal of relief agencies, Al-Shabaab is becoming bolder and bolder in its activities. Notably, the group has launched its activities in other countries, with the neighboring countries in East Africa being most affected by this expansion program.

Over time, the group has managed to harmonize its operations with other terrorist groups around the world; it has expanded its operations in other countries through extensive recruitment programs targeting vulnerable young people, who are usually unemployed and vulnerable (Kurzman, 2011). Minneapolis, Minnesota, is a case in point. Al-Shabaab's recruitment endeavors have escalated through a radicalization agenda that targets young American people. They are fed extremist religious propaganda and eventually find themselves recruited into the organization (Kurzman, 2011). Such recruiting makes possible Al-Shabaab's many destructive activities, which go far beyond its terrorist attacks. For instance, it is reported that the group is responsible for the death of thousands of elephants every year for their ivory, which is sold to fund its heinous activities (Kurzman, 2011). In addition to this, the rangers who protect these animals are targeted by Al-Shabaab militiamen. Such revelations only increase the concern that the American people have about Al-Shabaab's program of recruiting young people in Minneapolis, in addition to raising fears about the safety of their own communities and children (Jenkins, 2010).

In order to place the research in its proper context, it should be noted that there are a number of selected articles that are considered important in their contribution to the research. These may be summarized as follows:

- Bergen (2011) provides an insight into “Operation Rhino,” an ongoing federal investigation of Al-Shabaab-related recruitment of individuals in the Minneapolis area. It enriched the background of the study.
- Ocean (2012), a U.S. commentary on security documents series, provided primary source documents and expert commentary on the worldwide counterterrorism effort. Of importance is the documentary analysis of the noted techniques that Al-Shabaab recruiters use. It posits that various forms of media have been critical propaganda, fundraising and recruitment tools for extremist groups; Al-Shabaab has proven adept at strategic communications. Ocean (2012) assists in setting the objectives of the dissertation.
- Smith’s (2013) Cable News Network (CNN) reporting on Somali jihadist recruitment in the United States, and Canada informed the study’s problem statement.
- Baxter and Jack (2008) offers a model that aligned with the possible research methodologies and designs that suited this study.
- Hirschi (1969) and Merton (1938) provide the study with the theoretical framework.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The recruitment of young Somali immigrants by Al-Shabaab in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has become a major concern for the United States. Over the past 5 years, a number of U.S. citizens residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota, have been reported to be involved in major terrorist attacks in various countries around the world (Shinn, 2011).

These individuals have been recruited by Al-Shabaab from the United States and deployed to carry out attacks on identified targets. According to Kurzman (2011), the recruitment of Americans is worrisome due to the fact that Al-Shabaab has openly pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda. This could compromise security in the United States, as well as other countries around the world. It is also believed that the recruitment of Americans to join Al-Shabaab forces will make it possible for the group to attack the United States and its allies, or in some cases aid the activities of Al-Qaeda. Little research has been conducted to investigate the reason behind Al-Shabaab recruitment in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This research was aimed at investigating the motivating factors leading to the success of Al-Shabaab recruitment in Minneapolis. It helps in identifying the relationship that exists between male youths of Somali American origin and Al-Shabaab recruiters, as well as the methods that Al-Shabaab recruiters use to influence youths in American to join their terror group (Jenkins, 2010). The study provides useful information that can be used to mitigate the recruitment of Somali Americans by Al-Shabaab. Reducing the influence of Al-Shabaab recruiters among the Somali residents of Minneapolis, Minnesota, requires an understanding of the factors that influence youths to join the terror group (Jenkins, 2010).

### **Nature of the Study**

The plan for this study was a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological research design. Qualitative inquiry includes the use of interpretation by leveraging the researcher as a key instrument to study things in their natural settings (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenological approach was used in an attempt to discover, comprehend and

explain experiences and perceptions of terrorist recruitment of adult males in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Qualitative research also includes the adaptation of a specific approach to inform the procedures of the study, which provides writing structure and helps in organizing ideas that are grounded in the literature (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenological research design was appropriate for this study because it allowed for the lived experience of the participants to be used to gather data. Phenomenological approaches aim at highlighting data specificities, with a conclusion identifying phenomena related to study participants' perceptions in the event (Finlay, 2012). In addition, the phenomenological approach is applied to human spheres in the collection of information that is deep, beside inherent perceptions. The collection of information is achieved through qualitative methods that are inductive; these include participant observation, informal discussion, and interviews, as well as participant perspectives.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Al-Shabaab:* Al-Shabaab is basically an Arabic name that means 'the youth.' According to al Jazeera (2013), Al-Shabaab is an armed and violent Somali organization that is aligned with the terrorist group Al-Qaeda and was established with the aim of overthrowing Somalia's UN-backed Transitional Federal Government and consequently enforcing Islamic law in the country (al Jazeera, 2013).

*Al-Qaeda:* Al-Qaeda is a Sunni Muslim radical international organization established by Osama bin Laden in the year 1988 with the aim of expanding Islamic fundamentalism and disrupting influence from Western nations. Al-Qaeda has cells throughout the globe that carry out terrorist attacks (Gibbs, 2010).



*Extremism:* Extremism refers to the holding of political or religious ideologies that are fanatical, intolerant and often single minded (Kruglanski, 2013).

*Polarization:* Polarization refers to the divergence of political ideologies and opinions within groups, which in turn creates ideological extremes.

*Pluralism:* Pluralism is a situation whereby groups from diverse social, economic, religious and political backgrounds coexist in the same environment but maintain their diversity.

*Radicalization:* Radicalization is the process by which a group is mobilized in a bid to achieve a political or social objective (Rascoff, 2012).

*Relative deprivation theory:* Relative deprivation theory is the presumption that individuals may experience a sense of discontent when they do not have the resources and opportunities that are necessary to achieve the class or economic prosperity to which they are entitled (Leary, 2004).

*Social bond theory/social control theory:* Social bond theory/social control theory is based on the presupposition that humans possess a “hedonistic drive” that causes them to act in a “selfish and aggressive” manner, which, if not socialized to conform to acceptable social norms and standards, may lead to criminal behavior (Gibbs, 2010).

### **Research Question**

What motivates Somali young adults (ages 18-25) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to provide further information that may assist the intelligence community, as well as federal, state and local programs in thwarting the radicalization of the Somali Diaspora in Minneapolis, Minnesota, by investigating to find the main variable that motivates an individual towards the radicalization process. Presently, the United States is encountering a phenomenon of adolescent and young men, as well as women, willing to join in jihad. It is in the best interests of United States national security that policy makers, law enforcement and local communities understand and develop ways to mitigate these phenomena. In this research, I also sought to provide information that can be relied upon by strategists when designing youth programs that are sustainable and immune to corruption by radical groups such as Al-Shabaab. In addition, the research's findings go a long way in providing literature that can be relied upon when determining societal issues that may place young people at risk of exploitation and manipulation by fundamentalist and extremist groups. In an era that has been ravaged by terrorism, the research's findings also provide working knowledge of some of the techniques that are used by extremist groups in recruiting innocent people into their organizations, thereby helping in understanding how terrorist groups work in order to better equip law enforcement agencies with working knowledge of how to best deal with them.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study was guided by the social bond/social control theory of Hirschi (1969), which indicates that almost all prevailing criminological theories started with a defective

essential basis; that felonious conduct requires, in some form, the creation of criminal motivation. To Hirschi, all human beings from birth have the decadent ambition to act in the kinds of egocentric and hostile ways that lead to the criminal behavior (Leary, 2004). These manners, Hirschi posits, are part of innate human nature, but the vital measure is one's control of these normal impulses. The question of why people engage in criminal activities, according to Hirschi, can be answered by examining the bonds that people form to prosocial values, people and institutions that end up controlling behavior when people are tempted to give in to deviant acts—attachment, commitment, involvement and belief (Leary, 2004).

Hirschi's (1969) argument is that terrorism recruitment among the Somali Diaspora in Minneapolis should not be viewed in terms of why Americans with Somali origins are recruited into the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab; rather, the level of psychological affection (attachment) of Somali youth for social institutions should be determined. Secondly, what kind of social relationships (commitment) do Somali Americans have? Thirdly, how busy (involved) are Somali Americans in Minnesota, Minneapolis? And finally, how do Somali Americans believe that criminal behavior contributes to radicalization? In a nutshell, social control theory places a lot of prominence on the role that is played by the society in controlling criminal behavior. Society has a very important role to play in controlling crime, and it is not possible for all of the responsibility to be placed on the individuals committing the crime. Hirschi noted that virtually all felonies are the result of absence of monitoring by the authorities and the

family of the felons. Presence or absence of relationships and commitments will determine whether laws are broken by people (Leary, 2004).

The study was also guided by Merton's (1938) relative deprivation concept and the inability of some factions to reach everyday societal goals that define *social anomie*. This concept suggests that communal recruitment and/or terrorist activities materialize when people feel deprived of economic, social or cultural opportunities to which they feel entitled. Individuals may have developed relative deprivation either by comparing their position to the position of other groups in society, or due to a progressive development in which a period with positive growth is followed by an interval of stagnation (Leary, 2004).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

There are a few noteworthy assumptions and limitations concerning the research participants. The participants were recruited from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Based on the large immigrant population of Somali Americans residing in the research setting, it was assumed this urban, populous area would be fertile ground for recruiting young adult males to Al-Shabaab. Another assumption, in conducting interviews, was that participants would be truthful, open, and straightforward in relating their personal experiences of recruiting efforts. Furthermore, I assumed the young adult males' participation in the study to be motivated by a genuine desire to tell their story, rather than a need for compensation or financial gain.

In the course of this study, there were limitations auxiliary to this research relating to the data collection approach and the participants from whom the data will be collected.

For example, some of the data collected from the participants will be qualitative and thus may have been translated or interpreted differently. Another limitation associated with sampling is that participants' experiences may not be representative of all young adult males being recruited, as each situation will vary due to uncontrolled factors, such as home life, upbringing, education and religious views.

The delimitations of this study were established by focusing only on the time period of March 2016 to August 2016 for interviewing and survey information. Most importantly, this study will use a purposeful sample of young adult males aged 18 to 25 located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to respond to questions pertaining to possible recruitment efforts and their interactions with Al-Shabaab. Consequently, the survey instrument and the number of respondents who return the survey were used in data collection and analysis.

### **Gaps in Research**

Although there is significant amount of literature focusing on the recruitment of young Somali Americans by Al-Shabaab, there are very few scholarly studies focusing on the factors that motivate young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join Al-Shabaab. Given that Minneapolis, which hosts the largest number of Somali refugees in Minnesota, has become a target by Islamic terror groups, including Al-Shabaab, there is still a lack of scholarly research on factors that motivate young Somali Americans in this region to join the group. Past research on the issue of recruitment by Al-Shabaab has focused primarily on the radicalization activities process. In his study “Al-Shabaab’s American Recruits: A Comparative Analysis of Two Radicalization Pathways,”

Richardson (2012) focuses on the factors that influence the radicalization of American recruits that join Al-Shabaab in Somalia. Richardson (2012) compares the radicalization process between Somalis and non-Somalis. Kurzman (2011) focuses primarily on the factors that contributed to decline in Muslim American involvement in terror activities in 2011. Shinn (2011) investigates how al-Shabaab has become a threat to Somalia. Stern (2010) proposes how to deradicalize Islamic extremists. There is a knowledge gap on the motivating factors that motivate young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network, which necessitated this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study was unique, as I tried to identify pertinent factors that lead to the enrollment of young Somali American males into Al-Shabaab. The findings of this study provide insight into the reasons why Americans of Somali origins are vulnerable to recruitment by Al-Shabaab despite the destructive activities and risks associated with joining the organization. Insights from this study will aid the U.S. government, local communities and law enforcement in devising ways to mitigate and counter terrorism in the United States and the international community. The study provides useful information that can be used to fight the recruitment of Somali Americans by Al-Shabaab. Reducing the influence of Al-Shabaab recruiters among the Somali residents of Minneapolis, Minnesota, requires an understanding of the factors that influence youths to join the terror group.

## **Summary**

The aim of this research was to provide information about the recruitment of Al-Shabaab in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The aim of the research was to provide findings regarding how this recruitment impacts the Minneapolis community. The information gathered from this research provides valuable insights that will be helpful to the U.S. government, local communities and law enforcement in dealing with the issue of radicalization and extremist teachings targeting young people in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Chapter 2 contains a comprehensive explanation of the relevant literature associated with the research. In Chapter 3, I reveal the qualitative method of inquiry, specifically the phenomenological approach, as well as the study's data collection and data analysis strategies. Chapters 4 and 5 provide the findings and conclusion of the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Since 2007, the Somalia-based terrorist group Al-Shabaab has been developing a network aimed at recruiting and radicalizing members from the United States and other Western countries. Official reports indicate that since the year 2007, more than 50 American citizens have joined Al-Shabaab (Zimmerman, 2013). These recruits have been involved in major terrorist attacks in various countries around the world (Bramadat & Dawson, 2014). According to Kurzman (2011), the recruitment of Americans to Al-Shabaab is worrisome, given that Al-Shabaab openly pledged its allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2009.

The recruitment and radicalization of young adult Somali males by Al-Shabaab in Minneapolis, Minnesota, poses a great challenge to the world's social, economic and political stability. It has become a concern for the United States because it exposes the United States and its citizens to the threat of terrorism (Knickerbocker, 2010). The recruitment of Americans to Al-Shabaab may enable the group to more easily attack the United States and its allies or aid the activities of Al-Qaeda; however, limited research has been conducted to understand the factors driving the radicalization of young adult Somali males in Minneapolis. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the factors that motivate these men to join Al-Shabaab. Interviews with adult Somali-American males ages 18 to 25 will be conducted to analyze and identify motivating factors influencing the radicalization process. This chapter presents a discussion of the



literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, conceptual framework, and literature review related to key variables and/or concepts, ending with a summary and conclusion.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Extant literature on the research topic was sourced from library databases including EBSCOhost and ProQuest and search engines including Google to provide key bibliographic resources for this study. Other databases that facilitated the identification of secondary sources of information for this study included the Social Science Research Network (SSRN) and Web of Science. Key search terms included the following: *Minneapolis, Minnesota; Somali young adults; the Al-Shabaab terrorist network, motivation, terrorist recruitment, social bond theory/social control theory, and theory of relative deprivation.*

The search process in this study commenced with a synthesis of articles and other literature about the research topic obtained through diverse search engines. Scholarly bibliographic resources were obtained from diverse online databases. The literature was evaluated to ensure its relevance to the research process and the ultimate accuracy of the research findings. Given that there are few scholarly resources specifically on this research topic, this study relied on similar studies to develop a theoretical and conceptual framework.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

This study was premised on Hirsch's social bond theory/social control theory (1960s) and Robert K. Merton's theory of relative deprivation (1938). These two theories have been widely adopted by social scientists to explain various phenomena in society.

Hirschi's social bond theory/social control theory was developed in the 1960s, a time when the American value system was undergoing a revolution occasioned by political activities in the South. Merton's theory of relative deprivation was based on the sociologist's strain theories, which were developed at a time when it was perceived that there was pressure on social norms occasioned by a gap between the goals and aspirations of youth and their ability to reach them through legitimate means.

Merton's social deprivation theory was based on the presupposition that criminal motivation is a prerequisite for criminal behavior. In his works, Merton posits that American society places great emphasis on economic affluence, dubbed the "American dream" (Merton, 1938). To achieve social mobility, the American populace is encouraged to work hard in order to reap socioeconomic rewards; however, this is more difficult for members of vulnerable sectors of society, who do not have equal opportunities for education and employment. Merton argued that social mobility for the disadvantaged is limited, which causes anomie. Fundamentally, relative and absolute deprivation in society is directly correlated with anomie. The disadvantaged in society experience social inequality, which in turn causes human dissatisfaction and ultimately manifests through high crime rates.

In societies that place great emphasis on economic affluence, the economically deprived are more likely to shun legitimate means of achieving economic rewards in favor of illegitimate ones such as crime. Merton's social deprivation theory draws a relationship between limited opportunities, anomie, and deviance (Merton, 1938). In essence, in societies that have limited opportunities, there are high levels of anomie and

consequently a high rate of deviance. When there is a sense of deprivation in a group, a sense of injustice is inevitable, which in turn is likely to cause high levels of crime and involvement in illegal political organizations.

Social bond theory/social control theory is based on the presupposition that humans possess a “hedonistic drive” that causes them to act in a “selfish and aggressive” manner, which, if not socialized to conform to acceptable norms and standards, may lead to criminal behavior. In his quest to explain why individuals engage in criminal behavior, Hirschi (1969) argued that all humans have innate natural urges that may drive them to engage in deviant and criminal behavior. According to Gottfredson (2013), factors that hinder individuals from engaging in deviant behavior include attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. Youths who are involved in legitimate activities, for instance, are less likely to be engaged in criminal and deviant behavior.

Hirschi's social bond theory/social control theory (1960s) and Merton's theory of relative deprivation have been used widely in criminology and social studies. Dekeseredy and Schwartz (2010) used the theoretical framework developed in Merton's theory of relative deprivation to examine the relationship between lack of legitimate problem-solving means and formation of gendered subcultures that encourage engagement in criminal behavior. Gibbs (2010) used social bond theory/social control theory to explore diverse aspects of terrorism as a crime, including “causes of offending, impact on the victims, and both official and public responses to crime.”

Hirschi's social bond theory/social control theory and Merton's theory of relative deprivation were the most appropriate theories for the study, largely because they helped

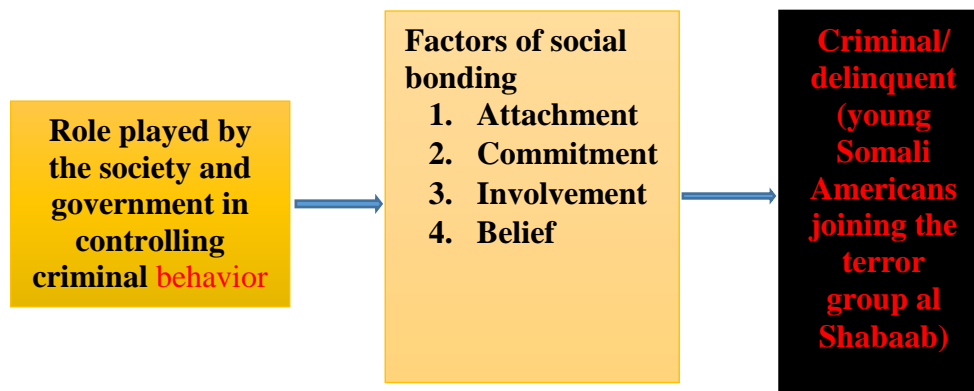
in the investigation of the essence of the research topic. Merton's social deprivation focuses on the motivation for criminal behavior and thus informed this study in the quest to identify what motivates Minneapolis Somali young adults to leave the United States and join Al-Shabaab. Hirschi's social bond theory/social control theory helped in the investigation of factors including attachment, commitment, involvement and belief, and how they have contributed to some Somali young adults' decisions not to conform to acceptable standards in American society and instead to join Al-Shabaab.

Although Hirschi's social bond theory/social control theory and Merton's theory of relative deprivation have been used widely in the investigation of crime in society, there has been limited use of the same in understanding terrorism. In this sense, the use of these two theories as the theoretical foundation not only helped to build on them, but also may inform future studies on the same and similar topics.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Diverse arguments can be adopted to explain the motivations of U.S. citizens to join Al-Shabaab. Based on the arguments in Hirschi's social bond theory/ social control theory, the motivations that influence young Somali Americans to join the terror group should be explored from a psychological perspective. Factors including attachment, commitment, involvement and belief should be explored. The focus of this study was exploring the type of social relationships that Somali-American youths in Minneapolis have to their families and American society. I also investigated how busy (involved) youth are in Minneapolis. This study determined the programs and opportunities that the federal government has accorded to Muslim youths specifically of Somali descent. This

study explored what American youth of Somali origin believe in relation to criminal behavior.



*Figure 1.* Conceptual framework: Hirschi's social bond/social control theory.

Evidentially, society has a very important role to play in controlling crime. It is not rational, therefore, to assign all responsibility to the individuals committing crimes. Hirschi (1969) noted that virtually all felony conduct is the result of absence of monitoring by the authorities and the families of the felons. According to Leary (2004), the nature and extent of relationships and commitments an individual has with his or her family, society and even country play a fundamental role in influencing the individual's affinity toward criminal behavior. This study was guided by Merton's (1938) relative deprivation concept and the inability of some factions to reach everyday societal goals, which contributes to social anomie.



*Figure 2.* Conceptual framework: Merton's (1938) relative deprivation concept.

Fundamentally, communal recruitment and/or terrorist activities materialize when people feel deprived of economic, social, or cultural opportunities to which they feel entitled. Individuals may develop relative deprivation either by comparing their position to that of other groups in society, or due to a progressive development in which a period with positive growth is followed by an interval of stagnation (Leary, 2004).

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

Extant literature on Somali recruitment by Al-Shabaab in Minneapolis, Minnesota, focuses on various facets of this topic. Jones (2013); Bergen, Bruce, and Katherine (2011); and Smith (2013) examined the new threat that Al-Shabaab poses to the United States and its allies through its recruitment initiatives. Other authors including Wonacott (2013), Smith (2013), Zimmerman (2013), Shah and Browning (2012), Post (2010), Bjeloper (2013), Bhui et al. (2012), and Lub (2013) provided insight into the factors that influence the radicalization process. Most of the studies on this research topic contain raw data including interviews and even excerpts from court proceedings with recruits and other authorities, providing diverse perspectives; however, most of the

literature on this research topic is not scholarly, which makes the research findings therein less accurate and unreliable.

Jones (2013) used an explanatory/descriptive design to examine the threat that Al-Shabaab poses to the United States and its allies. The study provided useful background information for this research, especially pertaining to the recruitment of young Somali-Americans by Al-Shabaab. Jones cited the recruitment of young Somali-Americans by Al-Shabaab as one of the key reasons why the terror group is a threat to the United States. Jones used a descriptive research design which was in line with the research methodology used in this study and argued that although a significant percentage of attacks by Al-Shabaab have been against Somalia and other neighboring countries including Kenya and Ethiopia, the terror group nonetheless poses a threat to the United States. Its 2013 attack at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, revealed that the terror group is capable of “sophisticated intelligence collection, surveillance, and reconnaissance of the target”—resources and skills that could enable it to successfully launch an attack against the United States and Americans (Jones, 2013).

The leaders of Al-Shabaab have also expressed their plan to launch attacks against the United States and its citizens, whom they view as their enemy because they are not Muslims. Jones (2013) further argued that Al-Shabaab has been recruiting young men of Somali-American descent since 2007. In the article, Jones (2013) stated that “between 2007 and 2010 more than 40 Americans joined Al-Shabaab, making the United States a primary exporter of Western fighters to the Al-Qaeda -affiliated group” (p. 15).

In their study “Assessing the Jihadist Terrorist Threat to America and American Interests,” Bergen, Bruce, and Katherine (2011) explore the diversity and complexity of the new threat posed by Al-Qaeda and allied groups to the United States and other countries. Bergen et al. (2011) contributed to this study by providing insight into the recruitment and radicalization initiatives of Al-Qaeda and allied groups in the United States. Bergen et al. (2011) used a descriptive research design similar to the one that was employed in this study. Comparatively, the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and allied groups to the United States today is less severe than that of the 9/11 attack; however, the terror groups potentially pose a greater security threat to the United States and its citizens because since the 9/11 attacks, the group has been expanding its capabilities. Bergen et al. (2011) stated, “Al-Qaeda and its allies arguably have been able to establish at least an embryonic terrorist recruitment, radicalization, and operational infrastructure in the United States with effects both at home and abroad” (p. 4). Al-Shabaab has strong connections to Al-Qaeda and pledged its allegiance to the then-leader of Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, in 2009.

Although the mechanisms used in recruitment and radicalization of Shirwa Ahmed, the first known Somali-American to carry out terror attacks (in 2008) on behalf of Al-Shabaab, are still unclear, the terror group has been successful in establishing a network to advance its recruitment efforts in the country. Bergen et al. (2011) cited the ability to deploy suicide bombers as one of the key strengths of Al-Qaeda. Al-Shabaab has developed the same structures as Al-Qaeda, and the terror group has been laying the



groundwork for massive recruitment from Western countries, especially the United States.

In the article “Somali Jihadists Recruit in U.S., Canada, Europe,” Smith (2013) affirmed the sentiments articulated by Jones (2013) and Bergen et al. (2011) regarding the potential threat posed to America and its citizens from the recruitment and radicalization efforts of Al-Shabaab. According to Smith, of the terrorists who attacked Westgate Mall, three were from the United States and one each were from the United Kingdom, Canada, and Finland. The involvement of Americans by Al-Shabaab in the Westgate attack was not a surprise because the terror group had a well-established recruitment network in the United States as well as Europe.

Wonacott (2013), Smith (2013), Zimmerman (2013), Shah and Browning (2012), Post (2010), Bjeloper (2013), Bhui et al. (2012), and Lub (2013) provided insight into the motivations that drive young Somali men to join Al-Shabaab. In an article published in *The Wall Street Journal*, Wonacott (2013) reported that while Al-Shabaab recruitment initiatives in the United States are characterized by glamorization of the terror group's mission, in some parts of the world Al-Shabaab recruits through force and fear. The article presented excerpts of interviews from a recruit and his relative, which were in line with the data collection methods used in this study. A potential recruit from Kenya was threatened and beaten by Islamist militants who wanted to force him to join Al-Shabaab. His family had to bribe the terror group in order to get him released by the militants. In the article, Mohamed, a recruit who had been beaten to submission but later escaped, stated, “If you try to defend yourself, you will die” (p. 34). He was 30 years old at the

time of the article's publication and counseled other Somalis against extremism as part of a new youth mentor program in Eastleigh, outside Nairobi. "I escaped, started a new life, but Al-Shabaab will always be behind me," he reflected (Wonacott, 2013).

According to Zimmerman (2013), Al-Shabaab is targeting vulnerable Muslim youths especially of Somali descent by promising them heaven if they join the "holy war" against non-Muslims. Official reports indicate that since the year 2007, more than 50 American citizens have joined Al-Shabaab (Zimmerman, 2013). Smith (2013) added that Somali American families who reside in Minneapolis have taken initiative to stop Al-Shabaab recruitment efforts; however, the socioeconomic environment of Somali-Americans has made this difficult. In the article by Smith (2013), Bihi, a relative of one of the gunmen killed in the Westgate attack, stated, "Minneapolis' Somali community is 100% against terror," but that a lot of families arrive owing "a lot of debt," and community youth programs were "almost nil". Al-Shabaab recruiters engaged teens by providing them with entertainment and role models, then "'brainwashed' them" (Smith, 2013).

In a similar article, "Minneapolis janitor's trial exposes trail of Minnesota's terror pipeline," Shah and Browning (2012) provide insight into the strategies that Al-Shabaab use to entice young Somali-Americans to join. According to Shah and Browning (2012), an analysis of information from the trial of Mahmud Said Omar, a 46-year-old part-time janitor involved in recruitment and radicalization of young Somali-Americans in Minneapolis, revealed that the recruiters appeal to potential recruits by instilling a sense

of nationalism. In a recorded statement, Hassan, one of the recruited young Somali Americans, states:

"The cleric said it was our duty to fight against non-Muslims who invade our countries. The cleric said we don't need permission from our parents to do this. It was a duty as Muslims and we would get benefit -- God will accept you and be pleased with you, basically, from doing this, and eventually [you] would go to paradise." (Shah and Browning, 2012).

The study by Jenkins (2010) also provides insight into the research variables in this study by providing information on "who is being recruited by Jihadist terrorists and how the recruits were identified by U.S. authorities." According to Jenkins (2010), most of the people recruited by jihadist terrorists from the United States had the intention to be terrorists and used the internet to "find resonance and reinforcement of their own discontents and people who would legitimate and direct their anger" (Jenkins, 2010). Of 109 jihadist recruits investigated in the study by Jenkins (2010), only 23 had criminal records. Notably, 46 of jihadist recruits manifested ideological commitment to terrorism due to diverse factors including adventure, naïveté, and being misguided. The jihadist recruits showed unwavering commitment to becoming terrorists and were described as having "jihadi hearts and jihadi minds" (Jenkins, 2010).

In the study "Psychological insights into Indonesian Islamic terrorism: the what, the how, and the why of violent extremism," Kruglanski (2013) found that a key factor that influences the radicalization process is the perceived "grievance of Muslims worldwide." Most terror group recruits believe there are diverse grievances, including

rape, attacks and murders, perpetrated against Muslims in different parts of the world by infidels. The belief system that has been ingrained among Muslims - that their own are aggrieved by non-Muslims and the only way they can obtain justice is through violence - is a key influencing factor toward radicalization. Conversely, Post (2010) argues that that there is "no one terrorist mind set" and the notion that individuals who fit a certain category are more inclined to become terrorists is archaic. In a similar study, Bjeloper (2013) examines the "Forces and Factors in the Forging of Terrorists." Bjeloper (2013) argues that although the factors and forces which led an individual to becoming a terrorist are diverse and still open to debate, he cites alienation, poverty, personal humiliation and brainwashing as key factors. According to Sageman (2011), Ahmed Omar Sheikh, the man who kidnapped Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, became a terrorist because during childhood, he experienced discrimination and witnessed the suffering of Muslims in Bosnia. The experience fueled his anger and outrage towards non-Muslims, and later in life when he met with a member of Kashmir-based terrorist group, he willingly joined up. According to Bjeloper (2013), other factors that influence the radicalization process include family ties, socialization and "moral outrage or perceptions that the West is harming the global community of Muslims (the Ummah)." Bhui et al. (2012) argues that although past studies indicate that radicalized individuals are likely to have experienced some sort of deprivation, poverty, unemployment, or criminality compared to other demographics in the society, this is not always true. Bhui et al. (2012) state: "If anything, they are better educated, slightly younger and slightly more likely to be migrants than the general population." According to Lub (2013), in order to implement measures that will

curtail the recruitment initiatives of terror groups it is imperative for policymakers to understand the factors and forces that influence the radicalization process.

### **Minnesota: A Brief Overview**

Research conducted in 2013 indicates that Minnesota was home to 38,873 Somali immigrants and Somali-Americans. It is the largest Somali population in America, and the population has grown since then. The densest neighborhoods are found in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, located south of Minneapolis and University Avenue. Another sizable Somali community is found in St. Paul area. The Somalis mainly migrated from their homeland as a result of famine and warfare which ravaged the land (Department of Homeland Security Science & Technology Directorate, 2015).

Somalis are also found in other areas of America including Atlanta, Louisville, Los Angeles, New York, Ohio, Seattle, and Northern Virginia. Like many immigrants, many of Somali heritage have struggled to adapt to the culture and realities of their new location. Minnesota is home to Sunni Islamist Somalis. More than twenty mosques serve Somali-Americans. Islamic schools that offer teachings on Somali traditions and culture are also found in Minnesota. They serve to instill religious knowledge and guidance to the Somali community (Department of Homeland Security Science & Technology Directorate, 2015). The Somali student enrollment in Minneapolis Public Schools has increased to 70 percent since 2011. Their use of the food assistance program has also doubled in the last five years (Koumpilova, 2014).

### **Recruitment and Radicalization**

Radicalization has been variously defined by several authors. Radicalization is slowly taking place in countries that are liberal and tolerant. These countries allow Muslims considerable freedom in exercising their religion (Goerzig & Hashimi, 2014). Among some of the definitions of radicalization:

i) It is a process that follows decreased confidence in a system, leading a person to retreat further into their own group (Demant, Slootman, Buijs & Tillie, 2008).

ii) It is an attempt to alter the society through the use of unorthodox means that often result in threats to democratic institutions. It is “a pathological outcome of socialization trajectories whereby an individual or group adopts extreme religious views and justifies acts of violence or terrorism based on these views” (Bramadat & Dawson, 2014).

iii) “Radicalization is a process of relative change in which a group undergoes ideological and/or behavioral transformations that lead to the rejection of democratic principles (including the peaceful alternation of power and the legitimacy of ideological and political pluralism) and possibly to the utilization of violence, or to an increase in the levels of violence, to achieve political goals” (Schmid, 2013).

iv) The United States Department of Homeland Security defines radicalization as “the process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect social change” (DHS ' Office of Intelligence and Analysis).

These definitions lean towards one theory regarding radicalization. They support the idea that an individual ascribes to a certain social group. Furthermore, external factors influence radicalization. An individual adopts ideologies that are advanced by the group by legal or illegal means. If the group represents an extremist ideology, the group is likely to participate in violence and terror activities that disrupt social order.

Radicalization refers to the process by which a group is mobilized in a bid to achieve a political or social objective. These identified objectives may not be easily attainable; thus certain members become discouraged and disillusioned and abandon conventional means to take action. They therefore engage in other tactics which they believe will have a greater impact in advancing their motives.

Radicalization entails behavior modeling and imitation. Impatience and lack of satisfaction provide a motivation and justification for terror activities among members of the Al-Shabaab group. Basically, the entire group undergoes a gradual process including experiences, perception-building and events that contribute to radicalization. The radicalization process involves seclusion, which prevents contact with other people who are likely to alter thinking and ideologies.

The motivation to join Al-Shabaab is based on several aspects. Identity is manipulated by propaganda and new “insights.” The religious aspect is exaggerated and is usually used to convince the youth of their duty to engage in terrorist activities. Recruitment is pushed by encouragement from family members and the community which has made the fight their own, meaning that they have owned it and feel they are obligated to assist the people who are part of the outlawed sect. Others are simply

encouraged by their religious leaders who deliver radical sermons in their places of worship. A substantial number of youth recruited are drawn from idle backgrounds where they have no source of earning a living. The recruitment of youths to Al-Shabaab in Minnesota has greatly altered the community perception regarding the outlawed group. Many who have joined recount the massive atrocities committed by the group. Most people who attempt to leave the group end up being killed. In the present world, recruiters have adopted more sophisticated means of recruitment which has recently involved young people relocating to Syria.

### **Concept of Extremism**

Extremism is rooted in the desire to disrupt society and forcefully bring change, often to political and religious structures. Actions of extremists are usually in rebellion to existing authorities who curtail individual behavior. Extremism thrives where a culture breeds alienation as well as social groups that focus on political discontent. Radicalization is an increase in and/or reinforcement of extremism in the thinking, sentiments, and behavior of individuals or a group. Extremist groups and parties tend to have an agenda whose salient features include the following:

1. They are anti-constitutional and nondemocratic, usually authoritarian.
2. They are fanatical and intolerant, often single-minded.
3. They do not adhere to the rule of law.
4. They subscribe to the ideology that the end justifies the means.
5. They tend to use violence and force to persuade those of contrary belief.



Extremist ideas and beliefs potentially translate to terrorist actions. This is because the ideologies they propagate serve as a factor towards radicalization. Ideological indoctrination has the potential to convert vibrant youths within the society to violent militia capable of causing massive destruction. Such ideologies embrace a culture of violence and greatly reduce existence of moral awareness. They justify the need for extreme methods to advance the group's objectives.

### **Factors Leading to Vulnerability of Young Adults to Recruitment**

Several factors affect the recruitment of young adults, including social, cultural and political aspects that enable them to justify their reasons for joining. This section seeks to discuss these underlying factors in an attempt to determine the reasons why youths are vulnerable to recruitment into such extremist groups.

Young adult Somali Americans are usually drawn into Al-Shabaab as a result of manipulation of emotions related to social identity, pride and fear. Social identity refers to an individual's self-concept derived from belonging to a group that shares beliefs, values, traits and symbols. Members attach value and emotional significance to the membership. Deeply held religious beliefs are especially powerful in promoting group identity. Al-Shabaab recruiters exploit pride in the group and fear of challenges to the group to persuade youth to defend their collective religious and social identity by joining Al-Shabaab. Recruits are made to believe that their religion, Islam, is under threat; thus they should act to restore its position in society. Since religious leaders are often not involved in the recruitment process, this misconception goes unchallenged and the interpretation of religion is distorted. The recruits learn to view themselves as "we" or

"us" and to define everyone else as "them." Recruits therefore view themselves as defenders of Islam.

Religion has been used to alter perspectives and manipulate the mindsets of the youth. They have been made to believe that being part of Al-Shabaab is a religious duty which they have to undertake. Youth have been manipulated into thinking that failure to undertake this religious duty amounts to betrayal of their religion.

An additional potential recruitment factor by Al-Shabaab is the lack of education and employment among Somali-American youth. The collapse of Somalia's education system has produced a major decline in its citizens' intellectual capacities. Education plays a crucial role in preparing individuals for employment and independent life. Education implies a sense of awareness and knowledge about issues around us and affects people's perceptions of how they are treated from a political viewpoint. Education facilitates interaction with new cultures, people as well as insights and information. An educated person is likely to have a better understanding of political processes and how to address them, as opposed to those who have not been enlightened. This is because education allows them to reason and think critically regarding issues rather than subscribing to manipulative ideals.

In the United States, Somali-American youth struggle to remain in school and connected with the larger society. Many end up in low-income jobs or unemployed; lack of employment leads to idleness. Many youths do not want to rely on their relatives for survival. Their self-worth and self-esteem is crushed. The youth who are not educated therefore do not see themselves as accomplished in life. They feel their future is

nonexistent, which makes them vulnerable to Al-Shabaab recruiters who promise a "higher calling." The "package" which the sect presents the youth is often alluring. Joining the sect guarantees good pay. It enables such youths to provide for themselves as well as their families. Additionally, recruits who die in the line of duty are usually promised paradise. They therefore have a hope of a better afterlife. Paradise is widely viewed as a reward for the loyal martyrs and hence they are guaranteed to meet their maker. Questions have been raised regarding what exactly is jihad or holy war. What makes the war valid despite the massive destruction it causes is a question which has left Muslims and other religions alike questioning the war. Youths who are not aware of what makes jihad valid will engage in Al-Shabaab for the basis of the reward of paradise.

Young adult Somali Americans engaging in Al-Shabaab activities usually view themselves as defenders of their country and religion. Being a member of Al-Shabaab brings the feeling of being feared. The desire to build a reputation by the youth drives them to joining the sect. They want to be seen as heroes in a bid to gain respect. They feel prominent and have a sense of responsibility within their social groups. Membership in the outlawed sect confers respect and power (however misguided), which strengthens their self-worth. Their identity is also emphasized. The distorted religious zeal aids in radicalization efforts and contributes to youths' willingness to set aside their hopes, dreams, ambition, and practically their entire lives to advance the mission of Al-Shabaab.

Fear of being victimized by society and immediate family also contributes to young adult Somali Americans joining Al-Shabaab. In areas where Al-Shabaab has assumed full control, the young adults fear not joining because they are viewed as being

in collaboration with the enemy. Lastly, the thirst for revenge leads to some of the young adults joining the sect. They seek to avenge the humiliation that women and children from their society have undergone as a result of the war against terror. They want to be seen as heroes of their land. Revenge builds hatred towards groups that do not subscribe to the jihadist movement. In this case, they seek to create destruction, spread unrest, cause distress, and destroy property while at the same time killing people.

Individual factors contribute to radicalization. Young people around the world usually seek a sense of purpose and meaning. They are often in search of adventure and fame which can catapult them to higher status. There is an urge to break out and be free spirits not bound by rules or regulations. Countering these individual factors requires the collective effort of family, teachers, religious leaders, and the civil society at large. However, Somali youth are not exposed to such a support group due to the conflict and unrest that has ravaged their nation. Strong pillars that can offer guidance and shape positive worldviews are important to the young people. Youth who are nurtured will be in a position to engage in constructive activities instead of extremist ideologies and possible violence.

### **Means to Minimize and Deal With Radicalization**

Countering radicalization efforts requires a proper understanding of the reasons why people join such terrorist organizations. An analysis of these factors allows authorities, including government agencies and civil and social organizations, to deal with the root cause of the problem. These include conducting intelligence-led operations, which implies that information gathering must be undertaken to look into Al-Shabaab

recruitment. In countries where the threat has been imminent, strategies involving public participation have been employed to monitor suspicious activity. Security forces have developed intelligence mechanisms covering radar and aerial monitoring to intercept communication and signals which are leads to Al-Shabaab activities.

Without proper intelligence and collaboration with communities, it is almost impossible for security forces to obtain information about terrorist operations. Understanding how Al-Shabaab gathers its own intelligence is the only way to counter it. Actively patrolling communities and streets is an important aspect of improving security. Public presence of law enforcement agencies with the community promotes constant interaction which allows them to collect information which they can act on.

### **Countering Radicalization**

Countering radicalization refers to efforts aimed at preventing radicalization as well as changing the mindsets of the already-radicalized. Researchers have coined the term "de-radicalization" to refer to the process of making an individual less radical in terms of behavior and beliefs. The goals of de-radicalization are as follows:

1. Achieve disbandment and disengagement of individuals from outlawed sects.
2. Demobilize extremist groups.
3. Develop reconciliation and reintegration of former members into the society.

Efforts of de-radicalization include religious counseling and use of political means such as ceasefire and decommissioning of arms. Dealing with radicalization requires an understanding of those who are most vulnerable to radicalization. This

includes close analysis of the characteristics of the vulnerable group, as well as the economic, social, and political structures that contribute to its vulnerability.

### **Empowering Civil Society**

Empowering civil society groups to offer youth-oriented programs is a good step towards mentoring the youth. These groups could advocate for the needs of the young adult Somali Americans, as well provide them with meaningful activities. By helping change young people's mindsets about education, employment and other facets of their lives, civil society groups can empower the youth. Civil society groups should operate at the community level to ensure that they are fully involved in the people's lives. This immersion will enable civil society groups to detect the early stages of radicalization among young people which, in turn, will allow the groups to intervene before extremism or violence develops.

### **Mentoring Into Adulthood**

Somali Americans who are in between adolescence and adulthood experience frustration. They seek to reaffirm their adulthood, as well as gain a sense of purpose, by joining extremist groups like Al-Shabaab. There is a need to mentor the youth so that their perceptions of adulthood and responsibility are linked to the need for education and employment. It is, therefore, imperative to create more education and employment opportunities for the youth to ensure that they do not seek membership in extremist groups.

### **Improving Relations Between Somali Youth and Law Enforcement**

Improving the relations between Somali youth and law enforcement authorities will restore order and prevent the recruitment of young people into extremist groups. Somalia has had a history of instability and unrest, where regimes were oppressive. Security forces, for example, were deployed to refugee camps to harass Somalis. As such, Somalis may neither view law enforcement authorities as defenders of justice, nor trust or respect that these authorities will actually protect civilians and restore public order. Most Somalis, however, simply view law enforcement authorities with fear and try to avoid them. There are many reasons why people try to evade Somali authorities – some of them may be illegal migrants, or some of them may be engaged in questionable transactions. In this situation, law enforcement bodies need to create rapport with the civilians so that they can overcome negative perceptions of the government and security agencies. Civilians should be made to feel comfortable within the system; in doing so, the community might be able to share vital information with security personnel that will help them detect early signs of recruitment and radicalization.

At the same time, there is a need for caution. The Somali community has been victimized and persecuted within their homeland as well as in foreign nations. For this reason, they may view law enforcement's scrutiny of Al-Shabaab recruitment and anti-terrorist operations as witch hunts designed to persecute the civilians. Building trust between law enforcement agencies and the Somalis will help the latter better understand the role of the law enforcement bodies and thus avoid misconceptions about their role.

## Summary

Existing literature reveals that the threat posed by Al-Shabaab has become increasingly complex and diverse even if that threat is not as severe as the experience of the 9/11 attacks. Nevertheless, Al-Shabaab's threat to the United States and its citizens is now more formidable because of the terror group's recruitment and radicalization activities in the country. Since 2007, the number of Americans that have been recruited by Al-Shabaab has been increasing. A prime example of Al-Shabaab's successful recruitment is the attack in Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya which occurred in September 2013. The gunmen came from the United States and other western countries where Al-Shabaab had well-established recruitment networks and resources. This enabled the extremist group to develop their recruits' skills in mounting terrorist attacks which could occur in the United States.

Scholars, however, do not provide a consistent account of the factors that influence or motivate radicalization. Most radicalized individuals have one unifying characteristic, i.e. their desire to become terrorists. Key phrases used to describe recruits into terrorist organization include individuals having "jihadi hearts and jihadi minds" or the terrorist mindset. While there is no dispute that some potential recruits are strongly committed to becoming terrorists, some studies contend that there is no such terrorist mindset or personality. These studies show that radicalized individuals are motivated to become terrorists by diverse factors such as anger, grievances which can only be addressed through violence, alienation, poverty, personal humiliation, and brainwashing. Some authors argue that the Muslim belief system, which sees paradise as the reward for



self-sacrifice, also plays a significant role in influencing potential recruits to join terror groups. Other factors that have been identified to influence the radicalization process include family ties, socialization, moral outrage towards western countries, and discrimination. While social-economic deprivation has been cited as a key factor for radicalization, some studies dispute this arguing that some of terrorist are very well-educated.

In order to help policy-makers make sound decisions on how to deal with Al-Shabaab's recruitment initiatives in the United States, it is critical to reconcile the contradictory literature on this social phenomenon. This current study, therefore, is significant because it seeks to identify the key factors in radicalization as well as to contribute to expanding the literature which, at this point in time, are quite few. Nevertheless, the author used the available literature on this topic to develop a theoretical and conceptual framework that will facilitate further investigation into Somali Recruitment by Al-Shabaab in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The following chapter will provide information on how this study will be conducted, how the participants will be identified, and how the information will be organized and analyzed.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the research methodology for this study on motivating factors that influence Somali American males in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to join Al-Shabaab. The study was necessitated by limited research on this social phenomenon. Over the last decade, there has been an increase in terrorist attacks by the radical group Al-Shabaab around the world and in the involvement of U.S. citizens from Minneapolis in these attacks. A review of extant literature on motivating factors that influence young adult males in Minneapolis to join Al-Shabaab revealed a knowledge gap on this social phenomenon, thus necessitating investigation to provide decision makers with a much-needed theoretical framework on which they can base their decisions.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the study's research design and its rationale. The role of the researcher, research questions, context for the study, measures for ethical protection, recruitment strategy, inclusion criteria, data collection procedures, data analysis, member checking, audit trail, handling of discrepant cases, and researcher bias are also described herein.

### **Research Design**

A qualitative research methodology has been employed in the investigation of the factors that motivate young adult males ages 18 to 25 in Minneapolis to join Al-Shabaab. The research methodology employed in the study was influenced by diverse factors, including the nature of the research topic. According to Yin (2015), a research methodology provides a framework that is basically a blueprint for how research will be

conducted. Qualitative research has become increasingly popular, especially in the social sciences, largely because it facilitates investigation into diverse social phenomena that cannot be examined using alternative research paradigms (Yin, 2015). Unlike alternative research paradigms, qualitative research offers researchers flexibility but still requires the knowledge and expertise needed to conduct an inquiry. Fundamentally, qualitative research enables researchers to carry out inquiries on diverse social phenomena in their real/natural settings. Researchers using qualitative paradigms are able to investigate research variables from the viewpoint and experiences of the target population.

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research involves the use of interpretation by involving the researcher as a key instrument to study social phenomena or issues in their natural settings. Qualitative research also includes the adaptation of a specific approach to inform the procedures of the study that provides a writing structure and helps in organizing ideas that are grounded in the literature (Creswell, 2013).

In this study, I employed a descriptive approach/phenomenology in a quest to identify and understand the experiences of the target population. Phenomenology enables researchers to gain insight into the real-life experiences of the participants in a study, as well as to derive the essence of those experiences. Based on the experiences of the participants in the study, the researcher can draw conclusions about the phenomenon under investigation.

In this case, a phenomenological study facilitated the identification of motivating factors that influence young adult males in Minneapolis to join Al-Shabaab from the perspective of adult Somali males aged 18 to 25 in Minneapolis and key leaders within

Minneapolis's Somali community. Through a phenomenological approach, I sought to discover, comprehend, and explain experiences and perceptions related to terrorist recruitment of adult males in Minneapolis. A phenomenological research design was appropriate for this study because it allowed for the real experiences of the participants to be used to gather data (Yin, 2015). Specifically, this study employed a hermeneutics phenomenological design to facilitate the interpretation of data gathered on the research variables under investigation. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological design, I gathered and interpreted the experiences of adult Somali males aged 18 to 25 in Minneapolis and key leaders within the Somali community regarding motivating factors that influence Al-Shabaab recruitment. Consequently, the study used an interpretive paradigm and relied on naturalistic methods of data collection, including the analysis of data available on the research topic and interviews.

A descriptive approach/phenomenology facilitated inquiry into the experiences of adult Somali males aged 18 to 25 in Minneapolis and key leaders within the Somali community in their natural setting regarding motivating factors that influence young men to join Al-Shabaab. A hermeneutic phenomenological design influenced the inquiry as well as the interpretation of experiences. An interpretive paradigm ensured the use of naturalistic methods of data collection, including the analysis of data available on the research topic and interviews to gain insight into the research topic.

### **Rationale for Research Design**

A descriptive approach/phenomenological research design was the most feasible for this study of motivating factors that influence Somali American males in

Minneapolis, Minnesota, to join Al-Shabaab, due to its descriptive nature. Motivation consists of behavioral constructs that cannot be investigated effectively using alternative designs. A descriptive approach/phenomenology research design facilitated the examination of the real-life experiences of adult Somali males aged 18 to 25 in Minneapolis and key leaders within the Somali diaspora community regarding motivating factors that influence Somali American males in Minneapolis to join Al-Shabaab.

Additionally, a descriptive approach/phenomenology research design was the most feasible in that it enabled investigation of the experiences and essence of these experiences based on diverse factors, unlike other types of qualitative designs such as ethnography, case study and grounded theory, whose focus is narrow (Yin, 2015). Ethnography focuses mainly on cultural characteristics of the target population, which involves a very narrow perspective and thus would have not been appropriate for this study. A case study was not appropriate for this study because it involves the examination of cases, whereas this study's focus was the identification of motivating factors based on the experiences and perspectives of Somali males aged 18 to 25 in Minneapolis and key leaders within the Somali community. Given the sensitive nature of this research topic, it would have been quite challenging to obtain case studies for analysis. Where it was possible to obtain case studies about the topic under investigation, some of the information therein was deemed confidential and thus cannot be disclosed to the public—another major challenge for this study. Grounded theory qualitative research design involves the development of theory through the identification of the underlying assumptions and principles of a given social phenomenon, which was not the objective of

this study. Grounded theory qualitative research design also requires a large sample population, whereas this study's sample population was quite small. In this sense, a descriptive approach/phenomenology research design was the most feasible for this study.

### **Role of the Researcher**

A researcher must engage in diverse activities, including reflection, interpretation, and even active participation in a study (Yin, 2015). My roles as the researcher in this study were diverse and in line with the qualitative research process. I began by *thematizing*, which involved decision making regarding the research topic, the rationale behind the study and the methodology involved in carrying out the inquiry. For instance, I had to make a decision regarding the most appropriate research methodology, research design, and methods of data collection. Another key role played was designing the methodology by articulating the procedures to be involved in data collection and analysis. In doing so, I had to decide the type of interviews used to collect data on the research variables and determine the interview schedules. After designing the methodology, I interviewed the participants using a secure online survey tool. This involved designing open-ended questions and identifying a secure, reputable online survey service to protect the identities of the participants.

Upon IRB approval, I began the interviewing process by advertising via flyer to Somali American males in Minneapolis and with LinkedIn emails to Somali community leaders. Next, I analyzed the data collected from adult Somali males aged 18 to 25 in Minneapolis and key leaders within the Somali community. These data were interpreted,

put into categories, and formatted so that they would be easy for the target audience to understand. I then verified the data in order to allay any concerns regarding their generalizability, validity, credibility, conformability, and reliability. Finally, I reported on the research findings.

### **Research Questions**

The research question for this study was the following: What motivates Somali young adults (ages 18-25) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

### **Context of the Study**

According to Yin (2015), the relationship between participants and the researcher has a profound impact on the quality of a study. In this sense, the relationship between participants and the researcher was based on values, such as trust, which were nurtured throughout the research process with the objective of optimizing the quality of the study. To achieve a positive working relationship with the participants, I worked to develop rapport with the participants in the study. When there is effective rapport, the relationship between participants and the researcher can be likened to therapy.

The participants in the study were given an opportunity to openly share their experiences in relation to what motivates Minneapolis Somali American males (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. The relationship between the participants and researcher in this study was expected to enable the participants to share deep insights about this topic. Although the interview sessions with participants were quite short, they provided participants with an environment for sharing

their experiences that was characterized by trust as well as respect. My ability to develop a therapeutic relationship with adult Somali males aged 18 to 25 in Minneapolis and key leaders within the Somali community were enhanced by ethical measures that were taken in order to protect the rights of participants in this study.

### **Measures for Ethical Protection**

In conducting this research study, I heeded and complied with Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. According to Malterud (2001), qualitative research can potentially be characterized by ethical challenges, especially if appropriate ethical guidelines are not put in place. First, permission to conduct this study was sought from Walden University's IRB. Diverse measures including informed consent, confidentiality and beneficence were enacted to protect the participants' rights. All participants in this study were informed about its purpose and informed that participation was voluntary. Additionally, participants were not required to disclose any personal and identifying information. The participants were made aware that the information that they disclosed during the interview was used only for the study.

The nature of phenomenological qualitative research poses various risks to participants, including distress and anxiety caused by participants reliving personal experiences. Given the sensitive nature of the research topic, my rapport and sensitivity toward the participants helped minimize any such anxiety. Additionally, I attempted to relate to the participants in a therapeutic way, which helped to reduce any distress associated with this study.



All research materials (e.g., field notes, online and printed surveys) have been properly secured in my home office. As stipulated by the IRB, I will maintain and secure all raw data and products for a minimum of 5 years. After this period, all research material in paper form will be disposed of by shredding. All computer data files will be deleted. No published report (including this manuscript) will include any personally identifiable information that could be used to identify research participants.

### **Recruitment Strategy**

The recruitment strategy employed in a qualitative study has direct implications on the quality of the inquiry. A recruitment strategy articulates the plan that the researcher will use in the identification and selection of participants in a study. The recruitment strategy should include the criteria that the researcher will use to screen participants. An effective recruitment strategy should be coupled with a framework that is both unbiased and robust (Yin, 2015). Additionally, it is imperative to ensure that the recruitment strategy employed is representative of the target population in order to achieve findings that are unbiased and conform to extant literature on the social phenomenon/issue under investigation.

The recruitment strategy employed in this study included purposive quota sampling. Under quota sampling, the sample population's characteristics, such as age, gender and nationality, are predetermined when designing the research methodology. Predetermining the sample population's characteristics enables the researcher to get participants who have a high probability of having had the target experiences or who have insight into the research topic. Information for this study was obtained primarily

through interviews with adult Somali males aged 18 to 25 in Minneapolis. The interviews were arranged by key leaders within the Somali community. Secondary information was obtained from community leaders who had worked directly with these young men. In this study, the sample population's characteristics, including age, gender and nationality, were predetermined, and key leaders within the Somali community were used to identify potential participants in this study. In addition, the recruitment strategy relied greatly on the recommendations made by the local leaders in the study population, who were Somali males residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

The rigor of any qualitative inquiry is to a great extent influenced by the methodology design elements employed, including the inclusion criteria, or predetermined characteristics that qualify members of the target population to be involved in a study (Yin, 2015). The inclusion criteria for the first group of participants in this study were based on factors including age, gender, residence and nationality. To participate in the study, one had to be Somali, male, aged 18 to 25, and residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In the second group of participants, one had to be a community leader who had worked directly with young adult males from the target population in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection procedure in this study was carefully planned and executed, given the sensitive nature of the research topic. First, secondary sources of information were selected and analyzed, and the conceptual framework/background was developed

for this study. Primary data was collected through open-ended, semi structured online interview questions to gather perceptions of participants related to the purpose of the study. Each participant took a survey one time for a 30-minute period. The online interviews were arranged at the convenience of the participants. Prior to commencing the interview process, each interviewee signed a consent form indicating that he understood the purpose of the study. Participants were required to state basic identifying information including age, gender, residence, nationality, occupation, marital status and education. The participants were not required to disclose any personal identifying information such as name.

The interviewing process commenced with the participant accessing the link to the survey and giving his consent to participate. Upon giving consent, the participant was directed to the next page to take the survey. Although the interviews were not monitored by an interviewer, the session allowed the participants to share in-depth experiences regarding motivating factors that influence young adult males in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to join Al-Shabaab—which was in line with a descriptive approach/phenomenology qualitative research design. After the first group of participants was interviewed, I conducted online interviews with the community leaders. With the online responses from the interviews, the data were transcribed and data categories were created. To ensure credibility of the secondary sources of information, these sources were analyzed to determine their authority, purpose and currency (Yin, 2015). Credibility of the primary sources of data was ensured through diverse strategies including member checks, triangulation and peer debriefing.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in this study relies on thematizing statements about the experiences of each of the participants and making comparisons to other participants in a quest to identify any emerging themes. According Yin (2015), the rigor of the data analysis process is highly influenced by the researcher's reflective and interpretive skills. Reflective and interpretive skills were used in order to get the essence of the experiences of the participants and consequently align the same with the social phenomenon under investigation. Reliance on reflective and interpretive skills to analyze data collected is in line with hermeneutic phenomenological quantitative research design employed in this study. Based off the response from both surveys, Posteriori word coding and thematic analysis were used to analyze into categories to understand what influences recruitment. Posteriori word coding was used to identify patterns of words, phrases, and concepts that exist.

### **Audit Trail**

An audit trail is basically articulation of the research path in a given research inquiry. According to Malterud (2001), an audit trail is a report "declaring that qualitative analysis was done, or stating that categories emerged when the material had been read by one or more persons, is not sufficient to explain how and why patterns were noticed... the reader needs to know the principles and choices underlying pattern recognition and category foundation" (p. 486). An audit trail provides a description of the methodological procedures that were involved in data collection, interpretation and

analysis and, the rationale and underlying assumptions on which the research findings are based. In this study an audit trail was conducted and the findings reported.

### **Handling of Discrepant Cases**

Given that this study employed a hermeneutic phenomenological quantitative research design its sample population was considerably small, any data that illustrated a different theme was reported as discrepant data. This discrepant data will be discussed later in Chapter 4 Results. The study employed a purposive quota sampling which ensured that the sample population enrolled in the study had fairly similar characteristics and similar perspectives and experiences regarding factors that motivates Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

### **Researcher Bias**

Unlike alternative research paradigms, qualitative research has a high probability of being affected by researcher's bias; qualitative research gives researcher the flexibility of designing the research process (Yin, 2015). In this study, to avoid bias, ensure conformability to extant literature on the research topic, and enhance the rigor of this study, diverse measures, such as peer debriefing and an audit trail were conducted. One key disadvantage of interviews as a method of data collection is that the credibility and validity of data collected may be influenced by personal bias of the researcher/ interviewer (Yin, 2015). In order to avoid personal bias during the interviews, the interviewee was trained on effective interviewing skills.

## Summary

This study employed a hermeneutics phenomenological design to facilitate the inquiry and interpretation of experiences of Somali males' ages 18 to 25 in Minneapolis, Minnesota and key leaders within the Somali community regarding factors that motivate young adult males in Minneapolis, Minnesota to join Al-Shabaab. A hermeneutics phenomenological design was the most feasible for the study because of its descriptive nature, facilitating with ease the investigation of the experiences regarding the research topic. The researcher in this study played a multi-functional role including reflective, interpretive and even active participation in the study. Given that the relationship between participants and the researcher has a profound impact on the rigor of a study, the research in this study first developed a rapport with the participants to ease anxiety and create a therapeutic environment that allowed participants to share deeply and openly about their experiences on the research topic. To avoid ethical challenges that characterize qualitative research, authorization to conduct this study was sought and approved by Walden University's IRB. Additionally, measures, to include informed consent, confidentiality and beneficence were utilized to protect the rights of the participants. The recruitment strategy employed included a purposive quota sampling, as the sample population's characteristics such as age, gender and nationality were predetermined when designing the research methodology. The recruitment strategy employed also relied on local leaders in the target population to select the participants. Inclusion in the first group of participants was based on factors including age, gender, residence and nationality, thus the sample population were Somali, male, adult aged 18 to

25 residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In the second group of participants, the sample population included community leaders that have worked directly with the young males in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The data collection procedure in this study was carefully planned and executed given the sensitive nature of the research topic and it involved the development of a conceptual framework, interviews, transcribing and checking credibility of the data collected. Data analysis relied on thematizing statements about the experiences of each participant and making comparisons to other participants in a quest to identify emerging themes. There were few discrepant cases in this study, as it employed a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative research design, and consequently its sample population was considerably small with participants having similar perspectives/experiences on the research topic. Although there was potential for this study to be affected by bias, diverse measures, such as peer debriefing, an audit trail and training the researcher on effective interviewing skills were undertaken.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected from interviews with Somali young adults (ages 18-25) currently residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota, as well as interviews with community leaders in the same area. The objective of the study was to understand what factors motivate Somali young adults to join the Al-Shabaab and, consequently, to identify how positive social change could be implemented and the effects of that change. In pursuit of these objectives, this chapter provides a description of the respondents, the major themes and subthemes that came up during the interviews, and evidence for the rigor and trustworthiness of this study's data collection. The chapter also contains an analysis of the qualitative mechanics used in data collection.

The data presented in this chapter pertained to the research question: What motivates Somali young adults (ages 18-25) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

### **Data Collection**

#### **Interviewee Group 1: Six Somali American Males, Aged 18 to 25**

The first group of interviewees included diverse members of the Somali American community. The screening process involved criteria including the following:

- Somali American residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- Residing in the United States for more than 2 years.
- Aged 18 to 25 years.



The interviews were arranged in advance and were conducted in three phases. The first phase was aimed at getting consent from the interviewees. Participation in the interview was voluntary, and all of the interviewees gave consent before the interview process commenced. The first question in the interview: “Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking ‘yes,’ you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.” Additional measures were put in place to protect the rights of the participants in the study (Yin, 2015); specifically, the interviews were online, secure, and lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour.

The second phase was the interview itself, with 14 questions designed to obtain in-depth information about the research question. The interviewees were very responsive and open to most of the questions in the interview. The third phase of the interview involved collecting demographic data about the interviewees. The interviewees were asked six questions about their age, gender, residence, nationality, occupation, and education.

The six participants responded to both demographic and research questions relating to the research question. The respondents’ characteristics were based on factors including age, gender, residence, nationality, and education.

Table 1

*Demographic Data of the Six Participants*

Age	25	22	19	24	25	20
Educational achievement	Master's degree	Master's degree	High school	Bachelor's degree	College	High school
Religious affiliation	Muslim/Sunni	N/A	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim
Number of years residing in the United States	3 years	Life	19 years	17 years	20 years	10 years
Ethnic background	Somali	Somali	Somali	African, Somali	Somali	Somali

The participants in the study had received high school and college-level education. Five of the six respondents had resided in the United States for a considerably long time, ranging from 3 years to 22 years. Only one of the respondents had been in the country for a short period (3 years).

**Interviewee Group 2: Community Leaders**

The second group of interviewees was composed of highly educated community leaders holding diverse positions in the Somali American community in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Somali community leaders who had worked directly with young adult males were contacted to participate in this study on the motivations for Somali young adults (ages 18-25) who currently reside in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The community leaders were identified on LinkedIn and invited by LinkedIn email to participate in this doctoral study. The criteria for inclusion in this group of participants included:

- Have a position in the community in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- Have held that position for a significant period of time.
- Work closely or interact with young Somali Americans aged 18 to 35.

Table 2

*Demographic Information of Community Leaders*

Age	35	34	36	36	50	44
Educational achievement	Master's degree	Master's degree	College	Bachelor's degree	College	Master's degree
Religious affiliation	Muslim/Sunni	N/A	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim
Occupation	Educator	Business-man	Small business owner	Somali mentoring program coordinator	Engineer	Educator
Number of years residing in the United States	3 years	Life	22 years	17 years	30 years	20 years
Ethnic background	Somali	Somali	Black	African, Somali	Somali	Somali
Position in the community	Involved community advocate	Community leader	Leader	Liaison for Hennepin County Library		School teacher
Number of years in the position	7+ years	10 years	4 years	20 years		15 years

The six Somali American community leaders who participated in the second interview group held diverse positions, specifically community advocate, community leader, educator, leader, and liaison for the Hennepin County Library. Three of the

interviewees had held their positions for at least a decade, whereas the rest had been in their positions for less than 10 years, ranging from 4 years to 7 years.

### **Evidence of Rigor and Trustworthiness**

Noble and Smith (2015) stated that “unlike quantitative researchers, who apply statistical methods for establishing validity and reliability of research findings, qualitative researchers aim to design and incorporate methodological strategies to ensure the ‘trustworthiness’ of the findings” (p. 1). To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, a number of strategies were employed, including keeping meticulous records, validating the respondents’ identities and positions, and taking note of similarities/differences in the responses of different interviewees.

Online records of the interviews were created in Survey Monkey, and interview transcripts were developed. In taking these steps, I sought to ensure that the views and opinions of the interviewees were accurately presented, in turn enhancing the credibility and reliability of the research findings (Creswell, 2013). To enhance the credibility and reliability of the research findings, I also used cross checking. Through cross checking, the responses of the interviewees were compared for similarities and differences (Malterud, 2001). I anticipated that participants would respond to the questions freely, would feel at ease, and would have the ability to read and write in English. I sent invitations to participate to leaders of the Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota, whom I identified by searching LinkedIn; Somali American males aged 18 to 25 were recruited by advertisement.

Similar to the idea of generalizability in quantitative studies, transferability in qualitative research refers to the extent to which the study's findings are applicable to other contexts or individuals due to shared experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I obtained two samples of six participants for each interview group, who were Somali American men aged 18 to 25 who responded to the survey. Future researchers may be able to build on the results of this study with different populations.

Dependability involves the consistency of the process and product of research over a period of time under various conditions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To demonstrate dependability, I initiated an audit trail to record the processes this study used in case future researchers wish to repeat this study (Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004). I created audit trails, coding, and themes to ensure trustworthiness from the beginning of the research process to the final analysis of data. As required, I will preserve and maintain notes, questionnaires, and the answers to the questionnaires for review when necessary by other researchers.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a main condition for confirmability is the degree to which the researcher acknowledges his or her own predispositions. The goal of this research was to find out the lived experiences of Somali American men in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and not to confirm or support my thoughts or bias as an intelligence professional (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). To establish confirmability, data collected from each participant was checked and rechecked during analysis of the data to minimize bias.

As an intelligence professional, it was important and necessary for me to attempt to bracket my knowledge of Al-Shabaab, terrorism, and the different cultural background of Somali Americans. I set aside my individual judgments about Somali Americans and terrorism. Furthermore, the transcripts of participants' responses have been saved on my password-protected computer and will be retained for evaluation at any time by other researchers for a period of not less than 5 years.

### **Discrepant Data**

According to Rumrill, Cook, and Wiley (2011), the findings and emerging themes in a study do not always support the preliminary assertions or conclusions made by the researcher. Such findings are discrepant and should be critically examined in order to avoid dismissal of relevant data. Analysis of the findings in this study indicated discrepant cases from both the first and the second interviewee groups.

The first case of discrepant data in the first interviewee group indicated a relationship between religious affiliation, beliefs and values, and terrorism. Five interviewees out of six in the first interviewee group held the opinion that there was no relationship between religion and terrorism. Therefore, the emerging theme from the interview question "Do you believe there a relationship between religious affiliation, beliefs and values, and terrorism?" was negative. The second discrepant case indicated that there was no relationship between sense of injustice toward Muslims and the decision to join terrorist networks by young Muslims. Only two responses from the first interviewee group to the interview question "Does a sense of a social injustice against Muslims from different parts of the world influence Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali

young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?” were affirmative. One interviewee’s response to this question indicated that claims of social injustice against Muslims from different parts of the world were just propaganda to lure young Muslims to join terrorist networks. Therefore, the emerging theme from this research question was discrepant.

The third discrepant case was from the second interviewee group. It also pertained to the relationship between religious affiliation, beliefs, values, and terrorism. In response to the research question “From interactions with young adults in your community and past experiences, do you believe there is a relationship between religious affiliation, beliefs and values, and terrorism,” five of the interviewees’ comments were negative, and one was neither positive nor negative. Interviewees 1 and 2 both had strong opinions about this research question. Interviewee 1 stated,

No, it is without a doubt that the majority of the religious community does not condone murder, extremism, and/or the killing of innocent people. Terrorism is not a form of Jihad, nor is it justified in any regard by the Muslim faith.

Interviewee 2, on the other hand, stated,

Absolutely no! There are a lot of religious leaders, who sometimes use religion out of context to influence terrorism, and some religious leaders use religion a tool to also create fear for their followers, in order to create power for themselves. That creates a generation of Muslims, who knows Islam as violence. The way their Imams preach them, which basically is not Islam, but narrow vision version which is created by those self-appointed Imams.

The findings regarding the relationship between religious affiliation, beliefs, values, and terrorism were discrepant. The second case of discrepant data from the second interviewee group was in regard to the research question “Do you believe that the level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units among young adults in your community influences their likelihood to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?” The fourth interviewee from the second group had a very strong opinion in regards to this question. The interviewee stated,

No, in my experience, attachment to family and social units doesn't increase or decrease the likelihood to join the likes of Al-Shabaab. Rather, it is the opposite. It is a fact that most parents are unaware of when, how kids are recruited and when they plan to leave. Due to change in immigrant family dynamics, high divorce rate among at least Somali families' kids are detached from their parents, who have less control of their kids.

Only one interviewee's response to this question was affirmative; thus, the findings for this question were basically discrepant.

The second case of discrepant data from the second interviewee group may have been due to a large extent to the use of technical terms by the interviewee. In response to the research question “Do you believe that the level of attachment, involvement, and commitment to family and other social units among young adults in your community influences their likelihood to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network,” his statement was basically negative. Notably, only one interviewee's response to this question was affirmative; thus, the findings for this question were discrepant.



However, another finding from the same interviewee group indicated that they believed that strong family and societal ties would deter Somali American youths in Minneapolis from joining terrorist networks.

### **Survey Analysis**

#### **Interview Group 1: Somali American Males, Aged 18 to 25**

**Research question.** What motivates Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network? To answer the research question above, the participants in this study were asked 14 questions through an online survey.

**Interview Question 1.** What social factors do you believe motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “Lack of employment and limited skills, limited resources, and marginalized communities.”

Interviewee 2: “Lack job and parent structure.”

Interviewee 3: “Identity crisis.”

Interviewee 4: “Pressure from law enforcements, lack of resources and opportunities, and cultural barriers between their parents and them.”

Interviewee 5: “Lack of employment, identity, and father figure.”

Interviewee 6: “Lack of employment.”

**Analysis.** Social factors are a motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 2.** Do you believe there a relationship between religious affiliation, beliefs and values and terrorism?

Interviewee 1: No relationship between religion and terrorism. “No I don’t believe, I think Terrorism it has nothing to do with beliefs of religion. Islam is peace as it is.”

Interviewee 2: “No relationship.”

Interviewee 3: “There is a relationship between religion and terrorism.”

Interviewee 4: “No relationship.”

Interviewee 5: “No relationship.”

Interviewee 6: “No relationship.”

**Analysis.** There is no relationship between religion and terrorism.

**Interview Question 3.** Do Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali communities experience social inequality?

Interviewee 1: “Yes, due to lack of adequate resources and inability to integrate with other communities in the United States.”

Interviewee 2: “Yes.”

Interviewee 3: “Yes.”

Interviewee 4: “Yes. Of course for educational, health and job opportunities are those they are not receiving because they aren’t part of top decision makers.”

Interviewee 5: “Not sure; a sense of social injustice maybe one of the motivating factors for Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.”

Interviewee 6: “Definitely.”

**Analysis.** There is a relationship between a social inequality and the decision for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 4.** Does a sense of a social injustice against Muslims from different parts of the world influence Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network? Please describe.

Interviewee 1: “No, it does not. This propaganda to lure young Muslims to join their terrorist networks.”

Interviewee 2: “No.”

Interviewee 3: “Yes.”

Interviewee 4: “No.”

Interviewee 5: “Not sure.”

Interviewee 6: “Possibly.”

**Analysis.** No relationship between sense of injustice towards Muslims and decision to join terrorist networks by young Muslims.

**Interview Question 5.** Does level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units influence the likelihood of Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network? If so, please explain.

Interviewee 1: “No, it does not.”

Interviewee 2: “Maybe.”

Interviewee 3: “Yes.”

Interviewee 4: “No.”

Interviewee 5: “Yes, if there are no family or relatives that can influence a young person I think is easy to be derailed.”

Interviewee 6: “Yes.”

**Analysis.** There is a relationship between level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units influence the likelihood of Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab.

**Interview Question 6.** Do you believe that Somali Americans youths in Minnesota, Minneapolis, that have strong relationship with their families and the American society are less likely to engage in terrorist activities?

Interviewee 1: “Yes I think so, because the bad groups cannot get any chance to influence them if they have strong relationship with their families.”

Interviewee 2: “Yes.”

Interviewee 3: “Yes.”

Interviewee 4: “Yes.”

Interviewee 5: “Yes.”

Interviewee 6: “Yes.”

**Analysis.** Strong family and societal ties would deter Somali Americans youths in Minnesota, Minneapolis from joining terrorist networks.

**Interview Question 7.** What psychological factors do you believe motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “Drug addiction, school dropout and mental illness such as psychosis.”

Interviewee 2: “Depression.”

Interviewee 3: “Lack of mentoring.”

Interviewee 4: “Police, lack of understanding of their parents and lack of resources or opportunities.”

Interviewee 5: “Not sure.”

Interviewee 6: “Depression due to lack of opportunity and racism.”

**Analysis.** Psychological problems including mental illness are a key influencing factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 8.** Does criminal behavior/intention predispose Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab?

Interviewee 1: “Yes they do, because if they committed such crimes they need to get exit.”

Interviewee 2: “Could be.”

Interviewee 3: “No.”

Interviewee 4: “Yes, if they can't get jobs or can't attend school could be one of the causes.”

Interviewee 5: “Not sure.”

Interviewee 6: “Yes.”

**Analysis.** Criminal behavior predisposes Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 9.** What situational factors do you believe motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab?

Interviewee 1: “Unemployment and lack of education.”

Interviewee 2: “No jobs.”

Interviewee 3: “Not knowing who the yes.”

Interviewee 4: “Media propaganda and false image about Islam.”

Interviewee 5: “Issues with identity and employment.”

Interviewee 6: “Broken home, lack of money.”

**Analysis.** Situational factors including unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, media propaganda, false image about Islam are key motivating factor for

Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab.

**Interview Question 10.** Do you believe that modern platforms of communications are influencing Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?"

Interviewee 1: "Yes, mass media it is number one."

Interviewee 2: "It could be."

Interviewee 3: "Yes."

Interviewee 4: "No."

Interviewee 5: "Yes."

Interviewee 6: "Yes, it is the easiest way to reach out to young Somalis."

**Analysis.** Modern platforms of communications are being used as a tool to influence Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab.

**Interview Question 11.** To what extent is social media being used as a platform for radicalization?

Interviewee 1: "A great extent. Social media is very fast and it is the mother of radicalization."

Interviewee 2: "I have no idea."

Interviewee 3: "85%"

Interviewee 4: “American Media when they show the young kids bad image about Islam then they get difficulties from their American friends, schools and play grounds.”

Interviewee 5: “Social media is the main platform in my opinion.”

Interviewee 6: “It is the main reason for recruitment due to its ease to reach people.”

**Analysis.** Social media is a main platform for targeting recruits for radicalization.

**Interview Question 12.** Do you believe that Minneapolis, Somali adults (ages 18-25) that leave the United States and join Al-Shabaab terrorist do so because of lack of economic sustenance opportunities?

Interviewee 1: “Yes, I believe they do.”

Interviewee 2: “I have no idea.”

Interviewee 3: “Yes, create jobs for the youth.”

Interviewee 4: “Yes, I don't think if that is true I would still blame lack of resources. When they are that age I don't they go and search something from Internet. Because they don't have nothing to do and they get more free time to search or to watch the news.”

Interviewee 5: “Yes.”

Interviewee 6: “Yes.”

**Analysis.** The lack of economic sustenance opportunities is a key motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) that leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.



**Interview Question 13.** What measures should the government put in place in order to deter Minneapolis, Somali adults (ages 18-25) from leaving the United States to join Al-Shabaab?

Interviewee 1: “Monitoring their movement.”

Interviewee 2: “Opportunity hubs.”

Interviewee 3: “Invest time and provide opportunities.”

Interviewee 4: “I don't know.”

Interviewee 5: “Opportunities.”

Interviewee 6: “Family enrichment programs and job training.”

**Analysis.** Measures such as opportunity hubs and monitoring can help the government to deter Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) from leaving the US to join Al-Shabaab.

**Interview Question 14.** What programs and opportunities should the United States government provide to Muslim youth specifically of Somali descent to deter them from leaving the United States to join Al-Shabaab?

Interviewee 1: “Sports programs, skills development, after school programs and cultural events activities.”

Interviewee 2: “Good programs.”

Interviewee 3: “After school programs.”

Interviewee 4: “I mentioned all at the above questions.”

Interviewee 5: “Training and education.”

Interviewee 6: “Maybe a mentor program and job training.”

**Analysis.** Programs including Sports programs, skills development, after school programs and cultural events activities can help the government to deter Muslim youth specifically of Somali descent from leaving the US to join Al-Shabaab.

Most of the participants hold the opinion that the government can use programs including Sports programs, skills development, after school programs and cultural events activities can help the government to deter Muslim youth specifically of Somali descent from leaving the US to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. In addition, the government can use training and education programs to achieve this objective.

Table 3

*Propositions, Themes, and Subthemes*

Proposition	Theme	Subtheme
Social factors motivate young Muslim adults background of Somali ethnic background to join terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor family structure and roles is a key motivating factor for young Muslim adults to join terrorist network</li> <li>• Cultural issues are also a key motivating factor for young Muslim adults to join terrorist network</li> <li>• Inequality and marginalization among Somali communities residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota is also a key motivating factor for young Muslim adults to join terrorist network</li> </ul>	Cultural incongruence may cause identity crisis in turn motivating factor for young Muslim adults to join terrorist network
There is a relationship between religious affiliation, beliefs and values and terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relationship between religion and terrorism</li> </ul>	
Minnesota Somali communities experience social inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social inequality among populations of Somali origin residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota motivates Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	Populations of Somali origin residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota motivates Somali do not have equal access to jobs and education opportunities which motivates Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.
Social injustice against Muslims from different parts of the world motivates young Muslim adults background of Somali ethnic background to join terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relationship between sense of injustice towards Muslims and decision to join terrorist networks by young Muslims</li> </ul>	The sense of injustice towards Muslims is propaganda used by terrorist networks to lure young Muslims to join their networks
The level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units influences the likelihood of young Muslim adults background of Somali ethnic background to join terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units does not influence young Muslim adults background of Somali ethnic background to join terrorist network</li> </ul>	

*(table continues)*

Proposition	Theme	Subtheme
If Somali Americans youths in Minneapolis, Minnesota, have strong relationship with their families and the American society they are less likely to engage in terrorist activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong family and societal ties would deter Somali Americans youths in Minnesota, Minneapolis from joining terrorist networks</li> </ul>	
Psychological factors motivate young Somali Americans in Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the US and join Al-Shabaab network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psychological problems including mental illness are a key motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	Lack of understanding from parents and the police, lack of mentorship and similar opportunities may cause psychological problems, which in turn serves as a motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.
Criminal behavior/intention predispose Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Criminal behavior motivates Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	
Situational factors motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Situational factors including unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, media propaganda, false image about Islam are key motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	
Modern platforms of communications influence Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modern platforms of communications are being used as a tool to influence Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	
Social media is being used as a platform for radicalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media is being used a platform for radicalization</li> </ul>	

Proposition	Theme	Subtheme
The lack of economic sustenance opportunities is motivating Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The lack of economic sustenance opportunities is a key motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) that leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>(table continues)</i></p> Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) that do not have education and job opportunities are more likely to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network
There are measures that the government can put in place in order to deter Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) from leaving the US to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measures such as opportunity hubs and monitoring can help the government to deter Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) from leaving the US to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	
There are programs and opportunities that the United States government can provide to Muslim youth specifically of Somali descent to deter them from leaving the US to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs including Sports programs, skills development, after school programs and cultural events activities can help the government to deter Muslim youth specifically of Somali descent from leaving the US to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.</li> </ul>	

## Interview Group 2: Somali Community Leaders

**Research question.** What motivates Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

To answer the research question above the participants in this doctoral study were asked 14 questions through in-depth interviews.

**Interview Question 1.** As a leader in the Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota what social factors do you believe motivate young adults (ages 18- 25) in your community to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “Marginalization by the society, sense of detachment from peers and other social system and incarceration. Interviewee 1 feels that...often times the young Somali American youths that experience marginalization by the society, sense of detachment from peers and other social system and incarceration turn to religion for answers and when they are most vulnerable they get preyed on by terrorist networks.”

Interviewee 2: “Lack of opportunity, poverty and racism.”

Interviewee 3: “Lack of identity, false sense of duty and brainwashing.”

Interviewee 4: “Identity crisis, language barrier, too much pressure from the education system and inequality.”

Interviewee 5: “Failure to adapt to western culture and a sense of nationalism with native land.”

Interviewee 6: “Sense of not belonging, lack of opportunity.”

**Analysis.** Social factors are a strong motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

The Somali Community leaders estimate that there are diverse social factors including marginalization by the society, sense of detachment from peers and other social system, incarceration, lack of opportunity, poverty, racism, lack of identity, false sense of duty, brainwashing, identity crisis, language barrier, too much pressure from the education system and inequality that motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 2.** From your interactions with young adults in your community and past experiences do you believe there is a relationship between religious affiliation, beliefs and values and terrorism?

Interviewee 1: “No, it is without a doubt that the majority of the religious community does not condone murder, extremism, and or the killing of innocent people. Terrorism is not a form of Jihad nor is it justified in any regard by the Muslim faith.”

Interviewee 2: “Absolutely no! There are a lot of religious leaders, who sometimes use religion out of context to influence terrorism, and some religious leaders use religion a tool to also create fear for their followers, in order to create power for themselves. That creates a generation of Muslims, who knows Islam as violence. The way their Imams preach them, which basically is not Islam, but narrow vision version which is created by those self-appointed Imams.”

Interviewee 3: “It depends.”

Interviewee 4: “Not at all.”

Interviewee 5: “No.”

Interviewee 6: “No; however, the relationship depends on an individuals’ interpretation of their religion.”

**Analysis.** There is no relationship between religion and terrorism.

**Interview Question 3.** Have you experienced or, witnessed any form of social inequality in the Somali community residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota? If so, what do you think is the impact on young adults in your community?

Interviewee 1: “Yes, there is a social divide between Somali youth and their western counter parts. But I believe that gap can be closed. As a youth the most vital aspect to learning and self-discovery is HUMAN INTERACTION. That off-course, is limited if non-existent do specifically to the public housing system.”

Interviewee 2: “Yes, in the school system, job market and even through police brutality.”

Interviewee 3: “Yes, Somali Youths are being closed off from main stream community.”

Interviewee 4: “Yes, it is making it easy for terrorist groups to recruit young Somali Americans.”

Interviewee 5: “Yes, prejudice in jobs, schools.”

Interviewee 6: “Yes, Somalis find it difficult to fit in with the American way of life and are torn between traditional Somali culture and what is expected of them in Minneapolis.”

**Analysis.** There is a relationship between a social inequality and the decision for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.



**Interview Question 4.** As a leader in the Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota, do you believe that a sense of a social injustice against Muslims from different parts of the world influences young adults (ages 18- 25) in your community to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “At the late stages of radicalization yes, because they are constantly told about the suffering of their fellow Muslims around the world (at the hands of non-Muslim) but rarely point out the political, economic, and sometimes natural factors that is also prevalent in those situations.”

Interviewee 2: “Yes and no, this could be a yes or no answer. If Muslims in Minnesota face racism or unequal treatment here in Minneapolis, as a digital generation, what is happening somewhere in the world could influence too. However, I believe, if Somali or Muslim Americans have the trust and necessary opportunities here in America, they won't have join Al-Qaeda groups around the world. They feel not safe here and that creates social cleavages or animosity toward the US or the West.”

Interviewee 3: “Yes.”

Interviewee 4: “Yes.”

Interviewee 5: “Yes.”

Interviewee 6: “Yes, it is all over the news and social media what is going on in the Muslim world.”

**Analysis.** There is a relationship between sense of injustice towards Muslims and decision to join terrorist networks by young Muslims.

**Interview Question 5.** Do you believe that the level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units among young adults in your community influences their likelihood to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “Yes.”

Interviewee 2: “No.”

Interviewee 3: “Not necessarily.”

Interviewee 4: “No, in my experience, attachment to family and social units doesn't increase or decrease the likelihood to join the likes of Al-Shabaab. Rather, it is the opposite. It is a fact that most parents are unaware of when, how kids are recruited and when they plan to leave. Due to Change in immigrant family dynamics, high divorce rate among at least Somali family's kids are detached from their parents who have less control of their kids.”

Interviewee 5: “No.”

Interviewee 6: “Not necessarily.”

**Analysis.** No relationship between level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units influence the likelihood of Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 6.** Do you believe that Somali American youths in Minnesota, Minneapolis that have strong relationship with their families and the American society are less likely to engage in terrorist activities? If so, please explain.

Interviewee 1: “Without a question.”

Interviewee 2: “Yes, mostly, anti-social introvert are those who join Al-Shabaab or terrorists. Why? They simply do not have someone who answers their questions or who to share with their problems. Usually, they are from single parent households without father figures in their families. Therefore, this recruiter, who do not know any religion would bring their ideas to this young man, and he would take his answers like heavenly messages. Always, these recruiters target introverts and gullible, who are not bright to reject their agendas.”

Interviewee 3: “It depends on the individual.”

Interviewee 4: “Yes, I think so, I notice that most of the kids who are recruited are academically challenged, some have criminal record, and parents are less educated. One needs at least certain level of education and being able to effectively speak English in order to integrate. That is not the case for majority of the families in Minnesota.”

Interviewee 5: “Yes, assimilation into America plays a big part.”

Interviewee 6: “Yes, family is integral part of Somalis.”

**Analysis.** Strong family and societal ties would deter Somali Americans youths in Minnesota, Minneapolis from joining terrorist networks.

**Interview Question 7.** From your interactions with young adults in your community what psychological factors do you believe would motivate them to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “Inability to integrate into the American Society and culture.”

Interviewee 2: “Sense of despair.”

Interviewee 3: “Lack of identity, false sense of duty, brainwashing.”

Interviewee 4: “Drugs are increasingly used by Somali youth which I believe has long lasting negative psychological effect on Somali kids. Being closed society and Muslim, Somali kids as well as adults pay higher price when they use drugs than other communities. Whoever uses drugs are segregated from the community. This is the case whether someone uses crack cocaine or alcohol. They are viewed as irresponsible, and morally corrupted though they might be just the opposite. Disconnected from their families and community, provide opportunity for al-Shabaab and other terrorist organizations.”

Interviewee 5: “Disenfranchisement with American dream that is unattainable to them.”

Interviewee 6: “Depression and sense of not fitting into community.”

**Analysis.** Psychological problems emanating from situational factors and behavioral such as drug use are a key influencing factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 8.** As a leader in the Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota do you believe that criminal behavior/intention predisposes Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “Absolutely.”

Interviewee 2: “Yes, criminal behavior predisposes them to terrorist activity.”

Interviewee 3: “Not necessarily.”

Interviewee 4: “I don't think so.”

Interviewee 5: “No.”

Interviewee 6: “Possibly.”

**Analysis.** Criminal behavior predisposes Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 9.** From your interactions and past experiences with young adults in the Somali Community in Minneapolis, Minnesota what situational factors do you believe motivates them to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “Family, schooling, economic factors and media.”

Interviewee 2: “Racism, poverty and hard life.”

Interviewee 3: “Tensions between different ethnic groups, others previously listed.”

Interviewee 4: “Nationalistic ideology.”

Interviewee 5: “Family, economic factors.”

Interviewee 6: “Racism, prejudice, lack of opportunity here in Minneapolis.”

**Analysis.** Situational factors including family situation, economic factors, media, poverty and racism are key motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 10.** Do you believe that modern platforms of communications are influencing Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “Yes.”

Interviewee 2: “Yes! Internet is two-edged knife! One bad edge and good one.”

Interviewee 3: “It could be a contributing factor.”

Interviewee 4: “Of course, internet has been big when it comes to recruiting young adults so as local media TV, whose reports seem subjective and not-objective-who constantly and purposefully create link Islam and terrorism doesn't help at all. It alienates the event most moderate among Muslims.”

Interviewee 5: “Absolutely, recruiters design videos to glorify jihad.”

Interviewee 6: “Yes.”

**Analysis.** Modern platforms of communications are being used as a tool to influence Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 11.** Do you believe that Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) that leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network do so because of lack of economic sustenance opportunities?

Interviewee 1: “Lack of economic sustenance is a major factor. When youth work they make a living they have money to spend on activities and more importantly they are more proud and hold a higher regard for themselves.”

Interviewee 2: “Yes.”

Interviewee 3: “No. Some of the recruited ones that were eventually caught had bright educational and economic prospects.”

Interviewee 4: “It is big part of it.”

Interviewee 5: “Yes.”

Interviewee 6: “Yes.”

**Analysis.** The lack of economic sustenance opportunities is a key motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) that leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 12.** As a leader in the Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota: What measures should the government put in place in order to deter Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “Jobs specifically designed for at risk youth.”

Interviewee 2: “Strengthen the relationship between law enforcement and the community, community development programs and opportunities for the

youth, home-ownership programs, integration programs for young Somali Americans and other communities and leadership programs for the Youth.”

Interviewee 3: “Open dialogue and interaction, inclusion of community in decision-making process, earn trust.”

Interviewee 4: “Investing in education and addressing social injustices.”

Interviewee 5: “Technical job training and cultural assimilation classes in school.”

Interviewee 6: “Community based centers to train and assist in job placement.”

**Analysis.** Measures such as job opportunities, open dialogue, addressing social injustices and enhanced relationship with law enforcement can help the government to deter Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 13.** What programs and opportunities should the United States government provide to Muslim youths specifically of Somali descent to deter them from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “Cultural festivals aimed at integration of Somali American youths into main stream communities.”

Interviewee 2: “Job creation for the youth, economic development and using less media on this subject.”

Interviewee 3: No response

Interviewee 4: “Building trust between law enforcement and the community is important. Creating jobs, investing in education, health and addressing



social and economic inequalities will help Somali/Muslim communities integrate faster while reducing the number of recruited young adults by terrorist organizations.”

Interviewee 5: “Involve them more in the community to build sense of ownership and responsibility. This networks them into the community.”

Interviewee 6: “Job creation and increase in Somali businesses.”

**Analysis.** Programs including cultural events, job creation, economic development opportunities and building trust with activities can help the government to deter Muslim youth specifically of Somali descent from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Interview Question 14.** Should the government intensify monitoring in order to deter Muslim youths specifically of Somali descent to deter them from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Interviewee 1: “That is actually part of the problem. Probing the Somali youth creates distrust stemmed from generalization.”

Interviewee 2: “If you monitor me without my knowledge or without exposing later to the media, that is would be ok and more useful. But, monitoring in such ways that I have been seeing recently is more detrimental to United States intelligence community than doing a great job. This requires good consultants, who are honest, and understand both cultures, languages, or sometimes three cultures, Somali, Muslim and Western culture. But the problem here is that, one old white guy would parachute into the Somali

community in three weeks and then will become a constant expert in Somali affairs. If that is the case, good luck US government! Lol.”

Interviewee 3: “Intensifying monitoring by itself would not solve the problem.”

Interviewee 4: “The government should stop monitoring Muslim communities and should do the opposite instead. It creates suspicion among the community and between the community and law enforcement.”

Interviewee 5: “No, unless there is a threat that has been identified in the community with reliable information.”

Interviewee 6: “No, it would anger the Somali community, back dooring trust that’s being built.”

**Analysis.** Intensify monitoring of Somali American youths by the government will not deter them from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network?

Table 4

*Propositions, Themes, and Subthemes in Interviewee Group 2*

Proposition	Theme	Subtheme
Social factors motivate young Muslim adults background of Somali ethnic background to join terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marginalization causes a sense of detachment among Somali communities residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota is also a key motivating factor for young Muslim adults to join terrorist network.</li> <li>• Social inequality Minnesota is also a key motivating factor for young Muslim adults in Minneapolis Minnesota to join terrorist network.</li> </ul>	The lack of jobs and education opportunities that is common place among young Muslim adults in Minneapolis Minnesota motivates them to join terrorist network
There is a relationship between religious affiliation, beliefs and values and terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relationship between religion and terrorism</li> </ul>	Islam religion is being used out of context to lure young Somali Americans into terrorist networks.
Minnesota Somali communities experience social inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social inequality facing young Somali Americans residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota motivates Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	
Social injustice against Muslims from different parts of the world motivates young Muslim adults background of Somali ethnic background to join terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of injustice towards Muslims around the world is a motivating factor for young Somali Americans that join terrorist networks</li> </ul>	
The level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units influences the likelihood of young Muslim adults background of Somali ethnic background to join terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units does not influence young Muslim adults background of Somali ethnic background to join terrorist network</li> </ul>	

*(table continues)*

Proposition	Theme	Subtheme
If Somali American youths in Minneapolis, Minnesota, have strong relationship with their families and the American society they are less likely to engage in terrorist activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong family and societal ties would deter Somali Americans youths in Minnesota, Minneapolis from joining terrorist networks</li> </ul>	
Psychological factors motivate young Somali Americans in Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psychological problems emanating from sense of despair, drug use and inability to integrate into mainstream community are a key motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	
Criminal behavior/intention predispose Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Criminal behavior motivates Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	Criminal behavior isolates young Somali Americans from the rest of the community so they turn to religion and because they are vulnerable they easily lured by terrorist networks.
Situational factors motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Situational factors economic hardships, family situations, racism and poverty are key motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	
Modern platforms of communications influence Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modern platforms of communications especially the internet are being used as a tool to influence Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	

(table continues)

Proposition	Theme	Subtheme
The lack of economic sustenance opportunities is motivating Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The lack of economic sustenance opportunities is a key motivating factor for Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) that leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	
There are measures that the government can put in place in order to deter Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measures such job opportunities, open dialogue, addressing social injustices and enhanced relationship with law enforcement can help the government to deter Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	
There are programs and opportunities that the United States government can provide to Muslim youth specifically of Somali descent to deter them from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs such as cultural events, job creation, economic development opportunities and building trust with activities can help the government to deter Muslim youth specifically of Somali descent from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.</li> </ul>	
The government can deter Muslim youths specifically of Somali descent from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network by intensifying monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intensify monitoring of Somali American youths by the government will not deter them from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network</li> </ul>	

Although the two interview groups that participated in this doctoral study have different demographic characteristics, their response to the interview questions are invariably similar on most of the interview questions used to investigate the factors that motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join Al-Shabaab. In addition, although the interview questions were tailored for each group, the underlying propositions of the questions were basically the same.

### **Summary**

Participants in the study described their lived experiences with religious, cultural, and social factors that may/may not contribute to joining Al-Shabaab. Understanding the factors that motivate young Somali males, ages 18-25, to leave the United States to join Al-Shabaab is necessary for the United States government and for Somali communities in Minneapolis to develop measures and programs to deter such a phenomenon. The situational factors that motivate young Somali males in Minneapolis to join the Al-Shabaab include unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, media propaganda, and false representation of Islam. Another factor identified in the interviews is a person's psychological problem, which could come from parents' or the police force's misunderstanding of their plight. It is, therefore, for Somali-American families in the United States to develop close-knit families and provide positive role models for Somali young adults. To effect additional positive social change, it is critical for the police to develop communication links, or even hotlines, with young Somali Americans so that they know that they can trust the police and not fear them. The sense of a social injustice that many Muslims in the world feel does influence Somali young adults to leave the

United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. The majority of the participants in this study concur with that statement. In chapter 5, I discuss the findings, limitations, recommendations, implications that may lead to social change, and conclusion of the study.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

For this dissertation, I sought to identify the factors that motivate young Somali adults aged 18 to 25 who live in Minneapolis to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network, as well as to recommend measures that may help bring positive social change in the community. This study is significant because it applies Hirschi's social bond theory/social control theory and Merton's theory of relative deprivation. This chapter presents an interpretation of the findings, an assessment of the utility of the study's conceptual framework, the limitations of the study, recommendations for further research and practical measures to effect social change, and the study's conclusion.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The study found that there are diverse factors that motivate young Somali adults ages 18 to 25 who live in Minneapolis to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. Fourteen themes emerged from the interviews and are discussed below.

#### **Theme 1: Social Factors Motivate Young Muslim Somali Americans to Join Terrorist Networks**

An emerging theme from both interview groups was that social factors are a strong motivating factor for Somali young adults (ages 18-25) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to leave the United States and join Al-Shabaab. The first interview group cited social factors such as family structure and roles, as well as cultural issues such as cultural incongruence, inequality, and marginalization, as the key social factors that motivate Somali young adults in Minneapolis, Minnesota, toward Al-Shabaab. Similarly,



the second interview group cited marginalization by society, a sense of detachment from peers and other social systems, incarceration, lack of opportunity, poverty, racism, lack of identity, false sense of duty, brainwashing, identity crisis, language barrier, too much pressure from the education system, and inequality as the social factors that motivate Somali young adults toward Al-Shabaab. The results revealed that both groups hold the opinion that social factors emanating from cultural factors, economic factors, and family background have a huge impact on the decision by Somali young adults (ages 18-25) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. This finding is in line with Merton's (1938) relative deprivation theory, which indicates that the inability of some factions to reach everyday societal goals causes social anomie. Young Somali adults become radicalized when they feel deprived of economic, social, or cultural opportunities to which they feel entitled.

## **Theme 2: Religion Is Not a Motivator**

This study found that no relationship between religion and terrorism. The majority of the interviewees in both groups felt that there is no relationship between religion and terrorism. They argued that terrorist networks are misinterpreting Islamic teachings to enhance their self-serving interest. This finding is in line with the findings presented in the article “Islam Teaches Tolerance Not Hate: We Need to Rid Society of Extremism” by Musharaf (2002), who argued that the extremist views and violent activities of terrorist networks are not based on Islamic teachings. Islam is a peaceful religion that advocates for peace and tolerance.

**Theme 3: American Somali Communities in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Experience****Social Inequality**

Both the first and second interview groups concurred that American Somali communities in Minneapolis, Minnesota, experience social inequality. The emerging theme from this proposition was that there is a relationship between social inequality and the decision to join a terrorist network for Somali young adults. Both interview groups expressed the belief that American Somali communities in Minneapolis, Minnesota, experience inequality, especially due to lack of opportunities that are accorded to other communities of non-Somali origin in the country. Lack of job opportunities especially predisposes Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. This finding is also in line with Merton's (1938) relative deprivation theory, which indicates that the inability of some factions to reach everyday societal goals causes social anomie. Lack of economic, social, or cultural opportunities for young Somali adults leads to feelings of social anomie.

**Theme 4: Social Injustice Against Muslims From Different Parts of the World Motivates Young Muslim Adults of Somali Ethnic Background to Join Terrorist Networks**

The two interview groups had different views on this theme. In one group, 60% of the interviewees indicated that young Muslims' decision to join Al-Shabaab is not influenced by a sense of social injustice. In the second group, all of the interviewees stated that young Somali Americans are motivated by a sense of social injustice to join Al-Shabaab but that this is because terrorist networks use "social injustice" as a lure for

young Somali Americans to join their cause. In an article published by the *Huffington Post* (Sledge, 2015), the Council on American-Islamic Relations stated, “Theologically Islam is no more violent or less violent than Christianity or any other monotheistic religion [...] I think one stereotype is true: that Muslims are being highly discriminated against. So that's an experience which people have experienced firsthand.” It appears, therefore, that even though social injustice does not actually motivate young Somali adults to join Al-Shabaab, this remains a predominant belief in society.

**Theme 5: The Level of Attachment, Involvement, and Commitment to Family and Other Social Units Influences the Likelihood of Young Muslim Adults of Somali Ethnic Background Joining Terrorist Networks**

On this theme, there were different results from the two interview groups. In the first group, 40% of the interviewees stated that they believed that the level of attachment, involvement, and commitment to family and other social units influences young Somali adults to join Al-Shabaab. Another 40% did not believe this to be true, and the remaining 20% were unsure.

In the second group, composed of community leaders, 75% of the interviewees indicated that the level of attachment, involvement, and commitment to family and other social units does not influence young Somali adults to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

In his quest to gain deeper insight into criminal behavior, Merton developed a typology of deviance (“Robert K. Merton,” 2015). Conformity is one of the components of this typology. In any society, individuals who want to achieve their goals—economic,

social or cultural—must conform to established systems and rules. As such, individuals who exhibit a high level of attachment, involvement, and commitment to family and other social units are more likely to conform with those systems and rules. This is in line with Hirschi's social bond/social control theory (1969). This theory indicates that the family unit and the society play a significant role in influencing criminal behavior. According to Leary (2004), the presence or absence of relationships and commitments in an individual's life has a direct influence on the likelihood that a particular individual will break the law. This is applicable to the group studied in this dissertation.

The interviewees in both groups felt that if a young Somali American has strong family ties, he or she is not likely to be lured by terrorist networks. If the same youth, however, does not have strong family and societal ties, he or she will tend to look for acceptance in religion. If, in the process of becoming more devout, this youth encounters recruiters for a terrorist network posing as religious leaders, then the young adult will be easily radicalized. In this situation, Merton's concept of conformity is relevant. Young Somali adults in Minneapolis who do not have strong ties to the society and their families and who do not conform to the established systems and rules in American society are more likely to engage in criminal behavior, which includes joining the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

This finding is also in line with Hirschi's (1969) social bond/social control theory, which indicates that the presence or absence of relationships and commitments in an individual's life has a direct influence on the likelihood that a particular individual will break the law. The nature of the family and societal ties possessed by young Somali

adults in Minneapolis significantly influences their likelihood of leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Theme 6: Psychological Factors Motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali Young Adults (Ages 18-25) to Leave the United States and Join the Al-Shabaab Network**

This study found a positive relationship between psychological factors and the decision of young Somali Americans in Minneapolis to join the Al-Shabaab network.

Both interview groups expressed the belief that psychological factors are a key influence on the decision to engage in this social evil. The interviewees identified the following psychological factors as influential: drug addiction, problems that lead to dropping out of school, mental illness, lack of understanding from parents and police, lack of mentorship and similar opportunities, inability to integrate into the American society and culture, sense of despair, lack of identity, false sense of duty, brainwashing, and drug use and abuse.

This finding is in line with Merton's strain theory, according to which any dysfunction that leads to a gap between an individual's goals and aspirations and the individual's ability to achieve them may lead to several adaptations, which include rebellion. Rebellion, one of the deviances identified in Morton's typology, occurs when an individual's means to achieve his or her goals do not conform to societal structures and rules. Psychological factors are dysfunctions that cause strain between the goals of young Somali adults and their capacity to achieve to those goals. This strain, in turn, can lead them to rebel by leaving the United States and joining the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Theme 7: Criminal Behavior/Intention Predisposes Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali Young Adults (Ages 18-25) to Leave the United States and Join the Al-Shabaab Terrorist Network**

Both groups expressed the belief that criminal behavior predisposes young Somali adults in Minneapolis to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. The emerging theme from both groups was that “criminal behavior predisposes Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.” The only disparities between the findings from the two groups were the emerging subthemes. Notably, interviewees from the first group believed that lack of job and education opportunities cause Somali young adults (ages 18-25) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to turn to crime, which then predisposes them to terrorist activities because they become segregated from the community. Lack of jobs makes them idle, which causes them to be lured by terrorist networks. On the other hand, interviewees from the second group argued that Somali young adults (ages 18-25) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, engage in criminal behavior turn to religion for acceptance, and since they are vulnerable, they tend to be exploited by recruiters from terrorist networks posing as religious leaders. This finding is also in line with Merton’s strain theory. Criminal behavior may be considered a dysfunction that creates a strain between the young adult’s goals and his or her ability to achieve them, which, in turn, could lead to rebellion. Young Somali adults who exhibit criminal behavior are not fully accepted by their society, and joining the terrorist network allows these young adults to achieve their goals without having to conform to societal structures and rules.

**Theme 8: Situational Factors Motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali Young Adults (Ages 18-25) to Leave the United States and Join the Al-Shabaab Terrorist Network**

Both interview groups expressed the belief that situational factors are a key motivating factor for young Somali adults to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. The situational factors identified by the interviews were unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, media propaganda, a false image of Islamic family situations, economic factors, media, poverty, and racism. This finding is also in line with Merton's (1938) relative deprivation theory, which indicates that the inability of some factions to reach everyday societal goals causes social anomie, which could then manifest as deviant behavior (“Robert K. Merton,” 2015). Abject poverty, for example, may prevent an individual from realizing his or her goals, thus leading to feelings of social anomie. Those feelings might come to be expressed as deviant behavior, such as joining the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

**Theme 9: Modern Platforms of Communication (Social Media) Influence Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali Young Adults (Ages 18-25) to Leave the United States and Join the Al-Shabaab Terrorist Network**

Both interview groups expressed the belief that modern platforms of communications are being used as tools to influence young Somali adults in Minneapolis to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. As a result, the emerging theme from both groups was that modern platforms of communication are being used as tools to influence Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and

join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. The emerging subthemes from the two interview groups were divergent. Whereas the first group argued that modern communication platforms, in general, are being used as tools to influence Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network, the second group focused majorly on the Internet. The second interview group argued that although the local media has played a significant role in linking Islam to terrorism, the Internet has been the key tool used for influencing Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali young adults (ages 18-25) to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. This finding is in line with the assertions made by Ocean (2012). Ocean (2012) studied U.S. security documents (primary sources) and expert commentary on counterterrorism to provide insights into the techniques that Al-Shabaab recruiters use. The author suggests that various forms of media have been critical for propaganda, fundraising, and recruitment for extremist groups. As such, the various media used by the Al-Shabaab have enhanced the terrorist network's strategic communications objectives, allowing its members to lure young Somali adults to their cause.

**Theme 10: Lack of Economic Sustenance Opportunities Motivates Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali Young Adults (Ages 18-25) to Leave the United States and Join the Al-Shabaab Terrorist Network**

Both groups agreed that lack of economic sustenance predisposes young Somali adults to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network; however, the second interview group explained that this is not the whole picture because a significant percentage of these



young adults are well-educated and have good jobs. The emerging subthemes from the two groups were dissimilar to some extent. The interviewees in the first group contended that government creation of jobs for Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali young adults (ages 18-25) would deter them from leaving the United States and joining the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. On the other hand, the emerging subtheme in the second interview group reflected that although lack of economic sustenance is a motivating factor for a significant percentage of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali young adults (ages 18-25) leave the United States and join terrorist networks, they are well educated and have good jobs. This finding aligns with Merton's (1938) relative deprivation theory— lack of economic opportunities limits the ability of young Somali adults in Minneapolis to meet everyday societal goals. This leads to social anomie and, eventually, deviant behavior (Merton, 2010).

**Theme 11: There Are Measures That the Government Can Put In Place in Order to Deter Minneapolis, Minnesota, Somali Young Adults (Ages 18-25) From Leaving the United States to Join the Al-Shabaab Terrorist Network**

Both interview groups proposed several measures that the government can undertake to prevent young Somali adults in Minneapolis from joining Al-Shabaab. The measures identified included opportunity hubs, monitoring, job opportunities, open dialogue, addressing social injustices, and enhancing relationships with law enforcement. Some of the measures proposed by the interviewees are similar to the ones identified in the article “Establishing official Islam? The law and strategy of counter-radicalization” (Rascoff, 2012). Other measures proposed by Rascoff (2012) are engagement and

addressing the underlying risk factors – such as lack of educational and economic opportunities – for the target groups. Hirsch's social control/bond theory argues that the lack of monitoring by the government is a key factor for criminal behavior. This is in line with this study's proposal of using monitoring measures to deter young Somali adults from joining the Al-Shabaab terrorist network

**Theme 12: There Are Programs and Opportunities that the U.S. Government Can Provide to Muslim Youth of Somali Descent to Deter Them From Leaving the United States to Join the Al-Shabaab Terrorist Network**

The two groups proposed programs and opportunities that the United States government can provide to Muslim youth specifically those of Somali descent to prevent them from joining Al-Shabaab. The programs and opportunities the interviewees identified were sports programs, skills development, after-school programs, cultural events, job creation, economic development, and trust-building. In essence, the programs and opportunities proposed by both groups are very similar except for program monitoring. The government can deter Muslim youths of Somali descent from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network by intensifying monitoring.

The findings from the first interview group indicate that the government can deter Muslim youths of Somali descent from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network by intensifying monitoring. Conversely, the emerging theme from the second interview group indicates that intensifying monitoring of Somali American youths by the government will not deter them from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network. While the first interview group feels that monitoring is one of

the programs that the United States can use to deter Muslim youth of Somali descent from leaving the United States to join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network, the second interview group feels that monitoring does not provide a solution; thus, the government should stop monitoring Muslim communities because it creates suspicion between the community and law enforcement. This finding is in line with the findings of Richey (2015) and Rascoff (2012) who recommend building trust and cooperation with Muslim communities as well as providing opportunities that address underlying risk factors. Richey (2015) states, "There are pilot programs in Boston, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles aimed [at] fostering greater cooperation and trust between law enforcement and the Muslim community. Nevertheless, many Muslims reject the effort as a veiled attempt to improve government surveillance." As such, monitoring may not be a feasible measure to deter young Somali adults from joining the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

### **Conceptual Framework Findings**

The findings of this study demonstrated that using Hirschi's (1969) social bond/social control theory and Merton's (1938) relative deprivation theory were very useful in explaining the motivating factors that influence young Somali adults residing in Minneapolis to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist network.

Table 5

*Conceptual Framework Findings*


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Social factors	Merton's relative deprivation theory- inability to reach everyday societal goals causes social anomie	Radicalization of Somali young adults (ages 18-25) residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota is as a result of social anomie that occurs because they are deprived of social factors can help them achieve their goals and aspirations.
Social inequality among American Somali communities in Minneapolis, Minnesota	Merton's relative deprivation theory- inability to reach everyday societal goals causes social anomie	Radicalization of Somali young adults (ages 18-25) residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota is as a result of social anomie that occurs because of social inequality among American Somali communities in Minneapolis Minnesota they are deprived of opportunities that can help them achieve their goals and aspirations.
The level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units	Merton's deviance typology (conformity)- individuals in the society with high level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units are more likely to conform Hirschi's (1969) social bond/social control theory- the presence/absence of relationships and commitments that an individual has a direct influence on whether that individual will break the law	Radicalization of Somali young adults (ages 18-25) residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota is more likely to occur if a youth has no/ low level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units.

*(table continues)*

Family and societal ties	Merton's deviance typology (conformity)- individuals in the society with high level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units are more likely to conform Hirschi's (1969) social bond/social control theory—the presence/absence of relationships and commitments that an individual has a direct influence on whether that individual will break the law	Radicalization of Somali young adults (ages 18-25) residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota is more likely to occur if a youth has no/ weak family and societal ties
Psychological factors	Merton's strain theory— dysfunction causes strain between an individual's goals and aspirations and, the ability to achieve them may lead to several adaptations including rebellion	Somali young adults (ages 18-25) residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota affected by psychological factors are more likely to rebel and thus easily radicalized.
Criminal behavior	Merton's strain theory— dysfunction causes strain between an individual's goals and aspirations and, the ability to achieve them may lead to several adaptations including rebellion	Somali young adults (ages 18-25) residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota that have engaged in criminal behavior are more to rebel further thus are more likely to rebel by joining terrorist networks. On the other hand, Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) that engage in criminal behavior will not be accepted by the society which may cause them to rebel even further by joining a terrorist network
Situational factors	Merton's relative deprivation theory- inability to reach everyday societal goals causes social anomie	Radicalization of Somali young adults (ages 18-25) residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota is as a result of social anomie that occurs because of situational factors that limit their ability to achieve their goals and aspirations

(table continues)

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Modern platforms of communications	-	-
Economic sustenance opportunities	Merton's relative deprivation theory- inability to reach everyday societal goals causes social anomie	Radicalization of Somali young adults (ages 18-25) residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota is as a result of social anomie that occurs because of lack of economic sustenance opportunities that can help them achieve their goals and aspirations.

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### **Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of this dissertation rest mainly on the mechanisms used in data collection. First, this study relied on a single method of data collection (interviews) which may have limited the credibility and reliability of the research findings and proposed recommendations (Creswell, 2013). The use of an online survey maintained by SurveyMonkey did not provide a detailed dialogue that would have occurred during face-to-face interviews. Although the population of this study was limited to Somali American men ages 18 to 25 years living in Minneapolis, there was no mechanism in place to validate participants' true age, sex, and residence. I had to trust that the participants were honest about their identities and experiences.

Second, the sample population for this study was considerably small (12 participants) therefore, the findings in this study may not be representative of the target population and which makes it impossible for the result of this study to be generalizable. While qualitative research examines the perceptions and lived experiences of the respondents, generalizing the findings to the entire population under study is limited due to the small number of participants.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Future research on this topic should focus on determining the efficacy of monitoring in deterring the radicalization of young Somali adults in Minneapolis because of the contradictory findings from the interviews. One group saw monitoring, which is in line with Hirsch's social control/bond theory, as a viable method to deter radicalization, while the other group argued that the government should stop monitoring Muslim communities because of the suspicion it engenders which is supported by other scholarly studies such as that by Richey (2015). In addition, future studies should use different methods of data collection and use a larger sample population in order to enhance the trustworthiness, credibility and reliability of findings (Creswell, 2013).

### **Implications for Social Change**

To achieve social change and prevent the radicalization of young Somali adults in Minneapolis, the government should address underlying risk factors such as social inequality, the level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units, family and societal ties, psychological factors, predisposition to criminal behavior, situational factors, and modern platforms of communications used by radical groups. Some of the programs that the government could implement are sports programs, skills development, after-school programs, cultural events activities, cultural events, job creation, economic development opportunities, and trust-building activities.

To deter this phenomenon, the United States government could develop empowerment programs which ensure that young Somalis are provided with educational

and employment opportunities, based on their demographic characteristics, in the community. Somali-American community leaders residing in Minneapolis should also create mentorship programs for young Somali adults that emphasize empowerment and the negative aspects of terrorist activities. For instance, if young Somali Americans understand that terrorist networks are simply using the sense of injustice that many Muslims around the world feel to lure them into terrorism, then it is possible that they will not fall into their trap. The media has a broad reach can help effect positive social change through unbiased news reporting which does not aggravate the sense of social injustice against Muslims. In addition, the media can also create programs or educational campaigns against terrorism so that young Somali Americans will not become pawns in Al-Shabaab's efforts to advance their cause in the United States and other parts of the world.

### **Conclusion**

The study found that the factors that motivate young Somali adults, age 18 to 25, who reside in Minneapolis to leave the United States and join the Al-Shabaab terrorist networks include: social factors; social inequality among American Somali communities in the area; the level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units; family and societal ties; psychological factors; predisposition to criminal behavior; situational factors, and modern platforms of communications. The findings of this study were within the study's conceptual framework which was based on Hirsch's (1969) social bond/social control theory and Merton's (1938) relative deprivation theory. The limitations of this study pertain to the



statistical mechanisms used in data collection including the reliance on a single method of data collection (interviews) and the use of a considerably small (12 participants) sample population. Therefore, this study's findings may not be representative of the target population. Future studies on this social phenomenon should focus on determining the efficacy of monitoring as one of the proposed measures for deterring radicalization, use different methods of data collection, and use a larger sample population in order to enhance the trustworthiness, credibility and reliability of findings. To achieve social change on this front, the government should implement measures and programs such as sports programs, skills development, after-school programs, cultural events, job creation, economic development opportunities, and trust-building activities.

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## Appendix A: Email Survey Consent Form for Community Leaders

Date

Dear Sir or Ma'am,

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "Motivating Factors in al-Shabaab Recruitment in Minneapolis, Minnesota." I, Lorrie Flores, the researcher, am a student with Walden University and am conducting this study as a requirement for my doctoral degree program.

This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part. You are being invited to participate in a research study about motivating factors contributing to al-Shabaab recruitment. The objective of this research project is to attempt to understand why people radicalize and join terrorist groups in hopes to create and inform policy to counter this effect. This proposed study will attempt to focus on family structure, education, employment, and the lure of terrorist organizations.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before acting on this invitation to be in the study.

You will be asked to complete a one-time online survey; the survey will be on the Survey Monkey web portal. The survey questions ask for your opinions on the motivators that may drive a young Somali American male to join a terrorist organization. It will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. When you are ready to participate in this survey, please click the link below to take the survey, or copy and paste



the URL below into your internet browser. A consent form will first appear, then the questions after your consent is given.

LINK FOR SURVEY WILL BE INSERTED HERE

After all data has been collected and collated and conclusions have been assessed, a complete report on survey findings will be distributed to the community leaders that have agreed to participate in this research.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any interview questions that you feel are too personal.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:** You are being asked to talk about possible motivating factors that you have gathered through observations and experiences with young Somali American males ages 18 to 25. There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. The benefits to participation are the study might offer insight towards developing positive community programs that invest in educating and assisting Somali Americans.

If during the interview any question(s) arouse unresolved concerns or compromising distress you may choose to take a break from the interview, choose not to respond to the question, or at any time, you may withdraw completely from the research study. Although you may not benefit directly, you could find it enriching to share your

experience with others. You may also benefit from knowing that your ability to share your experience has helped to make others better understand the overall recruitment experience.

**Confidentiality:** Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. The researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. Data will be reported only in aggregate form. All surveys will be password encrypted and retained for at least five years on the researcher's password protected computer. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate at any time, to not answer certain questions, or to request your data not be included in the analysis, without prejudice or penalty.

**Compensation:** There is a \$10.00 Starbucks egift certificate for participation in the study. At the end of the survey, a re-direct link will allow the participant to download the certificate.

**Contacts and Questions:** You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone or email. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By selecting the "I Consent" button, I am indicating my agreement to the terms described above.

Please do not put your name or any other identifying information on the completed questionnaire.

Please print or make a copy of this consent form for your records.

Thank you for the time and effort you have put into your participation in this research project. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lorrie Flores

## Appendix B: Online Survey Consent Form for Somali American Males

### Informed Consent in pursuit of Doctoral Study on Motivating Factors Contributing to Al-Shabaab Recruitment in Minneapolis, Minnesota

You are being invited to participate in a research study about motivating factors contributing to al Shabaab recruitment. The objective of this research project is to attempt to understand why people radicalize and join terrorist groups. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before acting on this invitation to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Lorrie Flores, a Doctoral Candidate at Walden University

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to examine the reasons young men chose to radicalize. This proposed study will attempt to focus on family structure, education, employment, and the lure of terrorist organizations.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in one online survey. The survey link will be distributed email and will be confidential. It will last between 30 to 60 minutes and can be done in privacy at a place of the participant's choice.

**Anonymity:** This survey is anonymous; do not write your name on the survey. No one will be able to identify you, nor will anyone be able to determine where you live or your place of work. No one will know whether you participated in this study.

**Confidentiality:** Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. The researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. For the purpose of this study in effort to maintain confidentiality all corresponding documents preceding this informed consent will be signed with an assigned alias.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any interview questions that you feel are too personal.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:** You are being asked to talk about possible motivating factors that you have gathered through observations and experiences with young Somali American males ages 18 to 25. There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. The benefits to participation are the study might offer insight

towards developing positive community programs that invest in educating and assisting Somali Americans.

If during the interview any question(s) arouse unresolved concerns or compromising distress you may choose to take a break from the interview, choose not to respond to the question, or at any time, you may withdraw completely from the research study.

Although you may not benefit directly, you could find it enriching to share your experience with others. You may also benefit from knowing that your ability to share your experience has helped to make others better understand the overall recruitment experience.

**Compensation:** You will be given a \$10 dollar Starbucks gift card for your participation in the study.

**Contacts and Questions:** You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone or email. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, the Walden University representative can discuss this with you.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By selecting the “I Consent” button below, I am indicating my agreement to the terms described above. Please do not put your name or any other identifying information on the completed questionnaire.

Please print or make a copy of this consent form for your records.

Thank you for the time and effort you have put into your participation in this research project. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.

## Appendix C: Survey Questions for Somali American Males

1. What social factors do you believe motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
2. Do you believe there a relationship between religious affiliation, beliefs and values and terrorism?
3. Do Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali communities experience social inequality?
4. Does a sense of a social injustice against Muslims from different parts of the world influence Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network? Please describe.
5. Does level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units influence the likelihood of Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network? If so, please explain.
6. Do you believe that Somali Americans youths in Minnesota, Minneapolis that have strong relationship with their families and the American society are less likely to engage in terrorist activities?
7. What psychological factors do you believe motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?

8. Does criminal behavior/ intention predispose Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
9. What situational factors do you believe motivate Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
10. Do you believe that modern platforms of communications are influencing Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
11. To what extent is social media being used as a platform for radicalization?
12. Do you believe that Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) that leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network do so because of lack of economic sustenance opportunities?
13. What measures should the government put in place in order to deter Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) from leaving the US to join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
14. What programs and opportunities should the United States government provide to Muslim youths specifically of Somali descent to deter them from leaving the US to join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
15. What is your education level?
16. What is your religious affiliation?
17. What is your occupation?

18. What is your ethnic background?
19. What is your age?
20. How many years have you been residing in the United States?
21. What is your gender?
22. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
23. Do you identify with any of the following religions? (Please select all that apply.)
24. About how long have you lived in Minneapolis?
25. Please describe your race/ethnicity.



## Appendix D: Survey Questions for Community Leaders

1. What is your position in the community?
2. How long have you been in that position?
3. As a leader in the Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota what social factors do you believe motivate young adults (ages 18- 25) in your community to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
4. From your interactions with young adults in your community and past experiences do you believe there is a relationship between religious affiliation, beliefs and values and terrorism?
5. Have you experienced or, witnessed any form of social inequality in the Somali community residing in Minneapolis, Minnesota? If so, what do you think is the impact on young adults in your community?
6. As a leader in the Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota, do you believe that a sense of a social injustice against Muslims from different parts of the world influences young adults (ages 18- 25) in your community to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
7. Do you believe that the level of attachment, involvement and commitment to family and other social units among young adults in your community influences their likelihood to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
8. Do you believe that Somali Americans youths in Minnesota, Minneapolis that have strong relationship with their families and the American society are less likely to engage in terrorist activities? If so, please explain.

9. From your interactions with young adults in your community what psychological factors do you believe would motivate them to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
10. As a leader in the Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota do you believe that criminal behavior/ intention predisposes Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
11. From your interactions and past experiences with young adults in the Somali Community in Minneapolis, Minnesota what situational factors do you believe motivates them to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
12. Do you believe that modern platforms of communications are influencing Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) to leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
13. Do you believe that Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) that leave the US and join the al Shabaab terrorist network do so because of lack of economic sustenance opportunities?
14. As a leader in the Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota:What measures should the government put in place in order to deter Minneapolis, Minnesota Somali young adults (ages 18- 25) from leaving the US to join the al Shabaab terrorist network?

15. What programs and opportunities should the United States government provide to Muslim youths specifically of Somali descent to deter them from leaving the US to join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
16. Should the government intensify monitoring in order to deter Muslim youths specifically of Somali descent to deter them from leaving the US to join the al Shabaab terrorist network?
17. What is your education level?
18. What is your religious affiliation?
19. What is your occupation?
20. What is your ethnic background?
21. What is your age?
22. How many years have you been residing in the United States?
23. What is your gender?
24. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
25. Do you identify with any of the following religions? (Please select all that apply.)
26. About how long have you lived in Minneapolis?

## Appendix E: Advertisement for Survey Participants

### Research Participants Needed

Are you a Somali American Male, ages 18 to 25?

If so, you are invited to participate in a study to gather opinions on what motivating factors may cause someone to choose to join terrorist organizations.

Participation will take approximately 20 minutes and is entirely online and confidential.

To access the survey please use the following link:

I WILL PROVIDE THE LINK AFTER IRB APPROVAL. I have not built the survey yet in Survey Monkey.

A \$10 Starbucks gift card will be given in thanks for your participation

Call or email for more information:

## Appendix F: SurveyMonkey Permission

SurveyMonkey Inc.  
www.surveymonkey.com  
For questions, visit our Help Center [help.surveymonkey.com](https://help.surveymonkey.com)

Re: Permission to Conduct Research Using SurveyMonkey

To whom it may concern:

This letter is being produced in response to a request by a student at your institution who wishes to conduct a survey using SurveyMonkey in order to support their research. The student has indicated that they require a letter from SurveyMonkey granting them permission to do this. Please accept this letter as evidence of such permission. Students are permitted to conduct research via the SurveyMonkey platform provided that they abide by our Terms of Use, a copy of which is available on our website.

SurveyMonkey is a self-serve survey platform on which our users can, by themselves, create, deploy and analyze surveys through an online interface. We have users in many different industries who use surveys for many different purposes. One of our most common use cases is students and other types of researchers using our online tools to conduct academic research.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact us through our Help Center at [help.surveymonkey.com](https://help.surveymonkey.com).

Sincerely,  
SurveyMonkey Inc.

## Appendix G: SurveyMonkey Privacy Policy

### Privacy Policy

Effective Date: April 7, 2016

SurveyMonkey has relocated its international operations hub from Luxembourg to Ireland. As a result, if you have contracted with SurveyMonkey Europe Sarl and you renew that contract on or after January 1, 2015, your contract will be assigned to SurveyMonkey Europe (our Irish company) upon such renewal date. The change in contracting entity will also result in SurveyMonkey Europe becoming the new data controller for your personal data, but the ways in which we handle and process your data will not otherwise change. We will consider that you have consented to these changes if you renew your contract and continue to use our services.

This privacy policy explains how SurveyMonkey handles your personal information and data. We value your trust, so we've strived to present this policy in clear, plain language instead of legalese. The policy is structured so you can quickly find answers to the questions that interest you the most.

This privacy policy applies to all the products, services and websites offered by SurveyMonkey Inc., SurveyMonkey Europe, SurveyMonkey Brasil Internet Ltda. and their affiliates, except where otherwise noted. We refer to those products, services and websites collectively as the "services" in this policy. Some services have supplementary privacy statements that explain in more detail our specific privacy practices in relation to them. Unless otherwise noted, our services are provided by SurveyMonkey Inc. inside of the United States, by SurveyMonkey Brasil Internet Ltda. Inside of Brazil, and by SurveyMonkey European Safe Harbors. SurveyMonkey Inc. complies with the US-EU and US-Swiss Safe Harbor Frameworks developed by the U.S. Department of Commerce regarding the collection, use and retention of personal information from EU member countries and Switzerland. We have certified, and TRUSTe has verified, that we adhere to the Safe Harbor Privacy Principles of notice, choice, onward transfer, security, data integrity, access and enforcement. View our certification on the U.S. Department of Commerce's Safe Harbor website. Questions? For questions regarding our privacy policy or practices, contact SurveyMonkey by mail at 101 Lytton Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94301, USA, or electronically through this form. You may contact TRUSTe if you feel your question has not been satisfactorily addressed.

Key Privacy Points: The Stuff You Really Care About

#### IF YOU CREATE SURVEYS:

- Your survey data is owned by you. And we respect the privacy of your surveys. We don't sell them to anyone and we don't use the survey responses you collect

for purposes unrelated to you or our services, except in a limited set of circumstances (e.g. if we are compelled by a subpoena, or if you've given us permission to do so).

- We safeguard respondents' email addresses. To make it easier for you to invite people to take your surveys via email, you may upload lists of email addresses, in which case SurveyMonkey acts as a mere custodian of that data. We don't sell these email addresses and we use them only as directed by you and in accordance with this policy. The same goes for any email addresses collected by your surveys.
- We hold your data securely. Read our Security Statement for more information.
- Survey data is stored on servers located in the United States. More information about this is available if you are located in Canada or Europe. SurveyMonkey will process your survey data on your behalf and under your instructions (including the ones agreed to in this privacy policy).

#### IF YOU ANSWER SURVEYS:

- Surveys are administered by survey creators. Survey creators conduct tens of thousands of surveys each day using our services. We host the surveys on our websites and collect the responses that you submit to the survey creator. If you have any questions about a survey you are taking, please contact the survey creator directly as SurveyMonkey is not responsible for the content of that survey or your responses to it. The survey creator is usually the same person that invited you to take the survey and sometimes they have their own privacy policy.
- Are your responses anonymous? This depends on how the survey creator has configured the survey. Contact them to find out, or [click here](#) to read more about respondent anonymity.
- We don't sell your responses to third parties. SurveyMonkey doesn't sell or share your survey responses with third party advertisers or marketers (although the survey creator might, so check with them). SurveyMonkey merely acts as a custodian on behalf of the survey creator who controls your data, except as further described in this privacy policy with regard to public surveys.
- If you think a survey violates our Terms of Use or may be engaging in illegal activity, [click here](#) to report it.

#### Survey Creators, Survey Respondents, and Other Visitors

SurveyMonkey is used by survey creators (people who create and conduct surveys online) and survey respondents (people who answer those surveys).

## Appendix H: IRB Approval

Dear Ms. Flores,

This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your application for the study entitled, "Motivating Factors in al Shabaab Recruitment in Minneapolis, Minnesota."

Your approval # is 04-29-16-0483437. You will need to reference this number in your dissertation and in any future funding or publication submissions. Also attached to this e-mail are the IRB approved consent forms. Please note, if this is already in an on-line format, you will need to update that consent document to include the IRB approval number and expiration date.

Your IRB approval expires on April 28, 2017. One month before this expiration date, you will be sent a Continuing Review Form, which must be submitted if you wish to collect data beyond the approval expiration date.

Your IRB approval is contingent upon your adherence to the exact procedures described in the final version of the IRB application document that has been submitted as of this date. This includes maintaining your current status with the university. Your IRB approval is only valid while you are an actively enrolled student at Walden University. If you need to take a leave of absence or are otherwise unable to remain actively enrolled, your IRB approval is suspended. Absolutely NO participant recruitment or data collection may occur while a student is not actively enrolled.

If you need to make any changes to your research staff or procedures, you must obtain IRB approval by submitting the IRB Request for Change in Procedures Form. You will receive confirmation with a status update of the request within 1 week of submitting the change request form and are not permitted to implement changes prior to receiving approval. Please note that Walden University does not accept responsibility or liability for research activities conducted without the IRB's approval, and the University will not accept or grant credit for student work that fails to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research.

When you submitted your IRB application, you made a commitment to communicate both discrete adverse events and general problems to the IRB within 1 week of their occurrence/realization. Failure to do so may result in invalidation of data, loss of academic credit, and/or loss of legal protections otherwise available to the researcher.

Both the Adverse Event Reporting form and Request for Change in Procedures form can be obtained at the IRB section of the Walden website:

<http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec>

Researchers are expected to keep detailed records of their research activities (i.e., participant log sheets, completed consent forms, etc.) for the same period of time they retain the original data. If, in the future, you require copies of the originally submitted IRB materials, you may request them from Institutional Review Board.

Both students and faculty are invited to provide feedback on this IRB experience at the link below:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMUx43pZegKlmdiQ\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMUx43pZegKlmdiQ_3d_3d)