2015 START Symposium

Individual Radicalization Panel

- Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)
  
  *Presented by Gary LaFree*

- Childhood Trauma and Adolescent Misconduct as Precursors to Violent Extremism
  
  *Presented by Pete Simi*

- The Psychology of Terrorism and Terrorist Motivations
  
  *Presented by Anthony Lemieux*

- Deradicalization of Extremists
  
  *Presented by David Webber*
Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)

Gary LaFree
START Symposium
10/15/2015

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What is PIRUS?

PIRUS codebook

Number of individuals: 1,503

- **Identification Variables**
  - Number ID
  - Name and aliases

- **Plot and Consequences**
  - Activity description
  - Location of plot
  - Date of exposure
  - Violent/non-violent
  - Criminal charges

- **Group information**
  - Group name(s)
  - Role in group
  - Name of group leader
  - Group dynamics

- **Radicalization details**
  - Ideologies
  - Recruitment
  - Role of internet/media
  - Event influence

- **Demographics**
  - Ethnicity
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Marital status
  - Religious background
  - Citizenship

- **Socioeconomic Status**
  - Education level
  - Finances and employment
  - Military background
  - Socioeconomic stratum

- **Personal details**
  - Abuse and psychological concerns
  - Family and relationships
  - Drug and alcohol use
  - Social life
  - Previous criminal activity
  - Mindset prior to radicalization
Radicalization Over Time

ALL CASES BY IDEOLOGY 1965-2013 (percentage)
Radicalization Mechanisms

Radicalization Mechanisms Across Ideologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Islamist</th>
<th>Far right</th>
<th>Far left</th>
<th>Single issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grievance</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outbidding</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Victimization</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradual Decline</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- **Islamist**
- **Far right**
- **Far left**
- **Single issue**
Predictors of Violence
Predicting the probability of violent outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Far Right</th>
<th>Far Left</th>
<th>Islamist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abuse</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Dynamics</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lone Actors and Group Actors Over Time

LONE ACTORS v. GROUP ACTORS 1965-2013 (PERCENTAGE)

Graph depicts “date of exposure” for individuals in PIRUS from 1965 to 2013. The date of exposure represents the time at which the individual’s radical activity or plot first came to public attention. Usually the time of incident or arrest, or earliest mention of the individual in open sources, so long as it is related to the plot/radicalization of the individual.
Are Lone Actors Different? Comparing Lone Actors to Group Actors

*All results are statistically significant using Pearson’s chi-squared to at least the .005 level

Group actor = coded as either a member of a formal extremist group; an informal extremist group; or an above-ground political activist group
Lone actor = coded as having no group affiliation or membership
US Foreign Fighters: Outcomes

- Expressed interest: 226
- Attempted travel: 193
- Successfully traveled: 118
- Returned to US: 51

Involved in domestic plot: 45 (~20% of all cases)
Behavioral Indicators of Radicalization

- Changes in daily lifestyle: 74.23%
- Associates with known radicals: 26.80%
- Distancing from past relationships: 12.37%
- Activism in support of extremist ideology: 18.56%
- Material/financial support to extremist organizations: 3.09%
- Logistical support for domestic plot: 18.56%
- Seeks operational training in violent extremist: 5.15%
- Active participation in non-violent plots: 14.43%
- Active participation in violent plots: 3.09%
- No radical behaviors: 5.15%

N = 97
Implications: Radicalization

• Substantial rise of far right and Islamist groups in last decade
• Increasing prominence of lone actors
• There is a window of opportunity for intervention with foreign fighters.
• Foreign fighter returnees may not be more dangerous than those that choose to stay.
Contact

Gary LaFree, Director
glafree@start.umd.edu

William Braniff, Executive Director
Braniff@start.umd.edu

Michael Jensen – Principal Investigator
majensen@start.umd.edu

Patrick James – Project Manager
pajames@start.umd.edu

Herbert Tinsley – Project Researcher
htinsley@start.umd.edu

www.start.umd.edu
Childhood Trauma and Adolescent Misconduct as Precursors to Violent Extremism

Pete Simi
START Symposium
10/15/2015

This research was supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate’s Office of University Programs through START. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations presented here are solely the authors’ and are not representative of DHS or the United States Government.
Scope of the Problem

- Since 9/11 Right-Wing Extremists have killed more Americans in the United States than violent jihadists (New America Foundation Study, 2015)

Figure 1
Key Concepts

• **Violent Extremism**: violence committed by an individual and/or group in support of a specific political or religious ideology (often used interchangeably with terrorism) (Borum 2011).

• **Right-Wing Extremism**: The far-right subscribes to aspects of the following ideals:
  - national, racial, and/or religious chauvinism; suspicious of centralized federal authority (or conversely promotes authoritarian leadership and governing style); conspiratorial thinking; sense of being under attack (Chermak, Freilich, and Suttmoeller 2013).
Research Questions

• What types of early childhood and adolescent experiences characterize the lives of violent extremists?

• What role, if any, does childhood trauma and adolescent misconduct play in the process of becoming involved in violent extremism?
Method & Data

• In-depth life history interviews (n=44)
  ▪ structured and unstructured questions
  ▪ earliest memories to present

• National sample

• Broad range of right-wing extremist groups
Risk Factor Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Risk</th>
<th>Child Abuse</th>
<th>Family Substance Use Problems</th>
<th>Neglect</th>
<th>Mental Health Issues</th>
<th>Attempted Suicide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Subjects</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multidimensional Model of VE Participation

1. **Negative Emotions**
   - Early Childhood Trauma (e.g., family dysfunction, victimization, etc.)

2. **Adolescent Conduct Problems**
   - Familiarity and Desensitization Toward Extremist Ideology and Groups

3. **Extremist Participation**
   - Dimension 1: Coping Mechanisms
   - Dimension 2: Supportive Context
Process Tracing: Case Study 1

• **Childhood Trauma**: “I can recall him [step-father] being like a buddy, even after he raped my mom, beat her. He came out and he put his hand on my head and rubbed my hair...I remember the feeling, just being like, stuck...lots of memory after memory about physical violence...being kicked in the face, thrown down stairs on and on....”

• **Adolescent Conduct Problems**: “The first suicide attempt was at 12, but I was not hospitalized. Second attempt I was 14, 15, and then the last one resulted in a three-month forensic lockdown unit. It was like an adolescent suicide treatment center is how they described it...”
Process Tracing Cont.: Case Study 1

- **Non-Ideological Coping Mechanism**: “Then me and Roger [leader of an extremist group] started hanging out on the street. He was drinking a lot, we had lots of heartfelt conversations. He actually taught me how to roll people [rob people] effectively and this sort of thing... I was on the streets, this was how I got off the streets... I had a role; I got invited into a small cell of guys who worked under a larger organization that had like a hundred and some members. It was this tiered system.”
Implications

• Intervention opportunities prior to extremist involvement

• Relative importance of ideology

• Rely on “lessons learned” from gang and delinquency intervention
Contact

Pete Simi
psimi@unomaha.edu
402-594-4817

www.start.umd.edu
The Psychology of Terrorism & Terrorist Motivations

Anthony F. Lemieux
Georgia State University

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A wide range of motivations

Grievance, Risk, Opportunity, Identification

Individual Level Factors: SDO, RWA, ARIS.

Experiments in the US & Internationally: An approach to test the relationships.
• Allows us to determine the extent of impact of grievance, establish causality in relationships
Core areas of research: Taking stock of research efforts to date

**Experiments in the US & Internationally:** Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, Jordan, Malaysia.

1.) **Grievance:** Grievance has a positive influence on the justification of both protest (U.S., Malaysian, and Jordanian samples) and terrorism (across samples).

2.) **Individual Level Factors:** SDO, RWA, ARIS (in Egypt & Morocco).

3.) **Intergroup Images & Representations:** Evil, Oppressive.
   - Viewing the other as *oppressive* is correlated with higher levels of protest justification.
   - An image of the other as *evil*, and to a lesser extent as subhuman, leads more respondents to view an attack as justified.
Comparative Approach Advantages:
• Experimental approach to examine causality in relationships
• Online & International – broad reach, efficient data collection, comparison
• Augmented Reality – engaging, higher realism
• Direct comparison will allow us to test for differences (Spring / Summer 2016), and going forward.
Bottom Line

• Empirical support for grievance
• Empirical support for image
• Expanding our experimental approach to include AR; which enhances multidisciplinary expert network.
  – Massive potential to test additional variations (i.e., communicator properties, grievance properties, setting & context; presence of others, etc.)
  – Demonstrating & Documenting what this enhanced approach offers is critical.
Contact

Anthony Lemieux
alemieux@gsu.edu
860.490.5983
Deradicalization of Extremists

David Webber
START Symposium
10/15/2015

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Overview

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
- Terrorist organization that waged secessionist campaign in Sri Lanka, until defeated by Sri Lankan military in 2009

Rehabilitation program effectiveness
- Longitudinal assessment across a 1 year of rehabilitation
- Assessment /comparison with non-extremists in the communities after reintegration in society

Psychological factors
- Psychological variables involved in the processes of radicalization and deradicalization
Radicalism across 1 year in rehabilitation
(Support of LTTE / violence / separate state / armed struggle)

Treatment components
- Educational
- Spiritual
- Vocational
- Cultural/family
- Psychological/creativity
- Sport/extra-curricular

Minimum Treatment
Treatment
Radicalism after reintegration
(Sacrifice for equality, support for violence / separate state)
Positivity after reintegration
(Support government, positive relations with Sinhalese)
The role of personal significance
(Personal / Tamil / caste humiliation or discrimination)

Blue = Former LTTE
Green = Community
Bottom Line

• Overall, rehabilitation appears successful
  – Most were beneficiaries of full treatment
  – After reintegration, former LTTE are comparable or less extreme than their community counterparts

• Regional differences suggest the Eastern districts may be at greater risk of future radicalization

• Greater radicalism might stem from experiences of humiliation that breed self-condemnation and insignificance
Contact

David Webber
dwebber2@umd.edu

Research Team

Arie Kruglanski
Michele Gelfand
Malkanthi Hettiarachchi
Rohan Gunaratna
Noa Schori-Eyal
Marc LaFreniere
Jocelyn Belanger

www.start.umd.edu