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## Anger in the Overlooked: A gendered analysis of the January 6, 2021 Capitol Hill breach

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Anger in the Overlooked:

A gendered analysis of the January 6, 2021 Capitol Hill breach

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Undergraduate Honors Thesis

University of Nebraska at Omaha

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### **Abstract**

The violence seen at the U.S. Capitol Building on January 6, 2021 has sparked concern at the threat of domestic violent extremism (DVE) within the United States. Over 700 individuals have been federally charged in connection with the events of January 6 including almost 100 women. Women's involvement in DVE is underestimated and understudied. This project utilized a corpus of over 1,000 court documents to content code variables relating to violence and DVE affiliation for the individuals who have been federally charged in relation to January 6th. The results of the coding process were then used to compare the rates at which women were involved in violence and DVE. Ultimately, the study will contribute to the lack of literature surrounding women's involvement in DVE in the United States.

*Keywords: gender, women, domestic violent extremism, violence*

## Introduction

On January 6th, 2021, several thousand people stormed the United States Capitol Building on the erroneous belief that the preceding presidential election results had been falsified. Between January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, 745 people had been federally charged with crimes stemming from this incident.<sup>1</sup> (Clifford & Lewis, 2022). Researchers and officials alike have expressed concern at the number of individuals who traveled to Washington D.C. and then participated in criminal activity and violence – whether spur of the moment or planned - that injured people and destroyed property (Clifford & Lewis, 2022). To date, approximately 13% of those charged (100 people) are women. Despite their relatively small numbers, these women were also responsible for some of the violence that occurred on that day.

Not all participants in the events of January 6<sup>th</sup> were acting in an individual capacity. A portion of the individuals charged for their actions had known extremist group and ideological affiliations. These affiliations may have motivated them to attend the event or engage in violence. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines domestic violent extremism (DVE) as “an individual based and operating primarily within the United States or its territories without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other foreign power who seeks to further political or social goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence” (2021). Women’s promotion and participation in DVE is not a new phenomenon, but one that is understudied and underestimated (Carter, 2013; Leidig, 2021). Women have had significantly lower rates of criminality, and more specifically, violent criminality over time when compared to their male counterparts (Baskin & Sommers, 1988; Heidensohn, 1997; Rowe et al., 1995; Heimer, 2000; U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). This trend is mirrored when looking at differences in DVE

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<sup>1</sup> <https://extremism.gwu.edu/Capitol-Hill-Siege>; <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/capitol-breach-cases>

involvement where women make up a much smaller portion of participants than men (Blee, 2020; Carter, 2013; Leidig, 2021). Women who had some affiliation with a DVE organization or ideology were present on January 6<sup>th</sup> even if they were outnumbered by men who also had an affiliation to a DVE organization or ideology.

Sigle (2016) notes that while women are actively engaged in DVE, they may be less likely to engage in violence as a result of gendered socialization. Some of the women with an identifiable affiliation with a DVE organization or ideology have been charged with committing acts of violence on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The extent to which DVE groups or ideologies motivate women to engage in violence remains unclear. As such, the group of women in this sample present an interesting comparison group to the men who were also charged in relation to the Capitol Hill Breach and each group's use of violence in conjunction with DVE organization affiliation.

Given women's participation in DVE organizations, ideologies, and violence at the Capitol Hill Breach on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the event poses a unique analysis of women's involvement and participation in DVE in the United States. This study asks three related questions:

RQ1: What proportion of the women who have been federally charged in relation to actions on January 6<sup>th</sup> have an identifiable DVE affiliation?

RQ1(a): Does the type of DVE affiliation vary by gender?

RQ2: What proportion of those charges are for violent offenses?

RQ3: How do these proportions compare to the same analysis done on men who have been federally charged in relation to their actions on January 6<sup>th</sup>?

This paper will first review the current literature on the topics of women criminality and women involvement in DVE. It will then provide an overview of the coding process and statistical

analysis. It will conclude with a discussion of how the findings may impact future research on the subject matter.

## **Literature Review**

### **Gender differences in criminality**

Men have consistently had higher rates of criminality overtime (Baskin & Sommers, 1988; Heidensohn, 1997; Nagel & Hagan, 1983; Rowe et al., 1995; Heimer, 2000). According to national data on crimes committed in the United States, almost 73% of those individuals who were arrested in 2019 were men (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). This disparity does not mean that women do not commit crimes, but rather that they do so less frequently than their male counterparts. As a result, women's criminality is often understudied or is analyzed using theories derived from studies on men's criminality, which assumes that the same underlying mechanisms push and pull both men and women to crime (Nagel & Hagan, 1983).

Generally, scholars have relied on a combination of biological, social control, and strain theories to clarify this gender gap. Biological theories of criminality state that some people are genetically predisposed to partake in criminal activity (Campbell, 2009; Lombroso, 2006). Using a biological perspective, scholars argue that women are physiologically inferior men, and thus commit less crime than men (Green, 2021). Social control theories affirm that norms in a society will work to thwart criminal behaviors. Using a social control perspective, scholars claim that women are not socialized to commit crime as this is viewed to be a masculine behavior by society (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Green, 2021; Steffensmeier & Allan, 2010). Strain theories describe crime as response to an added negative stimulus or the removal of a positive stimuli (Agnew, 1992). This perspective claims that women experience different types of strain than men and

respond to strain differently than men, which ultimately explains their lower levels of criminality (Broidy & Agnew, 1997).

Steffensmeier and Allan (2010, p. 475) attempt to explain women's involvement in criminal activity compared to men's involvement through a paradigm that combines elements of "(1) gender norms and focal concerns, (2) moral development and affiliative concerns, (3) social control, (4) physical strength, and (5) sexuality." These five areas impact the willingness and ability of both men and women to partake in criminal behavior, and thus may explain the gender-gap seen in criminality (Steffensmeier & Allan, 2010). This theory is unique in that it applies more than one theoretical explanation compared to those aforementioned explanations.

Little has been done to empirically confirm that these theories can truly describe women's criminality. With the rise of feminist scholarship across the field of criminology, however, more research is being devoted to studying the specific phenomenon of women's criminality (Heidensohn & Silvestri, 2012; Steffensmeier & Allan, 2010). Thus far, some scholars have argued that the studies tend to focus more on individual differences between women offenders than overall gendered differences in criminality (Bisi, 2002; Rowe et al., 1995).

Despite the large gender disparity in criminality, there has been a recent increase in offenses committed by women (Bisi, 2002; Green, 2021). The decreasing gender gap in criminality has been attributed to a variety of factors. One basic explanation is that bad behavior by women is being redefined as criminal behavior (Heidensohn & Silvestri, 2012). The criminalization of certain behaviors, or in some cases, the increased willingness to prosecute offenses by women is one explanation provided for the increase in women's criminality overtime. Another explanation is coined the liberation hypothesis. This hypothesis says that the increase in criminality among women is a result of the increased freedoms provided to women in the current society (Bisi, 2002).



Others argue, however, this is not the case as the feminization of poverty demonstrates that women remain victims of a patriarchal society (Chesney-Lind, 1996; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2003). The feminization of poverty, rather, puts women into difficult social circumstances that leads them to crime as a means of survival (Basin & Sommers, 1988; Heimer, 2000). Thus, as poverty has increased, so too have the rates of women's criminality. As the gender gap in criminality decreases, there is a renewed effort to begin research that focuses exclusively on the realities of women's criminality (Baskin & Sommers, 1988; Bisi, 2002; Green, 2021), even if a disparity between genders remains.

The gender disparity in criminality is greater when looking specifically at violent crime. In 2019, almost 80% of individuals arrested for a violent crime in the United States were men (Nagel & Hagan, 1983; U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). To explain the wider gender gap in violent criminality, most research relies on the same theories used to explain the gender gap in criminality. Biologically, scholars argue that women do not possess the same violent physiological characteristics as men which inhibits them from committing violent crime (Green, 2021; Lombroso, 2006). From a social control perspective, women are socialized with traditional feminine values which does not include seeking power or participating in violence (Gottfredson & Hirshi, 1990; Green, 2021). Regarding strain theories, Broidy and Agnew (1997), state that women are less likely to resort to violence in the face of strain due to differences in coping skills, social support, opportunities, social control, and general disposition across genders. As with the gender gap in outright criminality however, the gender gap in violent criminality is also decreasing (Heimer, 2000; Green, 2021).

One of the reasons for the decreasing disparity in the gender gap in violent criminality is an increase in cases of aggravated assault committed by women offenders (Chesney-Lind & Pasko,

2003). Heidensohn and Silvestri (2012) identified an increased willingness to criminalize women's bad behavior, and this has also resulted in an increase in the number of instances of violent criminality that can be attributed to women offenders (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2003). Conversely, Heimer (2000) argues that the violence committed by female offenders is more often than not in the form of protection of self or others, while the violence committed by men offenders is a show of masculinity. This may explain both the reason for the gender gap in violent criminality, but also why the gender gap is decreasing due to women's continued victimization in a patriarchal society as evidenced by the feminization of poverty (Basin & Sommers, 1988; Chesney-Lind, 1996; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2003; Heimer, 2000).

On the whole, women's offending activity is characterized by the same substantive type and range of criminal themes as is men's offending, regardless of the large gender gap (Youngs et al., 2004). The increase in overall involvement in offending, specifically violent offending, by women warrants more research.

### **Domestic Violent Extremism**

Domestic violent extremism (DVE) in the United States can be categorized broadly into two main types: racially and ethnically motivated violence extremists (RMVEs) and anti-government/anti-authority violent extremists (AGAAVE), with a third catch-all category for other domestic violent extremists (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2021).

RMVE extremists have an agenda built on some bias against others due to their race, ethnicity, or religion. One example of DVE organization that can be categorized as a RMVE group is the Atomwaffen Division (AWD). AWD is a neo-Nazi accelerationist group whose goal is to use terror and violence to push the world into an apocalyptic society in order to ultimately take

power and impose a white nationalistic rule (Anti-Defamation League, 2022; Clifford, 2021; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2022).

AGAAVE extremists have an agenda built on a rejection of societal hierarchies or perceived government overreach. The Oath Keepers is an American militia organization that can be categorized within DVE as an AGAAVE group. The Oath Keepers rely on a vigilante structure to protect citizens from what they see as tyrannical overreach by the current United States government (Anti-Defamation League, 2022; McQueen, 2017; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2022).

Other domestic violent extremists are comprised of those whose agenda cannot be categorized within the aforementioned themes of RMVE or AGAAVE (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2021). The Proud Boys provide an example of the other DVE organizations within the US. The Proud Boys are self-described “Western chauvinists” who espouse primarily violent misogynistic rhetoric, but whose individual members sometimes hold membership in other white nationalistic groups (Anti-Defamation League, 2022; Kriner & Lewis, 2021; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2022).

The Federal Bureau of Investigation tracks federal level data on hate crimes, but not on incidents related DVE. This is due, in part, to the fact that no singular domestic terrorism statute exists within the United States. Given this fact, it is difficult to identify what charges might have a relationship to DVE within the United States (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2021).

The potential danger posed by DVE, however, is less ambiguous. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (2021) stated that DVE will continue to pose an “elevated” threat. Specifically, the threat of RMVE is considerably higher than the other categorizations within the

DVE for their heightened lethality (Clifford, 2021; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2021; Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2021).

These judgements are further confirmed when looking at the number of domestic terrorist attacks in the United States. The number of domestic terrorist attacks has been increasing since 2014, with an average of about 30 fatalities attributed to domestic terrorism per year (Jones, 2022).

### ***Women in Domestic Violent Extremism***

Given women's documented lack of participation in acts of violence, one might expect women's involvement in DVE to be equally low. According to Blee (2020), however, women actually make up a sizable number of adherents to DVE ideologies. In fact, the number of women involved in DVE has been increasing, and some women have even taken leadership positions with DVE groups (Blee, 2020; Stasulane, 2017). The caveat is that these leadership positions are more informal as many DVE groups/ideologies rely on underlying misogynistic views that require women to be subordinate to their men counterparts (Blee, 2020; Stasulane, 2017).

Even with these misogynistic undertones, DVE narratives still appear to be attractive to women given their increasing number of women in DVE organizations (Blee, 2020; Stasulane, 2017). With regard to gender, DVE narratives usually promote "tradwife" culture (Mattheis, 2019). Tradwife culture prioritizes motherhood and traditional gender roles for women in society and within the DVE organization itself. DVE narratives claim that modern society restricts the natural, biological instincts of men to be violent and women to be mothers, and "tradwife" culture or traditional gender roles in DVE offer a return to what adherents see as an ideal and natural society (Leidig, 2021). Further, the narrative empowers women adherents to fulfill their ultimate biological duties to become mothers and raise the next generation who will carry on the ideology, even while being subservient to men in leadership roles (Dowing, 2018).

Once women become involved in DVE organizations, they can take on a variety of roles within the organizations. Researchers have found that women play a key role in DVE in promoting and participating in violent extremism taking on roles as recruiters, propagandists, organizers, and fundraisers (Bigio & Vogelstein, 2019; Carter, 2013; Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2021; Leidig, 2021). These roles are essential in the maintenance and preservation of DVE organizations and ideologies over time. Women also have an ability to normalize the extreme beliefs inherent in a DVE organization. This is because women are more likely to use mainstream platforms like YouTube or Instagram to share their personal stories on adopting DVE ideology which allows them to connect with audiences on a personal level and on a far greater scope. Ultimately, it may make them more effective in recruiting and radicalizing individuals into such ideologies (Leidig, 2021).

On the whole, women's involvement in terrorism is increasing even if their involvement compared to men is dramatically lower (Bigio & Vogelstein, 2019; González et al., 2014). When women did participate in crimes related to violent extremism, they usually took on supportive roles (González et al., 2014). Interestingly, relationships were found to be an important part in women's participation in violent crimes related to DVE (González et al., 2014). Researchers say that women's involvement in DVE normalizes the violence seen in the crimes related to DVE regardless of their role in the crime.

A consensus among researchers is that women are often overlooked and underestimated in the literature relating to DVE groups (Carter, 2013; Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2021; Leidig, 2021). Radicalized women still commit the same types of crimes as radicalized men, albeit, at a decreased frequency (Bigio & Vogelstein, 2019). On January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, women were a part of the documented organized groups among the thousands of people and were also participants in the

violence of that day (Margolin & Daymon, 2021; Santucci et al., 2021). A recent study by Matfess & Margolin (2022) found that women's involvement in DVE varied by group structure and ideology. Further, they noted the frequency at which women were involved in DVE on January 6<sup>th</sup> represents a break from traditional DVE norms (Matfess & Margolin, 2022).

### **Current Study**

The literature surrounding women in DVE within the United States is thus limited and does not provide sufficient background to theoretically derive hypotheses about women's involvement in DVE on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Instead, it will ask the following theoretically informed exploratory questions to contribute to literature in this area:

RQ1: What proportion of women who have been federally charged in relation to actions on January 6<sup>th</sup> have an identifiable DVE affiliation?

RQ1(a): Does the type of DVE affiliation vary by gender?

RQ2: What proportion of those charges are for violent offenses?

RQ3: How do these proportions compare to the same analysis done on men who have been federally charged in relation to their actions on January 6<sup>th</sup>?

### **Methodology**

#### **Data**

The project utilized the Capitol Hill Breach Arrests dataset created by researchers at the National Counterterrorism, Innovation, Technology, and Education Center (NCITE) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The United States Department of Justice<sup>2</sup> curated an archive of every person "prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia" for crimes related to January 6<sup>th</sup>. This archive was used to identify the sample of individuals to be reviewed

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/capitol-breach-cases>

in the study. Individuals were included if they met the following two conditions: (1) faced federal charges related to crimes committed on January 6<sup>th</sup> from January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022; and, (2) the individual was identified on the archive page. The archive page also catalogued any publicly available court documents related to the specific defendants that were identified as participants in the study. These documents were downloaded onto a secure drive for use by the project team.

### **Procedure**

Once the court documents had been downloaded, the project team developed a codebook composed of 33 unique variables designed to evaluate three themes: (1) preparation and planning, (2) participation in violence, and (3) legal outcomes.

The first two categories were constructed due to leading government officials articulating interest in the level of coordination and violence. For instance, in his address one year after the Capitol Hill Breach, President Biden (2020) expressed concern at the frequency of violence on January 6<sup>th</sup>. The first category includes variable that attempt to measure the preparation and planning by some individuals. Examples of this variables are whether the individual could be identified as a group organizer or whether an individual was affiliated with any DVE organization. The second category attempts to measure the degree to which an individuals participated in violence and is composed of variables like the types of weapons an individual used and whether the individual encouraged acts of violence by those around them.

Finally, while many of the charges stemming from January 6<sup>th</sup> are still pending, researchers, government officials, and law enforcement are interested in the legal outcomes of these cases. Further, there is added interest in these outcomes as these investigations and sentencing procedures are being completed without a specific domestic terrorism statute (Collins, 2020; Zapotosky &

Barrett, 2022). To begin to measure these outcomes, the project team developed our final category designed to measure the legal outcomes of an unprecedented investigation in size and scope by the U.S. Department of Justice. Variables that fall under this category range from an individual's plea to the types of sentences received by the individual.

After developing a comprehensive codebook, the research team divided the cases in the study between coders. Coders were then given access to the codebook and the court documents related to their assigned cases. Coders read through all available court documents to content code the information into a numerical format. These numerical codes were then assigned an identifier number and put into a shared dataset spreadsheet.

Freilich et al. (2014) stated that court documents provide a large amount of detail and rank highly in source credibility. As such, the Capitol Hill Breach dataset relied solely on court documents to code variables relating to preparation/planning, participation in violence, and legal outcomes of the individuals in the sample due to the sensitive and politicized nature of the subject.

In order to provide descriptive statistics about the study sample, the project relied on the addition of several demographic variables, such as age and hometown, which were recorded by researchers at George Washington University using open-source information in addition.

### **Key Variables of Interest**

For the purpose of this study, the gender variable was a dichotomous variable with the two responses being either male or female. To assess the gender of each case, coders relied on the use of pronouns utilized in the language of the court document. He/him/his pronouns resulted in a code of "0" for a man, and she/her/hers pronouns resulted in a code of "1" for woman. None of the 745 cases in the study were found to have any ambiguity relating to this coding scheme.



Of particular interest to this study are the variables pertaining to specific DVE affiliations and acts of violence on January 6<sup>th</sup>. The affiliation variable first indicated if any of the court documents associated with the individual mentioned a connection to an existing DVE organization or ideology. A second order variable then asked to coders to specify the name of the organization of ideology the individual had a connection to as a textual variable. The textual nature of this variable allowed the coder to list any group affiliations that may have been mentioned in the court documents. A complete list of the identified groups can be seen in Table 2. The affiliation variable is shown in Figure 1, and represents the only variable utilized in the statistical analysis as the research questions were focused broadly on DVE affiliation, and not on any specific groups that may have been identified in the second order textual variable.

Figure 1. Coding for Variable *Affiliation*

<p><u>Dataset identifier:</u>    <b>affiliation</b></p> <p><i>Affiliation</i> is a dichotomous variable reflecting whether the individual has any noted group or ideological affiliations. (e.g., publicized leadership position, social media posts, etc.)</p> <p>0 = did not have any noted group or ideological affiliations</p> <p>1 = does have noted group or ideological affiliations</p> <p>99 = unknown</p>
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The violence variable indicated if the individual participated in any documented acts of violence on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Numerous individuals were charged with violating 18 U.S.C.§111(a)(1) which is assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers, but not all these individuals facing this charge actually participated in a documented act of violence. Due to this inconsistency, coders had

to rely on court document descriptions to code for specific acts of violence. The violence variable is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Coding for Variable *Violent Act*

<p><u>Dataset identifier:</u>    <b>violent_act</b></p> <p><i>Violence Charge</i> is a dichotomous variable reflecting whether the individual committed any act(s) of violence. (e.g., hitting an officer with a flagpole, breaking a window for entry into the Capitol Building)</p> <p>0 = not charged with an act(s) of violence</p> <p>1 = charged with an act(s) of violence</p> <p>99 = unknown</p>
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### Analytical Approach

For all statistical analysis, the researcher utilized the programming language “R” to facilitate calculations. The first two research questions required a simple mathematical computation of proportions. The calculations for these research questions are listed below.

$$\text{RQ1: } \frac{\text{Number of women charged who have a DVE affiliation}}{\text{Total number of women charged}}$$

$$\text{RQ2: } \frac{\text{Number of women charged with violence}}{\text{Total number of women charged}}$$

The sub-research question under RQ1 also requires a simple computation of proportions but varies by the three DVE typologies identified in the literature. This calculation is listed below.

$$\text{RQ1(a): } \frac{\text{Number of women charged who have a (AGAAVE/RMVE/Other) affiliation}}{\text{Total number of participants who had a (AGAAVE/RMVE/Other) affiliation}}$$

To assess the third and final research questions, the same proportions were computed using the men charged in the sample. These proportions were then compared to the results of the women to understand how they were similar or different.

### Results

As of March 31, 2022, 745 people were federally charged in relation to January 6th. Of those, 100 were women and 645 were men. The mean age was 40 years old, and they came from 48 states. Comparing by gender, women charged tended to be older ( $M= 43$  years old) and came from 28 states whereas men tended to be younger ( $M= 40$ ) and came from 47 states.

Table 1. Men and women's involvement in DVE and violence

	Women			Men		
	#	% of women	% overall	#	% of men	% overall
<b>DVE Affiliation</b>	14	14%	1.9%	88	13.6%	11.8%
<b>Charged with Violence</b>	8	8%	1.1%	168	26.1%	22.6%
<b>DVE Affiliation + Charged with Violence</b>	2	2%	0.3%	18	2.8%	2.4%

Table 1 shows presents the information necessary to address the three research questions. The first research question asks: what proportion of the women who have been federally charged in relation to actions on January 6<sup>th</sup> have an identifiable DVE affiliation? As Table 1 shows, 14% ( $n=14$ ) of the women who were federally charged in relation to the events of January 6<sup>th</sup> were affiliated with a DVE organization. The second research question asks: what proportion of those

charges are for violent offenses? Table 1 also shows that 8% (n=8) of the women in the dataset were federally charged with at least one violent offense.

Table 2 identifies the DVE groups that were observed throughout the sample along with a gendered break down of the participants. In total, there were four groups that fit into the AGAAVE category, one that fit into the RMVE category, and three that fit into the Other category.

In the identified AGAAVE organizations, the Boogaloo movement had only two men within the sample. As a DVE organization, it espouses narratives that warn against an impending civil war alongside anti-government and anti-police rhetoric (Thompson, 2021). The Oath Keepers represented a larger proportion of DVE adherents within the sample but had only four women members. The Oath Keepers is a militia movement that promotes anti-government rhetoric and is motivated around the protection of their unique interpretation of the United States Constitution (McQueen, 2021). The People's Rights Network represents only one man in the sample. This DVE organization is composed of paramilitary members who ascribe to anti-government sentiment (Institute for Research & Education on Human Rights, 2020). Finally, III% (Three Percenters) represent a larger proportion of adherents within the sample than the People's Rights Network but have only one member who was a woman. The III% is also a paramilitary organization and adheres to anti-government rhetoric in the form of concern over what they perceive to be tyrannical control of the U.S. government (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2021). These organizations clearly meet the requirements of the AGAAVE category given the FBI's definition; however, it should be noted that many of these organizations also promoted and adhered to sub narratives of white supremacy, antisemitism, anti-LGBTQ, and others which muddles the quality of the categorizations (Institute for Research & Education on Human Rights, 2020; McQueen, 2021; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2021; Thompson, 2021).

The sample had only one DVE group that fit into the RMVE category, which was the Red Elephant organization that had one lone male member. The Red Elephant organization refers to itself as a media entity but is generally regarded as a conspiracy organization that promotes antisemitic and white supremacist narratives (Anti-Defamation League, 2021).

The sample also had three organizations that could be classified in the Other categorization. The first was the Proud Boys which make up a sizeable proportion of DVE adherents within the sample, but only two were women. The Proud Boys self-describe themselves as “Western chauvinists” with misogynistic and “anti-political correctness” narratives (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2021). QAnon is a loosely structured DVE organization that promotes conspiracy theories and other disinformation regarding the sanctity of the U.S. government (Anti-Defamation League, 2020). Interestingly, this organization had the highest number of members who were female with five overall. Finally, Super Happy Fun America was a small proportion of the sample and had only one woman member. In its own words, the group subscribes to anti-LGBTQ rhetoric by promoting “straight pride” (Hauslohner, 2021). As with the AGAAVE groups, however, these categorizations get muddied when sub narratives that are anti-government and that promote white supremacy are added into the analysis of the overall group’s ideology (Anti-Defamation League, 2020; Hauslohner, 2021; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2021).

The sub-research question for RQ1 asks: does the type of DVE affiliation vary by gender? Table 2 shows that 13% (n=5) of participants in AGAAVE groups were women. This is similar to Other groups where 14% (n=8) of participants were women. Further, these proportions roughly equate to the proportion of women throughout the sample who were involved in DVE. Interestingly, no women participated in RMVE groups which is a stark contrast to the percentages identified in the AGAAVE and Other groups. This suggests that women are equally as likely to be

involved in AGAAVE and Other groups, but much less likely to be involved in RMVE groups. Further, the data shows that women's involvement in AGAAVE and Other DVE groups mirrors the overall likelihood that women will be involved in DVE in general.

Table 2. Gendered breakdown of DVE groups

<i>Group</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Women</i>		<i>Men</i>		<i>Total</i>
		#	% of organization	#	% of organization	
Boogaloo	AGAAVE	0	0%	2	100%	2
Oath Keepers	AGAAVE	4	16%	21	84%	25
People's Right's Network	AGAAVE	0	0%	1	100%	1
III%	AGAAVE	1	9%	10	91%	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>AGAAVE</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>39</b>
Red Elephant	RMVE	0	0%	1	100%	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>RMVE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1</b>
Proud Boys	Other	2	6%	31	94%	33
QAnon	Other	5	24%	16	76%	21
Super Happy Fun America	Other	1	50%	1	50%	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>56</b>

The third, and final, research question asks: how do the proportions identified in the first two research questions compare to the same analysis done on men who have been federally charged in relation to their actions on January 6th? Of the 645 men in the dataset, 88 (13.6%) were identified as having a DVE affiliation. Similarly, the proportion of women who were involved in DVE is 14%. Slightly over a quarter of men (26.2%, n=168) participated in an act of violence. This is far greater than the proportion of women which was only 8%, or a third of the proportion of men. This suggests that men and women are equally as likely to be involved in DVE but that

men are more likely to be involved in acts of violence. The proportion of both men (2.8%) and women (2%) who have both a DVE affiliation *and* were involved in an act of violence is relatively similar, which suggests that DVE might not be a precursor to violent action.

### **Discussion**

Women consistently have had lower rates of criminal involvement overtime (Baskin & Sommers, 1988; Heidensohn, 1997; Nagel & Hagan, 1983; Rowe et al., 1995; Heimer, 2000). This trend was also identified over the course of the study as women comprised only a small number of participants on January 6<sup>th</sup>. In fact, women accounted for approximately 14% of the total sample which reflects similar figures of women's criminality according to U.S. Department of Justice statistics for 2019 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020).

Further, the proportion of women involved in DVE and violence was also minimal. In fact, women involved in DVE make up about 1.9% of the total sample, and men involved in DVE represent another 12% of the sample. When looking at women involved in violence, they account for 1.1% of the total sample while men involved in violence make up almost 23% of the total sample. This appear to reflect the trends identified in the literature suggesting that women's participation in violence and DVE is significantly less than their male counterparts (Bigio & Vogelstein, 2019; González et al., 2014; Nagel & Hagan, 1983; U.S. Department of Justice, 2020)

Table 1 shows that the 14% of men & women with a DVE affiliation is about the same. While men are still far more likely to have been involved in acts of violence, the percentage is about the same when there is a DVE affiliation. Further, the individuals who were women made up just 15% of total sample, but despite these small numbers, they were almost as likely as men to be involved in DVE. This represents a divergence in the literature on women's involvement DVE. Less overall involvement by women has historically justified the lack of scholarship on the subject,

but the proportions identified in this study suggest that more research should be directed at women's involvement in DVE (Carter, 2013; Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2021; Leidig, 2021).

The 18 men who had both a DVE affiliation and participation in acts of violence account for approximately 2.5% of the total sample population and women with the same characteristics account for only 0.03% of the total sample. This appears to show that DVE affiliation is not a precursor to violence. Cumulatively, far more individuals participated in acts of violence that had no DVE affiliation at all. According to the literature, DVE poses an elevated threat in the form of violence to the United States (Clifford, 2021; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2021; Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2021). These findings, however, indicate that DVE does not always equate to violent action. More research on the topic is needed to measure the extent to which DVE participation results in acts of violence.

### **Conclusion**

While limited in scope, this study provided descriptive statistics regarding women's involvement in violence and DVE at the time of the Capitol Hill breach. The limited number of women in the sample reflects trends in the literature, however, their proportional involvement in DVE is outside of the norm according to current scholarly insight. Literature on the topic of women in DVE remain limited, but the events on January 6<sup>th</sup> has highlighted the need for more research on this topic in the future. The most recent scholarly work in this area was published just prior to the publication of this study and analyzed women's involvement in DVE on January 6<sup>th</sup> and the charges and resulting sentencing data to date (Matfess & Margolin, 2022).

The Capitol Hill breach, then, serves as a jumping point for scholars looking to contextualize DVE through a gendered lens. It also acts as an obvious reminder as to why a



gendered understanding of DVE is important because women's participation in DVE organizations, ideologies, and violence at the Capitol Hill Breach on January 6<sup>th</sup> proves they are important actors in DVE.

### ***Limitations and Future Directions***

The sample size limits the generalizability of the findings in this research effort. Further, it represents only a small segment of men and women involved in violence and DVE across the United States. It is difficult to determine the relative strength and reach of DVE organizations given their efforts to conceal membership and looser organizational structure. Thus, a more comprehensive sampling technique would be needed to account for the trends in women's involvement in violence and DVE across the country. The Capitol Hill Breach, in some ways, represents a privilege by some followers to be able to attend the event and is not representative of all those involved in DVE in the United States.

To address the limited numbers of women who participated in acts of violence, future studies may examine the proportion of women who advocated for violence preceding or on the day of January 6<sup>th</sup>. This would likely increase sample size and provide a better scope for women's involvement and promotion of violence relating to DVE. An additional limitation is that the sample of individuals faced federal charges related to crimes committed on January 6<sup>th</sup> reflects only those individuals who have been identified by law enforcement. Thousands of people were estimated to have participated in the Capitol Hill Breach, but not every person has been identified and charged for these crimes. These are also ongoing investigations, so some facts pertaining to individual conduct may yet be unknown. Therefore, it would improve the study to be replicated in the future as more information and data becomes publicly available.

### ***Implications***

Regardless of the results, what is clear is that there is a need for more research on women in DVE. Even in small numbers, women participate in violence and DVE which makes them a threat worthy of consideration and attention. Even as passive actors, they represent a vessel to maintain an ideology and recruit others. To truly address the threat of DVE within the United States, women's true scope of involvement must be more closely monitored and understood.

Finally, the study also demonstrates a need for gendered counter-radicalization efforts. It is clear from the results of this analysis that some women do in fact participate in DVE and violence. Given so much of the research on DVE focuses on men's involvement, current solutions will not address the counter-radicalization needs of women involved in the same organizations. The use of gendered counter-narratives that address the vulnerabilities specific to women's involvement in DVE must also be curated to help stop and deter additional women's involvement in DVE.

The Capitol Hill Breach on January 6<sup>th</sup> was broadcast around the world. It gave a shocking insight into the threat DVE in the modern U.S. society. As researchers and officials begin to sift through what this event signifies and develop solutions to this emerging trend, they must not ignore the small number of women who also comprise this threat.

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