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*Individual Domestic Terrorism: An Analysis of the Motivations and Radicalization of
Terrorism in the United States*

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in
International Studies

By

Tony Hudson, Jr.

Under the mentorship of Dr. Srobana Bhattacharya

ABSTRACT

Individual terrorist events have increased in the United States. What are the motivations behind these attacks and what led these individuals to participate in this form of political violence? In this paper, I provide a case study analysis of four domestic terrorist attacks in the United States that have been executed by individual perpetrators. I combine rational choice, sociological, and psychological theories in order to show a similar path of radicalization taken by each of the terrorists involved in these attacks. I build upon previous research on the importance of studying terrorism from an individual- analysis perspective.

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Tony Hudson Jr.

Introduction

Individual terrorist events have increased in the United States. What are the motives behind these attacks and what led these individuals to participate in this form of political violence? While the study of terrorism is certainly not new, past (and current) literature on the subject has focused mostly on terrorist organizations rather than the individuals involved. This includes the aspects of organizational networks, structures, group ideologies, and even lethality of these terrorist groups, while not always focusing on the specific motivations of the individuals engaging in the violence (Ozgul, 2016; Lewis, 2013; Kilberg, 2012). This can especially be seen in articles that were published in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 which caused the number of studies conducted on terrorism and their organizations, such as Al Qaeda and other Islamic fundamentalist organizations, to increase. Although these studies have highlighted certain features of these organizations and have detailed some of their attacks, they still have overlooked the importance of individual- analysis of the actual attackers.

There have, however, been some scholars who have tried to explain the motivations of terrorism by using a psychological approach. Some of the scholars have discussed the psychological mindset of those individuals who commit suicide attacks (Emad El-Din, 2017; Urooj & Tariq, 2015). Those scholars focused their studies on how terrorist groups and organizations were able to influence an individual or make them believe that suicide was a worthy cause. Other scholars that have discussed the actual paths that these individuals took that led them to participating in a terrorist attack, or radicalization (Stern, 2016; Kruglanski et al., 2014). These scholars have discussed the

various ways in which a person has moved from an extremist ideology to actually participate in the violence, usually in the name of a group or organization. I, however, take a closer look into the radicalization process of those individuals who do not belong to an established terrorist group.

I build upon the previous research that has been done on the radicalization of individuals. I argue that the motivations of individual domestic terrorism are a mixture of the rational choice, psychological, and sociological environments in which the terrorist is a part of. Unlike the majority of scholars who discuss radicalization, I do not limit the motivations of radicalization to just one single factor such as economic status or religious ideology. It is at the point where the three elements, mentioned above, met that should be the focus of attention when discussing individual domestic terrorism. In this thesis, I explore the motivational factors between several individual terrorist attacks in the United States and build upon the topic of terrorism at the individual- analysis level.

In the following sections, I provide a review of the literature on the topic of terrorism and how scholars have potentially become too focused on terrorist organizations while overlooking the people involved. After explaining the gaps in the existing literature on the subject, I introduce my theoretical approach to the research questions that involves the use of both psychological, sociological theories, and rational choice approaches to help explain the motivations of individuals involved in terrorism. Next, I explain the research method and discuss the four case studies used in this thesis. Then I analyze each of the four cases and discuss the results found when testing against

the hypotheses. Finally, I conclude the project by presenting my findings and offer potential ways that the research can be used by other scholars and government agencies/officials in the future.

Literature Review

The study of terrorism is not a new phenomenon. However, throughout the course of history, there have been several factors of terrorism that have been used for the basis of research while ignoring other certain elements. In this review of the literature created by scholars, I highlight key findings of research conducted and those that have greatly added to the continuation of research on the topic of individual terrorism. I first start with the definitions used by scholars to define terrorism and some of the issues in producing them. Then I discuss the research conducted on terrorist groups/ organizations and how the previous research on individual terrorists has focused on the connection of the groups and the individual. Finally, I discuss the gaps in the research by primarily focusing on the individual- analysis of the perpetrators of the attack and transition into my theory used for this project.

Defining Terrorism

Defining terrorism is a heavily debated topic. There has been considerable tension about what should and what should not be included in the definition of terrorism and what actions fall under its label. Although there seems to be a general consensus that the definition of terrorism should include aspects such as the use (or threat) of force, there are some who disapprove of trying to conceptualize the phenomenon in the first place (Young & Findley, 2001). I first start with a comprehensive review of the term and then

discuss some of the critiques given by scholars in the field. In 1988, Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman (1988) published their study and collective survey of researchers in the field of terrorism and found over 100 definitions of terrorism being used. Although the study of terrorism at the time was seen as marginal in the field of political science, the definitions and theoretical ideology behind the two researchers' studies are more important today than ever before. Since the publishing of their study, their work has been cited hundreds of times over by scholars looking to build on the knowledge of terrorism studies. This is especially so in the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001 when the number of journals and articles discussing terrorism increased drastically (Young & Findley, 2011). Due to this, many scholars have tried to conceptualize terrorism into one definition. However, this has led to many debates about what truly defines terrorism and if one definition is truly able to explain all forms of it, especially in the case of individual terrorism.

Leonard Weinberg (2004) helped to provide a rationale for this debate in his research on the topic of conceptualizing terrorism. Weinberg (2004) studies and highlights the debate on how scholars have chosen to define terrorism by collecting 22 definition elements from contributors and major journals of the field to create a, seemingly, solid definition. This included the famous definition previously given by Alex Schmid that, “[t]errorism is a politically motivated tactic involving the threat or use of force or violence in which the pursuit of publicity plays a significant role” (Weinberg, 2004: p. 786). He argues that the term “terrorism” can be used as political speech, to describe guerilla warfare, and in many more ways depending on the context that it is being used for. Through his research, Weinberg (2004) discovered even more scholars,

such as W.B. Gallie and William Connolly, who expressed that terrorism had become an “essentially contested concept” with unlimited possibilities (Weinberg, 2004: p. 778).

These sentiments were echoed in the article, “Promise and Pitfalls of Terrorism Research” by Joseph K. Young and Michael G. Findley (2011). In their research, the two authors use a collective database of articles based on the studies of terrorism and found several problems with the way that terrorism had been and continuous to be studied. They identify the problems as “definitional problems that lack empirical tests, not distinguishing among different types of terrorism, and using the wrong unit of analysis when designing research” (Young & Findley, 2011: p. 411). For the purposes of our research, we highlight the first two problems (definitional and distinguishing issues) as the most important factors.

One of the most important takeaways from the article by Young and Findley (2011) is their thought on the survey of definitions of terrorism used by scholars. The two authors argue that although the defining of terrorism has and continues to be an important factor of terrorism studies, it also has caused a major problem. They argue that because so many scholars have worked and argued over the creation of one definition of terrorism that they call “unattainable”, this has led to the evolution of terrorism studies as being counterproductive. Due to this, Young and Findley (2011) state that they believe that a more generalized definition should be utilized in order to fit the various studies of terrorism. I, for all purposes of this research, agree with the authors and find it best to stick with a more generalized concept of terrorism in order to properly address certain events as acts of terrorism that may otherwise be excluded due to not fitting a specific model or definition.

I borrow from this consensus and apply it to individual domestic terrorism. A case can be made by taking the broader concepts of terrorism as defined by Alex Schmid in the work by Weignberg (2004) about terrorists wanting to publicize a cause through the use, or threat, of force and applying that concept to individuals. However, individual domestic terrorism presents several key differences that cannot and should not be overlooked while creating a “standard” definition. Individual terrorism rejects the notion that terrorists must belong to a group or organization in order to bring publicity to a cause which has been the case for most of the definitions previously used. In the next section, I elaborate on the individual motives and radicalization process.

The Role of Individuals in Terrorist Groups/ Organizations

For this project, I first look into the motivation of individuals to commit political violence in this form. This is very different from the scholars in the field who have only discussed terrorism and counterterrorism at the group/organization level (Weinberg, 2004; Richards, 2015; Grozdanova, 2014; Kilberg, 2012). In each of these works, the scholars discuss the formation of giant organizations and groups such as the Islamic State, Al- Qaeda, and the Taliban. They research how to detect, track movements of the members of these groups, and offer suggestions on how to dissolve the terrorist networks. These studies are not without merit. However, there is much more that can be learned by observing the motivations of the particular individuals involved.

Some scholars discuss the topic of terrorism as it relates to the movements, strategies, ideologies, and networks of these organizations whether large or small (Gaibullove et al., 2013; Li et al., 2015; Krebs, 2002). Literature about individual terrorism typically discusses information that leads back to the structure of terrorist

organizations or focuses on the motivations of individuals in the psychological sense. Therefore, leaving a gap in how we acknowledge and recognize the role of individuals in terrorism as a whole.

One of the most interesting aspects of trying to explain terrorist groups or organizations is their continued focus on finding or understanding terrorist networks made up of individuals (Li et al., 2015; Krebs, 2002). Both research articles emphasize the need to understand the structures of terrorist cells and organizations by understanding the networks used by them. Krebs (2002) explains that you can actually map out these networks by looking at the individuals and their strong and soft ties to one another and organizations, however some of these networks are becoming more and more covert to elude authorities. These strong ties include shared schools/training, those individuals with family relations, those individuals seen out in public together, or even shared financial information. This notion of creating ties is echoed by the Li et al. (2015) and other authors who created a framework to show how terrorist networks made up of individuals can contribute to the overall structure of terrorist organizations.

Not only do scholars spend the majority of their time discussing the organizational structure of various organizations like Al- Qaeda or the Islamic State, but they also discuss how these networks come together and why organizations operate the way that they do. Scholars such as Gaibullove (2013) continue to research the goals, movements, motivations, and even why these terrorist groups and organizations fall apart. The United States' ability to track organizations such as the Taliban and Al- Qaeda has greatly improved over the past several years due to such research. We are able to use these networks that we have mapped out to apprehend individuals connected to the

terrorist cells. Even though we are able to locate and neutralize these major threats, the question still remains of how and when these individuals choose to commit to violence.

Most of these studies seem to skim over the actual concept of individual motivations to commit violence. The studies discussed above do not focus enough on the lethality of terrorism at the individual level. This is what I hope to contribute to the field of counter-terrorism. Although identifying terrorist organizations is important, more research is needed on the psychological and sociological factors that lead to the radicalization of individuals. Specifically, the radicalization process and motivations of those individuals that choose to participate in individual terrorism, especially for those who are not fighting within these organizations.

Individual Motivations- Social, Psychological, and Rational Choice

I further discuss the sociological, psychological, and rational choice factors and motivations of those individuals who commit acts of terrorism in this section. The main literature for the motivations for individuals to participate in terrorism is usually dedicated to either politics or religion (Coggins, 2015; Haider et al., 2015). These authors all seem to agree that socioeconomic problems and lack of law enforcement seem to be common factors leading to terrorism. Coggins (2015) and Haider (2015) both describe the effects of poverty and high unemployment rates have on regions, especially in countries such as Pakistan. However, there are deeper motivations for individuals to become terrorists that are not necessarily limited to one or two factors such as poverty

and unemployment. The rational motivation, in combination with socio-psychological aspects, of each individual plays an important part in understanding why a person may choose to engage in this form of violence.

Most scholars discuss how the motivation for people to join organizations and commit terrorist acts has to do with feeling oppressed by a government or by being radicalized in a religion. I propose the notion that these individuals can be subjected to psychological motivations that are connected to politics, sociology, and religion in which make them more prone to committing crimes. There is literature that discusses the rationality of people who join terrorist organizations such as Cormann (2016) and Kacou (2013). Both of these authors discuss the rationality behind terrorists and even provide narratives by individuals involved in the attacks. This includes the first-hand experience of the mass murderer Timothy McVeigh who orchestrated and executed the Oklahoma City Bombing of 1995. However, could there be more psychological or sociological aspects that may explain an individual's use of deadly force? I believe that there is evidence to support this claim and I explore this by discussing previous research on social/ societal marginalization, behavioral science, and how they relate to the isolation of an individual.

Social Conflict and the Impact of Isolation

Social pressures can play a crucial role in self-radicalization of an individual. An individual who cannot assimilate or function in his/her social environment may feel closed off and shut out of the larger majority section of the society of which they are in. Some of the common ways in which an individual may feel pressure by living in the society that they are in are by feeling uncomfortable with conforming to the status quo of

popular dress codes, if they speak differently (dialect), belonging to a minority ethnic/racial group, or even by holding unpopular beliefs. The inability to feel a part of their environment can weigh heavily onto an individual's mentality about how they interact or feel about their society.

Scholars have used various sociological theories to explain how terrorist groups are formed and how they operate throughout the world. In a comprehensive review of sociological and psychological theories used by scholars to try and explain the reasoning for individuals to join terrorist organizations, Victoroff (2005) discusses two theories that may help to explain the rationality of these individuals; the social learning theory and the national culture theory. I believe that both of these theories are important in understanding the societal pressures that may help to influence participation of individuals in terrorist activities.

The social learning theory suggests that aggression and violence follow the observations and imitation of aggressive models (Victoroff 2005, 18). This theory of aggression was created by Albert Bandura in 1977. The concept of the theory is that individuals do not become terrorists as a result of an aggressive act but rather are taught through cognitive reconstruction of their morals. This theory that has been used in the past by scholars when discussing recruitment efforts of terrorist organizations of individuals. This strikes me as interesting because it leaves open the room for other factors that may explain why individuals become terrorists and so apply it to an individual level of analysis for our research.

The second theory is the national cultural theory. Weinberg and Eubank (1994) claim that a person's identity is derived from the social system in collectivist cultures and

derived from personal goals in individualist cultures. Collectivists are individuals who need a sense of belonging to a group in order to identify themselves and distance themselves from “others”, like foreigners. I discuss how this theory may help to explain why individuals may have a strong desire to want to fit into the majority of society as a way to find their own identity within the system. Just like the social learning theory, I apply this thought process to my own theoretical framework to discuss the participation motivations of individuals engaging in individual terrorism.

Personal Relationships, Behavior, and Isolation

One of the factors that I focus on is the impact that the environment in which an individual is in has on their isolation. In this environment, an individual may have to face pressures from their family and associates which can be a major factor on an individual’s psychological and sociological state. These individuals may face pressure from both their family and the society in which they are a part of. Whether it is the struggle between practicing traditional customs from the family’s heritage and mainstream culture or trying to fit into a certain community or group of people, some individuals may find it difficult to assimilate into the full society. This constant inner struggle in these individuals can cause major implications on how these individuals see the world and ultimately lead to the turn of radicalization.

Scholars who have discussed the topic of terrorism have also used several different kinds of psychological theories to help explain different factors. Some scholars have used psychological theories in order to try and understand how terrorist groups attract new recruits. They also use the theories in order to study the motivations of terrorist groups and some individuals. Again, borrowing from theories listed within the

work conducted by Victoroff (2005), I find that the identity theory and the humiliation-revenge theory to be interesting concepts that I use to build upon in my own theoretical framework.

The theory of identity has been proposed by many different scholars throughout the field of psychology and in the subject of terrorism. Many scholars in the field of counterterrorism have used the theory to help explain the means by which individuals become terrorists based on their behavior. The basis of this theory is that young people who may be lacking self-esteem and have trouble defining their identities have the motivation to act out violently (Olsson 1988). According to Victoroff (2005), young people who are turning to political violence in their search for self-identity can act alone but also be eager to join an organization. I further discuss how this is an important aspect to the study of individual terrorism and agree with Victoroff that this search for self-identity may lead to an individual becoming a terrorist.

The next theory that I use to help influence my theoretical framework and helps to explain individual participation in terrorist activities is the humiliation-revenge theory. Humiliation and the pressure for revenge have been hypothesized as being a motivation for terrorism violence in the world (Juergensmeyer, 2000). According to Victoroff (2005), revenge for humiliation given by the oppressor is a tradition in many places around the world such as the Middle East. I agree with this and use this concept in order to a person's behavior and relationships with others. Furthermore, I explain how it can be instrumental in the development of their isolation from the rest of society.

Societal Marginalization

The study of societal marginalization of individuals or groups of people is not necessarily

new to the field of counter-terrorism. Since 2001, we have seen a number of studies and research that try and use an individual's experience of marginalization from society based on racial, ethnic, and even class discrimination to try and predict aggressive behavior and violent crimes in the future (Caldwell et al., 2004; However, much of the research conducted by scholars over the past several years have been geared towards the study of how these types of societal marginalization are used to fuel terrorist groups to commit violent acts and/ or to recruit new members. An example of this is the research conducted by James A. Piazza (2011) over the relationship between economic discrimination experienced by minorities in a country and domestic terrorism.

In his research, James Piazza (2011) suggests a new factor to explain domestic terrorism to add to, what he calls an "inconclusive picture" of previous studies of, the relationship between poverty and terrorism: minority economic discrimination. He employs the use of data from the Minorities at Risk project and finds that (1) countries featuring minority group economic discrimination are significantly more likely to experience domestic terrorist attacks and, (2) that this type of discrimination can be used as a strong predictor of domestic terrorism given the level of economic development. Piazza (2011) borrows from the theory of relative deprivation by Ted Gurr (1993), which mixes group motivations for political violence with the opportunity to do so. It is used to create a model in which collective or social status disadvantages (when mixed with repression from the state) helps to produce minority group identities that are separate from a country's larger society (Piazza, 2011).

I apply Gurr's (1993) theory and use this as another factor into the theoretical

framework to discuss how societal marginalization leads to isolation and, therefore, domestic terrorism. Crenshaw (1981) and Ross (1993) find that grievances of marginalized sub national communities is an important cause of terrorism. However, I have chosen to take a different perspective on these theories and arguments. Instead of applying them to marginalized groups of people, I apply these concepts to individuals who are facing marginalization from the society. This marginalization can be from random strangers, school/ workplace, or even the United States government institution through laws, regulations, and rhetoric.

I also argue against Gurr (1993) and Piazza (2011) that it does not take an entire marginalized group to mobilize in order for violence to ensue, but rather an individual must simply belong to that group. It is the grouping of these individuals into categories that create the sense of oppression and “othering” by the larger group of a society that lead to acts of domestic terrorism by an individual. It is an individual’s rational choice in correlation with socio-psychological aspects that are the causes of individual terrorism attacks. It is a person’s environment in which they are surrounded in that plays an important role in their rational choice to radicalize. This theory of rational choice mixed with socio- psychological factors will reject the notion that religion is the only causing factor of radicalization for a terrorist. I build upon the theories previously mentioned that describe the sociology, psychology, and rational choice pressures that contribute to the radicalization of an individual.

Theory

For this research, I argue that it is an individual's rational choice in correlation with socio-psychological aspects that are the causes of individual terrorism attacks. The mix of the three different factors (sociological, psychological, and rational choice) creates a sense of isolation within the individual. It is this sense of isolation that sends the individual down a path of radicalization which leads to political violence in the form of terrorism against the majority population or government institution. The isolation that is felt by these individuals is in conjunction with the environment in which they are a part of.

The environment in which an individual belongs to plays an important role in the radicalization process. This environment is defined as either the physical surroundings of a person or the idea of community that a person may be a member of. It is in this environment that the individual experiences the pressures placed on them, either consciously or unconsciously, by either their community members or by the larger society as a whole. For example, a person who is a member of a minority group in a society may feel pressure from living in an environment where the majority class holds all of the power in the society. In this case, the individual is stuck in an environment where there is a case of social marginalization by the majority living in the society. The environment plays a crucial role in the isolation of an individual.

The rational choice mixed with socio- psychological factors will also reject the notion that there is only one factor that determines the motivation for a person to turn to terrorism. These factors are not independent but rather are dependent on one another. An

individual does not simply turn to this form of political violence because they may fall victim to one of psychological or sociological pressures. It is only when and how these pressures and rational choice overlap that we are able to notice an isolation effect that leads to terrorism. I test this theory against the following hypotheses:

H1: Persons who are unable to identify or belong to a group or society are more likely to be radicalized and later involved in individual terrorism.

H2: Persons who struggle with their self-identity are more likely to be radicalized and later involved in individual terrorism.

H3: Persons who feel humiliated or marginalized by society (either personally or collectively as a part of a group) are more likely to seek revenge, become radicalized, and later involved in individual terrorism.

Research Design and Methodology

The research design for this project uses qualitative methodology. Through the use of case analysis, I take the generalized and normative theories about socio- psychological indicators and motivations and apply them to the rational choice in specific case selections. I have chosen four domestic terrorist attacks in the United States to conduct the case studies for this research. Table 1 displays the four cases selected (the Boston Marathon Bombing, Charleston Church Massacre, San Bernardino Shooting, Orlando Nightclub Shooting), the dates of each of the attacks, the names of the perpetrators, and their perceived motivational factors.

Table 1: Case Studies Selected for Research

Case Selection	Event Name	Date Occurred	Terrorist Name(s)	Potential Motivational Factors
<i>Case Study 1</i>	Boston Marathon Bombing	April 15, 2013	Dzhokhar A. Tsarnaev, Tamerlan Tsarnaev	Religious/ Societal Marginalization
<i>Case Study 2</i>	Charleston Church Shooting	June 17, 2015	Dylann Roof	Religious/ Racial/ Ethnic Conflict
<i>Case Study 3</i>	San Bernardino Shooting	December 2, 2015	Sayed Rizwan Farook, Tashfeen Malik	Religious
<i>Case Study 4</i>	Orlando Nightclub Shooting	June 12, 2016	Omar Mateen	Religious/ Social Pressures

These specific cases were chosen because they provide very similar events to analyze and compare for this project. Some of the similarities include the nature of political violence, the types of actors involved (individuals), citizenship statuses of those actors in the United States, and the presence of religion in each individual. I employ the use of J.S. Mill's (1843) Most Similar Method design as a way to compare the cases at the beginning. The use of this methodology is to provide a visual representation of the cases in order to highlight some of the major similarities between them while showing the differences of outcomes. As we can see, the cases show similar variables but differ in the

areas of religious affiliation and the outcome (hate crime or terrorism). The information displayed in Table 2 provides a breakdown of the similar case design incorporated into the methodology.

Table 2: Most Similar/ Difference Theory Applied

	Citizenship Status	Religious Affiliation of Actor	Group/Organization or Individual	Outcome
Boston Marathon Bombing	U.S. Citizen	Islam	Individual	Terrorism
San Bernardino Shooting	U.S. Citizen	Islam	Individual	Terrorism
Orlando Shooting	U.S. Citizen	Islam	Individual	Terrorism/ Hate Crime
Charleston Church Shooting	U.S. Citizen	Christianity	Individual	Terrorism/ Hate Crime

Methodology

In order to conduct this research, I use the following method to create our case studies of each of events listed above. I employ the use of methods including document analysis of government documents, news articles, and primary sources. I also use data collected through databases to help identify key variables of the events. Finally, all of the information is compiled to analyze the events and provide a similarity and difference comparison between all four cases to conclude the research project.

Content Analysis

The method used for this project is a content analysis of each case. With each of these case selections being deemed a terrorist or extremist attack, the United States government has issued the use of federal resources and aid in the investigations of each. The hope of this method is to use these documents as sources to verify certain variables such as psychological and sociological motivations of each individual actor.

In the document analysis, I conduct a review of media archives to generate more information about the attacks. By searching through news reports and sources, I will be able to present a “real time” chronological order of the events as they occurred on those days. For this project, I have chosen to use only those articles found within the New York Times history archives in order to stay consistent with the style or reporting of the events and the release of information. I have also determined this news source to be commonly used in the covering of attacks and feel as though the views and perspectives used by the company to be more objective than none.

In order to keep with the consistency, I only pull information from a total of eighty (70) document sources. Throughout the articles I search for behavioral patterns of the individuals and also search for patterns that may be related to radicalization such as previous signs of aggression or speech about terrorism. I also search for key terms in each article and analyze the use of them for each case: *Terrorism, *Religion, *Nationality, *Isolation, *Sociological Pressures and *Psychological Deprivation (*Noting that various forms of the term may be used throughout news articles).

I also use document analysis of primary sources to add to our case studies. Some of the perpetrators of these attacks left behind letters or documents explaining their final

thoughts or courses of actions. Some of the individuals even left full journals or social media posts explaining their frustrations or mindsets leading up to (or even during) the attacks. This information provides a first-hand account of the individuals that are being researched and may hold evidence to uncovering their “breaking point” or motivations that can be compared to the others who have committed individual terrorism.

Analysis and Assessment

While analyzing the data collected for each of the case studies, several key observations were made throughout this project. One of the most overarching similarities between each of the case studies has to do with the process of radicalization by each of the individual terrorists. The process by which each of the individuals were radicalized seem to have indicated several important factors in which help to support all of the hypotheses used for this research project. I provide an overall analysis of each case by discussing the path of radicalization and highlighting the key findings of the project.

The first observation that I found while comparing the case studies conducted was that each of the individuals were radicalized well before the attacks took place. I relate this to the theories of socio- psychological factors that leads an individual to isolation and radicalization. Thus, highlighting that fact that a person cannot be radicalized overnight but rather is subjected to this process over an extended period of time. There is evidence to support this claim in each of the individuals from the case studies are subject to the sociological, psychological, and rational choice theories discussed.

In the case of San Bernardino, the attackers were said to have been radicalized before they even met one another. When Sayed Farook went online to find his future

wife, he was already said to have been radicalized through his devout religious belief and lifestyle (Nagourney, Masood, and Schmidt, 2015c). Several reports indicate that Sayed was already planning small scale attacks against the United States with one of his friends (The N.Y. Times, 2015; Lovett et al., 2015). The two friends began to read and study more radical teachings of Islam and even began planning attacks back in 2011 and 2012. These reports highlight the fact that Sayed was upset about the fact that Muslims were serving in the United States military and were helping to kill other Muslims in the world. This provides evidence that even though Sayed was an American citizen, he seemed to struggle with his identity as both an American citizen and a Muslim. This provides support for the hypothesis that individuals who choose to participate in individual terrorist events may become radicalized due to their inability to identify completely with a specific community or group. In this case, Sayed struggled with his identity with belonging to both communities and therefore felt the need to choose one (Islam) and fight for what he felt was an injustice.

During this time of radicalization, Mr. Farook was searching for a spouse who was as committed and devout as he was and found that in Tashfeen Malik (Lovett et al., 2015). Tashfeen Malik was born in Pakistan but grew up in Saudi Arabia where she practiced a more conservative form of Islam (Walsh, 2015). It was during her time in Saudi Arabia that Tashfeen adopted this stricter form of Islam that investigators believe started her down the path of radicalization. When she returned to Pakistan for school, Tashfeen started to isolate herself from the rest of her peers and even moved to a private home away from the rest of her classmates according to one of her professors (Walsh, 2015). This isolation due to the Tashfeen's move to identify herself as a rigidly devout

Muslim woman surrounded by a less conservative population of Muslims can be viewed as the root of her radicalization. I find that her decision to practice a more conservative form of religion was a rational choice for her as well as her move back to Pakistan. When she met with Sayed and found that he too had radical ideologies, the couple married and began to plan their attack against the United States.

A similar case of radicalization due to identity can be found in the case of the Boston Marathon Bombing. Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev were also on the path of radicalization well before their bombing of the Boston Marathon. This is especially true of the older brother, Tamerlan, who was suspected of trying to join terrorist groups in Russia years leading up to the bombing in the United States (Barry, 2013; Herszenhorn, 2013; Schmitt et al., 2013a). Tamerlan was suspected of wanting to wage jihad against Russia in the years leading up to the attack in Boston. Just as the attackers in the San Bernardino case, Tamerlan seemed to struggle with his identity of being Muslim and living in the western world. He seemed to want to strike back against the Russian government for what he believed was injustice against his Muslim brothers and sisters (Schmitt & Schmidt 2013). It was after his trip to Dagestan and Chechnya that Tamerlan started to show signs of isolation (Schmidt et al., 2013a). During this time, he started to show more conservative religious practices and even looked up and endorsed several jihadist videos on YouTube.

His younger brother, Dzhokhar, was initially suspected of being brainwashed by Tamerlan and influenced to participating in the attack. However, evidence shows that Dzhokhar Tsarnaev had actually started down his path of radicalization years before the attack when he began to show more interest in his Chechen heritage (Shane, 2013). He

began to write more about his Chechen background in classes and speak of his sadness towards the atrocities that had occurred in the region to other Muslims. Dzhokhar was reported as not being as religious conservative as his brother, but did look up Tamerlan as a father figure while their parents were out of the country (Seelye & Schmidt, 2013a).

Tamerlan became more isolated due to his choice to identify with his religious community and began to think of ways to strike back against the Russian government. He struggled with his choice to become a citizen of the United States and his commitment to the Muslim community. Dzhokhar became more isolated as he thought more about his Chechen heritage and struggled with his own self-identity. He felt conflicted with his identity of being Muslim, American, and Chechen which caused him to want to strike back against the United States for what he felt was an attack on all Muslims (Seelye & Schmidt, 2013a). Both of the brothers provide strong evidence to support the theory of socio-psychological factors, in conjunction with rational choice, can lead to an individual's involvement in terrorism.

Throughout constructing the case studies, I also found evidence to support the claim that some of the individuals were radicalized due to their desire for revenge. This seek for revenge seemed to stem from being either humiliated or feeling marginalized by the society in which they belonged to (the United States in all of these cases). I relate this to the humiliation- revenge theory and find evidence from the Charleston Church Shooting and the Orlando Pulse Shooting to support the hypothesis. In both cases, the attacker not only showed signs of self- identity issues but also seemed to want to strike back against a certain target.

In the case of the Charleston Church Shooting, Dylann Roof believed that he and

the rest of white Americans were in danger of being overrun by minority groups, especially by blacks and African- Americans in the United States (Horowitz et al., 2015). He used this ideology, which is wrote about in his journal and later confessed to when arrested, as justification for his decision to walk into one of the United States' oldest African- American churches and open fire on congregation members. Mr. Roof felt that it was his responsibility to highlight this so-called issue with American society and wanted to start a war between the races (Robles, 2015). Roof identified with his identity of a white American and sought to take it upon himself to bring the issue to light. He felt threatened by blacks and African- Americans in the society and therefore started to adopt radical ideologies which isolated him from the mainstream societal thought of a unified country. It is this isolation that lead Roof to radicalization and pushed him towards using this type of political violence. We see a similar case with the attacker that executed the attack in the Orlando Pulse Shooting.

On June 12, 2016, the United States experienced its largest terrorist attack/ hate crime since September 11, 2001 in Orlando, Florida. Omar Mateen, the individual actor, attacked a local gay night club and opened fire on the crowd of people. When the attack ended, 49 people were left dead and 53 individuals were injured (Stack, 2016). Mateen, a 29 year old security guard, was born in New York and lived right outside of the Orlando area (Blinder et al., 2016). Omar Mateen seemed to want to target the gay community in Orlando because he might have seen it as a threat to his religious beliefs. In the aftermath of the attack, several individuals came forward with possible information accusing the attacker as being gay himself (Robles & Turkewitz, 2016). If these claims were to be true, it may open up the possibility that Mateen was struggling with his identity as a

Muslim who may have also been gay. This may indicate that Mateen felt conflicted and humiliated at the fact that he may be gay and wanted to strike back against the gay community in a way of coping with the situation. This, however, is only speculation and more information will be needed in order to verify this theory.

The observations provided in this section highlight strong evidence to support the hypotheses developed for this project. Each of the case studies conducted are able to show how sociological factors, psychological factors, and rational choice are able to come together and produce a path towards radicalization for an individual given the right environment. The analysis of these case studies also supported that isolation plays an important role in the radicalization process of a terrorist. Although I do find evidence to support the argument that it is the isolation of the individuals (based off of the socio-psychological factors) that have led to the radicalization of these terrorists, there are also a few observations that I believe should be highlighted for future research on the topic.

One of the major observations found throughout my research is that almost all of the individuals viewed some type of propaganda by extremist groups/ organizations before the attacks. The Tsarnaev brothers used the magazine Inspire, as a way to learn how to build the pressure cooker bombs that were used during their attack (Cooper et al., 2013). The shooter involved in the Orlando Pulse Shooting, Omar Mateen, was said to have viewed several YouTube videos of extremists before committing his own act of terrorism (Stack, 2013). Dylann Roof spent many hours viewing online blog posts that talked about racial issues in the United States (Robles, 2015). Finally, the husband and wife involved in the San Bernardino Shooting viewed several videos given by religious leaders who opposed the United States (Lovett et al., 2015). Whether they were social

media posts or videos posted as propaganda or full magazines detailing the steps to carry out an attack, there is evidence that each of the individuals used these as motivators and/or instructions to engage in violence.

Another major observation that was found while conducting this research is that each of these attacks were planned weeks or months in advance. While looking through the data collected for each of the case studies, it seemed that all of the terrorists had a full plan of their attack. Several of the attackers had stocked up on a number of weapons and ammunition in preparation for their attacks. This included buying ammunition and materials needed to make bombs over a period of time.

In the case of San Bernardino, the couple destroyed cell phones and hard drives of computers before beginning their attack (Lovett et al., 2015). They are even suspected of using several burner phones due to their suspected contact to a terrorist cell that had been caught in an attempted attack several months before (Schmidt & Masood, 2015).

Tashfeen Malik also took to her social media in the moments leading up to their attack to announce that the coming attack would be in the name of an established terrorist group. Similarly, we can see the same thing happen in the Orlando Pulse Shooting when Omar Mateen also took to social media to talk about the attack before, and even during, his attack (Alvarez & Perez- Pena, 2016a). This evidence shows that there was deep thought and action taken in advance of the attacks by these individuals.

Conclusion

Individual domestic terrorism in the United States is currently on the rise and more research is needed on the specific individuals who engage in this form of violence. It is

only from studying the attackers in such events in which we may be able to build on the research of terrorism at the individual- level. This paper has highlighted the importance of merging the concepts of sociology, psychology, and rational choice in such a way to analyze the radicalization of such individuals. Although I believe that this project has brought more attention to the motivational factors of individual terrorism, it is apparent that further research must be done to address factors such as the role of media and propaganda by organizations have on such individuals.

Unfortunately due to the time constraints of this research project, I am not able to further my analysis on such factors. However, I believe that future research into these topics may help to uncover more factors and patterns that are commonly shared by individuals. If given the opportunity to continue this research project in the future, I would want to adjust my hypotheses and my research design to test the theory against different forms of political violence such as hate crimes. There seems to be evidence that those individuals who participate in hate crimes may go through a similar type of radicalization as those who participate in acts of terrorism. I would expand my case studies to include examples of hate crimes and compare and contrast such events with other forms of political violence. I believe that the research could be used to help fight against all types of political violence in the future.

It is my hope that the future research on the topic of individual terrorism will be able to aid future counter- terrorism agencies and politicians. This research and others that build upon the study of terrorism can be used by such actors and agencies in the U.S. government to create both policies and plans to mitigate the risk of individual terrorism in the future. These policies and plans of actions will be able to focus on identifying

individuals who may have been radicalized even earlier than current security systems set in place. They will also be able to help expand the current counter-terrorism systems from just known organizations to all forms of terrorism in order to help prevent future attacks. Although the United States has certainly taken enormous steps to helping to keep the citizens safe from another September 11th style attack, the government must be able to adjust to the changing realities of terrorism in the future.

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Appendix

Table 1: Case Studies Selected for Research

Case Selection	Event Name	Date Occurred	Terrorist Name(s)	Potential Motivational Factors
<i>Case Study 1</i>	Boston Marathon Bombing	April 15, 2013	Dzhokhar A. Tsarnaev, Tamerlan Tsarnaev	Religious/ Societal Marginalization
<i>Case Study 2</i>	Charleston Church Shooting	June 17, 2015	Dylann Roof	Religious/ Racial/ Ethnic Conflict
<i>Case Study 3</i>	San Bernardino Shooting	December 2, 2015	Syed Rizwan Farook, Tashfeen Malik	Religious
<i>Case Study 4</i>	Orlando Nightclub Shooting	June 12, 2016	Omar Mateen	Religious/ Social Pressures

Table 2: Most Similar/ Difference Theory Applied

	Citizenship Status	Religious Affiliation of Actor	Group/Organization or Individual	Outcome
Boston Marathon Bombing	U.S. Citizen	Islam	Individual	Terrorism
San Bernardino Shooting	U.S. Citizen	Islam	Individual	Terrorism
Orlando Shooting	U.S. Citizen	Islam	Individual	Terrorism/ Hate Crime
Charleston Church Shooting	U.S. Citizen	Christianity	Individual	Terrorism/ Hate Crime