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FROM SWADDLING TO SWASTIKAS:
A LIFE-COURSE INVESTIGATION OF WHITE SUPREMACIST EXTREMISM

By

Steven Windisch

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Criminology and Criminal Justice

Under the Supervision of Dr. Samantha Clinkinbeard

Omaha, Nebraska

May 2019

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FROM SWADDLING TO SWASTIKAS:
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University of Nebraska, 2019

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Abstract

To date, most terrorism research concerned with the long-term development of extremist behavior focuses on patterns of terrorist attacks, long-term responses to extremist violence or organizational longevity of extremist groups. The current study addresses this void in the existing literature by relying on life-history interviews with 91 North American-based former white supremacists to examine the developmental conditions associated with extremist onset. My attention is primarily focused on individual-level experiences; particularly how childhood risk factors (e.g., abuse, mental illness) and racist family socialization strategies generate emotional and cognitive susceptibilities toward extremist recruitment. This type of investigation contributes to terrorism research by emphasizing some of the early childhood and adolescent experiences that may heighten a person's vulnerabilities to certain pulls associated with ideology and group dynamics more broadly. Overall, findings from the current dissertation build upon developmental-life course criminology and studies within terrorism that address the role of childhood and adolescent risk factors. In particular, I elaborate on the work of Simi and colleagues (2016) and offer additional context as to the precursors that influence extremist onset.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to any person who has experienced prejudice, intolerance, inequality, discrimination, and/or bigotry regarding their race, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, disability, nationality, and/or ethnicity. The only remedies against racism and prejudice are enlightenment and education, which is a slow and painstaking process.

Acknowledgments

A hundred times a day I remind myself that my inner and outer lives are based on the labors of other people, living and dead and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving. - Albert Einstein

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Historically, the study of terrorism has primarily been examined by a few basic disciplines such as history (Laqueur, 1986, 1987), sociology (Blee, 1996; Futrell and Simi, 2004), psychology (Hudson, 1999; Ligon, Simi, Harms, and Harris, 2013) and political science (Asal, Gill, Horgan, and Rethemeyer, 2015). In recent years, however, criminologists have begun to examine extremist participation through a variety of theoretical perspectives such as subcultural theory (Pisoiu, 2015), rational choice (Perry and Hasisi, 2015), social disorganization (Fahey and LaFree, 2015), routine activities (Parkin and Freilich, 2015), deterrence (Argomaniz and Vidal-Diez, 2015), and strain theory (Nivette, Eisner, and Ribeaud, 2017). Despite these advances; however, the use of developmental and life-course criminology to study extremist involvement remains substantially underdeveloped (for an exception see Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016).

Most research pertaining to the long-term development of extremist behavior focuses on patterns of terrorist attacks (LaFree, Morris, and Dugan, 2009), long-term responses to extremist violence (Bleich, 2013), or organizational longevity of extremist groups (Cronin, 2006). While informative, these investigations tend to disregard how extremists have been influenced by a variety of internal and external factors (e.g., trauma) prior to embracing a political ideology and how a person may still be influenced by these experiences once they become an extremist member. The neglect of developmental and life-course criminology is unfortunate because this framework is well suited to examine a wide range of ideological and non-ideological experiences that unfold over the life-course such as trauma, emotionality, and family socialization.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of extremist participation, it is important to examine changes in extremist behavior over the life-course as opposed to focusing exclusively on a specific period in a person's life. Moreover, because extremist participation is included within the broader realm of violent and criminal behavior, it is also important to examine both internal and external factors that influence extremist involvement at the individual-level. To address this gap, I rely on life-history interviews with 91 former white supremacists to examine the long-term development of extremist participation, and generic criminal behavior (e.g., drug use). My attention is primarily on experiences at the individual-level, focusing particularly on how childhood risk factors (e.g., abuse, mental illness) and racist family socialization strategies generate emotional and cognitive susceptibilities toward extremist recruitment processes.

Not All Extremists are Created Equal

In addition to the absence of longitudinal studies at the individual-level, terrorism scholarship also lacks research that appropriately compares extremists (Schmid, 2014). While white supremacists as an organization contain similarities that bring them together, members in these groups may have unique individual and behavioral differences that separate them from one another. The range of people who become involved in extremist organizations is vast. Similar to conventional criminal offenders, white supremacists are a very heterogeneous group (Hoffman, 1995; Jacques and Taylor, 2008, 2013; White, 2001). The combination of general characteristics and specialization parallels other subfields within criminology (Archer, 1994; Browne, 1987; Fagan and Browne, 1994; Felson and Lane, 2010). For example, intimate partner violence (IPV) shares similarities with other types of violence (e.g., often age-graded with peaks in adolescence and young

adulthood; see Giordano, Johnson, Manning, Longmore, and Minter, 2015; Halpern, Spriggs, Martin, and Kupper, 2009) but can also be distinguished from more conventional criminal offending (e.g., IPV carries a high social stigma; see Copp, 2014). Instead of adopting a “one-size fits all” approach toward extremist participation, it is important to explore heterogeneity among white supremacists. As such, to fully understand participation in white supremacist extremism, I investigate whether there are important factors that differentiate former white supremacists from one another in terms of childhood trauma, negative emotionality, and racist family socialization. In light of recent governmental and non-governmental efforts to combat extremist violence, systematically investigating factors that distinguish extremists from one another may have substantial theoretical implications that can help terrorism scholars better understand radicalization processes.

Research Questions

To examine the unique behavioral conditions associated with white supremacist extremism, I rely on 91 life-history interviews with former U.S. white supremacists. Because issues in developmental and life-course criminology concern both empirical and theoretical questions regarding the onset and cessation of offending in life, this dissertation focuses on the period from early childhood to late adolescence. My primary research question is:

1. How do early childhood experiences (i.e., trauma, negative emotionality, racist family socialization) influence the development of extremist participation among former white supremacists?

In addition, the following sub-questions are explored:

- a. What is the extent and nature of early childhood trauma and how do the emotional consequences of these experiences generate cognitive susceptibilities toward extremist recruitment processes?
- b. What types of racist norms were established in the early lives of white supremacists and how did these practices reduce the psychological distance between everyday life and organized hate?

To examine these questions and analyze the data, I will rely on a modified-grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2009; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Miles and Huberman, 1994), which allows researchers to combine a more open-ended, inductive approach while also relying on existing literatures and frameworks to guide the research and help interpret the findings. By understanding how multiple conditions co-exist and interact, I will be better able to identify meaningful interaction patterns that shape extremist involvement (Ragin et al., 1984). Such an approach has the potential to inform theoretical and applied research by validating or elaborating prior terrorism research and by informing terrorism prevention initiatives. In the next section, I outline two theoretical perspectives that provide the necessary framework for addressing my research questions.

Guiding Theories

To answer my primary research questions, I rely on two theoretical perspectives including (1) symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934) and (2) developmental and life-course criminology (Farrington, 1995, 2003; Le Blanc and Loeber, 1998; Loeber and Hay, 1994; Moffitt, 1993; Patterson, 1993; Patterson, DeBaryshe, and Ramsey, 1989; Sampson and Laub, 1993, 1996). In the following sections, I provide a brief overview of each of these theoretical perspectives.

Symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionists (SI) have long acknowledged that individuals bring their life experiences and perspectives into every situation (Mead, 1934). Overall, SI assumes that human action and interaction are complex processes that can be best understood through direct observation. Blumer (1969) identified three core premises to explain how humans respond to and perceive their social world. First, “human beings act toward things based on the meanings that things have for them” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). Second, meaning, which is key to human group life and behavior, is a social product and derives from the interactions we have with others and ourselves. In other words, SI suggests that patterns created through the exchange of language symbols, and interactions provide meaning to our reality (Blumer, 1969). Third, we develop, revise, and confirm these meanings as we interact with others and ourselves.

SI calls for exploration and introspection, pushing researchers to examine human life more closely. Exploration is a “flexible procedure” where the researcher can “shift from one to another line of inquiry,” “adopt new points of observation,” and “move in new directions previously unthought of” as more information is accumulated (Blumer, 1969, p. 40). Relatedly, introspection promotes the use of multiple approaches and vantage points in the study of human group life. In other words, the researcher needs to be “flexible, imaginative, creative, and free to take new directions” as social life is examined (Blumer, 1969, p. 44). In this way, SI provides a framework to examine multiple, transitional life phases simultaneously. SI is especially useful as a guide for understanding extremist participation because this process is comprised of several “fits and starts” and does not unfold linearly. Overall, the work of Blumer, Cooley, Mead, and others will help guide my analyses on how former white supremacists make sense of their

experiences and how they structure different aspects of their lives. In addition to SI, I also draw heavily from developmental and life-course criminology.

Developmental and life-course criminology. In general, developmental and life-course criminology (DLC) refers to the study of temporal within-individual changes over the life-course and how these experiences shape criminal offending (Le Blanc, 1997; Le Blanc and Loeber, 1998, p. 117). During the 1990s, scholars began using DLC to examine childhood developmental processes and their later influence on criminal offending (Moffitt, 1993; Sampson and Laub, 1993). As such, DLC places a substantial emphasis on risk factors (e.g., single-parent households) and life events (e.g., marriage, becoming a parent) that occur during childhood, adolescence, or adulthood and how these impact both criminal and non-criminal behaviors.

Related to but distinct from DLC are taxonomy theories of criminal offending. In general, taxonomy theories assume that a population is composed of a mixture of distinct groups defined by their unique trajectories (see Loeber, 1991; Moffitt, 1993; Nagin and Paternoster, 1991; Patterson, 1993). Taxonomy theories typically refute the assumption shared by both static and dynamic approaches that suggest one theory is sufficient to explain the behavioral development of all criminals (see Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Instead, taxonomy theories suggest there are different pathways for different kinds of offenders. This approach allows for equal consideration of internal propensities (e.g., self-control) and external events (e.g., maltreatment) in shaping the offender's behavior.

For instance, Moffitt's (1993) two category typology of offending (i.e., adolescent-limited and life-course persistent) takes into account neurological deficits such as hyperactivity and impulsivity, as well as, environmental factors including marital

relations, employment, and “snares” with the criminal justice system (Moffitt, 1993, p. 684; see also Huesmann, Dubow, and Boxer, 2009; Nagin and Land, 1993; Nagin, Farrington, and Moffitt, 1995; Odger et al., 2007; Patterson, DeBaryshe, and Ramsey, 1989). According to Nagin (1999), the assumption that the population is composed of distinct groups is not entirely accurate. Unlike biological or physical disciplines that examine distinct phenomena (e.g., animal or plant species), social scientists are unlikely to encounter such distinguishable groupings. Regardless, the purpose of taxonomy modeling is to highlight differences in the causes and consequences associated with certain trajectories rather than to suggest that the population is composed of literally distinct groups.

Overall, both DLC and taxonomy theories are especially useful for investigating the etiology of criminal offending, as well as, risk factors that predispose someone toward serious delinquent behavior rather than conformity. While various criminological frameworks have recently been utilized to study extremist participation (Argomaniz and Vidal-Diez, 2015; Fahey and LaFree, 2015; Hsu and Apel, 2015; Parkin and Freilich, 2015; Perry and Hasisi, 2015; PISOIU, 2015), few studies employ a developmental and life-course criminological approach (for exceptions see Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016). This is an unfortunate omission as extremist involvement involves a range of issues life-course criminology is well suited to examine such as onset, persistence, disengagement, and desistance. Also, a life-course approach provides an opportunity to assess how white supremacists differ from one another in terms of risk factors and ideological beliefs. As such, I rely heavily on both symbolic interactionism and life-course perspectives to examine the long-term development of extremist involvement among white supremacist

extremists. Specifically, I draw considerable theoretical inspiration from the work of Blumer (1969) and Mead (1934) on the role of agency and the “self,” as well as, Sampson and Laub (1993, 2003) on the age-graded nature of offending. In the next sections, I discuss several concepts that guide my analysis.

Conceptualizing Hate, Extremism, and Radicalization

Since the current dissertation relies heavily on the concepts of hate, extremism, and radicalization, further differentiation is necessary. The basis for this project involves hatred, which refers to an emotion of extreme dislike or aggressive impulses toward a person or group of persons (Allport, 1954), a process that is social-interactional as well as neuro-cognitive (Blee, 2004; Zeki and Romaya, 2008). Fromm (1973/1992) distinguished between two forms of hate including *rational hate* and *character-conditioned hate*. Rational hate has a logical basis. For instance, a person may come to hate someone who unjustly wronged them (e.g., swindled them out of their fortune or fame) or committed a crime against them (e.g., sexual assault, theft). On the other hand, character-conditioned hate, which is the focus of the current project, is much more dangerous. This kind of hate targets groups of people based on some characteristic or action. According to Sternberg (2005), a primary component of hate includes the negation of intimacy, which involves the seeking of distance between targeted groups of individuals because they arouse anger, fear, disgust and/or devaluation.

Emotions of extreme dislike may arise from propaganda that depicts a population or a culture as subhuman or inhuman, and/or incapable of sustaining feelings of closeness, warmth, caring, compassion, and respect (Leyens et al., 2000). For instance, Nazis fomented the negation of intimacy toward Jews and other targeted groups by

depicting them as power-crazed, greedy, ugly, filthy, disease-ridden, ratlike, or as insects that need to be exterminated (Naimark, 2001; Rhodes, 1993). In contrast, Aryans were portrayed as desirable, pure, or even godlike. The negation of intimacy was created by the physical removal of Jews, Gypsies, people with disabilities, and other persecuted groups to “protect” the approved members of society. Due to the potential to provoke aggressive impulses (Allport, 1954), hate is a major precursor of many terrorist acts, massacres, and genocides as the perpetrators engage in extremist and often dichotomous thinking in targeting hated groups (e.g., “we are good, they are bad”). Often, groups of haters become single-minded, focusing on the target of their hatred to the exclusion of many other things (Beck, 1999).

Related to but distinct from hate is *extremism*, which refers to groups and ideologies on the right or left of the political spectrum that are not aligned with state norms, reject pluralist governance, oppose the existing social order, and usually draw negative reactions from the public (Futrell, Simi, and Tan, 2019; Midlarsky, 2011). Extremists strive to create a homogeneous society based on rigid ideological tenets by suppressing opposition and subjugating minorities (Bötticher and Mareš, 2012). These individuals typically do not tolerate diversity and tend to be close-minded while adhering to an inflexible interpretation of the world where people are either with or against them (Schmid, 2013).

Extremism is more a political term than a precise scientific concept (Sotlar, 2004). In some situations, the classification of “extreme” has the potential to blur lines between mainstream movements and movements that adhere to marginalized ideological beliefs. For instance, the extremist far-right movement is comprised of an overlapping web of

ideological groups including the reformist-minded Tea Party movement, the “Western chauvinistic” and “anti-feminist” campaigns of the alt-right, as well as, the lethal tactics of such groups like the Ku Klux Klan, Hammerskin Nation, or Public Enemy Number One. Such connections between mainstream and marginalized beliefs make it difficult to draw the line between what is and is not extremism. From this perspective, developing or adopting extremist beliefs that justify violence is one possible pathway into extremist participation, but it is not the only one (Borum, 2011).

Confusion between what is and is not extreme also applies to individual members. To provide clarity, terrorism scholars often make distinctions between those who embrace extremist ideologies and those who carry out extremist violence. For instance, data collected from polling organizations like Pew and Gallup suggest that there are tens of millions of Muslims worldwide who are sympathetic to “jihadi aspirations,” though the clear majority do not engage in violence (Atran, 2010; Borum, 2011; Lemieux and Asal, 2010; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008). Similarly, researchers have identified individuals committing serious acts of extremist violence with relatively weak ideological devotion (Borowitz, 2005). In these situations, individuals may be drawn to the group and extremist violence for other reasons outside of ideological beliefs and commitments such as personal revenge or significance, as well as, desired needs (e.g., belonging, acceptance and/or protection; Borum, 2014; Crenshaw, 1986; Horgan, 2008; Kruglanski and Orehek, 2011; Venhaus, 2010).

Under the right circumstances (e.g., political opportunities, imminent threats, or feeling disenfranchised), however, extremist culture can motivate violent action (della Porta, 1995, 2008; Snow and Byrd, 2007). Researchers have come to see an individual’s

turn to violence, typically termed *radicalization*, as a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, and where the attainment of goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence (Wilner and Dubouloz, 2010).¹ In this dissertation, I take a broad approach to radicalization and define it as “increasing extremity of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the ingroup” (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008, p. 416).

Numerous theoretical frameworks have been applied to radicalization processes including social movement theory (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008; della Porta, 1995; Gunning, 2009), social psychology (McCauley and Segal, 1987), and conversion theory (Dawson, 2010). While there is a consensus among terrorism researchers that no pathway exists that would apply to all individuals (Borum, 2003), researchers have found that radicalization tends to be a gradual process, full of fits and starts, rather than a singular, linear trajectory (Futrell, Simi, and Tan, 2019; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2011). In this way, understanding motivations for extremist participation requires more than understanding a religion or a doctrine. Rather, researchers must consider a person’s full range of experiences to appreciate the larger biographical context that helped produce the behavior. As such, the focus of the current dissertation is to examine life histories of former U.S. white supremacist extremists to better understand the long-term development of criminal behavior and the complex nature of extremist onset. In the next section, I

¹ While radicalization applies to individuals who come to undertake or directly aid in terrorist activity, it also applies to individuals who come to hold radical views in relation to the status quo but do not undertake or aid terrorist activity. Similar to extremism, radicalization does not require violent action. Radicalization is simply the process by which individuals are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement away from moderate, mainstream beliefs towards extreme views (Bartlett and Miller, 2012).

briefly introduce several core tenants of white supremacist extremism followed by theoretical and practical takeaways related to the current project.

White supremacist extremism. While Barack Obama's election to the U.S. presidency in 2008 signaled to many Americans that they were on the verge of victory in the country's long fight for civil rights, race continues to remain a pivotal point of conflict for Americans today. Some argue that American racism is now "color-blind" and expressed more through subtle social conventions that merely hint at biased tendencies rather than through overtly racist acts (Bonilla-Silva, 2009). However, overt racists and racist acts remain alive and well. For purposes of the current dissertation, I will focus on one type of political extremism, white supremacy, which is rooted in broader populist conspiratorial anxieties about demographic change, immigration, and governmental overreach. These beliefs are pushed by far-right pundits that comprise an overlapping web of movements including various Ku Klux Klans, neo-Nazis, Christian Identity, racist neo-Pagan believers, white power skinheads, Posse Comitatus, Oathkeepers, Birthers and segments of the anti-government, militia, patriot, and sovereign citizen movements (Blee, 2002; Burris, Smith, and Strahm, 2000).

Although substantial ideological and stylistic differences exist across these movement networks, members tend to agree on some basic doctrines. First, white supremacists imagine they are part of an innately superior biogenetic race (i.e., "master race") that is under attack by "race-mixing" and intercultural exchange. White supremacists see themselves as victims of a world that is on the brink of collapse and typically unite around genocidal fantasies against Jewish people, Blacks, Hispanics, sexual minorities, and anyone else opposed to White racial privileges (Berbrier, 2000).

They desire a racially exclusive world where non-Whites and other “sub-humans” are vanquished, segregated, or at least subordinated to “Aryan authority.” They idealize conservative, traditional male-dominant heterosexual families and loathe homosexuality, inter-racial sex, marriage, and procreation (Simi and Futrell, 2015). Moreover, white supremacists sometimes select violence as a justifiable option because they believe they are defending racial, cultural, and religious purity (Weinberg, 1998).

While white supremacists have long been written off by many observers as politically innocuous “wackos,” some racial extremists have recently reframed their rhetoric to appeal to mainstream conservative Whites. To neutralize the public stigma associated with white supremacy, they recast racial and anti-Semitic hatred as “White heritage preservation,” “White nationalism,” and, most recently, “the alt-right” (Futrell and Simi, 2017). Rather than openly denigrate people of color, groups like Identity Evropa, focus on raising White racial consciousness, building communities based on shared racial identity, and intellectualizing white supremacist ideology. This sanitized “white-collar supremacy” casts Whites as minority victims facing reverse discrimination. Their rebranded white supremacy aligns with more mainstream media figures that fuel extremist far-right beliefs. For instance, popular far-right pundits, including Alex Jones, Glenn Beck, Ann Coulter, and Austin Miles broadcast intense paranoia and anger to millions of Americans (Simi and Futrell, 2015). Moreover, white supremacists are reemerging to try to capitalize on a racially recharged political climate (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017). For instance, Donald Trump’s presidential campaign heavily emphasized preserving Western culture, opposing immigration, building a wall along the Mexican border, and expressing general hostility toward Muslims. On election night

2016, traffic swelled on Stormfront as white supremacists expressed triumph with Donald Trump's victory. They celebrated: "We finally have one of us in the White House again!" (Futrell and Simi, 2017). For white supremacist members, witnessing a presidential candidate who embraced their ideals electrified, emboldened, and helped spread their message of fear and hatred across the U.S. (Barkun, 2017).

White supremacist members also unite around criminal and ritualistic activities (Simi and Futrell, 2015). For instance, members of white supremacist groups are known to commit a variety of different types of crimes that include physical assaults, home invasions, identity theft, counterfeiting, drug distribution, fraud, various forms of hate crimes, and acts of terrorism (Berlet and Lyons, 2000; Flynn and Gerhardt, 1995; Freilich and Chermak, 2009; Freilich, Chermak, and Caspi, 2009; Hamm, 2002; Hoffman, 2006; Simi, 2010; Simi and Futrell, 2015; Simi, Smith, and Reeser, 2008; Smith, 1994; Wright, 2007). For instance, Dylan Roof killed nine African-Americans in the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina as an attempt to ignite a race war. One year later, a "Unite the Right" rally was held in Charlottesville, Virginia amidst the backdrop of controversy generated by the removal of Confederate monuments throughout the country in response to the Charleston church shooting. At the rally, self-identified white supremacist James Alex Fields Jr. deliberately rammed his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing Heather Heyer and injuring nearly 40 other people. In the past six months, two far-right motivated mass-shootings occurred that killed over 60 people including the Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and the Christchurch mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand. These activities are all

part of white supremacists' efforts to catalyze social change based on their extremist and racist ideology.

Significance of the Study

While there are numerous theoretical and practical benefits associated with the current project, I highlight three of the most significant takeaways. First, the current dissertation has the potential to highlight important points of similarity between extremist involvement and the broader realm of violent and criminal behavior. Within the field of criminology, extremism and “normal” crime (Sudnow, 1965, p. 260) are traditionally studied separately from one another. Extremist involvement is often characterized as unique from conventional crime because extremism is an overtly political act motivated by clear ideological commitments and beliefs. Generally, extremists use violence to express grievances and to propose solutions to their issues (Hamm, 1994; Hoffman, 2006). Moreover, the group nature of extremist participation often aids in the separation of extremist involvement from conventional crime because terrorism researchers often focus on group dynamics at the expense of a person's earlier biographical experiences leading up to extremist onset. As such, there is a tendency to neglect how extremists have been influenced by a variety of internal and external factors (e.g., trauma) before becoming involved in an extremist movement. At the same time, researchers also ignore that once a person becomes involved in an extremist movement, the person may still be influenced by other factors external to group dynamics.

Despite claims that extremist involvement is fundamentally different from conventional criminal offending (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 2001; Silke, 2014), some observers point to important similarities including the presence of childhood risk factors

(Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016), the disproportionate rates of terroristic activity committed by young males (McCauley and Segal, 1987; Russell and Miller, 1983), and histories of criminality prior to and unrelated to their future acts of terrorism (Hamm, 2002, 2004). Moreover, extremism and some types of conventional criminal offending (i.e., street gangs, organized crime syndicates) adhere to an ongoing organizational structure (Maguire and Pastore, 1996; Short, 1997). Also, extremist participation, street gangs, organized crime activities, and serial crimes are not defined by a single act but rather is the amalgamation of multiple violent crimes throughout an individual's criminal career. Finally, terroristic behaviors are, by definition, criminal (Hamm, 2005; LaFree and Dugan, 2004). Findings from the current dissertation are likely to benefit terrorism and criminological scholarship by identifying additional points of continuity between extremist activities and conventional criminal offending.

Second, in the decade following 9/11, the threat of extremist violence generated substantial attention (Turk, 2004), yet, much of that attention has focused on international jihadists organizations while ignoring the threat from other types of political extremists (Simi, 2010). The neglect of extremism in the U.S. has several consequences. First, the relatively infrequent focus on white supremacist extremism reinforces the belief that these groups do not warrant serious attention. Second, by ignoring other forms of extremist participation, terrorism scholarship contributes to the view that extremism is a "foreign problem" that does not exist in Western society (Simi, 2010, p. 252; also see Said, 1978). Finally, if terrorism research focuses only on specific types of extremism, theoretical development and intervention efforts may provide narrow conclusions because these findings will be based on one ideological perspective. Taken together,

these implications nurture a “consensus of irrelevance” that trivializes and ignores the threat of white supremacist extremism (Simi, 2010, p. 258). As such, the current dissertation represents a key step forward in terms of investigating other types of ideological extremism by utilizing the case of U.S. white supremacists.

Lastly, understanding the mechanisms of extremist involvement is key to designing terrorism prevention programs that can prevent at-risk individuals from following a path into extremism. Findings of this dissertation could eventually be used to enhance the types of tactics and strategies used to disengage and de-radicalize members of ideologically extreme groups. For instance, certain messages and tactics could be individually tailored and delivered within specific populations to diminish the effects of extremist propaganda media messaging. In this way, developing an understanding of extremist careers, based on subject narratives, may provide critical firsthand insight about the “pushes” and “pulls” into extremism that is necessary for constructing counter-narratives capable of neutralizing extremist messages. Moreover, using the information compiled from life-history interviews, findings from the current dissertation may lend additional support for the development of prototype tools to aid mental health and public safety professionals in their assessment of individuals’ suitability for participation in early intervention programs and ability to disengage from violent extremist behaviors.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 outlined the argument and purpose of the current dissertation and has provided a general overview of white supremacist extremism in the U.S. In Chapter 2, I synthesize relevant theoretical frameworks pertaining to risk factors, typologies of criminal careers, and extremist participation, which provide context for exploring how

extremists transition and change over the life-course. Following this discussion, Chapter 3 contains a detailed description and justification of the methodology prescribed for this study. In Chapter 4, I provide my first results chapter that discusses the extent and nature of childhood trauma. This chapter also describes the emotional consequences of childhood maltreatment and family adversity. An additional results chapter follows that examines the element of racist family socialization and how did these practices reduce the psychological distance between everyday life and organized hate. Finally, I discuss in Chapter 6 how these findings could be used as part of initiatives aimed at preventing extremist violence.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

White supremacist extremism in the U.S. is a complex social movement composed of a variety of racist and anti-Semitic groups and unaffiliated activists (Futrell, Simi, and Tan, 2019). Scholars who study the U.S. white supremacist movement report of its efforts to compile and promote a version of reality that often borrows ideas from mainstream conservative thought and practice but is characterized as extremist or fringe right on the ideological spectrum (Daniels, 2009; Simi and Futrell, 2015). For instance, extreme far-right groups such as the Proud Boys describe themselves as “Western chauvinists” who are interested in spreading “anti-political correctness” and “anti-White guilt” agendas. Such efforts to rebrand racial and anti-Semitic hatred as “White heritage preservation,” “White nationalism,” and “the alt-right” has led some to suggest there is a new, sudden rise of white supremacy in the U.S. (Futrell and Simi, 2017). Yet, white supremacist beliefs have not dwindled, nor have they changed. While this rhetoric may contain a softer veneer, their strong racial and anti-Semitic hatred represents white supremacist ideology that aspires to preserve White racial privileges.

From the Margins to the Mainstream

As our understanding of ideology has progressed, a consensus has emerged among terrorism researchers that white supremacist organizations, like many other social groupings, rely heavily on unifying ideologies for group cohesion, maintenance, and growth (Thompson, 1990). Initially, these beliefs resided at the margins of our society, but through the proliferation of alternative forms of media such as InfoWars, 4chan, and Breitbart News, white supremacist ideologies have gained shocking levels of acceptance

in the political mainstream (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015). While numerous beliefs unite members of the white supremacist movement, five hegemonic ideologies best characterize the movement's view of reality. First, white supremacists are told to celebrate and promote white pride, which encourages Whites to be excited about being whom they perceive themselves to be, White and naturally dominant (Brown, 2009). White supremacist men are encouraged to internalize roles as warriors, guardians of law and order, and, if needed, martyrs, while women in the movement are urged to adopt traditional mother and keeper of the home roles (Perry, 2000).

Closely related to a belief in white pride is a condemnation of miscegenation or "race-mixing" (Bowman-Grieve, 2009). White supremacists call for the total separation of Whites from other groups, and this ideological position prohibits intimate relationships with Jewish people and non-Whites (Meddaugh and Kay, 2009; Perry, 2000). White supremacists believe that mixing the "other" with Whites dilutes and eventually destroys the cultural supremacy of their "pure" Aryan bloodline (Barkun, 1994). In addition to the condemnation of miscegenation, white supremacists also claim that sexual minorities threaten the cultural identity of Whites. In conveying this ideology, white supremacists typically depict gay men as HIV- or AIDS- infected and lesbians as "butch" and possessing masculine features (Daniels, 2007).

Three additional ideologies unite members of white supremacist movement including (1) a belief in a Zionist occupied government (ZOG); (2) historical revisionism; and (3) the inevitability of a future race war (Bowman-Grieve, 2009). Taken together, these ideologies provide conspiratorial and biblical justifications for violence by misrepresenting historical events. For instance, over the last several decades, the spread

of the pseudo-religious doctrine known as “Christian Identity” has furthered legitimized violence in the white supremacist movement by depicting non-Whites as subhuman and Jewish people as the literal descendants of Satan (Barkun, 1997). Moreover, white supremacist members also believe that centuries of governmental overreach, political liberalization, and religious tolerance will bring about an apocalyptic racial holy war referred to as “RAHOWA” (Bowman-Grieve, 2009). White supremacists claim that RAHOWA will end once Whites save the world from “Jewish domination” (Bowman-Grieve, 2009). Overall, these white supremacist ideologies present a picture of the movement’s hegemonic view of reality, and the promotion of that version of reality is integral to the movement’s longevity.

Living amongst Us

In addition to rebranding white supremacist ideologies with broader conspiratorial anxieties, white supremacist organizations have also experienced a recent transformation (Futrell and Simi, 2017). Although several groups stand as the poster children of white supremacy including the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, and racist skinheads (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 2000), modern white supremacist groups have withdrawn from most public forms of activism. Instead, members of these groups have traded in their hoods and robes for suits, covered their racist tattoos, grown out their hair, and hid racist insignia as a way to outwardly project an image that conceals their extremist beliefs (Futrell and Simi, 2017). Moreover, white supremacist leaders encouraged members to infiltrate and quietly maintain an active presence in legitimate institutions such as law enforcement agencies, political spheres, and everyday settings such as family homes, Bible study meetings, and local bars (Futrell and Simi, 2017).

To some extent, this reflects the deliberate effort of white supremacist leaders to thwart law enforcement surveillance and prosecution by moving away from easily-detected networks of racist groups and leaders. The changing structure of the white supremacist movement also reflects the advance of digital media, which has prompted the rise of “lone wolf” racists who commit racial violence in the name of a movement to which they are connected primarily through websites and social media (Blee, DeMichele, Simi, and Latif, 2017; Futrell and Simi, 2017). In terms of membership, modern white supremacist groups such as the Klan, neo-Nazis, and racist skinhead are not mutually exclusive from one another, and members often have overlapping affiliations. With that said, there is dissent from one another within and across racist branches, and a brief overview may shed light on each group’s unique organizational milieu.

The most iconic and recognizable white supremacist organization is the Ku Klux Klan. Historically, the Klan violently opposed the dismantling of southern slave states in the 19th century and desegregation in the 20th century. Today’s Klans maintain a strong hatred of Blacks, Jewish people, sexual minorities, and immigrants (Blee, DeMichele, Simi, and Latif, 2017). While modern Klan chapters typically keep a low profile and occasionally seek attention through public rallies, some Klan chapters have been implicated in violent terror plots (Blee, 1991, 2002; Chalmers, 1987; Cunningham, 2013). Recent Klan developments include increased growth within longstanding groups and the emergence of new groups in areas that have not traditionally been linked to such activity (Anti-Defamation League, 2007).

A second and more active white supremacist organization involves neo-Nazis who regard Jewish people and racial, religious, and sexual minorities as their central

enemies (Ezekiel, 1995; Simi and Futrell, 2015). These organizations often rely on Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as a foundational source and model themselves after Nazi military style (e.g., swastikas, peaked caps, jackboots) (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 2000). Neo-Nazis also have a history of being the most active in terms of demonstrations, and distributing propaganda and merchandise (Daniels, 1997; Hamm, 1994; Hilliard and Keith, 1999; McVeigh, 2009; Ridgeway, 1990; Simi and Futrell, 2015). Members often endorse violent terroristic activities, ranging from the Holocaust during World War II to the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.

Racist skinheads are another closely linked U.S. white supremacist subcultural group.² Originally emerging in Great Britain in the 1960s, skinheads were essentially classified as a deviant youth subculture, characterized by their punk rock music and haircuts (Windisch and Simi, 2017). After appearing in the U.S. punk scenes in the 1970s, skinhead punks became increasingly "hardcore" and started to adopt traditional skinhead style (e.g., boots), territorial violence with other street gangs, and varying forms of delinquency (Simi, 2006, p. 149). Modern skinhead groups represent the youngest branch of the white supremacist movement, and because of their inclination toward violence, other white supremacist groups commonly refer to them as "... the security force and the foot-soldiers in the movement" (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 2000, p. 67).

While these three branches are the most recognizable white supremacist groups in the U.S., there are overlaps between white supremacists and more mainstream movements and networks comprised of militia, sovereign citizens, nativists, patriots, Tea

² Not all skinheads are racist, and in fact, non-racist skinheads (i.e., Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice or "SHARPS") outnumber their racist counterparts (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 2000; Ferber, 1999). Within the context of this dissertation, "skinhead" can always be understood as meaning a racist skinhead.

Partiers, Oathkeepers, and Birthers. Rather than being viewed as distinct organizational domains, membership is fluid, and these groups are not mutually exclusive from one another (Futrell and Simi, 2017). Instead, the white supremacist movement should be viewed as an overlapping web of groups, activists, and unaffiliated sympathizers.

From Swaddling to Swastikas

While much has been learned from studying white supremacist ideologies and recent organizational transformations, few empirical studies have examined white supremacist extremism over the life-course (for an exception see Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016). Rather, most research pertaining to the long-term development of extremist behavior focuses on patterns of terrorist attacks (LaFree, Morris, and Dugan, 2009; LaFree, Yang, and Crenshaw, 2009), long-term responses to extremist violence (Bleich, 2013; Scott, Poulin, and Silver, 2013), or organizational longevity of extremist groups (Cronin, 2006; Freilich, Chermak, and Caspi, 2009). To gain a more comprehensive understanding of white supremacist extremism, it is important to examine individual-level changes over the life-course as opposed to a specific developmental period. Moreover, because white supremacist extremism is included within the broader realm of violent and criminal behavior, it is necessary to examine a person's full range of experiences to better understand the larger biographical context that helped produce this behavior (Smith and Damphousse, 2002).

To address this gap, I rely on life-history interviews with 91 former white supremacists to examine the long-term development of extremist participation, and generic criminal behavior (e.g., drug use, robbery). My attention is primarily on experiences at the individual-level, focusing particularly on how childhood risk factors

(e.g., abuse, mental illness) and racist family socialization strategies generate emotional and cognitive susceptibilities toward extremist recruitment processes. In the following sections, I provide a detailed overview of key concepts that guide my analysis including prior research on developmental and life-course criminology and explanations of extremist participation.

An Interactionist Approach to Developmental and Life-Course Criminology

Developmental and life-course criminologists rely on a variety of paradigms to help understand criminal offending. One particular paradigm is symbolic interactionism, which posits that an individual's behavior is determined by their perception of self in a given situation (see Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Giordano, Schroeder, and Cernkovich, 2007; Hagan, 1997; Heimer and Matsueda, 1994; Matsueda, 1992; Thornberry, 2018). Symbolic interactionists argue that individuals take “cues” from their immediate environment in determining how they should behave. In this way, an individual is comprised of numerous “selves” that differ based upon the situation, people, and/or the environment they occupy (Mead, 1934). Moreover, symbolic interactionists suggest that patterns created through the exchange of language, symbols, and interactions provide meaning to reality (Blumer, 1969). From this perspective, individuals both create and shape meaning for their environments through the exchange of conversations, thoughts, and ideas with other people.

Another major principle of symbolic interactionists is that individuals bring their past life experiences and perspectives into every situation and these events define the world and influence how individuals interact with other people (Mead, 1934). Therefore, the interactionist perspective suggests that both internal (i.e., person) and external (i.e.,

situation) factors are always operating in social behavior and these conditions must be considered in any systematic conceptualization of such behavior (Pervin, 1968). In this way, the interactionist perspective dictates that researchers need to be “flexible, imaginative, creative, and free to take new directions” as social life is examined (Blumer, 1969, p. 44). Based on this perspective, symbolic interactionism will help guide my analyses on how former white supremacists make sense of their experiences and how they structure various aspects of their lives. Related to but distinct from symbolic interactionism is developmental and life-course criminology, which I discuss in the following section.

Developmental life-course criminology. Based on the utility of symbolic interactionism to examine multiple vantage points occurring over the life-course, developmental and life-course criminologists have applied this paradigm to the onset and persistence of antisocial and criminal behavior. In general, developmental and life-course criminologists are concerned with the unfolding nature of life events and how these experiences shape offending (Farrington, 2005; Le Blanc, 1997; Moffitt, 1993; Nagin and Paternoster, 1991; Sampson and Laub, 1993). In this way, developmental and life-course criminology (DLC) theories are *dynamic*, focusing on the processes leading to criminal and delinquent behavior and hypothesizing differences across time, place, and individuals (Elder Jr., 1994; Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph, 2002; Sampson and Laub, 1993). DLC argues that the presence of different factors at various stages of life may spark, strengthen, or diminish criminal offending. As such, DLC places a substantial emphasis on risk factors (e.g., single-parent households) and life events (e.g., marriage, becoming a parent) that occur during childhood, adolescence, or adulthood and how these

experiences impact both criminal and non-criminal behaviors. This perspective contradicts with more *static* criminological theories, which have been criticized for employing a cross-sectional approach toward explaining criminal offending and ignore the precursory and subsequent relationships between variables (for example see Glueck and Glueck, 1950; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi, 1969; Mednick, 1977; Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985).

While there is a tendency to characterize the life-course perspective as a relatively new paradigm (see Alwin, 2012; Cullen, 2011; Elder Jr., Johnson, and Crosnoe, 2003), sociologists have long utilized this framework to study how immigrants moving to the U.S. developed American identities (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1920), the impact on children being raised during the Great Depression and World War II (Elder Jr., 1985; Mayer, 1988), and the evolution of family cycles over multiple generations (Glick, 1947; Hill, 1970). Moreover, criminologists have also relied on DLC to study natural histories of delinquents and professional thieves (Shaw, 1931; Sutherland, 1937), membership in street gangs (Bubolz and Simi, 2015; Melde and Esbensen, 2011), victimization (MacMillan, 2001), criminal trajectories (Capaldi and Patterson, 1996; Kempf-Leonard, Tracy, and Howell, 2001; Loeber, 1996; Moffitt, 1993, 1994), and desistance from crime (Giordano et al., 2002; Sampson and Laub, 2003). Despite these advances; however, the use of life-course perspectives to study terrorism remains substantially underdeveloped. To fill this gap, I rely heavily on DLC perspectives to examine the long-term development of white supremacist extremism and conventional criminal behavior.

Core principles of developmental and life-course criminology. While there are several different versions of DLC (see Cullen; 2011, Farrington, 2003), a core set of

theoretical principles unites this perspective including (1) risk factors for crime; (2) patterns of antisocial behavior; and (3) desistance from criminal offending. Although desistance is a major theoretical principle of DLC, I will not examine desistance processes among former white supremacists. As a result, this topic will not be reviewed in the following section as it is beyond the scope of the current dissertation.

Risk factors for crime. A view of delinquency and criminal offending as a developmental process has enabled DLC researchers to identify risk factors that either precede or co-occur with its development (Hemel, Lincoln, and Herd, 1999; Loeber and Le Blanc, 1990; Le Blanc and Loeber, 1998; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, and Tobin, 2003). While no single risk factor can “cause” offending, prior research has identified an array of factors most likely to contribute to antisocial behavior (Loeber et al. 2003; Farrington, 2003, 2004). Most risk factors fall into one of several domains including individual, family, peer, school, and community environments (Dahlberg, 1998; Hawkins, Herrenkohl, Farrington, Brewer, Catalano and Harachi, 1998; Howell, 2009; Loeber and Farrington, 1998; Lipsey and Derzon, 1998). The following sections provide a cursory overview about each of these domains (for a more detailed overview see Tanner-Smith, Wilson, and Lipsey, 2013).

The first domain involves risk factors at the individual-level that encompass demographic, psychological, and behavioral characteristics that are part of a person’s biographical background. Age, gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status are some of the most common risk factors associated with crime (Blau and Blau, 1982; Burgess-Proctor, 2006; Cullen, 1994; Greenberg, 1985). In particular, criminologists have found that young minority males who originate from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are at

the highest risk of displaying criminal or violent behaviors (Ellis, Beaver, and Wright, 2009; Morenoff, 2005; Piquero and Brame, 2008; Sampson and Lauritsen, 1997; Sweeten, Piquero, and Steinberg, 2013). In addition to demographic characteristics, criminologists have found that a variety of physiological factors such as low self-esteem, impulsivity, low self-control, and conduct disorder are also associated with higher levels of delinquency, violence, and criminal offending (Beauchaine and Neuhaus, 2008; Farrington et al., 1990; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Loeber and Dishion, 1983).

A second risk domain involves familial factors, which are particularly important during childhood and adolescence when the family acts as the primary agent of socialization (Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987; Hoeve et al., 2009; Warr, 2007). For instance, Patterson and colleagues (1989, 1991) assert that family structures are especially important because offenders learn antisocial ways of dealing with conflict through their parents. This is particularly true for offenders who come from abusive families or families that lack supervision, contain a large number of individuals living in the same household, use harsh disciplinary practices, and whose parents have a history of criminality, drug use, and/or marital discord (Dishion and McMahon, 1998; Farrington, 1995; Loeber and Dishion, 1983; Patterson, Capaldi, and Bank, 1991; Patterson, DeBaryshe, and Ramsey, 1989; Widom, 1989). Finally, family socialization strategies that highlight extreme political attitudes, racist and homophobic views, and religious intolerance have also been found to generate a disposition toward extremists and antisocial subcultural environments (della Porta, 1988; Horgan, Taylor, Bloom and Winter, 2017; Veugelers, 2013).

The third domain, peer risk, becomes prominent during adolescence as peer relationships replace the family as the primary agent of socialization. One of the most consistent criminological findings to emerge from the literature is an association between delinquent peers and delinquency (Akers, 1996; Anderson, 1999; Elliott and Menard, 1996; Matsueda, 1988; Matsueda and Heimer, 1987; Osgood and Anderson, 2004; Sampson and Laub, 2003; Short, 1957; Thornberry and Krohn, 1997). While key risk factors in this domain include antisocial socialization and selection toward deviance and criminality, the specific direction of these relationships is subject to considerable debate. For instance, researchers who adhere to the selection hypothesis argue that delinquency increases the likelihood of associating with delinquent peers. In other words, youth who already engage in antisocial behaviors are more likely to be drawn toward, or select into, delinquent groups. Alternatively, the peer socialization hypothesis suggests that delinquent peers teach youth “definitions favorable to the violation of law” and expose them to new opportunities to participate in criminal activities (Sutherland and Cressey, 1974, p. 81). This, in turn, weakens their bonds with conventional society and influences the risk of antisocial behavior, aggression, and offending (Akers, 1985; Cohen and Felson, 1979; Osgood, Wilson, Bachman, O’Malley, and Johnston, 1996; Thornberry, 1987; Thornberry and Krohn, 2001). With that said; however, criminologists are beginning to suggest there may be more of a balance between peer selection and processes socialization than conventional wisdom would suggest (McGloin, 2009).

School is another common risk domain (Felson and Staff, 2006; Hirschfield and Gasper, 2011). During childhood and adolescence, individuals may encounter a variety of academic obstacles such as low academic performance or educational attainment, and

low bonding to school. Low academic performance and problems with teachers have been found to predict high levels of delinquency, criminal behavior, and violence (Denno, 1990; Farrington, 1989; Hawkins et al., 2000; Maguin and Loeber, 1996; Sweeten, Bushway, and Paernoster, 2009). Bullying or being bullied at school have also been identified as risk factors for crime (Farrington, 1993). Criminologists have suggested that students with low levels of bonding to school may be at a higher risk of crime due to their weak relationships with peers, teachers, coaches, and guidance counselors (Catalano and Hawkins, 1996; Cernkovich and Giordano, 1992).

Finally, the community risk domain includes factors related to broader ecological surroundings at the neighborhood or community level such as concentrated disadvantage (Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush, 2001), residential instability (Bogges and Hipp, 2010), population heterogeneity (Massey and Denton, 1993), urbanization (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999), and low levels of trust or collective efficacy among neighborhood residents (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997). In general, criminologists suggest that individuals who come from disadvantaged communities are at a greater risk of offending because they are simultaneously denied access to legitimate means of employment while being socialized to delinquent subcultural values.

While it is useful to categorize risk factors into distinct domains, these experiences often function cumulatively by co-occurring within and between domains. Criminologists have suggested that the accumulation of negative life events, or “cumulative risk,” destabilizes social and emotional development (Coie et al., 1993, p. 1014). In this way, the overall risk of antisocial behavior can increase exponentially depending on the number of risk factors to which children are exposed. In fact, social

scientists have identified numerous consequences associated with the presence of multiple risk factors including mental health problems (Finkelhor, Ormrod, and Turner, 2007; Kendall-Tackett, 2003; Moylan et al., 2010); early experimentation with drugs or alcohol (Begle et al., 2011; Hamburger, Leeb, and Swahn, 2008; Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller, 1992; Wright, Fagan, and Pinchevsky, 2013); poor health conditions (Wolfe, 1999); violence (Mrug, Loosier, and Windle, 2008; Spilsbury et al., 2007); and delinquency (Margolin, Vickerman, Oliver, and Gordis, 2010; Mersky, Topitzes, and Reynolds, 2012; Widom, 2000). From this perspective, the most thorough explanation of offending would be one that considers the impact of multiple domains of risk factors.

In terms of the current dissertation, a reliance on DLC is especially useful for investigating the etiology of extremist participation for two reasons. First, DLC focuses on risk factors such as childhood maltreatment, family history of mental illness, and early experimentation with drugs and alcohol. An emphasis on the importance of a broad range of risk factors aids in examining ideological, as well as, non-ideological conditions, which have both been found as motivating factors that account for participation in extremist organizations (Bjørgero, 1997; Horgan, 2008; McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2011). Few studies; however, have empirically analyzed how non-ideological conditions influence extremist participation (for an exception see Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016). Second, DLC provides insight into how individuals experience various social contexts such as family, peer, school, and community environments (Cullen, 2011). As such, an emphasis on multiple domains provides a framework for analyzing how different types of social context help shape and influence extremist participation. In the following section, I

review prior research about the second core principle of DLC: patterns of antisocial behavior.

Patterns of antisocial behavior. As a point of distinction with many criminological studies which assume a cross-sectional perspective (e.g., Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997; Piquero and Brame, 2008; Pratt and Godsey, 2003), DLC places substantial emphasis on how an individual's age partially conditions the influence of specific life events. One of the most stable empirical findings to emerge from decades of criminological research is the relationship between age and crime (Farrington, 1986; Nagin and Tremblay, 2005). The age-crime curve suggests that offending is relatively uncommon in children less than ten years of age (Thornberry, 1997). Rather, the onset of delinquency and criminal behavior occurs between late childhood and early adolescence (i.e., age 10-14), with the peak of criminal involvement occurring in middle to late adolescence (i.e., age 17-20), followed by a rapid decline and subsequent tapering off by the mid to late-twenties (Farrington, 1986, 1995). In this way, even though it is common to engage in minor forms of deviant behavior during adolescence, most people do not habitually commit delinquent or criminal behavior throughout their lives (Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton, 1985).

The introduction of the age-crime curve sparked a theoretical debate among criminologists as to how they should interpret the relationship between age and offending (Blumstein, Cohen, Roth, and Visher, 1986; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; Greenberg, 1985). The traditional view is that offenders display "criminal careers." For these offenders, involvement in criminal activity begins at some point, continues for a length of time, and then ends. Proponents of this perspective argue that the decline in criminal

offending is due primarily to changes in frequency (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1986; Horney, Osgood, and Marshall, 1995). In other words, the number of offenders remains the same, but each offender commits fewer crimes. Other criminologists, however, emphasize chronic offenders known as “career criminals” (Blumstein and Cohen, 1979; Blumstein, Cohen, and Farrington, 1988; Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin, 1972). Advocates of the career criminal perspective argue that the number of offenders is fewer, but these individuals commit more frequent crimes over a longer period. From this perspective, the decline in crime is caused by a reduction in the number of offenders rather than frequency of offending.

The debate surrounding the age-crime curve has important theoretical implications. Specifically, because some offenders always participate whereas others end their careers early, it is necessary to develop different models for predicting criminal participation and frequency. It may be that one set of factors influences whether someone participates in crime, whereas another set of factors affect the frequency and duration of their criminal acts. In light of this recognition, criminologists have developed multiple models for predicting the onset and frequency of offending. Three theories presented by Patterson and colleagues (1989), Moffitt (1993), and Sampson and Laub (1993) form the basis of this research. While other theoretical models exist (see Thornberry, 1987; Tremblay, 2007), I selected these three models because: (1) they place an emphasis on how aversive family environments influence the creation of long-term antisocial behavior; and (2) each model posits two distinct routes (i.e., continuity and discontinuity) that characterize delinquent and criminal activities. In the following sections, I provide a brief overview of each model.

Patterson and colleagues' coercive training theory. Patterson and colleagues' (1982, 1989, 1991, 1993) developmental model of antisocial behavior contains three inter-related dimensions: coercive training in the home; social rejection and school failure; and deviant peer group membership. Based on this model, inept parenting practices (e.g., harsh and inconsistent discipline, poor monitoring and supervision) reinforce coercive behaviors among children. Because of this training, children learn to control other family members through manipulative and aggressive behaviors (e.g., temper tantrums, hitting, and physical attacks) (also see Caspi, Elder, and Bem, 1987). In these highly aversive family environments, coercive behaviors make it possible for these children to survive (Patterson et al., 1989).

According to Patterson and colleagues (1989), manipulative childhood behaviors produce two sets of reactions from the social environment: academic failure and rejection from “normal” peers. Due to a lack of prosocial skill training, coercive children are unable to stay on task (e.g., remain in their seat, answer questions), which hinders educational development and increases the risk of academic failure (see also Arum and Beattie, 1999; Sweeten, Bushway, and Paternoster, 2009). At the same time, these children are often rejected by their “normal” peers because they resort to aggressive and/or aversive behaviors during social interactions. The combination of academic failure and peer rejection leads to deviant peer affiliation. Similar to the family environment, delinquent peers socialize the adolescent with the attitudes, motivations, and rationalizations to support antisocial behavior, and provide opportunities to engage in delinquent acts (Patterson et al., 1989; see also see Giordano, Cernkovich, and Pugh, 1986; Harding, 2009; Matsueda and Anderson, 1998; Warr, 2002).

Patterson and colleagues (1989) assert that early forms of coercive training from family members are linked to early onset of delinquency and criminal offending. This is because children who receive antisocial training at home during adolescent years are simultaneously denied access to positive socialization forces among peers. These offenders, referred to as “early-starters,” begin delinquent offending before age 15. This pattern of behavior is maintained in a snowball fashion with consequences for behavior becoming more severe (e.g., incarceration) and opportunities for reform becoming fewer (Patterson et al., 1989). Conversely, “late-starters” lack early forms of coercive training and are less likely to experience academic failure and peer rejection. As such, late starters will not begin their offending careers until after age 15 and will discontinue delinquent activities soon after onset (Patterson et al., 1989, 1991). Because aversive family environments have been found as motivating factors that account for participation in extremist organizations (see Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016), an emphasis on these experiences aids in examining how non-ideological conditions influence the onset of extremist involvement.

Moffitt’s dual taxonomy theory. Another prominent developmental and life-course theory is Moffitt’s (1993) dual taxonomy theory. In light of the recognition that individuals differ in their rate of offending, Moffitt (1993) identified two unique types of offenders based on their distinct trajectories:³ adolescent-limited (AL) and life-course persistent (LCP) offenders (see also Moffitt and Caspi, 2001; Nagin, Farrington, and

³ Moffitt (2006) published a review of 10 years of research on her theory. While many of the predictions were confirmed, she discussed the need for additional categories of individuals: abstainers (who were over-controlled, fearful, sexually timid, and unpopular), low-level chronic offenders (who were under-controlled like the LCPs, with family adversity, parental psychopathology, and low intelligence) and adult-onset offenders.

Moffitt, 1995; Piquero, Farrington, Nagin, and Moffitt, 2010). Moffitt (1993) argues that AL delinquent behavior represents a standard developmental sequence where adolescents are caught in a “maturity gap” between childhood and adulthood. While adolescents are in this gap, it is normal for them to find a delinquent lifestyle appealing and mimic it to demonstrate autonomy from parents, gain peer acceptance, and accelerate social maturation (Caspi, Lynam, Moffitt, and Silva, 1993; Moffitt, 1993). In this way, temporary involvement in delinquency is rather normative because this behavior is an attempt to gain autonomy and test social boundaries.

LCP offenders, on the other hand, have a significantly different etiology and criminal trajectory. According to Moffitt (1993), neurological deficiencies (e.g., hyperactivity), in conjunction with adverse childhood environments (e.g., poor parenting, disrupted families, teenage parents), often lead to the development of the LCP offenders. These individuals have been found to internalize the criminal lifestyle and continue to commit more serious types of crimes throughout adulthood. As a result, LCP offenders are more likely to struggle with employment, marital relations, and “snares” with the criminal justice system (Moffitt, 1993, p. 684). The focus on AL and LCP offenders is important, in part, because these findings indicate that development does not begin and end with adolescence but rather continues throughout the entire life-course.

Sampson and Laub’s age-graded theory of informal social control. Finally, relying on data gathered from the 1930s by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, Sampson and Laub (1990, 1993; also see Laub and Sampson, 1993, 2003) introduce the age-graded theory of informal social control. While Sampson and Laub (1993) are not typically noted for a discussion of different types of offenders, they do make a meaningful distinction

between a small group of chronic offenders and the bulk of the offender population. The theory has three core components: juvenile delinquency; behavioral transitions from adolescence to adulthood; and adult criminal behavior. According to Sampson and Laub (1994), juvenile delinquency is directly explained by aversive “family context” (e.g., erratic discipline, parental rejection) and “structural background” factors (e.g., family size, parental criminality) that weaken attachments to school and increase attachments to delinquent siblings and friends (p. 525).

To account for offending over the life-course, Sampson and Laub (1993) argue that criminal stability is the result of “cumulative continuity” (p. 319). They emphasize how the depletion of social bonds serves to weaken attachments and limit legitimate opportunities by “closing doors” (e.g., being processed by the justice system, academic failure) (p. 124; see also Catalano and Hawkins, 1996; Hirschi, 1969; Reiss, 1951). The weakening of attachments and the narrowing of opportunities work in unison. These processes accumulate during childhood and adolescence, which in turn, facilitates criminal offending in adulthood (Sampson and Laub, 1993). With that said; however, Sampson and Laub (1993) acknowledge that change is common. While early delinquency and criminal behavior negatively influence the ability to acquire adult social capital (e.g., schooling, training), these individuals are not constrained by their past antisocial activities, and desistance is possible (see Giordano et al., 2002; Savolainen, 2009). Throughout the current dissertation, I draw considerable theoretical inspiration from the work of Sampson and Laub (1993, 2003) on the age-graded nature of offending.

Advantages of developmental and life-course criminology. The application of DLC to violent extremism offers several important advantages. First, the study of DLC

allows researchers to break away from the “adolescence-limited criminology” paradigm (Cullen, 2011, p. 289). Instead, DLC encourages researchers to examine the continuities and discontinuities across multiple stages of a person’s life such as childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. As such, the models presented by Patterson and colleagues (1989), Moffitt (1993), and Sampson and Laub (1993) provide a foundation for investigating both the onset and development of extremist participation at various developmental stages. Specifically, each model assumes that antisocial behavior is associated with early-childhood risk factors (e.g., delinquent peer relationships), which weakens social bonds, socializes children to antisocial behaviors, and helps to internalize criminal identities (Harding, 2009; Kreager, Rulsion, and Moody, 2011). These models also suggest that discontinuity of offending is associated with the development of pro-social skills in early childhood. The benefit of these models is the examination of within-individual changes over time. For instance, offending by extremists when they are unmarried can be compared with offending by the same extremists when they are married. In this way, each participant acts as his or her control in terms of temperament, educational attainment, self-control, and socio-economic status.

Second, like conventional criminal offenders, violent extremists are a very heterogeneous group. While white supremacist organizations contain similarities that bring them together, members in these groups are likely to have unique individual and behavioral differences that separate them from one another. Instead of adopting a “one-size fits all” approach toward extremist involvement, it is important to explore heterogeneity among white supremacists. From this perspective, DLC theories will aid in an examination of how white supremacists differ from one another in terms of risk

factors, and ideological beliefs. Having reviewed prior research on risk factors for crime and patterns of antisocial behavior, I now provide an overview of prior research about ideological and non-ideological explanations of extremist participation.

Explanations of Extremist Participation

In general, terrorism scholars depict the onset of extremist participation as a gradual process (see Horgan, 2008; Klausen et al., 2016; Kruglanski et al., 2010; Sageman, 2004). Prior research suggests that people and groups follow multiple pathways and mechanisms into and out of extremism (Borum, 2011; McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2008; Moghaddam, 2005). Based on this line of research, increased commitment to an extremist organization appears to be characterized by a slow marginalization away from conventional society toward a much narrower atmosphere where extremism becomes a “totalizing commitment” (Simi, Blee, DeMichele, and Windisch, 2017, p. 1174). While there is a consensus among terrorism researchers that extremist onset occurs through a process of deepening engagements that can be observed in changing overt behaviors, a substantial amount of ambiguity exists regarding the conceptualization of this process.

Most noticeably, models of extremist participation often vary in terms of the numbers of steps involved. While some models portray extremist onset as an intermittent process emerging from the combination of specific factors, other models introduce a linear process with identifiable stages. For instance, Moghaddam (2005) introduces a five-stage model in which extremist onset is illustrated as a staircase where the individual’s reaction to perceptions of fairness and feelings of injustice may or may not lead the individual to the next stage. As individuals climb the staircase, they see fewer

and fewer choices, until the only possible outcome is the destruction of others, oneself, or both. Taking an alternative approach, McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008) identify twelve intermittent mechanisms that occur in a context of group identification and reaction to perceived threats to the in-group. Across individuals, groups, and media, McCauley and Moskaleiko (2008) conceptualize extremist participation as a dimension of increasing extremity of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in support of intergroup conflict and violence. As these explanations illustrate, terrorism scholars have yet to reach a consensus regarding the precise conditions that account for extremist involvement.

One of the difficulties in theorizing about extremist participation is that a wide range of people become involved in extremist organizations. These individuals have been found to differ in terms of education, family background, age, gender, intelligence, and economic class (Blazak, 2001; Blee, 2002; Pedahzur, Perliger, and Weinberg, 2003; Sageman, 2004; Simi, Futrell, and Bubolz, 2016; Smith, 1994). Furthermore, how they become an extremist can vary, and factors which play a pivotal role in one person's decision to engage in extremist participation can play a peripheral role or no part in the decision-making of others.

Compounding this difficulty is the fact that individual boundaries are not exclusive, and these factors interact and mesh together in a complex manner that can often be very hard to disentangle or differentiate. To better understand the nuances of extremist participation, one must expect considerable variation between extremists. For example, harsh disciplinary practices and racist family socializations strategies may account for some individuals' initial disposition toward extremism, whereas, others may be drawn toward extremist participation because of thrill-seeking opportunities.

Ultimately, it is the combined impact of conditions that predispose an individual toward extremism and factors will vary depending on the culture, social context, extremist organization, and individual involved. With that said; however, terrorism scholars have identified a few relatively common ideological and non-ideological factors associated with extremist participation. Although not all of these factors will necessarily be present in the experience of every extremist, most will be there to some extent.

Ideological explanations of extremist participation. Several studies have shown that extremist participation is not homogeneous (Hoffman, 1995; Jacques and Taylor, 2008, 2013; White, 2001). There are various motivating factors that contribute and influence extremist onset including grievances, networks, and ideologies. While the following discussion is not an exhaustive list, I provide an overview of the most common ideological “push” and “pull” factors that have been found to facilitate extremist onset.

Push factors refer to adverse qualities in the environment that increase one’s susceptibility to extremism (Crenshaw, 1983; Post and Denny, 2002; Silke, 2003). One of the most common push factors identified involves grievances, which refer to real or imagined wrongdoings, especially unfair treatment. Terrorism researchers have highlighted a variety of grievances including perceptions of injustice and discrimination (Pauwels and De Waele, 2014; Pauwels and Schils, 2016; Piazza, 2012; Rezaei and Goli, 2010), direct and war-related trauma (Bhui, Warfa and Jones, 2014; Weine et al., 2009), personal disaffection, or loss (Nivette, Eisner, and Ribeaud, 2017; Pauwels and De Waele, 2014; Schafer, Mullins, and Box, 2014), and economic marginalization, cultural alienation, a deeply held sense of victimization, or strong disagreements regarding the foreign policies of states (Hafez and Mullins, 2015; Piazza, 2011; Victoroff, Adelman,

and Matthews, 2012). For instance, relying on information collected from media and open-source documents of several hundred al-Qaeda-related cases, Sageman (2008) found extremist participation was driven more by a shared sense of global “moral outrage” and anti-American sentiments than by deep Islamic doctrine.

Many theoretical models place grievances at the initial stages of extremist onset (Borum, 2003; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008; Moghaddam, 2005; also see Sageman, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2003). According to these models, people experience feelings of deprivation by comparing their unsatisfying events or grievances to others and view their disadvantages as injustices. Among populations who perceive themselves as threatened, extremist ideologies that advocate changing the status quo may appear attractive. While some researchers argue that the feeling of injustice is a subjective concept (Jost and Kay, 2010), the emotions (e.g., anger, desire for revenge) elicited by these events can be strong predictors of collective action.

Related to but distinct from grievances are identity crises. Based on prior terrorism research, discrimination, marginalization, and dual-identity management have the potential to generate an identity-crisis in which individuals are compelled to take alternative or, in some cases, extremist life paths (King and Taylor, 2011; Silber and Bhatt, 2007; Stroink, 2007). In some situations, identity crises can lead individuals to feel their personal significance has been threatened (Kruglanski et al., 2009; Kruglanski and Orehek, 2011; also see Bloom, 2005; Sageman, 2004; Speckhard and Akhmedove, 2005). In an attempt to protect oneself from the threat of personal insignificance, individuals will often align with groups experiencing similar perceived crises (Kruglanski and Orehek, 2011). For these individuals, joining such groups is viewed as a form of “problem-

solving” behavior (Cohen, 1955). In this sense, bonding together with well-defined collectives and associating with like-minded individuals can reduce the uncertainty associated with managing multiple identities (Hogg, 2000).

In addition to push factors, terrorism scholars have also examined ideological factors that pull people into extremism. Pull factors refer to features individuals find attractive about the group (Crenshaw, 1986; Horgan, 2008; Howell and Egley Jr., 2005; Peterson, Taylor, and Esbensen, 2004; Venhaus, 2010). For instance, an individual may be attracted to cultural, political, or religious beliefs. These beliefs, often labeled ideologies, refer to master narratives about the world and one’s place in it. Ideology influences extremist participation in several ways. First, extremist organizations often rely on ideologies to frame personal and collective grievances into broader political critiques of the status quo by demonizing enemies and justifying violence against them (Blee, 2002). Due to this function, researchers have become increasingly more interested in the relationship between cognition and ideological propaganda as it relates to extremist participation (for review see Kruglanski and Orehek, 2011; Lofland and Stark, 1965; Wiktorowicz, 2003). A focus on the interaction between cognition and ideology has led to the emphasis on “significance quests” (Kruglanski and Orehek, 2011) and “cognitive openings” (Wiktorowicz, 2003) as playing a pivotal role in the onset of extremist participation. Second, ideology can help forge new rebellious identities by appealing to symbols, narratives, mythologies, and rituals that give meaning to acts of personal risk and sacrifice. Among some extremist organizations, ideologies help to incentivize sacrifice by promising heroic redemption. In this way, some individuals are pulled into

extremism because the rewards of the afterlife far exceed the pleasures that can be derived in this world.

It is important to emphasize that push and pull factors work in conjunction with one another. That is, without the presence of push factors (e.g., marginalization), pull factors (e.g., significance restoration) would likely be much less influential. Moreover, terrorism researchers have found that grievances, identity crises, networks, and ideologies are not the only factors influencing extremist involvement. Although extremists typically go through a process of political and ideological awakening (Schafer, Mullins, and Box, 2014), individual background characteristics (e.g., age and gender) also shape the behaviors of these individuals. In light of this recognition, terrorism researchers are beginning to examine non-ideological factors that predispose extremist involvement.

Non-ideological explanations of extremist participation. A key assumption is that extremist onset is associated with observable behavioral changes linked to the ideology. While ideological factors are important, there is a growing recognition that these influences are not the only, or even primary, factors that explain extremist involvement (Bjørngo, 1997; Horgan, 2008; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008). Rather, a variety of non-ideological experiences including biographical availability (Aho, 1990; Blee, 2002), social networks (della Porta, 1995), psychological propensities (Borum, 2003; Victoroff, 2005), and adversity (Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016) also influence an individual's predisposition toward extremist involvement.

For instance, terrorism scholars have found that the likelihood of extremist participation is influenced by an individual's "biographical availability," which refers to the "absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks associated with

movement participation” (McAdam, 1986, p. 70). Examples of personal constraints most often analyzed among terrorism scholars include an individual’s age (Clark, 1983; Pedahzur, Perliger, and Weinberg, 2003), education level (Blee, 2002; Smith, 1994), socio-economic status (Blazak, 2001; Hassan, 2001; Strentz, 1988; Weinberg and Eubank, 1987), employment status (Aho, 1990; Smith, 1994), marital status (Blee, 2002; Simi, Futrell, and Bubolz, 2016), and religious affiliation (Aho, 1990; Sageman, 2004). In general, a person is more likely to join an extremist organization if they are *available* to do so, irrespective of their ideological beliefs. For example, similar to conventional criminal offending, most individuals have been found to begin their extremist careers during late adolescence (ages 14-20) prior to becoming independent and taking on adult responsibilities (Handler, 1990; Russell and Miller, 1983; Weinberg and Eubank, 1987).

Networks are another non-ideological factor influencing extremist participation. Networks refer to preexisting kinship and friendship ties between ordinary individuals and extremists (Lim, 2008). Based on this line of research, terrorism scholars generally agree that the strength and number of networks with current extremist members is one of the most influential factors pulling a person toward extremist participation (Aho, 1990; Blee, 2002; della Porta, 1995). In this way, extremist involvement may be much more a product of whom you know rather than what you believe (Blee, 1996; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010; Jasper and Poulsen, 1995; Simi and Futrell, 2015; Wiktorowicz, 2003).

Extremist networks not only offer opportunities for socialization with radicals; they also have the potential to satisfy psychological needs of acceptance among peers (Horgan, 2009; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008). For instance, Bakker (2006) collected information on social networks of more than two hundred extremists and found that

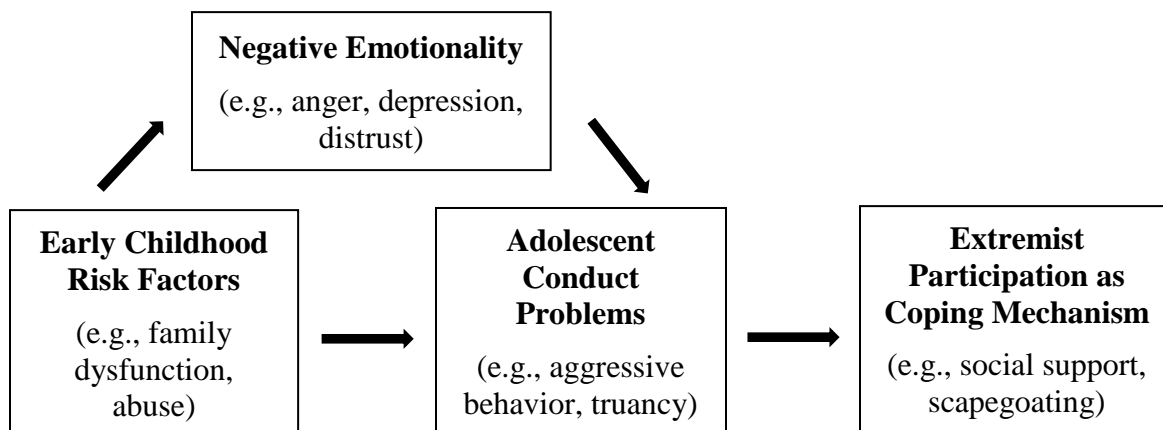
roughly 20 percent were related through kinship, and another 18 percent by friendship ties. Additionally, networks served to entrap individuals through the dynamics of peer pressure that solidify commitments to violence (della Porta, 1995). These findings emphasize the importance of social networks in facilitating participation in extremist organizations.

While terrorism researchers generally agree that networks matter, the specific role is subject to considerable debate. For instance, some terrorism scholars depict extremist networks as playing an active role by pushing individuals along the entry pathway where “recruits to terrorist groups are selected with considerable care and are assimilated into groups gradually” (Moghaddam, 2005, p. 116; Wiktorowicz, 2003). Alternatively, other terrorism scholars argue that extremist networks have a more passive role (Borum, 2004; McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2008). Based on this perspective, entry is more of a “bottom-up” approach in which recruits enlist into extremist social networks (also see Sageman, 2004). Although not actively involved in the entry process, these groups provide ongoing training, inspiration, and ideological justification. With that said, however, terrorism scholars have recently suggested there may be more of a balance between potential recruits and extremist networks than research suggests (Neuman and Rogers, 2007).

In addition to social networks, psychological propensities have also been found to influence extremist involvement. Terrorism scholars often suggest that extremist participation is based on a social-psychological transformation in which emotions, cognitions, and social influences lead someone to endorse and engage in extremist activities (Borum, 2003; McCauley and Moskalkenko, 2008; Moghaddam, 2005). To better understand this issue, terrorism researchers have examined a variety of

psychological propensities that predispose individuals toward extremist involvement such as narcissism, psychopathy, mental illness, and thrill-seeking behavior (Borum, 2003, 2011, 2014; Post, 2005; Silke, 2008; Victoroff, 2005). While early terrorism studies had little success in identifying a “terrorist mindset” (Borum, 2003, p. 7; Crenshaw, 1981; Laqueur, 1987; Pearlstein, 1991; Post, 1990), later developments describe extremists as individuals with “normal” backgrounds whose rate of mental illness resembles that of the general population (Hewitt, 2003; Horgan, 2005; Merari, 2010; Post, 2005; Sageman, 2004; Venhaus, 2010). With that said, however, terrorism researchers have recently found substantial evidence of mental illness (e.g., depression, suicidal mindset) among histories of former extremists (Bubolz and Simi, 2019). These authors argue that classifying extremists as “normal” is premature and more research is needed before a consensus can emerge.

Figure 1. Simi and Colleagues’ (2016) Risk Factor Model of Extremist Participation⁴



In terms of the current dissertation, a notable empirical study about non-ideological motivators involves Simi and colleagues’ (2016) risk factor model of extremist participation (see Figure 1). Instead of focusing on violent extremism as a

⁴ Adopted from Simi, Sporer and Bubolz, 2016

unique and specialized type of violence, Simi and colleagues' (2016) adopted a perspective that emphasizes the importance of contextualizing extremist participation within the broader realm of violent and criminal behavior. As such, the authors focused their attention on non-ideological experiences occurring throughout an individual's life such as family mental illness, maltreatment, and affiliation with delinquent peer groups.

In doing so, Simi and colleagues (2016) introduce an age-graded, sequential model of extremist participation using data from in-depth life-history interviews with former white supremacists. As illustrated in Figure 1, Simi and colleagues (2016) found that the cumulative effect of early childhood risk factors, negative emotionality, and adolescent misconduct creates a downward spiral that leads individuals to regard extremist groups as a support system, capable of addressing non-ideological needs (e.g., shelter). These findings are in line with the broader criminological literature, which suggests that adverse environmental and social conditions increase the appeal of delinquent pull factors (e.g., belonging) that accompany membership in street and prison gangs (Decker, 1996; Hill et al., 1999). In addition to containing empirical support, the benefit of Simi and colleagues' (2016) risk factor model is the ability to examine the unfolding nature of life events and how these experiences shape extremist involvement. The focus on risk factors, negative emotionality, and adolescent misconduct is important, in part, because these findings indicate that extremist onset does not begin with a single life event but rather is influenced by multiple factors throughout the life-course.

Bringing it All Together

To date, much of the terrorism research is focused on macro-level contexts such as societal characteristics, religious history, and organizational-level changes over time

(Bleich, 2013; Cronin, 2006; Freilich, Chermak, and Caspi, 2009; LaFree, Morris, and Dugan, 2009; LaFree, Yang, and Crenshaw, 2009; Scott, Poulin, and Silver, 2013). While useful, these approaches are less sensitive to micro-level conditions that shape extremist activities. Compounding the neglect of individual-level investigations is the lack of empirical research (Silke, 2001). Despite the recent surge in terrorism-related publications since 2001, most of this research lacks sufficient empirical data to support their claims (Borum, 2003; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008; Moghaddam, 2005; for exception see Bloom, 2005; Horgan, 2008; Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016; Windisch, Ligon, and Simi, 2017; Windisch, Logan, and Ligon, 2018). Such a limitation is not isolated to theoretical explanations of extremist onset. Rather, a serious impediment to terrorism scholarship is the lack of comprehensive and reliable data. Without detailed accounts, researchers are often forced to speculate about extremism based on analogies and anecdotes rather than empirical evidence.

To address these issues, I rely on theoretical developments from symbolic interactionism and developmental and life-course criminology to investigate the onset and persistence of extremism among 91 former white supremacists in the U.S. I also rely on decades of empirical research conducted by criminologists that highlight the causes and correlates of a broad range of violent and antisocial behavior. In doing so, the current dissertation represents a key step forward by empirically investigating the long-term development of extremist participation. My attention is primarily on experiences at the individual-level, focusing particularly on childhood risk factors (e.g., abuse, parental loss), and racist family socialization strategies. To examine these issues, I will rely on Simi and colleagues' (2016) risk factor model to extend and elaborate some of their

earlier findings but will also use grounded theory to explore unexamined aspects of the life-history data.

Findings from the current dissertation can provide important insights into the long-term progression of extremist involvement in several ways. First, various processes related to extremist involvement such as entry, radicalization, and violence overlap substantially with key points of focus within developmental and life-course criminology including onset, continuity of offending across the life-course, and antisocial behavior. The current investigation can provide additional points of continuity between terrorism scholarship and criminological literature. Second, understanding the mechanisms of extremist involvement is key to designing terrorism prevention programs that can prevent at-risk individuals from following a path into extremism. Findings of this dissertation could eventually be used to enhance the types of tactics and strategies used to disengage and de-radicalize members of ideologically extreme groups. In the next Chapter, I provide a detailed description of the methodology I use to examine these issues.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This dissertation examines a sample of former North American-based far-right extremists (N = 91). My attention is primarily on experiences at the individual-level, focusing particularly on how childhood risk factors (e.g., abuse, mental illness) and racist family socialization strategies generate emotional and cognitive susceptibilities toward extremist recruitment processes. Data for this dissertation are drawn from a series of on-going grant-funded projects designed to examine the life histories of former far-right extremists.⁵ In the sections below, I provide study and sample characteristics. I also describe the methods used to collect and analyze the interview data. Lastly, I summarize the potential limitations related to this dissertation.

Sampling Procedures

Scholars studying deviant subcultures use innovative approaches to gain entry into any subcultural environment, but two factors make access to former members of organized hate groups particularly difficult (Simi, Blee, DeMichele, and Windisch, 2017). First, former white supremacists are often reluctant to be identified as such. They fear that information about their prior affiliations or activities will expose them to violence by current extremists, to prosecution, or sanctions by current employers, neighbors, family members, child protection agencies, and others. Second, unlike current members, former extremists cannot be found through network ties since most seek to sever all connections to their previous lives (Simi et al., 2017).

⁵ The first grant was awarded in 2012 with several additional related awards that followed in 2013 and then two separate but related awards in 2015 (see Appendix A for a listing of grant awards). In general, each of the grant projects helped build the current sample by providing resources to fund the extensive travel, interview stipends, transcription, and analysis costs associated with the life history interviews.

As there is no way to compile a list of former members to serve as a sampling frame, interviewees were gathered by snowball sampling from multiple starts to ensure variety in the location and type of extremist group (Wright, Decker, Redfern, and Smith, 1992). As multiple individuals were used to generate unique snowballs, only a small segment of the sample was acquainted with one another. Initial contacts were developed for the snowball chains through a variety of means, including Dr. Simi's extensive prior research with active and inactive far-right extremists, by identifying former extremists with a public presence (e.g., media, book authors), and by using referrals from three prominent human rights groups: Anti-Defamation League, Simon Wiesenthal Center, and Southern Poverty Law Center. Referrals were also gathered from an outreach organization, Life After Hate, that assists individuals in leaving extremist groups.

Voluntary participation. Before contacting participants, researchers obtained Internal Review Board (IRB) approval to include human participants in the current dissertation. Participants in this dissertation are protected against risk based on the voluntary nature of participation in the research, and the confidentiality ensured to them. Confidentiality measures are intended to limit the risk of participant identification. Individuals included in the current sample were provided with an informed consent document that described the potential risks associated with study inclusion. To conceal the identities of participants, the informed consent document was not signed by any research participants. Moreover, all names, locations, and organizational titles used in this dissertation were replaced with pseudonyms.

Sample Characteristics

The current sample consists of life history interviews with 91 former members of U.S. white supremacist groups. Participants were interviewed in the places they now live, with 87 located in 24 states across all regions of the country and 4 in Canada. As presented in Table 1, participants ranged in age from 19 to 61 years ($M = 41.5$; $SD = 8.6$) and included 70 men and 21 women. Thirteen described their current socioeconomic status as lower class, 42 as working class, 31 as middle class, and 5 as upper class.

Table 1. Participant Demographics and Criminal Histories

Variable	Participants	%
Gender		
Male	70	77%
Female	21	23%
Current Socioeconomic Status		
Lower	13	14%
Working	42	46%
Middle	31	34%
Upper	5	7%
Marital Status		
Single	45	49%
Married	36	40%
Co-Habituating	10	11%
Has Child(ren)	63	69%
History of Delinquent Activity	79	87%
History of Violent Offending	63	69%
History of Incarceration	48	53%

In terms of involvement, participation in white supremacy ranged from three to twenty-one years ($M = 9.9$; $SD = 6.8$). Several participants had extensive histories of criminal conduct including property offenses (e.g., shoplifting, vandalism) and a variety of violent offenses such as murder, attempted murder, street fights, violent initiation rituals, and bomb-making. Of the 91 participants, 79 reported a history of delinquent activity, 63 reported a history of violent offending, and 48 had spent time in prison.

To be clear, individuals in this sample no longer identify as “White power” and are no longer affiliated with organized hate groups. The participants see themselves as “formers” or something equivalent to a former (“I’m not involved anymore”; “I moved on”). In some cases, individuals have been disengaged for more than a decade and have experienced substantial changes in their social and cognitive orientations (e.g., inter-racial marriage; conversion to Buddhism). Interviewing former extremists as opposed to current ones provided the ability to elicit information on highly sensitive issues such as previous involvement in violence, crime, and substance abuse as well as their life after extremist participation.

Data Collection

The primary methodology utilized for this dissertation involved life history interviews. Interviews provide a strategy for gaining information about events and social conditions that are not able to be observed directly (Burgess, 1985; Neyland, 2008) or may not be recorded in written documents (Fontana and Frey, 1994). Within the field of criminology, many important studies rely on interviewing. Among others, life history interviews have been used to research female offenders (Gilfus, 1992), juvenile delinquents (Graham and Bowling, 1995; Shaw, 1930, 1931; Sutherland, 1937; Wright et al., 1992; Wright and Bennett, 1990), criminal and delinquent families (Shaw, McKay, and McDonald, 1938), street criminals (Fleisher, 1995; Shover, 1996; Steffensmeier, 1986), drug dealers (Singer, 2006; Williams, 1989), chronic violent offenders (Athens, 1990), members of street gangs (Campbell, 1984; Decker and Lauritsen, 2002; Fleisher, 1998; Singer, 2006; Vigil, 1988; Whyte, 1943), and individuals that have desisted from crime (Carlsson, 2013; Giordano et al., 2002, 2007; Giordano, Seffrin, Manning, and

Longmore, 2011; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Maruna 2001; Shover, 1996; Sommers, Baskin, and Fagin, 1994).

Life history interviews, in particular, can provide an in-depth understanding of the social conditions that exist prior to, during, and after one's involvement with extremism. The life history interview technique allows participants to describe his or her life history beginning with earliest childhood memories and moving forward in a progressive, chronological fashion. Accounts provide an opportunity for understanding the link between culture and individual behavior (McAdams and Pals, 2006; Scott and Lyman, 1968). Further, scholars have recognized that life history interviews are "storied" and that stories serve to integrate portions of a person's life that were previously disorganized (McAdams, 2007). Life stories provide meaning to an individual because identities are grounded in the ability to continue producing a particular and evolving narrative (Giddens, 1991, p. 54). In this way, stories and the telling of an individual's history is a tool for making sense out of life (McAdams, 2007).

Life history interviews often include stories of growth and self-defining memories (Bauer, McAdams, and Pals, 2008; McAdams, 2007). Growth memories capture events such as high and low points in life, turning points, other life transitions, and broad plans for the future (Bauer et al., 2008). These growth memories are instrumental when tracking significant life moments as interpreted by the individual. From this perspective, in order to understand behavior and perception, it is also important to understand an individual's storied narrative (Crewe and Maruna, 2006). While life history interviews are labor and time intensive, the resulting narratives provide a "close-in perspective"

(Giordano et al., 2002) and a substantial amount of depth when attempting to understand the conditions that precede and follow a criminal career.

Also, life history interviews comprise an individual's "narrative identity," which is an internalized and evolving story of the self. By identity, I refer to "the meanings one has as a group member, as a role holder, or as a person" (Stets and Burke, 2003, p. 132). Data gathered using this technique allows interview participants to venture off into a personalized narrative. Life history interviews are a useful way of understanding a person's sense of identity because how individuals conceive of themselves influence individual choice and behavior (Crewe and Maruna, 2006; Giddens, 1991; McAdams, 1985, 1993).

Life-history interview protocol. Rapport was established before interviews through regular contact with participants via telephone and email. Interviews were conducted in private settings such as hotel rooms, residential homes and public settings such as restaurants and coffee shops. While participants were periodically asked direct questions to focus on specific topic areas, the interviews relied on an unstructured format intended to generate unsolicited data embedded in their narrative. Participants were asked to describe their childhood experiences as an initial starting point. Most of the interview was spent eliciting an in-depth life history to produce narratives that reflect the complexities and intersectionality of identity, ideology, and life experiences (McAdams, 1997). The interviews included questions about broad phases of participants' extremism such as entry, involvement, and disengagement, with probes to encourage participants to elaborate on aspects of their life histories (see Appendix B for Risk Factor Codebook).

A semi-structured interview instrument was used to ensure that specific topics such as extremist involvement and exit, the meaning of what it means to be a “former” extremist, and the consequences of extremist membership were covered during the interview. This technique of supplementing life history interviews with a semi-structured interview instrument has been used in prior research (Gilfus, 1992; Goffman, 1961; Johnson, 1975; Lofland and Lofland, 1995; Shaw, 1930; Whyte, 1943) and provides the flexibility that is needed for deviating into areas far beyond the topical areas prepared in the standardized questions (Berg, 2007). Departing from standardized questions is useful because it allows emergent themes to develop throughout the research process (Berg, 2007). Each interview concluded with more structured questions and scale items to collect comparable information across interviewees in terms of risk factors (e.g., history of child abuse, mental health problems), demographic information, and criminality.

While three researchers conducted the life history interviews, there was a high degree of overlap between the individual interviewers as interviews were conducted with the same protocol. Moreover, a subsample of interviews was conducted by multiple interviewers, which maintained consistency among interviewer behaviors. To increase interviewer consistency, the research team met in person for interview training and logistics planning before the initiation of data collection. During the process of data collection, the research team regularly debriefed via telephone conference calls and in-person meetings that included detailed discussions related to methodology and design.

Interviews lasted between four and more than eight hours and generated 10,882 pages of transcripts, which indicate the level of detail generated through the life histories. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed with only minor edits using a word

processing software. When the transcriptions were complete, participant names and other minor forms of potentially identifying information were replaced with pseudonyms or in a way that disguised the identity of participants. When all identifying information was replaced, the coding and data management portion of the project began.

Analytic Approach

Since 2012, the research team has published several peer-reviewed articles that rely on various facets of the life history data (see Appendix C for a complete bibliography of published articles that rely on this data). Because the iterative nature of accruing a large life history sample of this size, many of those articles relied on subsets of the larger sample with two publications that have benefited from an analysis of the entire sample. This dissertation will extend and elaborate some of these earlier findings but will also rely on grounded theory to explore previously unexamined aspects of the data.

Grounded theory. The current dissertation relies on a modified version of grounded theory to identify patterns, concepts, and theoretical explanations regarding extremist involvement and extremist exit, the meanings associated with being a “former” extremist, and the consequences of extremist membership. Modified grounded theory allows researchers to combine a more open-ended, inductive approach while also relying on existing literatures and frameworks to guide the research and help interpret the findings. Grounded theory is one of the most widely used frameworks for gathering and analyzing qualitative data (Charmaz, 2014; Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001; see also Berg, 2007; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

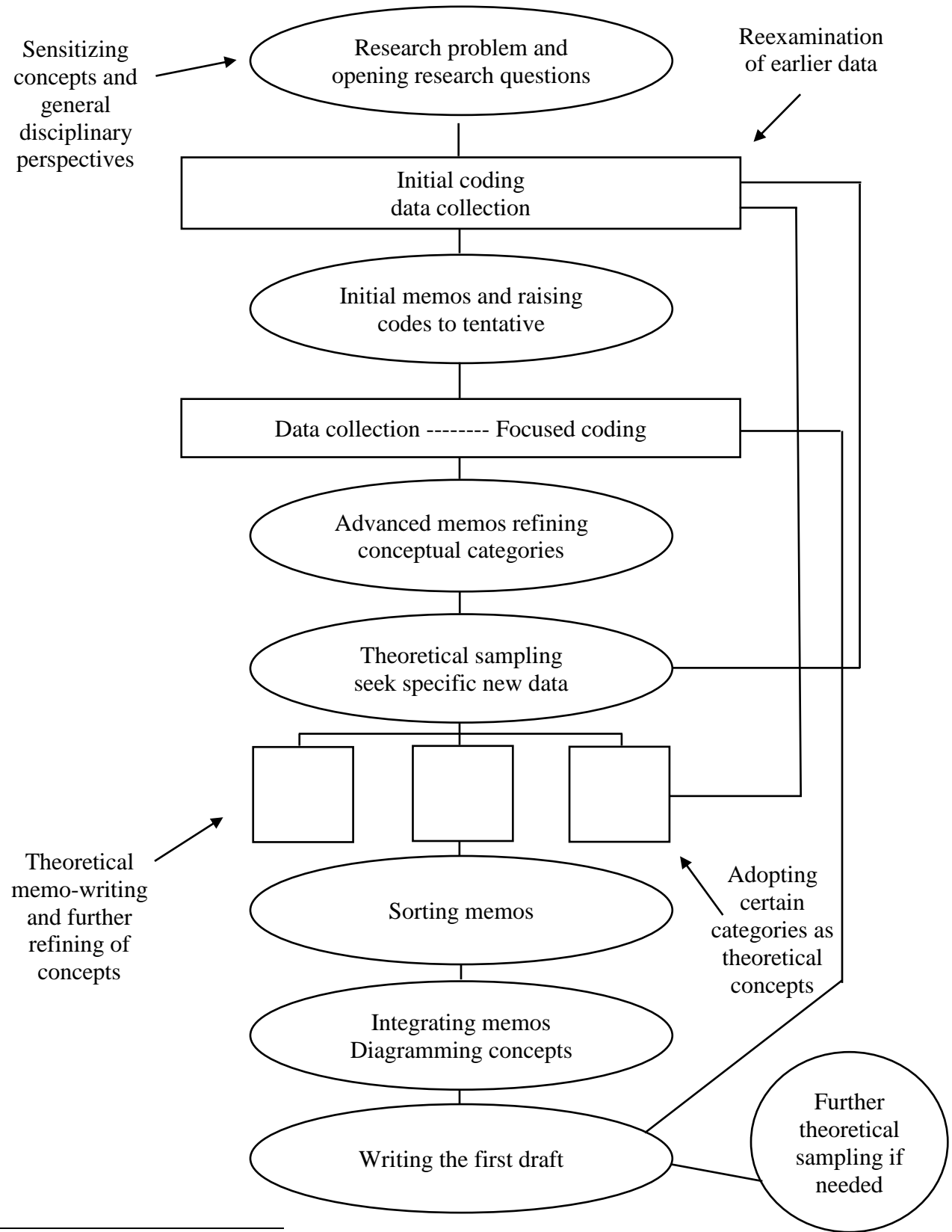
Grounded theory is derived from symbolic interactionism and argues that the researcher is an active part of the data collection process (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Specifically, the researcher constructs theory through various forms of interaction with the data (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory can be extremely useful in both creating new theories as well as reformulating or improving knowledge about existing theories that explain a phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Grounded theory is an inductive approach where theory emerges from the raw data as opposed to that of a deductive approach where theories are developed and then tested (Charmaz, 2014). A grounded theory approach involves following leads that emerge in the data rather than “force preconceived ideas and theories directly upon our data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 17). As the research unfolds and emergent themes develop, researchers alter data collection efforts and make continuous refinements.

Grounded theory coding procedures. Coding is a complex process comprised of multiple stages and is an integral component of data management and retrieval (Berg, 2007; Charmaz, 2014). Figure 2 provides a visual diagram of this process. In general, coding is the process of assigning a code to something for classification or identification. Codes can be defined as ‘the labels we use to classify items of information as pertinent to a topic, question, answer or whatever’ (Lofland et al., 2006). Codes take two forms including deductive and inductive. Deductive codes are derived from prior research or theoretical developments such as known risk factors for criminal offending, extremist radicalization processes, and micro-situational explanations of violence. Alternatively, inductive codes are generated from specific observations of the data. Inductive codes are flexible and imaginative and help to improve the existing theory and explain underlying social processes.

Figure 2. Grounded Theory Procedures⁶



⁶ Adopted from Charmaz, 2014

The first stage of coding is called substantive or initial coding because the data is analyzed line-by-line (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1978). In the substantive coding phase, each line of data in a written transcript receives a code. This process “should stick closely to the data,” describe data as action, and allow for the emergence of new ideas (Charmaz, 2014, p. 47-48). Substantive coding involves “constant comparative methods” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) where data are compared against each other, across participants, and across various times, and places (Charmaz, 2014). This process allows for further insight, ideas, and perspective in the data. Coding for this study will examine the occurrence and reoccurrence of various themes, characters, concepts, as well as the overall sentiment of the data and how it is told (Berg, 2007).

The second stage of coding is focused and involves moving from specific line-by-line codes to those that are more directed, selective, and conceptual (Charmaz, 2014). Focused coding uses the most significant or frequent codes that are identified during the initial line-by-line coding and attempts to understand their prevalence and interconnections among larger segments of data (Charmaz, 2014). According to Glaser (1978), this process is called theoretical coding and serves to “conceptualize how the substantive codes may relate to each other” (p. 72). The connections that are made across various codes are written down by the researcher in memos which serve as the building blocks for theory development (Lofland et al., 2006). Memos are helpful because they “catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallize questions and directions for you to pursue” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 72). In other words, memos serve as a record for thoughts and conceptual development as the coding and analysis unfold into a testable theory (Lempert, 2007).

The codes that derived from this study were managed and categorized using MAXQDA which is a data analysis and management software commonly used by social scientists. Among other advantages, this software alleviates the burden of manually tracking specific codes amid numerous pages of print. After codes are developed, researchers compare and contrast data themes, noting relations between them, and moving back and forth between first-level data and general categories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Limitations

Sampling bias and generalizability. While snowball sampling is one of the most effective ways to study elusive populations in their natural environments, this strategy is also associated with numerous difficulties and limitations (Wright et al., 1992). For example, maintaining constant access to participants can be problematic because participants change addresses and contact information (e.g., email address, phone numbers) and must attend to prior obligations and responsibilities (e.g., works, school, family). While contact with some participants is sporadic at times, this is common in studies that utilize a snowball sampling technique (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997; Fleisher, 1998; Mullins, Wright, and Jacobs, 2004; Padilla, 1992; Wright et al., 1992). Moreover, due to the relatively hidden nature of this population, the sample is not representative which prevents generalizing from these findings (Browner and Preloran, 2006).

Furthermore, this study represents former extremists across a variety of different groups whom all were once actively involved in a white supremacist group. Specifically, it is unclear whether findings from this study are generalizable across different types of individuals and periods (Calder, Phillips, and Tybout, 1982). For example, some

participants may report reasons for leaving the white supremacist movement that are no longer applicable to the current economic or social conditions facing the current generation of extremists. Although findings from this study are not generalizable, fieldwork and qualitative methodological approaches focus on the uniqueness of data and the degree to which explanations fit the data that was collected (Janesick, 1994).

Another potential limitation to the current study involves sample size. This is especially true for the current study as an imbalance exists between male (N = 70; 77 percent) and female (N = 21; 23 percent) participants. The disproportionate rate of males may limit comparisons between participants. Although the size of the sample used for the current study is relatively small in comparison to other areas and aspects of criminological research (Klein, Maxson, and Cunningham, 1991), the importance of small samples has been demonstrated in numerous studies related to crime, and delinquency (Decker and Lauritsen, 2002; Shaw, McKay, and McDonald, 1938; Singer, 2006; Steffensmeier, 1986; Sutherland, 1937). Small samples that are examined using qualitative methods provide a significant level of depth and encourage discovery and dialogue between ideas and knowledge (Ragin, 2000, p. 5). Finally, although small samples may be limited in terms of generalizability, they provide a powerful mechanism for collecting extensive knowledge about a specific area of focus (Stake, 1995).

Retrospection. Another limitation associated with this project involves the validity of participant responses. The practice of remembering is a reconstructive process where memories of events are typically reinterpreted during each recall (Bridge and Paller, 2012). The retrospective nature of life history interviews raises questions about validity and reliability due to memory erosion, distortion, and selective recall (Baddeley,

1979; Becker, 1970). Although this is problematic, personal life narratives and memory recollection are shown to be an important aspect of one's sense of self. Individuals frequently manipulate memories regularly; therefore, this limitation is not limited solely to the current study. Furthermore, the data analysis in this study is focused less on determining facts but emphasizes the meanings that individuals attach to memories and lived experiences (Becker, 1970; Crewe and Maruna, 2006).

Analytic considerations. Similar to other analytic approaches, grounded theory is characterized by numerous limitations. For example, the current dissertation takes a *modified* grounded theory approach to data analyses because much of the coding began before the end of data collection. Additionally, I read a significant amount of research and material on the topics of criminal risk factors, family socialization strategies, radicalization, and violence before collecting data; therefore, there are numerous codes that reflect themes derived from previous literature. This practice is inconsistent with traditional grounded theory methodologies (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Finally, although grounded theory is not intended to provide generalizations, the hypotheses developed can be tested at a later point by researchers in future studies. The goal of a grounded theory approach, however, is to develop a conceptual explanation that closely fits the data (or incidents), which the concepts are intended to represent.

Summary

I rely on life-history interviews with 91 former white supremacists to examine the long-term development of extremist participation, and generic criminal behavior (e.g., drug use, robbery). My attention is primarily on experiences at the individual-level, focusing particularly on how childhood risk factors (e.g., abuse, mental illness) and racist

family socialization strategies generate emotional and cognitive susceptibilities toward extremist recruitment processes. To examine these questions and analyze the data, I will rely on a modified-grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2009; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Miles and Huberman, 1994), which allows researchers to combine a more open-ended, inductive approach while also relying on existing literatures and frameworks to guide the research and help interpret the findings. By understanding how multiple conditions co-exist and interact, I will be better able to identify meaningful interaction patterns that shape extremist involvement activities. Such an approach may offer a chance at identifying indicators that can inform theoretical and applied research. In the next section, I present data from the life-history interviews that discuss the extent and nature of childhood trauma. This chapter also describes the emotional consequences of childhood maltreatment and how the emotional consequences of these experiences generate cognitive susceptibilities toward extremist recruitment processes.

CHAPTER 4

It's a Hard Knock Life: Contextualizing the Role of Trauma and Negative Emotionality among White Supremacists

Historically, terrorism scholars have viewed extremist participation through the prism of ideology (Post, 2005; Silke, 2008). In particular, previous studies have found that extremist groups attract individuals for numerous reasons such as ideological alignment, opportunities for significance restoration, or identity development (Horgan, 2009; Kruglanski et al., 2009; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008; Merari, 2005; Schafer, Mullins, and Box, 2014; Schwartz, Dunkel, and Waterman, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2005). Recent efforts; however, have begun to examine how the presence of adverse environmental conditions such as alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, sexual molestation, neglect, and instability push individuals toward extremist groups (Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016; also see Baron, 1997; Speckhard and Akhmedova, 2005). Similar to members of conventional street gangs and “ordinary” violent offenders (Miller, 2001), these risk factors increase an individual’s susceptibility to the pull of various types of criminally-oriented groups including violent extremism (Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016). Although much has been and continues to be learned from this line of inquiry, more fine-grained analyses would continue to advance our understanding of the cognitive and emotional states produced by trauma and the specific ways in which these psychological antecedents influence extremist participation and radicalization.

By unraveling the intricacies of trauma and stress, we can better understand how certain psychological vulnerabilities coincide with the desire to seek acceptance among peers and what Kruglanski and colleagues’ (2009) refer to as the “search for significance” (p. 335). Such an investigation will continue to move terrorism research

beyond examining ideological characteristics by evaluating some of the early childhood and adolescent experience that may heighten a person's vulnerabilities to certain pulls associated with ideology and group dynamics more broadly. Doing so helps us elaborate on investigations focused on proximal events that coincide with, or immediately precede, extremist participation by including distal events that may occur years before they are initially exposed to any facet of organized hate. In order to provide more context as to how trauma and stress influence extremist participation, the current chapter is organized into two sections: (1) measuring the extent and nature of trauma; and (2) psychological and emotional consequences of trauma.

Throughout these sections, I argue that as participants in the current sample experience the cascading effects (Granovetter, 1978) of trauma and stress, they become detached from close social relationships around them. This, in turn, produces an "altered state of reference" (Cohen, 1955) in which fighting back, running away, and acting violently toward others is seen as an effective way of managing emotional distress. Because these coping strategies are often maladaptive, the likelihood of experiencing additional risk factors such as academic failure, drugs and alcohol abuse, and exposure to various types of criminally-oriented groups including violent extremism is increased. For these individuals, bonding together with well-defined collectives and associating with like-minded individuals is seen as a "mechanism of adjustment" (Cohen, 1955, p. 54) capable of diminishing the intensity of their emotional distress.

Measuring the Extent and Nature of Trauma

Stress is an inevitable part of life. Stress can derive from physical, emotional, or environmental factors and is commonly used to describe responses to daily demands

encountered throughout one's lifetime (Middlebrooks and Audage, 2008; Selye, 1956). Certain amounts of stress are normal and necessary for children to develop the skills they need to adapt to new and potentially threatening situations in a physically and emotionally healthy manner (Korte, Koolhaas, Wingfield, and McEwen, 2005). While certain kinds of stress can promote healthy development, the beneficial aspects of stress diminish when it is severe enough to overwhelm an individual's ability to cope with their environment effectively (McEwen, 1998).

The most severe form of stress, often referred to as "toxic stress," involves the prolonged or permanent activation of certain hormones such as cortisol, norepinephrine, and adrenaline. Toxic stress is created by long-term exposure—often lasting weeks, months, or years—to a variety of factors such as extreme poverty, childhood maltreatment (e.g., physical abuse, parental mental illness), or exposure to natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, or tornados. While a single traumatic experience is capable of impairing physiological and psychological functioning, recent developments have found the cumulative burden of multiple traumatic events can be more detrimental for overall health (Anda, Butchart, Felitti, and Brown, 2010; Dong et al., 2004). In particular, "allostatic load"⁷ in the prefrontal cortex and amygdala has been found to disrupt self-regulatory behavioral and emotional responses, which can compromise the functioning of multiple organ systems including the nervous and immune systems (Korte et al., 2005, p. 5; Painter and Scannapieco, 2013; Twardosz and Lutzker, 2010).

⁷ The term "allostatic load," has recently been introduced to overcome the ambiguity of the concept of "stress" (McEwen and Wingfield, 2003). The central idea is that by controlling all physiological mechanisms simultaneously, the brain can become overwhelmed if certain hormones (e.g., cortisol, norepinephrine, adrenaline, etc.) are released too often or if they are inefficiently managed. This "wear and tear" can have a prolonged damaging effect on brain development and has been found to disrupt neurobiological functioning (Korte et al., 2005).

Research on allostatic load, toxic stress, and insights into the cumulative impact of multiple forms of trauma has led to the development of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) questionnaire (see Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, and Marks, 1998). ACE refers to ten experiences of trauma tracked across two dimensions. The first dimension, childhood maltreatment, accounts for emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse emotional neglect, and physical neglect. The second dimension, family adversity, accounts for caregiver substance abuse, caregiver mental illness, caregiver loss, caregiver incarceration, and witnessing domestic violence. A person's ACE score is expressed as the sum of these ten experiences, each measured dichotomously (see Appendix D for the ACE questionnaire).⁸ Because different types of adversity are highly interrelated (Anda et al., 1999; Dong et al., 2004; Felitti et al., 1998), the ACE questionnaire assesses the relationship between multiple categories of adversity and various health outcomes. Numerous studies from a wide range of disciplines have identified a strong, age-graded relationship between ACE scores and health concerns including unintended pregnancies (Dietz et al., 1999), sexually transmitted diseases (Hillis et al., 2000), adult substance abuse (Dube et al., 2002; Dube et al., 2003), heart and liver disease (Dong et al., 2004), depression (Edwards, Holden, Felitti, and Anda, 2003), suicide (Dube et al., 2001), and cancer (Anda et al., 2010).

In addition to health concerns, scholars have examined the connection between trauma and offending and found that violent juvenile offenders disproportionately

⁸ There are three important caveats regarding the ACE Questionnaire. First, each ACE item must occur before age 18 for it to count toward an individual's score. Second, an exposure, such as sexual abuse, is counted as one point regardless of the severity of exposure or the number of incidents (whether sexually abused 1 vs. 100 times). Finally, while the current project focuses primarily on trauma experienced from family members, maltreatment that occurred outside the home will also count toward an individuals' ACE score.

experience trauma, abuse, neglect, and maltreatment during childhood, as compared to less severe or non-offending juveniles (Finkelhor et al., 2013; Fox et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 1998; Loeber and Farrington, 2000; Maschi et al., 2010; Thompson and Braaten-Antrim, 1998). For instance, Hill and colleagues (1999) utilized data from the Seattle Social Development Project and found that exposure to a greater number of risk factors in childhood increased the risk of joining a gang in adolescence. Moreover, in the Rochester Youth Development Study, violent juveniles between ages 14 and 18 were more likely to have been maltreated as children, even after controlling for gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and family structure (Smith and Thornberry, 1995).

While a considerable amount of research has examined the relationship between trauma and offending, criminologists have only recently begun to apply the ACE questionnaire to “high risk” juvenile⁹ samples to examine the relationship between ACE exposures and adolescent delinquency or substance use/abuse (e.g., Baglivio et al., 2014; Duke et al., 2010; Perez, Jennings, and Baglivio, 2016; Zettler, Wolff, Baglivio, Craig, and Epps, 2017). For example, Duke and colleagues (2010) found that each additional ACE exposure increased the risk of interpersonal violence by 60–65 percent and carrying a weapon by 72–74 percent. Moreover, Baglivio and colleagues (2014) found that 96 percent of offenders in the Florida juvenile justice system experienced at least one ACE in their lifetime and 40 percent experienced four or more ACE exposures. These rates far exceed those of the general population (Merrick et al., 2018). In a more recent study, Fagan and Novak (2018) found the greater the number of self-reported ACE exposures,

⁹ “High-risk” juveniles are defined by more (pronounced) risk factors. These individuals are at the greatest risk of offending or becoming repeat and serious offenders (Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Sampson and Laub, 2003). High risk is defined as an aggregate phenomenon because conduct problems and criminal behavior are multidetermined by individual and contextual factors (see Jaffee and Odgers, 2013).

the greater the likelihood of self-reported alcohol use, marijuana use, violence, and arrest before age 16 (see also Fox, Perez, Cass, Baglivio, and Epps, 2015; Reavis, Looman, Franco, and Rojas, 2013). Together these lines of research highlight the distal effects of trauma on offending and delinquency. In the following section, I build on these lines of research and present ACE scores of 91 North American-based former white supremacists. In doing so, I highlight within-group differences between male and female participants and compare the current sample to another “high risk” sample and a non-offending adult sample.

Table 2. ACE Scores across Gender of Participants

ACE Score	Males (N = 70)		Females (N = 21)		Total (N = 91)	
	Participants	%	Participants	%	Participants	%
0	9	13%	0	0%	9	10%
1	4	6%	2	10%	6	7%
2	10	14%	1	5%	11	12%
3	6	9%	1	5%	7	8%
4	11	16%	4	19%	15	16%
5	5	7%	3	14%	8	9%
6	8	11%	2	10%	10	11%
7	7	10%	3	14%	10	11%
8	6	9%	4	19%	10	11%
9	4	6%	1	5%	5	5%
10	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) scores. Table 2 lists the overall composite ACE scores for the current sample. In line with prior research (Abram et al., 2004), participants were exposed to multiple types of adversity. Specifically, 7 percent of the sample experienced one ACE exposure, 12 percent experienced two, 8 percent experienced three, and 63 percent of the sample experienced four or more ACE exposures. Based on prior research, individuals exposed to four or more adverse experiences are considered “high risk” (Anderson-Mellies, 2016; Reavis et al., 2013). Although the majority of participants were exposed to four or more adverse experiences

throughout their childhood, no (0 percent) participant was exposed to all ten ACE items.¹⁰ Table 2 also illustrates the prevalence of ACE across gender of participants. Overall, more than four-fifths (87 percent) of male participants and all (100 percent) female participants reported to at least one ACE exposure. For male participants, 6 percent experienced one ACE exposure, 14 percent experienced two, 9 percent experienced three, and 59 percent experienced four or more ACE exposures. For female participants, 7 percent experienced one ACE exposure, 12 percent experienced two, 8 percent experienced three, and 81 percent experienced four or more ACE exposures. In terms of the average composite ACE score, female participants scored significantly higher than male participants ($M_{\text{Females}} = 5.33$; $SD = 2.37$ vs. $M_{\text{Males}} = 4.17$; $SD = 2.75$; $t = 1.752$, $p < .10$). This finding is in line with prior research indicating that females typically experience more ACE exposures than males (Anda et al., 2006; Baglivio and Epps, 2016; Reavis et al., 2013).

Table 3. Prevalence of Childhood Maltreatment across Gender of Participants

Childhood Maltreatment	Males (N = 70)		Females (N = 21)		Total (N = 91)	
	Participants	%	Participants	%	Participants	%
Physical Abuse	33	47%	11	52%	44	48%
Emotional Neglect	30	43%	12	57%	42	46%
Emotional Abuse	30	43%	12	57%	42	46%
Sexual Abuse	14	20%	7	33%	21	23%
Physical Neglect	9	13%	5	24%	14	15%

Table 3 illustrates the extent of trauma across the childhood maltreatment dimension. Childhood maltreatment includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, and physical neglect. Rates of childhood maltreatment ranged

¹⁰ It is important to note that participants did not complete the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) questionnaire. Rather, I coded for each of the ten ACE exposures based on the life-history data provided. Because of the methodology employed, it is possible the findings underreport the degree of risk present in our sample. Although I did not have multiple raters line-by-line code interviews, regular quality control checks were conducted to discuss issues with ratings throughout coding and analyses procedures.

from 48 percent being exposed to physical abuse to 15 percent being exposed to physical neglect (e.g., lack of basic needs). For both male and female participants, physical abuse (48 percent), emotional neglect (46 percent), and emotional abuse (46 percent) were the most prevalent types of maltreatment followed by sexual abuse (23 percent) and physical neglect (15 percent). These rates are comparable to a high-risk youth sample reported by Fagan and Novak (2018) who found that 46 percent of participants had been physically abused, 44 percent emotionally abused, and 24 percent had been sexually abused. As compared to males, female participants experienced higher rates of physical, verbal, and sexual abuse as well as emotional and physical neglect.

Table 4. Prevalence of Family Adversity across Gender of Participants

Family Adversity	Males (N = 70)		Females (N = 21)		Total (N = 91)	
	Participants	%	Participants	%	Participants	%
Caregiver Loss	46	74%	16	76%	62	68%
Caregiver Substance Abuse	44	73%	16	76%	60	66%
Witnessed Domestic Abuse	33	77%	10	48%	43	47%
Caregiver Mental Illness	29	67%	14	67%	43	47%
Caregiver Incarceration	20	69%	9	43%	29	32%

Table 4 illustrates the extent of trauma across the family adversity dimension, which includes caregiver loss (e.g., divorce), caregiver substance abuse, witnessed domestic abuse, caregiver mental illness, and caregiver incarceration. Rates of family adversity ranged from 68 percent reported caregiver loss in the household (e.g., death, divorce) to 32 percent reported caregiver incarceration. For both male and female participants, caregiver loss (68 percent) and caregiver substance abuse (66 percent) were the most prevalent exposures followed by witnessing domestic abuse (47 percent), caregiver mental illness (47 percent), and caregiver incarceration (32 percent). Female participants experienced slightly higher rates of caregiver loss and caregiver substance abuse than males; whereas, male participants experienced higher rates of witnessing

domestic abuse and caregiver incarceration than females. In terms of caregiver mental illness, male and female participants experienced equal rates of exposure.

Table 5. Comparison of ACE Categories across Samples

ACE Score	Current Sample	“High Risk” Sample	Non-Offending Sample
0	10%	10%	36%
1	7%	13%	26%
2	12%	14%	16%
3	8%	15%	9%
4+	63%	48%	13%

To contextualize the extent of trauma among participants in the current study, Table 5 provides a comparison of ACE scores across three samples: (1) the current sample of former white supremacists (Simi, Blee, and DeMichele, 2018); (2) a “high risk” sample (Reavis et al., 2013); and (3) the original Kaiser-Permanente sample of non-offending adults (Felitti et al., 1998).¹¹ As illustrated in Table 5, the current sample differs markedly from the sample of non-offending adults described by Felitti and colleagues (1998). Specifically, participants in the current sample were three times less likely to experience zero ACE exposures (10 percent vs. 36 percent) and roughly five times more likely to experience four or more ACE exposures (63 percent vs. 13 percent) than Felitti and colleagues’ (1998) sample. Rates of exposure for the current sample resemble estimates from the “high-risk” sample (Reavis et al., 2013). Specifically, 17

¹¹ These articles were selected for three reasons. First, both studies reported rates of exposure for all ten ACE items. For example, caregiver loss (e.g., death, divorce) has been included as an ACE exposure in some (e.g., Baglivio and Epps, 2016; Dube et al., 2003; Felitti et al., 1998; Schilling et al., 2007) but not all research (e.g., Cronholm et al., 2015; Hill et al., 1999; Hunt et al., 2017). Second, both studies reported the cumulative rate of adversity across their samples. In several cases (e.g., Fagan and Novak, 2018), the extent of each ACE category was reported but not the cumulative frequency of these exposures. Comparing all ten ACE items and their cumulative exposure allows for a more complete examination across the three samples. Finally, the selected studies analyzed data from the early to mid-1990s, which is a closer approximation to when participants in the current sample experienced childhood maltreatment and family adversity.

percent of the current sample and 23 percent of the “high-risk” sample experienced one or fewer ACE exposures, and the majority of both samples (63 percent and 48 percent, respectively) experienced four or more ACE exposures. Together, these findings indicate that experiences with trauma during childhood for the current sample more closely approximates a “high risk” sample than a non-offending adult sample.

While ACE helps quantify the extent of trauma across the current sample, it does not consider the severity and type of trauma experienced. For example, exposure to a form of childhood maltreatment, such as sexual abuse, is counted as one point regardless of the severity of exposure or the number of incidents (whether sexually abused one vs. 100 times). To provide more analytic depth, the following section highlights the nature of trauma across both the childhood maltreatment and family adversity dimensions.

The nature of childhood maltreatment. In discussing the various forms of childhood maltreatment, it is important to illustrate variability in the degree of severity described by participants. While prior research has found support that any experience of childhood abuse elevates the risk of internalizing (e.g., anxiety) and externalizing symptoms such as aggression and substance abuse (Bensley et al., 1999; Flisher et al., 1997; Silverman et al., 1996; Spaccarelli et al., 1997), recent studies have found that more severe forms of abuse are associated with more severe levels of long-term psychological difficulties such as depression (Bifulco et al., 2002; Schenkel et al., 2005). Without considering the degree of abuse that occurred across the types of childhood maltreatment, the severity and intensity of trauma may not be fully accounted for in the production of long-term psychological distress. For example, participants who experienced sexual abuse (N = 21) described various degrees of sexual misconduct on the

part of the perpetrator. Less severe forms of sexual abuse involved non-touching behaviors such as being told a “dirty” joke or shown pornographic material (e.g., “*She [mother] showed me dirty magazines and videos that sort of thing.*” – Ricky, Interview 70, 7/27/2014). More severe forms of sexual abuse involved forcible fondling (e.g., “*I had a cousin hold me down and jerk me off, stuff like that.*” – Doug, Interview 25, 7/23/2014), and oral, anal, or vaginal rape (e.g., “*I was 14 and we went to a party and I had been drinking and I was raped by two guys.*” – Shayne, Interview 80, 6/28/2015).

Participants also described substantial variation regarding emotional abuse (N = 42). Emotional abuse involved experiences in which participants were scared or felt bad because caregivers in their life called them names (e.g., “*My father was very belittling, very demeaning, like “What’s wrong with you? Are you a fucking retard?” shit like that.*” – Taylor, Interview 86, 7/19/2015), said mean things to them (e.g., “*Both my parents blame me for being born... My dad would always tell me how he has wasted his life on me.*” – Brittany, Interview 9, 9/17/2015), or avoided interacting with them (e.g., “*I felt as if I was pushed out of the house as much as they possibly could.*” – Zander, Interview 91, 12/21/2015). Across these different levels of emotional abuse, caregivers sought to control participants by discrediting, isolating, and silencing them. At the same time, the emotional abuse eroded these individual’s sense of self so much that they could no longer see their self-worth (Sackett and Saunders, 1999).

In terms of physical abuse, participants (N = 44) described substantial variability in the types and severity of physical abuse they experienced such as open-handed slaps, spitting, closed fist punches kicks and physically violence that involved various types

of weapons such as belt buckles or leather straps by one or more of their primary caregivers. For example,

He would spank us with a leather belt. It was like in the horror movies; more of like a religious experience... We learned our lesson real quick... **pain is a wonderful deterrent.** – Sheldon, Interview 73, 8/29/2016

I mean **unnecessary discipline.** He [father] was very violent and abusive... As long as I can remember, if he caught you putting a book in your pants or if you didn't stop right there and bend over and grab your ankles, you're going to get it worse... I mean being a parent is hard but there is **no excuse for him using belt buckles and kicking me** when I got in trouble. – Luke, Interview 60, 10/21/2016

Many of these participants describe the physical abuse being so severe that it caused bodily injuries and wounds such as scratches, black eyes, cuts, and bruises. For instance,

My dad was pretty abusive. **He busted my lip for not washing the dishes once.** He was an asshole. – Laura, Interview 57, 1/29/2016

I've gone to school with **blisters sticking to my pants.** He'd make you pull down your pants and **would beat you with the belt.** If you moved, then you got more. – Jackie, Interview 47, 4/5/2014

I got in trouble and he hit me with his belt and the **belt buckle broke over the back of my head and it split me open.** I didn't go to the hospital but if I would have it would have been, "he fell down the stairs" kind of thing, you know. **I probably needed stitches more times than I can count but I never went to the hospital.** – Alton, Interview 4, 10/23/2015

In the most severe cases, physical abuse exceeded the spectrum of "normal" abuse (Naar-King et al., 2002; Russel, 1986). An especially malicious nature characterized a portion of our subjects' abusive experiences reflecting Athens' (1990) concept of "violent subjugation" where the victim is assaulted to the point that he/she fears for their immediate survival (p. 28).

It was a struggle. There was one point when I was like 5 years old and **my mom hooked me up like a dog in the bathtub and made me eat dog food** and then proceeded to **beat me like a dog with a whip.** – Mark, Interview 65, 8/19/2013

Yeah, my dad would hit me when he was mad. One of the ones that sticks out to me is **my dad got mad at me and threw me off the roof**. I think I knocked something over and he **got pissed off with me and picked me up and threw me**. – Alex, Interview 1, 7/21/2015

Nobody beat me as bad as my stepdad beat me... A thirty-six-year-old man who used to beat the shit out of me at twelve and somehow that's called a fair fight. **I was fighting for survival**. – Freddie, Interview 33, 5/31/2014

In these situations, the abuser relies on physical and psychological domination to gain complete control over the individual (Athens, 1990). Participants felt like they could not do anything right and described “walking on eggshells” in their home because of their caregiver’s unpredictable behavior. This finding is in line with prior research that found abused children often develop traumatic stress reactions and anxiety because they lack a sense of control and are uncertain when a caregiver will become physically violent (Ballash et al., 2006; Carman, Rieker, and Mills, 1984). As a result, participants became afraid of their caregivers and began to reduce their interaction with these individuals. Such a reaction has been found to hinder the development and maintenance of friendships and the ability to trust authority figures (Brown and Finkelhor, 1986; Polusny and Follette, 1995).

Physical and emotional neglect also occurred in various degrees of severity. For a minority of the sample (N = 14), basic physical needs were unmet, including adequate food, clothing, medical care, and/or safe shelter. For example,

My parents were **crack heads**. We **did not have any food** in the house. **I only had like two outfits**. – Anders, Interview 2, 11/2/2015

She was definitely neglectful. I remember she **wouldn't do laundry**, she **wouldn't clean**, she **wouldn't cook**. She used to pick us up from school and **feed us Wendy's every day**. – Stacy, Interview 79, 11/27/2014

My mother didn't believe in doctors, and there were several times when I was quite ill and **should've been taken to see a doctor and she wouldn't let me**

go... I didn't get my tonsils out until I was 19, and they told me **they had been infected for years.** – Kara, Interview 56, 7/31/2015

Each of these narratives illustrates a lack of concern or interest regarding the participants' well-being or happiness. In some severe instances of physical neglect, participants ran away from home in pursuit of these resources (e.g., food, clothing). For the most part, rather than experiencing physical neglect, a large portion of the sample (N = 42) felt emotionally neglected and unable to rely on family members for social support and advice. For instance,

All wants and needs were all taken care of on a physical level in the sense that as a provider there was always food, clothing, and a roof over our heads... Never slept in a car. Never went without a meal but **to a tiny child that's meaningless. It's not the currency of love that is needed...** You can abandon someone by just taking off for good or **you can abandon them and still be in the same vicinity.**
– Toby, Interview 87, 5/27/2014

I had everything a kid should have like food, shelter, clothing. I wasn't neglected in that aspect. **I was more neglected as not having a parent that should teach me certain things.** – Saul, Interview 82, 1/20/2016

They were oblivious to stuff they should have been paying attention to, but I don't know if it was necessarily neglect. I always had a room to sleep in and food to eat. – Chase, Interview 20, 11/1/2013

Similar to physical neglect, caregivers convey the message that participants' time and needs are less important than other own. This finding represents a departure from prior research investigating demographic backgrounds among members of conventional street gangs which find clustering of membership in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods where families struggle to acquire basic physical needs such as food, water, and shelter (Fagan, 1996; Pyrooz, Fox, and Decker, 2010; Short, 1996; Wilson, 1996). This finding underscores the often "invisible" elements of trauma and abuse. While many of the participants' experiences with childhood maltreatment resulted in

physically visible injuries, childhood trauma also involved emotional damage that is more difficult to identify.

In addition to childhood maltreatment, it is important to examine family adversity (e.g., divorce, mental illness) occurring in the household because these factors are likely to co-occur with other forms of abuse that involve children (e.g., physical abuse). Without measuring these household factors, the consequences of childhood trauma may be wrongly attributed to single types of abuse rather than the cumulative impact of multiple exposures to adversity.

The nature of family adversity. Similar to childhood maltreatment, participants reported various degrees of severity across the family adversity dimension. In particular, substantial variation existed among caregiver mental illness (N = 43), which involved any caregiver having been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder such as depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, or schizophrenia (e.g., *“My father was diagnosed with the same thing as me, psychosis and schizophrenia.”* – Kacey, Interview 53, 9/4/2015). More severe forms of caregiver mental illness involved instances where a family member attempted suicide (e.g., *I remember my mom had my dad’s rifle and was going to shoot herself. I walked into the bedroom and my mom was like, “you see what he is going to make me do.”* – Alton, Interview 4, 10/23/2015) or when it negatively affected the caregiver’s ability to care for the participant (e.g., *My mom was basically out of the picture I mean she spiraled into depression when my dad left, like big time, like could not get out of bed.* – Kevin, Interview 51, 7/7/2014). It is important to note that rates of caregiver mental illness may be artificially low because the ACE questionnaire requires a “diagnosed” mental illness for it to count as an exposure. While some of the participants

discussed their caregiver displaying psychiatric disorders (e.g., manic or depressive symptoms, hallucinations), these incidences were not counted as an exposure because the caregiver was never officially diagnosed (e.g., *“She’s never been diagnosed so I can’t say for sure, but I know she’s bipolar and suffers from depression.”* – Jason, Interview 43, 12/20/2015). Even with this high threshold for determining caregiver mental illness, a substantial portion (47 percent) of the sample reported being raised by caregivers diagnosed with mental illness.

In addition to the wide variation in severity, one of the most prevalent findings to emerge regarding family adversity was the highly interrelated nature among these categories. Rather than occurring in isolation, these harsh domestic conditions were often discussed as overlapping with one another. For example, caregiver substance abuse (N = 60) often co-occurred with witnessing domestic abuse (N = 43). Caregiver substance abuse involved experiences in which a member of the participant’s household drank or used drugs so often that it caused interpersonal and legal problems (e.g., getting arrested, fired from work). For example,

Both my parents were alcoholics. When tempers get flared, **they would hit each other** and whatnot, things like that. – Alex, Interview 1, 7/21/2015

My father committed suicide when I was three months old, so I had various levels of stepdads that would roam in and out of the picture... She [mom] started dating biker-types and **they were very volatile to each other... just drug-fueled relationship** that didn’t produce a whole lot of positive memories for me. – Joel, Interview 38, 10/5/2015

Joel’s account underscores a central aspect of this project in that the cumulative impact of multiple traumatic experiences (i.e., father’s suicide, caregiver substance abuse, witnessing domestic abuse) can produce a considerable amount of psychological distress for participants at such a young age. Based on prior research, witnessing domestic

violence is associated with heightened levels of adverse behavioral and emotional problems in children, including internalizing problems such as withdrawal, anxiety, and depression, (Carter, Weithorn, and Behrman, 1999; Hughes, 1988; Osofsky, 1995; Socolar, 2000) and externalizing problems such as conduct disorders, aggression, and delinquency (Boney-McCoy and Finkelhor, 1995; Malinosky-Rummell and Hansen, 1993). Given their developmental needs, young children may be especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of domestic violence because they have not developed the capacity to understand and cope with trauma in the same way as older children (Osofsky, 1999). Participants also discussed how their caregiver's substance abuse issues contributed to marital separation and divorce (N = 62). For instance,

I think that **the predominance of their problems [his parents] and separation probably stemmed from my mom, she was really into drugs and partying.** She was never into drinking. She was into smoking pot or doing cocaine or whatever the drug of the day was. – Alton, Interview 4, 10/23/2015

Mom and dad **divorced when I was 13 because he was an alcoholic.** He had a good relationship with wild turkey, cigarettes, and coffee and **his behavior towards other people was unpredictable.** You never knew, you know, one day cool and collected the next day yelling and screaming at my mother. **I was never quite sure what was going through his mind.** – Sheldon, Interview 73, 8/29/2016

Each of these narratives frames the unpredictable and erratic domestic conditions many of the participants endured. The mood swings, inconsistency, and unpredictability exhibited by their alcoholic caregivers generated a considerable amount of confusion and contributed toward an unstable home environment. Moreover, these narratives illustrate how multiple factors (i.e., substance abuse, mental illness, parental divorce/separation) can produce a high level of emotional distress for participants during a formative developmental period.

Family adversity also co-occurred with other forms of childhood maltreatment (e.g., physical abuse, sexual abuse) previously discussed. As a result of their struggles with substance abuse or mental illness, caregivers often displaced and projected their issues on participants in a physically and emotionally harmful manner. In many situations, caregiver substance abuse was found to overlap with physical and emotional abuse. For example,

She drank a lot. She was awesome as a drunk, like she wasn't a mean drunk. She was actually a lot of fun to be around. **But when she would start coming down, it was hell.** I mean I would just be sitting on my bedroom floor doing my homework and **she would just come in and start just wailing [hitting] on me.** – Brittany, Interview 9, 9/17/2015

When my biological father was alive, things were very turbulent. **He was a drinker and by today's standards, I would say he was abusive...** like he would try to teach me how to spell really big words, you know and if I didn't get it on the second or third shot, he **would start belittling me. He would demean me,** you know, like, "Why aren't you smart enough to get this? **You're a stupid fuck,**" you know, just as an example. – Denis, Interview 23, 7/27/2014

Whether the abuse was physical or emotional, caregiver substance abuse decreased their parents' patience and ability to appropriately provide basic physical, psychological, and emotional care individuals required. Similar to other participants, these narratives illustrate the tenuous and unpredictable environments many of these individuals grew up in as children. These kinds of experiences served to weaken familial bonds and generate feelings of anxiety, fear, and anger. Moreover, participants who were emotionally abused discussed feeling inadequate when comparing themselves to others and felt little self-worth and self-esteem. Consequently, these individuals avoided social interactions and had trouble in establishing healthy relationships.

Emotional neglect or abandonment also overlapped with marital turbulence. Based on prior research, the consequences of divorce can negatively impact young

children's psychological adjustment, behavior, social ability, self-esteem, and academic achievement (Amato, 2001; Bing et al., 2009). For instance, several participants became involved in their parents' divorce or separation and discussed the delicate nature of these interactions and the psychological distress produced by these experiences.

They first had joint custody, so I was bouncing back and forth between the two of them... Whenever they'd get together, **it would just evolve into screaming**, but I also was kind of scared to be around my dad because any mention of my mom or stepfather and his **anger would turn toward me, as if I had betrayed him**. – Zander, Interview 91, 12/21/2015

In the aftermath of his parents' divorce, Zander was often forced to be the messenger between his mother and father regarding custody arrangements, child support, and day-to-day scheduling. Acting as the unofficial mediator exposed Zander to disparaging comments and his parent's anger toward one another. Because Zander identifies as being a product of his parents' union, these criticisms eroded his self-esteem and identity. Based on prior research, children who experience alienation strategies (e.g., degrading comments, custody issues) are likely to internalize the insults and believe they are not loved or that the divorce is their fault (Baker and Ben-Ami, 2011; Clarke-Stewart et al., 2000; Wallerstein, 1991). Moreover, these arguments conveyed the message that Zander's long-term well-being was secondary to his parents' pride. As a result, the failure of Zander's parents to address his needs created tension, anxiety, and anger.

Finally, caregiver loss (e.g., death, divorce) was also found to produce feelings of neglect and abandonment. For example, Donald discusses some of the issues that emerged after his father passed away when he was ten years old.

Yeah, actually I would say there was **definitely abandonment issues. It's not that he abandoned us, but those issues were the same**, you know. I've talked to people that have abandonment issues and their issues are right on par with what I felt. I felt abandoned. – Donald, Interview 24, 5/31/2014

As a result of experiencing chronic loss and not receiving the necessary psychological or physical protection, Donald internalized fear and viewed this departure as abandonment. Although his father's absence was the result of dying, Donald described similar emotional distress as participants who were exposed to emotional neglect. For most participants who lost a caregiver, the event was reported as a stressful event that pervaded most aspects of the participant's life. In this way, the death of a caregiver should not be viewed as a single stressful event, but as a series of events that continue after the death (Berlinsky and Biller, 1982). When children are without the psychological or physical protection they need, it is natural for these experiences to influence the way they manage and respond to future relationships.

Throughout this section, I highlighted the extent and nature of childhood maltreatment and family adversity that preceded extremist involvement. As illustrated, the current sample's experiences with childhood trauma are a closer approximation to a "high risk" sample than a non-offending adult sample. Moreover, childhood maltreatment and family adversity occurred in various degrees of intensity ranging from inappropriate sexual behavior (e.g., "dirty" jokes; showing pornographic material) to the more extreme forms of physical abuse that resided outside the spectrum of "normal" abuse. Regardless of the severity, a universal characteristic of childhood maltreatment and family adversity was the lack of emotional and social support¹² from caregivers, especially parents. Based

¹² While there are several different types of social support (see for review Vaux, 1988; also see House, 1981), the two most applicable forms as they relate to trauma include: expressive or instrumental social support. *Expressive social support* involves sharing and venting pent up emotions and affirming one's self-worth and dignity; whereas, *instrumental social support* involves the giving of advice and guidance for positive social advancement in legitimate society as well as material and financial assistance (Colvin, Cullen, and Vander Ven, 2002).

on prior research, the lack of social support following a traumatic event can increase the likelihood adolescent youths will display delinquent behavioral problems, higher levels of emotional distress, and increased mental health problems (Greenberg, 1999; Resnick et al., 1997). Without these social support networks, participants felt unable to process, vent, and reaffirm their sense of self appropriately. Due to the lack of social support and concern from their caregivers, participants were often left to process and internalize these experiences alone. In the following section, I extend these analyses by examining the psychological and emotional consequences of childhood trauma.

Psychological and Emotional Consequences of Childhood Trauma

Within criminology, emotions are not central to most theoretical perspectives (for an exception see Braithwaite, 1989; Giordano et al., 2007). A noteworthy exception involves Agnew's (1992) research on the role of anger in which he argues that while several different sources may produce a condition of strain, delinquent involvement is more likely when negative life circumstances have elicited an angry, emotional reaction. Terrorism scholars have also identified an association between different types of emotions (e.g., anger, shame, anxiety, pride) and extremist participation (see for review Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta, 2001). Most of this research; however, focuses on collective trauma such as grievances associated with opposing political sectors (Gunaratna, 2002; O'Neill, 2002; Hassan, 2001; Rajae, 2002), unjust policies (Hoffman, 2006; Stern, 2003), or wartime-related trauma (Barenbaum, Ruchkin, and Schwab-Stone, 2004; Machel, 1996; Sagi-Schwartz, 2008). For instance, van Zomeren and colleagues (2004) show that anger, resulting from the perception of injustice and discrimination, has a direct bearing on extremist participation. In this context, emotions are the response to

collective trauma and extremist participation is seen as a way to rectify unjust conditions (Agnew, 2006).

While the focus on collective trauma is certainly helpful in bringing emotions into the foreground of terrorism research, additional environmental stressors with the potential to generate negative emotionality remain unexplored. In particular, prior research highlights numerous emotional consequences associated with individual trauma (e.g., sexual abuse, parental loss, emotional neglect) including the increased risk of posttraumatic stress disorder, major depression, anxiety disorders, guilt, shame, aggression, and suicidal ideation (Holmes and Slap, 1998; Horwitz et al., 2001), all of which have been associated with extremist participation (Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016). In order to move beyond the focus of collective trauma, I investigate individual trauma and highlight the way that negative emotionality functions as an intervening mechanism between childhood adversity and extremist participation. To help frame and organize the different types of emotional consequences, I differentiate between negative emotions that are “self-directed” and negative emotions that are “outgroup-directed” (Mackie, Devos, and Smith, 2000).¹³ Distinguishing these two types of emotions enables a more precise examination of the consequences that develop out of abusive histories and the toll that trauma can have on a person’s emotional state.

Self-directed emotions. For the purposes of the current study, self-directed emotions encompass attention directed toward the self (i.e., “inside the head or body”).

¹³ The same categorization can also involve positive emotions that are self-directed (e.g., feeling satisfied, joy, or confidence) and positive emotions that are outgroup-directed (e.g., hope, honor, or pride; e.g., Smith and Lazarus, 1993; Smith, Seger, and Mackie, 2007). How positive emotions function as an intervening mechanism for extremist participation deserves more attention, but such an investigation is beyond the scope of the current chapter.

Self-directed emotions involved different expressions of (1) withdrawal, (2) dissociation, and (3) self-blame and guilt.

Withdrawal. Withdrawal involves avoiding people and activities that would usually produce joy (Rubin, LeMare and Lollis, 1990). For some people, withdrawal can progress to the point of social isolation, where they avoid contact with family and close friends in order to be alone. Since social life may carry reminders connected to the painful event (e.g., uncomfortable questions from friends, images in literature, scenes on television), withdrawing allows individuals to avoid normal activities that may elicit painful emotions or stressful thoughts. As a result of childhood trauma, several participants discussed emotionally withdrawing and disconnecting from those around them to manage their emotional distress. In doing so, these participants effectively shut themselves off from the rest of the world and became increasingly isolated. For example, Brittany discusses the advantage of emotionally withdrawing to avoid feeling the pain of her physical abuse.

There was no one to turn to so I just got numb and I was okay with that. **I just wanted to be numb.** I didn't care about anything else in the world. **I just didn't want to feel the pains of everything** I had been through. I don't know how to let shit go. **So just making it numb, just to be comfortable was okay.** – Brittany, Interview 9, 9/17/2015

Without support from caregivers, Brittany decided that the most effective way of managing her emotional distress would be to shut down emotionally. An unintended consequence of this behavior; however, was the inability to “care about anything else in the world.” This type of detachment is consistent with prior research which suggests that when an abused person’s “inner schemata” of self in relation to the world is damaged, negative emotional health consequences are likely to emerge (Horwitz, 1986). In addition

to avoiding painful reminders of their abuse, participants socially withdrew from interpersonal relations, including their caregivers. For example,

My mom would leave me with her friend's 18-year-old son. He did not rape me, but he was forcing me to give him oral sex... When my mom came home, **I told her... I don't think they ever talked about it. It was kind of like it did not happen.** So, yeah, I have always been really traumatized and that was like a **turning point for me...** I remember after that, everything was a lot different, you know, **I was definitely never a kid again after that like mentally because I wasn't getting love from my family. I have always been really reserved since that.** – Alice, Interview 6, 10/30/2015

Because childhood trauma occurs in the context of an interpersonal relationship, where a degree of dependence and trust has developed, these experiences have the potential of weakening social bonds. Although Alice's sexual abuse stopped, such erratic social support from her mother conveyed the message that she could not be depended upon for assistance or emotional support. For Alice, the abuse and the inaction from her mother represented a betrayal, which resulted in a breakdown of trust and security. According to Herman (1992), feeling connected with caring people is the foundation of personality development, and when this connection is shattered, the abused person loses their basic sense of self. Because Alice's mother did not provide expressive social support in which she could share her emotional distress, Alice began to shut down and internalize her sense of self. This experience functioned as a pivotal moment in which Alice was stripped of her previous identity and childhood innocence. In doing so, Alice took the first step in moving beyond her abused self into a new identity that was independent of her family.

While some participants experienced relief by socially withdrawing, other participants felt trapped and uncomfortable by this disconnection. In these situations, social withdrawal was found to generate specific self-in-relation difficulties, such as

problems fitting in and feeling confrontable in new environments. The lack of consistent human contact was found to affect systems of attachment negatively and compromised the development of trusting relationships in the future. In the following example, Charlie discusses feeling emotionally disconnected and participating in violent action as a way to trigger a jolt.

What happened to me as a kid really **cut me off from who I am**. You have this oscillating moment of normality which is boring and gives the appearance of everybody else in their day-to-day life. There was nothing. I mean once you're raped, the boundaries of life change and **what is normality for people is absolutely like death** because you're uncomfortable and **not engaged with that part of yourself...** you're so disconnected but when you go and **do things that are dangerous or that cause adrenaline or cause that fear, you're alert, you're heightened, the senses are kicked in...** In my experience, being violent and hurtful towards others, it jolted me. That trigger was necessary. – Charlie, Interview 18, 1/17/2015

As a result of his sexual abuse, Charlie felt disconnected and detached from society. Similar to other participants, Charlie discusses how childhood adversity cut him off from his previous self and changed the boundaries of life. For Charlie, this disconnection did not provide emotional relief but rather generated a sense of boredom in day-to-day life. In order to break this monotonous cycle, Charlie turned to violent behavior. Based on prior research, participation in dangerous activities is associated with the release of reward-motivated hormones such as norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin (Boles and Mikoto, 2003). As Charlie explains, being violent and hurtful toward others produced an enjoyable physiological reaction that made him feel a sense of alertness and generated a desire for excitement and adventure (Brænder, 2016; Windisch, Simi, Blee, and DeMichele, 2018). This, in turn, motivated Charlie to pursue environments outside of the home that provided opportunities for violence and aggression, including involvement in organized hate groups that celebrate violence and hypermasculinity.

Dissociation. Another type of self-directed emotion included dissociation, which involves mentally disconnecting from one's thoughts, feelings, memories, or sense of identity (Atchison and McFarlane, 1994). Dissociation strategies involve cognitive efforts aimed at reducing or temporarily eliminating the intensity of emotional distress generated by adversity (Menninger, 1963; Vaillant, 1977). Researchers have suggested that dissociation is an adaptive method of coping because it buffers and protects the individual from the overwhelming emotional consequences of the trauma (Merrill et al., 2001). Unlike social withdrawal, dissociation is often displayed on a continuum, with the most extreme forms occurring below conscious awareness. For these individuals, the abusive experience is repressed and blocked from their memory, which may be dormant for weeks, months, or years until something triggers it to the surface of the individual's conscious (e.g., *"It turned out my grandpa molested me at one point... Just kind of burst on to my brain one day. Like literally it was like a brand-new memory and it was real and there was nothing I could do to get it to not be real."* – Joel, Interview 38, 10/5/2015). Prior research indicates that dissociation is a common coping technique found among children exposed to chronic stressors such as sexual abuse and community violence (Bal et al., 2003; Trickett and Putnam, 1993; Sigmon et al., 1997). Dissociation can have important protective functions for individuals by providing an escape from reality and serving as an analgesic for pain (Ludwig, 1983, p. 95). While dissociation may provide short-term relief for severe emotional distress, in the long-term it has been associated with decreased psychological functioning and adjustment (Myers et al., 2002). In fact, several participants discussed the long-term consequences of repressing and disconnecting from their past traumatic memories. For example, Chase discusses the

conditions surrounding his childhood sexual abuse and how repressing these traumatic memories predisposed him toward organized hate as a way to further avoid dealing with these traumatic memories.

I suffered some pretty heavy abuse as a kid, got molested by a babysitter... I do not know if my dad ever found out, he was high a lot. It was pretty chaotic. **They both were doing their own thing going through the divorce...** Looking back on it now, I think that is a **point where my feelings for the rest of the world changed...** childhood kind of ended at that point. I was alienated from the world... I do not remember how I felt at the time. A lot of shame and guilt, **like it was my fault or something. There was a sense of dissociation. I mean any thought I had of that time was buried because I did not want to deal with it.** Dealing with it would have required examining my life. **I know that suppressing that and not dealing with it was instrumental in shutting down my emotions enough for me to transition into it all.** – Chase, Interview 20, 11/1/2013

Chase's account illustrates the highly interrelated nature among childhood maltreatment. Specifically, in addition to being sexually abused, Chase experienced caregiver loss (i.e., divorce), caregiver substance abuse, and emotional neglect. While Chase attempts to excuse his caregivers' neglect by offering numerous distractions that occurred at the time of the abuse, the fact remains that he was left to process this traumatic experience alone. The severity of Chase's sexual abuse weakened his interpersonal relations and a basic sense of self in which his feelings for the world "changed" and childhood "ended." Rather than be angry for what happened, Chase felt guilty as if he were responsible for his sexual abuse. The memories of the sexual abuse were so overwhelming for Chase that he relied on dissociation strategies to avoid dealing with these negative emotions. For Chase, an unintended consequence of suppressing these traumatic memories and shutting down his emotions was the ability to "transition into it all," which refers to the white supremacist movement. In this sense, shutting down his emotions neutralized any red flags or hesitation that may have caused him to question his extremist participation.

Self-blame and guilt. The third type of self-directed emotion involved self-blame and guilt. Self-blame refers to the cognitive process in which a child attributes responsibility to oneself; whereas, guilt is an emotional reaction or feeling that occurs when a person believes or realizes—accurately or not—that they bear significant responsibility for that violation (Janoff-Bulman, 1979). The goal of self-blaming is to regain behavioral control and view external events (including maltreatment) within the realm of the individual’s power (Herman, 1992; Westen, 1993). In this context, blaming oneself can lead to a decrease in the belief of random chance or predetermination (O’Neil and Kerig, 2000; Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck, 2009). According to Skinner (1992), every individual has an inherent need to feel capable of producing desired events and avoiding the undesired. By rationalizing that they brought the abuse upon themselves, participants may begin to feel that they possessed the power to alter the abuse by changing their behavior. For example, Abby describes feeling responsible for not getting along with her father and how she attempted to modify her behavior as a result.

He never talked to me like I was a human being. He treated my sister and I differently. It was always very obvious that we were girls. When my brother was born, my dad was over the moon... I constantly had, “Well, my own dad doesn’t give a shit.” From a young age, **I started feeling, “Well, something is wrong with me. It wasn’t that something was wrong with him; the fault had to lie with me.”** ... By that point, I had gotten to a place where when things like that happened, it was just like parts of me were just dying. It very much put me in a place where **I felt like I had to be harder and not let emotions show because then I was open to being hurt.** – Abby, Interview 5, 8/1/2013

In addition to her father’s belittlement and lecturing, Abby began to feel that her father did not display the same admiration and esteem toward her as he did toward her brother. Such blatant differential treatment generated an identity crisis for Abby in which she attributed the blame to her behavior rather than her father’s. Living in a domestic

environment characterized by conflict, disorganization, inflexibility, and violence, Abby was unable to conceptualize that her father's actions might be influenced by factors other than her behavior such as substance abuse or marital distress. The only acceptable alternative for Abby was to believe that she provoked his impatience and that by becoming "harder" she would not only be closed off to her father's hurt but may also be able to earn his love and care that had been so desperately lacking. While self-blame may temporarily enhance perceived control, it has been linked to increased trauma-related distress including greater posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms (DePrince, Chu, and Pineda, 2011), and poorer recovery from victimization (Najdowski and Ullman, 2009). Moreover, self-blame poses a serious risk to the well-being of abuse victims as it unjustly absolves perpetrators of responsibility for the abuse they committed. Self-blame is especially harmful when it dismisses the behavior of a trusted person (e.g., parent) as it has been found to hinder a child's social and emotional functioning (Filipas and Ullman, 2006; Freyd et al., 2005).

While self-blame helped some participants feel more in control, others were burdened by this emotional baggage. In these situations, participants were unable to feel any semblance of control, which sparked a downward spiral toward other negative outcomes such as helplessness, depression, worthlessness, shame, and guilt (Ligezinska et al., 1996; McMillen and Zuravin, 1997; Mennen, 1993). In the following example, Kevin discusses feeling responsible for his father's emotional neglect and abandonment and seeking an "escape from reality" through the use of drugs and later white supremacy.

The insecurities started from my dad not being a part of my life because you don't know why your dad doesn't come to see you... **you start to own that as a kid. You think it's your fault. You take that on yourself...** I'm sure that played a part in the insecurity and not feeling like I belong anywhere, and **drugs became a**

coping mechanism and they were always **my escape from reality** because I didn't want to look at myself, right? It's all escape from taking a good hard look at yourself. **When the skinheads came up it became another escape from those feelings.** – Kevin, Interview 51, 7/7/2014

Kevin's account illustrates many of the components previously discussed including a lack of social support and how childhood maltreatment can diminish emotional output. While Kevin accepts that his father struggled with substance abuse issues, he wrongly attributed and internalized this absence as his fault. Unlike Abby, Kevin did not intentionally reconfigure these events to re-establish control and alter his behavior. Rather, this guilt loomed over Kevin and eroded his self-esteem to the point that he did not feel like he belonged. Unable to manage his emotional distress and cope in prosocial ways, Kevin turned to drugs to avoid dealing with these unpleasant thoughts. This finding is consistent with prior victimization research that found adolescents often rely on maladaptive coping strategies (e.g., substance use) to temporarily diminish the intensity of their emotional distress (Simantov, Schoen, and Klein, 2000; Wright et al., 2013). Kevin continued to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol until he encountered white supremacy, which became "another escape from those feelings" and a potential alleviation for his emotional distress. Similar to using drugs, the white supremacist movement functioned as a mechanism of adjustment that allowed Kevin to manage these unwanted feelings.

Outgroup-directed emotions. In addition to self-directed emotions, participants also experienced "outgroup" directed emotions, which involve attention directed externally (i.e., "outside of the head") to stimuli present in the external world (Chun et al., 2011). Outgroup-directed emotions involved different expressions of (1) anxiety; (2) questioning the nature of humanity, and (3) anger and hatred.

Anxiety. The first type of outgroup-directed emotion involved reoccurring feelings of anxiety and tension surrounding their caregiver's erratic behavior. Anxiety generally features excessive fear regarding perceived or real threats or anticipation of future threats (Garner and Shonkoff, 2012). Bowlby (1969) posited that children develop an internalized view of the social world from experiences in their early relationships with caregivers. When children are abused; however, they develop insecure attachments and perceive the social world as an unpredictable place and internalize a more hostile view of their environment. In these situations, participants frequently felt panicked, fearful, and apprehensive around their caregivers because they worried the slightest behavior could spark a verbally abusive tantrum or physically violent assault. For example, Karl describes a casual accident that generated an extremely hostile reaction.

My mom was bat-shit crazy like I dropped a box of rubber bands once. As soon as it dropped, she was like, "Aaaah," just really loud and freaked out. **It scared me. It made me feel on edge that I could set her off so bad by dropping something,** but she would just flip like that all the time... She would do that with everyday life things like, she complained about my cat jumping on the countertops and **took it while I was at school, and I am quite certain killed it. Yeah, she was unstable.** – Karl, Interview 50, 1/9/2016

Karl's account illustrates how mundane events can produce volatile reactions, like dropping rubber bands or household pets on the furniture. These events contribute to a tenuous and stressful domestic environment in which participants felt like they had to walk on eggshells to avoid offending or upsetting their caregivers. In another example, Callie discusses her parents' frequent arguments and the anxiety created by these unpredictable feuds. For instance,

My dad would get drunk and get into with my mom... I wouldn't know if it was going to be one of those days. **I had a clock in my head like,** "It's been two days so it's probably coming." ... **I had anxiety, I'd get overwhelmed. I'd feel in my guts that something's wrong because something was always wrong at my**

house. You didn't know what you were going to open your front door to. – Callie, Interview 17, 7/23/2014

As Callie explains, the combination of caregiver substance abuse and witnessing domestic abuse caused her to feel anxious and overwhelmed. The regularity of these stressful events produced a mental “clock” in which Callie anticipated her parents arguing. As she explains, such an unpredictable domestic environment made her anxious to go home because she often did not know what she was going to encounter when she arrived. Carrie’s account is in line with prior research, which found that witnessing domestic violence is associated with adverse emotional outcomes in children such as withdrawal, anxiety, and depression (Boney-McCoy and Finkelhor, 1995; Malinosky-Rummell and Hansen, 1993). For both Karl and Callie, their caregiver’s erratic behavior was generated and, further exacerbated, by the combination of multiple factors including mental illness, substance abuse, and marital unrest. At such a young age, participants had not yet developed the capacity to navigate these tenuous environments emotionally. Over time, these experiences hindered the development and maintenance of trusting relationships (Brown and Finkelhor, 1986; Polusny and Follette, 1995).

Some participants became so overwhelmed by their caregivers’ erratic behavior that avoiding interactions with them was the most effective way of managing their emotional distress. For example, Anders was one of the few participants in the sample who lacked basic physical needs like food and clothing. Both his caregivers struggled with substance abuse and most of their money went to buy drugs. In addition to physical neglect, his caregivers were physically abusive during their withdrawals. As Anders discusses, the extreme physical abuse and neglect generated a high level of anxiety that motivated him to run away.

We did not have any food in the house. I only had like two outfits... I remember being left in the corner for two or three hours because they forgot about me. I was supposed to look straight. If you did not look straight you were going to get hurt again... **I remember it frequently being scared. I was petrified. I had a lot of anxiety...** Like I noticed that I couldn't even have somebody hold my hand. If someone would try and hold down my hand, I'd freak out, my anxiety would go way up... **I started running away.** I would just like go... One time I went to a house that was condemned. I broke in and stayed there for a little while, stole some pop... A few times I remember sleeping underneath a bridge. I also remember sleeping on roofs... **After a while of doing that, I actually ended up going up and staying with my sister Kelsey and her boyfriend Devin, who was a neo-Nazi.** That is when I started to get exposed to that stuff. – Anders, Interview 2, 11/2/2015

Anders' account underscores the central argument of this study by illustrating how negative emotionality functions as an intervening factor between childhood adversity and extremist participation. The combination of his parents' substance abuse issues, physical abuse, and physical neglect generated a high level of fear, anxiety, and tension. In the absence of social support, Anders concluded that his best option would be to run away. While leaving home was arguably a pragmatic decision, living on the street exposed Anders to additional risk factors such as drug and alcohol abuse, academic failure, and, eventually, white supremacy. Anders' account highlights the way extremists have been influenced by a variety of internal (i.e., anxiety, fear) and external factors (e.g., neglect) before embracing a political ideology.

Questioning the nature of humanity. The second type of outgroup-direct emotion involved questioning the nature of humanity. In the aftermath of childhood abuse, participants became rather reflective and pondered the actions of their abusers. As participants struggled to make sense of their experiences, they engaged in an attribution process in which they scanned through all the possible explanations they could generate in order to come up with the one that they believed fit best. According to Glick and

colleagues (1974), it is human nature to want to engage in a search for meaning, to understand what its implications are for one's life. From this perspective, the need for an individual to take stock and come to terms with childhood abuse is not any different from a person who needs to come to terms with a death of a loved one. When these views are altered through traumatization, the importance of narratives comes into effect as the individual attempts to "reconfigure" a sense of order, meaningfulness, and coherent identity (Bulman and Wortman, 1977; Shanfield, 1980). Prior research suggests that finding meaning after a traumatic event may be important in regaining or maintaining mental and physical health (Antonovsky, 1979; Lifton, 1968). For some participants, this reflection period led them to question whether civility existed in which they concluded there is a gap between the ideal and real way in which people interact. Participants often describe an "unstable" and "evil" world in which they became suspicious to other people's intentions and questioned whether their behavior made them appear "naïve" and "vulnerable" to abuse. For example,

He was kissing the back of my neck and pushing his dick on my back. **It really started to affect my thinking like, "Am I too vulnerable? I am too nice? Do they know I'm not going to do anything and I'm not going to say anything?"** – Tucker, Interview 88, 9/20/2018

After the rape, **I thought, "people think it's okay to treat me like this. They think it's okay to rape me and take whatever they want."** – Abby, Interview 5, 8/1/2013

Throughout this reflection process, some participants distilled from these abusive experiences how they should conduct themselves toward people they will encounter in their everyday life. Depending upon the degree of introspection, some participants decided to take violent action against other people who threatened or provoked them. In their view, such action would prevent feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness and

protect them from humiliation and self-deprecation (Athens, 1990). For example, Doug describes a sequence of violent events that altered his view of those around him and his inclination toward violence.

In grade 6, I got in a fight and threatened to get suspended. The next morning, he [dad] took me to school, grabbed the principal by his neck, told him he was putting me back in class and boys will be boys. **Then he told me that if I ever fought again, I would get my ass kicked like a man and I was scared...** After school that day, one of the buddies of the guy I got in a fight with circled me with his older brother and we started fighting, so by the time I got home I had black eyes and the insides of my thighs were black and my mom was freaking out and **dad beat the shit out of me and called me a pussy** and all this stuff. So, at that point, **I was like, "I'm fighting everybody. All the time People are fucked. Don't take shit from no one and don't fucking tolerate shit from no one." I was on my own. I trusted no one.** – Doug, Interview 25, 7/23/2014

Doug's account illustrates Athens' (1990) concept of "belligerency" in which abused individuals begin to generalize aggressive parenting styles to other settings, such as school and peer-group interactions (p. 59). In particular, Doug's father employed the threat of violence (i.e., "*He told me that if I ever fought again, I would get my ass kicked like a man.*") to force Doug to comply with his command. By getting in another school fight, Doug's father interpreted this act as disobeying his orders and began to insult and beat Doug as a way to force him to submit to his authority. This lesson became a fundamental part of Doug's worldview and was generalized to other social settings. As a result, Doug decided to resort to violence in his future relations with people because he no longer trusted their intentions. Experiences with physical punishment provide a role model or script for physical violence (Gagnon and Simon, 1973; Huggins and Straus, 1975) and lay the groundwork for the legitimacy of aggression. Patterson (1982) terms these family interaction patterns as basic training for aggressive behavior. Patterson's research has shown that irritable, aggressive parenting tends to elicit aggressive responses

on the part of the child, which increases the probability of violent action. Therefore, when the individual is required to take corrective action and resolve a dilemma, violence (or fighting back) becomes a legitimate solution. Operating from a family background of power and aggression, these individuals are primed to carry this with them to the streets, increasing the probability of drifting toward deviant peer groups, including extremism.

Anger and hatred. The third type of outgroup-directed emotion involved anger and hatred in which participants tapped into their emotional distress to release pent up aggression. In Freud's (1893) view, a person will continue to be anguished by their negative emotionality until they feel and express it. By refusing to express anger, an individual is at risk of causing these destructive feelings to persist, where they could lead to further psychological distress (Breuer and Freud, 1895/1995). In the following examples, Bertha and Abby discuss outwardly expressing their anger the emotional release associated with being violent.

I didn't know if his death [father] caused that sense of loss. I mean, that's a big thing for a 9-year-old and it was hard... I wasn't a bad kid; I guess a little impulsive. **It wasn't until she [mother] told me that she was remarrying that I started acting out... I hated him.** He was physically abusive. I wanted to kill that guy back then. I hated him... Anything that pumped me up and made me feel more angry. **It's like being more angry made me feel better and it helped. It made me feel like I had a sense of being,** you know, and it [White supremacy] was an outlet for me to direct my hate. – Bertha, Interview 16, 7/20/2015

For Bertha, her mother's decision to remarry a person she disliked and who presented a physical threat, generated feelings of anger, hatred, and a sense of betrayal. Based on prior research, anger plays a key role in the explanation of extremist participation because it provides an alleviation to ones' grievances (Forst, 2009; Moghadam, 2006a, 2006b; Newman, 2006; Stern, 2003; Victoroff, 2005). According to Agnew (2006, 2010), negative emotions create pressure for corrective action as these individuals feel bad and

want to do something about it. In another example, Abby discusses how anger helped her “click” with white power skinheads.

The first 20-some odd years of my life, I was pretty emotionally defective... I was raped at a young age... **I was doing drugs and became promiscuous, thinking that I would find some kind of affection or emotion in my life that was missing.** I would do things to make myself feel better... I used anger. When I was younger, violence became an answer for everything. **Violence was the solution. It was in the anger that I didn't have to deal with other feelings...** That's why I clicked with skinheads... I can be mad and violent, I can beat people up, I can scream at people, call them names. Nobody is going to say, “you're too angry and violent to hang out with us.” - Abby, Interview 5, 8/1/2013

Similar to Bertha, Abby embraced anger to help alleviate the emotional strain associated with her abuse. Managing her emotions in such a way allowed Abby to connect with the white supremacist movement that often celebrates violence, anger, and aggression. As both of these accounts illustrate, externalizing one's anger through violence (and later white supremacy) can be thought of as a form of problem-solving behavior by providing an affirming outlet that could resolve her emotional problems through corrective action (Cohen, 1955). A recognition that white supremacy could be an “outlet” or “solution” indicates a shift in these participants' frames of reference and offers additional insight into how negative emotionality can mediate risk factors and predispose a person toward violent extremism. In this context, white supremacy began to provide social support, which would otherwise be provided by their caregivers.

Conclusion

To improve our understanding of the impact trauma has on extremist participation, the current chapter relied on in-depth life-histories interviews with former white supremacists to examine how childhood maltreatment generated a susceptibility toward extremist participation. In doing so, I argued that as a person experiences the

cascading effects (Granovetter, 1978) of trauma and stress, these individuals become increasingly internalized, separated, and detached from close social relationships around them. This, in turn, produces an “altered state of reference” (Cohen, 1955) in which fighting back, running away, and being violent toward others is seen as an effective way of managing their emotional distress. Because these coping strategies are often maladaptive, the likelihood of experiencing additional risk factors such as drugs and alcohol abuse and exposure to various types of criminally-oriented groups including violent extremism is increased. For these individuals, associating with like-minded individuals is seen as a “mechanism of adjustment” (Cohen, 1955, p. 54) capable of diminishing or eliminating the intensity of their emotional distress.

In addition to investigating childhood maltreatment, it is important to examine the types of family socialization occurring in the household because these factors are likely to co-occur with other forms of abuse (e.g., sexual, verbal, physical abuse). Without measuring these family socialization strategies, extremist participation may be solely attributed to trauma rather than the cumulative impact of multiple categories of coercion, socialization, and adversity. The following chapter presents the findings from my second research question which asked: What types of racist norms were established in the early lives of white supremacists and how did these practices reduce the psychological distance between everyday life and organized hate?

CHAPTER 5

The Apple Doesn't Fall Far from the Tree: How Racist Family Socialization Ideologically-Aligns Far-Right Participation

The previous chapter illustrates how childhood trauma can alter an individual's state of reference in which internalizing, separating, and detaching from close social relationships is seen as an effective way of managing emotional distress. Doing so increases one's susceptibility to the pull of various types of criminally oriented groups—including violent extremism—which offers a supportive context where individuals can escape from unwanted feelings, express emotional distress (e.g., anger), or reconfigure a sense of meaningfulness and coherent identity. While such an investigation helps understand the psychological antecedents of extremist participation, it does not account for why these individuals become involved with the far-right over other extremist groups (e.g., far-left, Salafi Jihadi-inspired extremism¹⁴) or different collective outlets like streets gangs, religious groups, or community organizations. To better understand how participants became ideologically-aligned with the far-right, I examine family socialization practices that convey racism and various other types of bigotry.

Socializing Racial Meaning

According to Blumer (1969), meaning, which is key to group life and behavior, is a social product. As humans interact with one another, we become socialized to certain meanings through the exchange of language, symbols, and behaviors. In doing so, we

¹⁴ To some Muslims, Salafism and jihad do not necessarily lead to violent extremism. For these individuals, Salafism is simply used to follow the path of the early Muslims. Indeed, many Salafis eschew politics and concentrate their efforts on personal religious experience. Similarly, to some Muslims, jihad is used to mean struggle, not necessarily holy war. In the current context, I use Salafi-Jihadist to describe those who justify their violence with reference to a literalist interpretation of Islamic ideas and the concept of jihad. The followers of this ideology usually isolate themselves from their social class and national origins and see jihad as holy war. I acknowledge that not all Muslims who consider themselves Salafi or even jihadists are necessarily prone to violence.

create a social self and a sense of attachment to social systems (see also Mead, 1934; Cooley, 1902). As part of constructing meaning about human group life and behavior, humans naturally establish *symbolic boundaries* that categorize objects, people, and social customs (Lamont and Fournier, 1992). In general, symbolic boundaries differentiate ingroup from outgroup members and generate feelings of similarity and group membership (Epstein, 1992, p. 232). Symbolic boundaries are an essential medium through which people express conflict, frame grievances, gain status, and control resources (Lamont, Pendergrass, and Pachucki, 2015). The establishment of symbolic boundaries has been found to cultivate superiority regarding employment, social class, and nationalism (Cohen, 2013; Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Philips, 1996).¹⁵

While meaning and symbolic boundaries are constructed through the interaction of genetic, environmental, and situational factors (Hatemi et al., 2009), social scientists have highlighted the role of relatives such as parents, siblings, and/or grandparents in the socialization process (Aboud and Amato, 2001; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). The focus on the family environment is natural because it is the social context in which children spend most of their time and establish primary relationships. Robbins and colleagues (2007) demonstrated that family socialization processes were influenced by aspects of family functioning such as conflicts, disciplinary practices, monitoring, and supervision.

¹⁵ Only when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they become social boundaries that represent identifiable patterns of social, class, and racial exclusion (e.g., Logan et al., 1996; Massey and Denton, 1993; Stinchcombe, 1995). For example, not showing people of color housing in affluent White neighborhoods is a symbolic boundary; whereas, policies in governments or municipalities that segregate churches, schools, and neighborhoods are social boundaries. From this perspective, symbolic boundaries can be thought of as a necessary but insufficient condition for the existence of social boundaries (Lamont, 1992).

It is through these interactions that children gain insight and learn to assume, resist, or negotiate the statuses associated with human group life. Due to the salience of parents in constructing both meaning and symbolic boundaries for children, family socialization practices will be the primary focus throughout this chapter.

While interactions with parents have been found to provide meaning for religious, social, sexual, and political attitudes (Allport, 1954; Bandura, 1977; Flacks, 1988; Napels, 1998), the current chapter focuses primarily on racial socialization. According to Hughes and colleagues (2006), racial socialization is “the mechanism through which parents transmit information, values, and perspectives about race to their children” (p. 747). Through racial socialization practices, parents foster racial consciousness and identity development, define interracial relationships and cultivate ethnic heritage and culture (Hagerman, 2014, 2016; Ogbu, 1982; Quintana and Vera, 1999; Thomas and Speight, 1999). Racial socialization influences how children understand their group’s social position and their membership within that group by providing an understanding of race and racial privilege (Bowman and Howard, 1985). As such, racial socialization often reflects parents’ experiences with racism, discrimination, and their ideological perspectives about race (Umana-Taylor and Fine, 2004). This is important because White parents who feel discriminated against or believe that multiculturalism threatens dominant White culture may impart their racist perspective to their children, which could lead them to interpret the social world with similar discriminatory views and/or behavior.

Historically, racial socialization has focused on how African-American parents prepare children for experiences of racial discrimination (Brega and Coleman, 1999; Peters, 2002; Thomas and Speight, 1999; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, and Allen, 1990;

for an exception see Hagerman, 2014, 2016). Over the past several decades, studies of racial socialization have broadened in scope to document socialization among Latinx (Phinney and Chavira, 1995), Asian-American (Tran and Lee, 2010), and biracial families (Rollins and Hunter, 2013). Although much is known about the content and mechanisms of racial socialization for children of color (Bowman and Howard, 1985; Brega and Coleman, 1999; Hughes and Chen, 1999; Hughes, 2002, 2003; Knight et al., 1993), less research has focused on the way in which White children form ideas about race and the role that familial relationships play in this process. Because Whites occupy dominant positions within social institutions and because racist ideologies justify the racial status quo (Bonilla-Silva, 2009), understanding how young Whites develop racial meaning is important in terms of countering racial inequity and white supremacy.

To provide more context as to how participants in this sample became ideologically-aligned with the far-right, the current chapter is organized into two sections: (1) measuring the extent of racial socialization and (2) elements of racial socialization.

Measuring the Extent of Racial Socialization

As illustrated in Table 6, only twelve (13 percent) participants can be described as having family members who were directly involved in a white supremacist organization (e.g., *“Ever since we can remember it’s had some involvement in our life... like our grandfather had a swastika cattle brand for his cows, and our mom was all into National Socialism.”* – Lisa, Interview 61, 1/29/2016). Prior to their initial contact with an organized hate group, these participants were exposed to a variety of extremist beliefs including government conspiracies (e.g., Zionist Occupation Government), different forms of historical revisionism (e.g., Holocaust denial), genocidal fantasies against racial,

religious, and sexual minorities, and the belief that Whites are biologically and culturally superior to non-Whites.

Table 6. Patterns of Family Socialization

Variables	Participants	%
Exposure to Far-Right Socialization	12	13%
Exposure to Racist Family Socialization	66	73%
Racist Discourse (e.g., “Nigger/Spic”)	57	86%
Condemnation of Interracial Contact	39	59%
Condemnation of Interracial Dating	26	39%
No Exposure to Racist Family Socialization	13	14%

Most participants (N = 66; 73 percent) were socialized during childhood and adolescence with ideas that were consistent with white supremacist ideology such as racism and/or anti-Semitism. For instance, participants discussed being exposed to racism (e.g., *“I remember when I was younger, I had a Black friend that I took to my grandparents’ house and they said, “Your nigger friend can’t come in the house.” – Kay, Interview 55, 1/10/2016*), homophobia (e.g., *“According to my mom, Mr. Rogers was a fag. That’s what she always said, and I wasn’t allowed to watch his show.” – Joel, Interview 38, 10/5/2015*), anti-Semitism (e.g., *“My Grandpa Wilson would tell us that Jews own the department stores and they’re shysters.” – Roger, Interview 69, 1/31/2016*) or xenophobia (e.g., *“My purse got stolen and my grandmother blamed the Mexicans, you know, “The DMV is letting all the illegals get licenses now. They are lazy foreigners and can’t be trusted.” – Stacy, Interview 79, 11/27/2014*). Participants also discussed proscriptive norms that governed interracial dating (e.g., *“My grandma told me when I was like 15, she goes, “I’m not racist but you better never bring home a Black girl.” – John, Interview 40, 9/17/2015*) or interracial friendships (e.g., *“As young as I could remember, I was never allowed to do sleepovers with the Black girls at their house.” –*

Rachel, Interview 68, 11/20/2015). While these racial beliefs are at the core of organized hatred, indoctrination from family members who are not active members of white supremacist groups highlights an important dimension unexplored in previous research.

It is important to note that thirteen (14 percent) participants did not discuss being exposed to family socialization practices that conveyed racism or overlapped with white supremacist beliefs. Since the focus of the current chapter is on racial socialization occurring inside the household, it is possible that these participants were exposed to racism in other environments (e.g., neighborhood, school, community). How these participants became ideologically-aligned with the far-right deserves more attention, but such an investigation is beyond the scope of the current chapter. In the following section, I outline how exposure to both racist family socialization and far-right socialization involved different combinations of message frequency, explicitness, and proximity. In doing so, I highlight the way that racist family socialization practices cultivated racial consciousness, identity development, and interracial relationships.

Elements of Racial Socialization

As I illustrate in the following sections, the weaving of racism and white supremacist beliefs into day-to-day interactions has the potential to reduce the psychological distance between everyday life and organized hate. This complex racial socialization process consisted of three overlapping elements: (1) message frequency, ranging from “intermittent” to “chronic,” refers to how often caregivers transmitted racial messages; (2) message explicitness, ranging from “subtle” to “overt,” refers to the transparency of the racial message; and (3) message proximity, ranging from “distal” to “proximal,” refers to the participants’ relational contact with the racial message. While

the specific composition of a racial message may vary (see Table 7), all race-related behaviors involved a mixture of these three elements. In the following sections, I present segments from the life-history narratives to illustrate this complex process. The narrative data are not meant as a formal test but rather to illustrate empirical and conceptual categories. Finally, these elements do not specify all the dynamics related to socialization. Thus, this taxonomy is necessarily incomplete; however, I do address several important dimensions underdeveloped in previous research, namely how young Whites develop racial meaning.

Table 7. Composition of Race-Related Communications¹⁶

Example Scenario	Racial Message Elements		
	Frequency	Explicitness	Proximity
<i>As a person of color walks by, you witness your mother tightly clutch her purse.</i>	Intermittent	Subtle	Distal
<i>Your parents tell you it is unacceptable to date a person of color.</i>	Intermittent	Overt	Proximal
<i>Your father constantly tells you to be careful around Jews because they are untrustworthy.</i>	Chronic	Overt	Proximal

Element one: Message frequency. The first element of racist socialization involves message frequency, which refers to how often caregivers transmitted racial messages to participants. While the frequency of racial socialization is likely to shift according to children’s cognitive abilities and their experiences throughout childhood (Hughes and Johnson, 2001; Umana-Taylor and Fine, 2004), participants were generally exposed to “intermittent” or “chronic” racial messaging. In the following sections, I provide life-history narratives to illustrate both of these message frequencies.

¹⁶ As there are 24 different combinations of racial messages that can be derived from these three elements, Table 7 is not intended to be an exhaustive list but rather provides a schema for understanding the different message composition.

Intermittent. Intermittent messaging involved fragmented and irregular exposure to race-related communications (Lesane-Brown et al., 2005). Such encounters often involved overhearing racist comments (e.g., the telling of a racist joke, derogatory name-calling, pejorative epithets) or witnessing nonverbal mannerisms (e.g., offensive gestures). This racial messaging served to debase minorities and positioned them as inferior to the White race. Although their caregivers' racist comments were sporadic, these experiences were rather impactful because it is through these interactions that participants had primary relationships. For instance, the following participants recalled hearing racist jokes from family members that exaggerated outgroup behaviors and portrayed racial violence as entertainment.

He [grandpa] was **never ranting** about it. I heard him use the term “dike” or something like that **a few times. Never anything that big... I heard my mom make one racist joke, but nothing too serious.** She told me, “What’s a Mexicans’ first words? Attention K-Mart Shoppers.” – Scott, Interview 72, 9/1/2013

My dad would **occasionally tell a nigger joke** like, “What’s purple, pink, blue, and orange and sits on my back porch? My nigger. I can paint it any color I want.” Or, “I have Black people in my family tree. They’ve been hanging there forever,” that kind of stuff... **I remember those comments were more jokingly but never guided or on any preaching level.** – Kay, Interview 55, 1/10/2016

Both accounts underscore the central characteristic of this dimension in that caregivers conveyed racist discourse in a sporadic and fragmented manner. In addition to the intermittent delivery, participants discuss the distal nature of their caregivers' comments in which they were “never guided” or “never ranting” about racial issues. In this way, such interactions were not intended to act as formal lessons but, rather, provided racist commentary. While participants minimized their caregivers' comments as “nothing too serious,” these overt jokes can be quite harmful as they portrayed Whites occupying a

dominant racial position relative to non-Whites (Freud, 1905/1960). The use of humor is an effective strategy for conveying racist beliefs because the joke teller can downplay the offensive nature of the racist comment by claiming it was only a joke (Lockyer and Pickering, 2001). While contemporary discourse scholars suggest that humor can have positive implications for social, cognitive, and emotional well-being (Tannen, 1992), more recent scholarship argues that overtly racist humor—especially that which contains violence—has the potential to normalize hatred and dehumanize outgroup members (Billig, 2001, 2009).

In addition to racial/ethnic humor, participants described intermittent encounters with pejorative labels used to differentiate, dehumanize, condemn, and/or separate Whites from non-Whites. These race-related communications included the use of racial epithets: referring to African-American as “niggers” or “coons;” Asian-Americans as “chinks,” “Japs,” or “zipperheads;” members of the Jewish community as “kangajews;” and LGBTQIA+ members as “fags.” For many participants, their initial formulation of racial meaning involved the observation of these “verbal microassaults” (Sue, 2010, p. 28) from family members such as parents, grandparents, or aunts and uncles. For example,

The racial environment that I grew up in was not something like, “Shh, don’t say that, the kids are in the car,” or whatever... Like there was never any self-censoring. I’m sure that I heard the word “nigger” growing up, but **I didn’t hear it a lot** and if I did, it was racial **jokes, racial slurs, you know, epithets** while driving or about news stories, but **that was not regular**. – Shayne, Interview 80, 6/28/2015

I remember having chapped lips and my grandfather was like, “oh you’ve been kissing niggers.” I **heard racist things from him here and there**, but **nothing organized**. – Drew, Interview 27, 7/6/2013

Both Shayne and Drew discuss how their caregivers' racial comments were spontaneously conveyed. While these comments were not intended to act as formal indoctrination of racist views, they nevertheless conveyed negative meaning about racial events that involved non-Whites. In particular, while Drew recalls his grandfather's racist remarks as seemingly "playful" in nature, these comments intended to assault non-Whites racial identity and convey meaning that non-Whites are incompatible with the dominant White race. Similar to caregivers who conveyed racist humor, these exchanges were carried out in the presence of people who afforded them social support and who were unlikely to label them as racist. This is an important aspect as it indicates that these caregivers were socially aware of their offensive comments and took measures to protect themselves from public disapproval.

The intermittent use of pejorative labels served to construct a "White racial frame," which reinforces the apparent normalcy of White privilege and structural advantage in the United States (Feagin, 2010, p. 3). White racial frames function as interpretative lenses to understand outgroup behaviors. These frames are especially harmful when they are used to stereotype outgroup members as violent and dangerous. For example, after the attacks on September 11, 2001, many Americans began to view all individuals from the Middle East as "terrorists" (Wingfield and Feagin, 2010). A consequence of this stereotypical framing is the interpretation that certain outgroup qualities and behaviors are incompatible with the definition of what it means to be White. White racial frames can be dangerous due to their biased and flawed interpretations of reality. For example, participants recalled instances in which non-Whites, especially African-Americans, were perceived as threats to White social order.

I remember as a kid pointing out some Black dude driving a Rolls Royce and my dad said, **kind of under his breath, “He’s probably a drug dealer or a pimp.”**
 – Manny, Interview 62, 7/21/2015

While his father’s comments were not intended to function as a formal lesson, stereotyping African-Americans as drug-dealers and pimps conveyed to Manny that non-Whites must commit crime to acquire wealth. Moving forward, Manny is likely to generalize this racial frame and criminalize the achievements of outgroup members. In the following example, Abby discusses a similar experience and how it influenced her views of the people around her.

One incident I recall we still lived in the house with the pond and across the canal from us, these people had built this enormous house, and my parents found out they were Colombian. And all I remember them saying is, **“they must be doing drugs and murdering people and part of a cartel. That’s how they can afford this.”** I don’t remember if there was any conversation surrounding it, nothing, **just little things like here and there** that I guess informed my knowledge of the people around me. – Abby, Interview 5, 8/1/2013

Similar to Manny, Abby’s parents sporadically conveyed the dominant White racial frame that non-Whites must be criminal in order to be successful. These examples are consistent with prior research that indicates that people adapt to their environment through cognitive categorization and stereotyping. Fiske (1998), in particular, argues that stereotyping effects how we account for a person’s success and failure. Based on these narratives, participants’ relatives often attributed non-White accomplishments to negative external factors (e.g., a cartel member, drug dealer, pimp), rather than positive internal characteristics like intelligence or work ethic. In doing so, these experiences conveyed that non-Whites do not possess the skills (e.g., intellect, discipline) to achieve the same resources as Whites and they must break the law to compensate for this internal “deficiency.” At the same time, these experiences communicated messages of fear toward

non-Whites and effectively framed them as both a potential threat (i.e., “murdering people) and occupying an inferior racial position. Although infrequent, these experiences informed participants’ racial consciousness and interracial dynamics.

Chronic. In addition to intermittent comments, message frequency involved chronic messaging, which represented more durable and immersive exposure to their caregivers’ race-related communication. Because the frequency of the racial message remains stable, chronic exposure becomes a normalized aspect of these participants’ childhood. Such experiences often involved regular discriminatory comments (e.g., exclusively referring to African-Americans as “negros” or “niggers”), limited interracial contact (e.g., living in all-White neighborhoods, attending all-White schools), or the integration of racial meaning into mundane activities (e.g., clothing, education, household décor). Similar to previous examples, participants were exposed to racist humor, pejorative labels, and negative stereotypes that fostered an understanding and awareness of race and racial privilege. The key difference within this dimension; however, is the elevated frequency of the racial message. For example,

My dad worked construction, **so it was common to hear**, “that fucking wetback” or call the guy a “nigger.” – Zander, Interview 91, 12/21/2015

My grandpa was probably one of the most racist people I knew. **He was always talking, “Black this, nigger that.”** – Luke, Interview 58

Over time, these exchanges became so pervasive in conversations that participants began to see them as common and acceptable forms of dialog. For example,

I heard “nigger, and fucking Mexicans” all the time at home. It’s weird because hearing the word nigger and stuff like that was **just like pretty common.** So, it wasn’t that far of a stretch for me to accept some of the things that I was introduced to later. – Seth, Interview 83, 2/27/2014

They [his parents] **typically referred to Blacks as “darkies,” or “rappies”** and viewed them as servants... In a small town, **it was like accepted** and fine because there are no Black people to have a say about it. That was kind of the outlook of my youth, like **racism was seen as okay**. – Byron, Interview 14, 10/14/2017

Each of these accounts underscores a major aspect of chronic messaging by illustrating how racist discourse becomes a normal aspect of these participants' lifestyle and daily exchanges. As a result of this regular discourse, non-Whites were considered second-class citizens and “servants” who deserved less respect and decency than Whites (Sue, 2010). Byron's example, in particular, conveys an overt form of racism in which his parents referred to African-Americans as “rappies.” In doing so, his caregivers framed African-American sexuality as a dangerous, powerful, and uncivilized force hazardous to White women and a serious threat to White men (Daniels, 1997). This messaging conveys the notion that African-Americans have little impulse control and, are, therefore, biologically less evolved than Whites. Although participants were not instructed to behave similarly, observing their caregivers' prejudicial behavior helped foster the development of a framework to interpret the social world with similar distrust and disrespect toward non-Whites. These interactions also desensitized participants to racial views they would later encounter as members of organized hate groups.

Another important aspect of chronic racial messaging is the unspoken association between Whiteness and normalcy. That is, caregivers mediated participants' worldviews by selectively filtering and staging it in accordance with their own location in the social structure (i.e., as White, middle-class, and heterosexual). Across the sample, participants grew up in predominately Whites areas and, for the most part, their caregivers were successful in generating mostly White interactions. For example, the following participants discuss a lack of racial diversity at school.

When I walked into my elementary school, **like it didn't register on my mind**, "Oh, there's **not a single minority here**." It wasn't part of my thinking process at that point and **I don't even think I noticed it**... Growing up I didn't really make the connection that it wasn't really that different... **I thought that's the way it's supposed to be**. – Stacy, Interview 79, 11/27/2014

The school I went to, I think there was, maybe, **one Black kid and everyone else was White**. I remember the first time I actually saw a Black person. I was, oh, fourth grade. We were all talking. We didn't know why their hair was the way it was because we'd **never been exposed to any minority groups**. We were all White people. It was just so foreign to us... Not knowing any Black people, **the only stuff I knew was the stuff that my parents were saying, which wasn't that positive**. – Adam, Interview 3, 9/16/2013

As Stacy and Adam discuss, associating with predominately White individuals became a normal aspect of their daily social interactions and racial world view. For many of these participants, their first experience with non-Whites did not occur until high school or college. Due to limited interracial contact, participants were often unfamiliar with other racial groups and discussed their lack of knowledge regarding outgroup members. As Adam explains, most of what he knew about non-Whites came from his parents' racist comments. In addition to their own primarily White associations, participants discussed their parents having mostly White friends. For example,

My mom and stepdad, **they mostly had White friends**. My dad was in the military and he worked with Blacks, but **I do not remember Black people from his work ever coming over to our house**. I think that was more my doing because **they didn't want them to be around me**. – Kara, Interview 56, 7/31/2015

Because their caregivers had control over where participants lived and whom they welcomed as houseguests, these individuals more or less acquiesced to the reality their caregivers constructed without fully appreciating alternative racial dynamics. The continuous lack of diversity in their neighborhoods or at home further aided in shaping

their worldview. In this way, participants not only absorb a White perspective of the world; they also absorb it with the specific racial climate constructed by their caregivers.

While attending a predominately White school and having mostly White friendships does not guarantee involvement in white supremacy, there is evidence to suggest many of the participants' caregivers *intentionally* limited interracial contact as a way to shape participants' racial world views. For example, the following participants discuss moving to White neighborhoods to avoid having non-White neighbors.

I was originally born in a White section of Gary called Black Oak. Then my mom told my dad that **it was getting too dark and we moved**. – Melissa, Interview 66, 7/21/2015

My parents moved us because **my mom didn't want to live around other ethnicities**. She didn't want to live next to the Middle Eastern people and so it wasn't overtly racist, but **those sort of ideas were put into my head**. – Bertha, Interview 16, 7/20/2015

As illustrated, participants' caregivers paid close attention to the racial composition around them (e.g., “*getting too dark*”) and, in some situations, made intentional efforts to filter their social environment. These examples illustrate a form of de facto segregation often referred to as “White flight” in which White families leave a residential area with growing minority populations and move into another predominantly White area. Choosing to not incorporate these diverse relationships into their social circles, caregivers stunted participants' emotional maturity and their ability to see non-Whites in personalized ways beyond stereotypical associations. Lacking alternative racial context, participants embraced those understandings because they made sense and came to see these ideas as consistent with their worldviews.

For a few participants, chronic messaging involved the cultivation of white supremacist ideology. In these cases, individuals were raised in households characterized

by active involvement in various white supremacist groups. Several participants recalled their homes being adorned with racist imagery and white supremacist propaganda. In these situations, participants' caregivers covered their walls with signs of the movement including white power music posters, Hitler portraits, or Nazi flags. For example,

I had a crib and a swastika flag on the wall above it... We had a Bible in the house, but it had **Adolf Hitler's name on the Bible...** We also had my great-uncles' Nazi uniforms on display, you know, they were our trophy room... I remember 6, 7 years old, we would play war games and **we'd always be the Nazis killing the Americans** or the French... We would put the uniforms on as kids, that's what we played dress up in. We wanted to be our great-uncles, you know. – Tyler, Interview 85, 6/25/2015

Tyler's account illustrates a kind of gamified socialization technique in which caregivers infused racial themes into rudimentary events. In Tyler's case, his caregivers substituted Nazis as the good guys and the Americans/French as the enemy. By retaining the structure of these games, caregivers are able to weave racial fantasies into mundane activities. Moreover, replacing the Bible with Adolf Hitler's name or swapping Nazi uniforms in place of conventional trophies served to reduce the psychological distance between everyday norms and extremist far-right customs. In addition to home décor, participants discussed their style of clothing as emulating and/or being white supremacist-themed. For instance,

Ever since we can remember though, **it [White supremacy] has kind of had some involvement in our life...** My mom always made our dresses homemade. **She dressed us like the Hitler Youth for a while.** It was more strict schoolgirl with a white collared blouse or long sleeved white shirt, black and white stockings, and boots. We also had the little khaki dresses with the collars. – Laura, Interview 57, 1/29/2016

By dressing Laura and her sister in traditionalist outfits (e.g., dresses, blouses, shirts, stockings), their mother reinforced an Aryan ideology prescribing that women are relegated to the subordinate, albeit vital, roles of motherhood and homemaker (Simi and

Futrell, 2015). These gendered lessons are intended to prepare Laura and her sister for their future roles in procreating and socializing their own White children toward white power culture. Later in the interview, Laura elaborated on her mother's attempts to construct an immersive white power environment.

We were homeschooled and she preferred to teach us out of vintage history books... it was kind of neutral and that's what she liked us learning about, like **she said less politically correct and straightforward**, you know, nothing like the texts today where they talk about how White man came and destroyed the Native Americans... **Like the Civil Rights movement or slavery in America**, little things like that that I guess maybe you would say history books are apologetic about now. **My mom explained how people have progressed past it and why but, not at length.** - Laura, Interview 57, 1/29/2016

As Laura explains, her mother attempted to normalize extremism by making white power culture central to their family life through homeschooling. Historically, white supremacists see public schools as a threat because it is believed to make White students ashamed of their racial heritage (Simi and Futrell, 2015). From this perspective, by homeschooling their children, white supremacists have direct control over the content their children learn and the way they view historical events. For instance, referring to the 1960s Civil Right movement or American slavery as "little things" underscores the biased and narrowly-focused education Laura received as a child. Moreover, by claiming that the United States has "progressed past" these historical events and addressed systemic inequalities and institutional racism highlights her mother's attempt to preserve the racial status quo and minimize discriminatory practices. Similar to other participants, the weaving of white supremacist beliefs into everyday life (i.e., clothing and education) normalized organized hatred.

Throughout this section, I discussed how the frequency in which participants were exposed to racist messaging varied. Many participants experienced intermittent racial

messaging that involved pejorative labels and negative stereotypes that severed as racist commentary about race-related events in the news or mundane encounters (e.g., driving in traffic). Participants also discussed chronic racial messaging, which involved continuous exposure to racist comments as well as living in all-White neighborhoods, attending all-White schools, or living in homes adorned with white supremacist propaganda. Across both message frequencies, caregivers shaped participants' social environment by making the dominant White perspective an influential aspect of their family life.

Element two: Message explicitness. The second element of racist socialization involved message explicitness, which ranges from “subtle” to “overt” and refers to the transparency of the racial message. While the specific content of the message is important, recent scholarship suggests that the delivery of the message (e.g., tone, volume, nonverbals) also conveys meaning (Mehrabian, 2017). In this way, it is not just what people say but also how people say it. In the following section, I provide life-history data that illustrates both subtle and overt examples of racial messaging that participants received from their caregivers during childhood.

Subtle. Throughout the life-history interviews, participants discussed being exposed to racial messages that were often delivered through discrete remarks, underlying behaviors, and slight mannerisms (e.g., snubs, dismissive looks, offensive gestures, hostile tones). Participants who experienced this understated form of socialization characterized their caregivers' behavior as “vague,” “covert,” or “subtle undercurrents.” While these race-related communications were not readily identifiable, they still have the potential to signify racial norms and hierarchies (Hylton, 2005). In

several situations, participants discussed their caregivers' subtle disapproval regarding their taste in music, movies or television shows and/or clothing style. For example, Tracy recalls an instance in which one of his family members commented on the types of clothing that were appropriate for Whites to wear.

It was an underpinning that didn't surface on very many occasions. I remember an incident probably Christmas and my pants were kind of hanging low and I remember one of my cousins saying something about not wearing baggy pants because we are White. It was very subtle like, "Well, we are White. Our pants fit." – Tracy, Interview 89, 9/27/2015

While subtle, this interaction served to distinguish the types of clothing that Whites purchase from non-Whites (Morris, 2005). From this perspective, Tracy's cousin believes a prerequisite for being a member of the White race it is to wear well-fitted clothing. According to Bourdieu (1977, 1984), social status in various social settings is strongly tied to certain cultural tastes, skills, preferences, and knowledge, which he terms "cultural capital." Clothing styles can function as very important and visible aspects of cultural capital that are often embedded with racial meanings (Morris, 2005). Styles of dress and ornamentation can serve to display social status and demarcate membership in certain groups (Simmel, 1895/1957; Veblen, 1899/1979). For instance, wearing name-brand clothing conveys a sense of wealth and status in that these individuals possess discretionary income that can be spent on luxury items and are knowledgeable about vogue styles and trends.

Participants also discussed subtle instances in which their caregivers' language transmitted norms regarding racial hierarchy. In these situations, caregivers conveyed the message that non-Whites held a position inferior to Whites. For instance,

There was not a whole lot of overt racism. It was more like an undercurrent more than anything. My grandparents could not talk about a Black person

without calling them that “Black boy,” just the kind of stuff that I am sure they thought nothing of it, but **they were making those distinctions.** – Chase, Interview 20, 11/1/2013

Both during and after slavery, Whites routinely described Black men as “boys” to suggest that African-Americans were mentally, physically, and spiritually inferior to Whites (Bosmajian, 1969). Although Chase’s mother did not use an overtly pejorative term such as “nigger,” referring to an African-American as a “Black boy” still conveys a sense of authority and dominance for Whites and subordination of non-Whites. As Chase explains, while his grandparents did not feel these comments were offensive, they still conveyed racial hierarchy.

In addition to subtle comments, participants also recalled nonverbal behaviors that reinforced stereotypes and communicated ingroup versus outgroup dynamics. Based on prior research, children learn to organize interpersonal relationships and internalize racial meaning through nonverbal communication (Sanders and Wiseman, 1990). For example, Jeremy describes an experience in which his relatives displayed “underlying behaviors” that reinforced the stereotype that African-Americans are dangerous.

They all had that underlying behavior. Like we went to the mall once and an African-American walked by and my grandma and my aunt **held on to their purses a little snigger** than they normally would. **They had that mentality.** – Jeremy, Interview 44, 11/9/2013

This encounter represents a type of “microinsult” characterized by nonverbal communications that conveyed fear and suspension, effectively demarcating the individual as a potential danger. Microinsults represent subtle snubs, frequently outside the conscious awareness of the actor, but they often convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient (Sue, 2010). As this example illustrates, communicating that African-Americans are a threat to Whites can involve subtle expressions. From this perspective,

Jeremy's relatives automatically assumed the individuals were criminals, or that they should fear them, solely based on their racial characteristics. As a result of this behavior, the dominant White culture is positioned as normal and all others as aberrant or pathological.

Overt. In addition to subtle messaging, participants described instances in which their caregivers conveyed overtly racist comments. Overt messaging represented extreme forms of racism such as conscious and deliberate acts intended to dehumanize and/or discriminate against racial minorities such as using blatant racial slurs (e.g., “fucking niggers” or “goddamn wetbacks”), condemning interracial dating and/or friendships, or cultivating racist ideologies (e.g., anti-Semitism). Overt messaging represents a high degree of racial bias toward outgroup members and were often more ingrained within the family structure. Similar to subtle messaging, overt messaging communicated “appropriate” social boundaries and racial hierarchy. For example, participants discussed their family members labeling and designating certain household and consumer items as “nigger—.” This pejorative labeling process signified these items (and those who used them) as occupying an inferior position relative to Whites. For instance,

She had a special cabinet where she kept her special dishes. **She called it her nigger cabinet, and her nigger dishes.** She would wash them off with a water hose when they were through, then she would bleach them. She would bring them in the house and boil them, and then she would wash them like she did our dishes. I asked her...why are you going to all this trouble of bleaching and boiling these dishes?” She made the comment that **those people are so nasty and dirty, that she didn't even want them eating after themselves.** – Ben, Interview 10, 8/9/2015

In addition to the explicit labeling and household practice used to quarantine African-American's dishes from White's dishes, Ben discusses a multistage process his grandmother performed to decontaminate her “nigger dishes.” The extreme and ritualistic

nature of her decontamination efforts signified to Ben that non-Whites are “dirty” and pose a potential risk to Whites (and themselves) if appropriate boundaries are not maintained. In another example, Blake discusses how certain items were labeled “nigger—” as a way to signify their displeasure.

They wouldn't drink Budweiser. They either drank Hamm's or Stroh's back then but never drink Budweiser because that's what Black people drank. **Called it “nigger beer.” If they didn't like it, it was “nigger” this or “nigger” that...** that's where I first got comfortable. – Blake, Interview 13, 7/27/2014

Although Blake's account lacks formal guidance, this experience provided meaning, and context for racial consciousness, identity development, and cross-race relationships. In particular, the refusal of his family members to drink the same alcoholic beverage as African-Americans served to distinguish the kinds of consumer products Whites buy from those that African-Americans purchase. Moreover, by tagging items they did not like with a pejorative label, Blake's relatives circumvented formally acknowledging or explaining their condemnation. Moving forward, Blake can automatically infer that anything labeled “nigger—” occupies an inferior position, and, is, therefore, below the standards of the White race. The explicit nature of these examples underscores the racial climate that characterized many of these participants' childhoods, which can induce a mood of superiority, privilege, and aversion to non-Whites.

In addition to explicit racist comments toward African-Americans, some participants recalled anti-Semitic encounters that conveyed hostility toward or discrimination against Jewish people as a cultural, racial, or ethnic group. Historically, members of the Jewish community are often stereotyped for excessive greediness (Daniels, 1997). Jewish males, in particular, are represented as deceitful and witty criminals that limit White males' opportunities for economic success, and by extension,

opportunities to financially support their families. In the following example, Roger discussed how his grandfather taught him to feel animosity toward members of the Jewish community through explicit strategies.

I can remember when I was really young, we'd go to the mall and **my grandfather had a game where we had to find a Jew**. I remember my brother came running around the aisle yelling, "grandpa, grandpa, I found a Jew." **He would give us hints and tell us that Jews own the department stores and they're shysters.** – Roger, Interview 69, 1/31/2016

The participants did not always interpret socialization techniques as being radical or racist. At such a young age, Roger's grandfather had to package such an explicit form of ethnic socialization into a game in order to present this type of anti-Semitism in an "age-appropriate" manner. The form of this type of socialization bears a great deal of resemblance to practices many families utilize but the content involved explicit anti-Semitism. Although Roger's age may have limited his understanding, these experiences, nonetheless, helped him develop a particular type of racial consciousness. As Roger grew older, his grandfather's anti-Semitic lessons continued. For example,

Another time, when I was 12 or 13, I remember painting the ease at my Grandpa's house and I was up on the stepladder painting really hard and **he kicked the stepladder out from underneath me** and I came crashing down and I said, "Why did you do that?" He said, "**Well, that's your first business lesson. Don't trust anyone, especially Jews.**" – Roger, Interview 69, 1/31/2016

Roger's example illustrates the chronic anti-Semitic socialization that spanned across his entire childhood. Such repetitive exposure over time served to reinforce the view that members of the Jewish community are a potential threat to Whites. In doing so, these experiences shaped his view of the world and provided racial meaning for other racial/ethnic groups.

Other participants discussed being taught revisionist beliefs including the denial of Nazi genocide during World War II. It is common for white supremacists to refer to discussions of Nazi genocide as “holo-hoaxology” (Daniels, 2009). Holocaust deniers claim that the account of Nazi genocide universally accepted by legitimate historians is false, either in its entirety or in most of its central facts. Holocaust deniers claim to be “correcting” the historical record rather than attacking the Jewish community. By masking their hatred of Jewish community members as historical scholarship, deniers hope to make anti-Semitism a respectable approach to furthering their political and social goals (Bowman-Grieve, 2009; Lee, 1997). Similar to Roger, several participants were explicitly taught that members of the Jewish community fabricated history, and, therefore, what they learned in school could not be trusted as factual. For instance,

I never believed in the Holocaust story. **My father told me it wasn't invented until the late '60s.** I more or less had to bite my tongue going through school, you know. He even went to the principal and said, “Whenever my son's in class and they talk about the Holocaust, he's just going to walk out.” And when they asked him why he says, **“Because I'm not paying his tuition to be told lies.”** – Eddie, Interview 31, 9/20/2015

Eddie's father believed so strongly in Holocaust denial that he felt compelled to tell the school his son would not be forced to learn “lies.” Examples of related claims include asserting that Auschwitz gas chambers were used only for killing lice that infected camp workers, and that Allied forces had built gas chambers after the war concluded (Gallagher, 2003). White supremacists also propagate other forms of revisionism, such as making false claims about the Civil Rights movement and promoting the idea that Whites are the real “chosen” people of God (Barkun, 1994; Daniels, 2009).

As illustrated throughout this section, participants discussed early family environments that were characterized by various degrees of message explicitness. In

some cases, participants discussed their caregivers conveying subtle racial messages that were ambiguous. These instances often involved remarks about appropriate attire for Whites or nonverbal mannerisms that signified outgroup members as threats. Participants also discussed more overt racial messages that involved a higher degree of racism toward non-Whites such as openly framing non-Whites as inferior or teaching anti-Semitic and revisionist views that conveyed hostility toward members of the Jewish community. Across both the subtle and overt examples, these messages conveyed to participants that racist behavior toward non-Whites was acceptable.

Element three: Message proximity. The third socialization element involved message proximity, which refers to the participants' relational contact with the racial message. Message proximity ranges from "distal" to "proximal." While an individual's presence is a prerequisite for socialization to occur, the degree to which they interact with the message (and messenger) often varies. In the following sections, I present examples for both distal and proximal racial messaging.

Distal. Participants discussed the transmission and absorption of racial meaning through indirect messaging from their caregivers. Participants discussed distal interactions in which they overheard racist comments or witnessed their caregiver deliver an offensive gesture but were otherwise not involved in the exchange. Although caregivers may not have intended for the participant to observe their behavior, these experiences nevertheless served to vicariously convey racial meaning and signify dissatisfaction with outgroup members. In the following example, Kelvin discusses becoming ingrained with his mother's behavior toward non-Whites and learning to view them on a different level.

I noticed a lot of that when I was growing up like, **kind of subtle. Trying to be easy about it. I mean, it was not real blatant** like, “Hey, the hell with these guys.” But it was in a subtle way, like they might use them for work or whatever as far as Mexicans picking apples, but **they did not put them on the same level with Whites...** It wasn’t blatant, it was subtle... **We were kind of ingrained with that and we got it stuck in our head when we were kids and yeah**, that definitely had a play and opened up my mind or allowed me to think that way that you just got to stay kind of with your own people and stuff. – Kelvin, Interview 52, 12/12/2015

Kelvin’s accounts represent a form of “boundary-work” (Gieryn, 1983; Lamont, 1992), in which groups draw symbolic distinctions in order to highlight their respective individuality. Kelvin’s example, in particular, conveys a strict boundary that it is okay to hire non-Whites as employees, but it is inappropriate for them to be considered “on the same level” as Whites. In addition to establishing social hierarchies, distal messaging also conveyed appropriate norms regarding intimate relationships and dating. For example,

Even though he never pressed it on us, I knew it wouldn’t be okay... I heard my dad say stuff about people that were interracial like married or together and stuff like that, and my oldest stepsister, she’s like 3 years older than me and she always dated Mexicans and Blacks and my dad would get so mad... **Like I would hear him making comments about it and he wasn’t happy about it.** – Stephen, Interview 78, 7/20/2015

I never got instructions, but I pretty much knew it, you know. I remember my little sister contemplated dating a Black dude one time. **My dad didn’t talk to her for a year.** – Manny, Interview 62, 7/21/2015

By witnessing his sister’s punishment for contemplating dating an African-American, Manny learned indirectly what appropriate behavior was for Whites in general and what his father considered acceptable in their household more specifically. Participants discussed that it was common for their caregivers to convey dissatisfaction with interracial dating without actively interfering. Such language serves to create hierarchical relationships with Whites residing at the top and non-Whites occupying inferior positions. While participants were not directly instructed to behave in a certain way, these

racial norms indirectly conveyed appropriate behavior. Similar to living in an all-White neighborhood or attending an all-White school, caregivers constructed a White social world by selectively filtering participants' social contacts.

As a result of distal messaging, participants were found to adopt their caregivers' attitudinal views regarding race. This process, referred to as attitudinal mimicry, involves the adoption of attitudes similar to people around us (Sinclair et al., 2005). Attitudinal mimicry has been documented in each developmental stage including infancy, adolescence, and adulthood and typically deals with the imitation of parents, siblings, non-familial adults, and characters we see on television or in movies (Meltzoff, 1985; Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson, 1993). For participants who were raised in households with immediate relatives that were white supremacists, it was common for them to overhear their family members discussing extremist activities and becoming interested in this discussion. In these situations, participants were often indirectly exposed to conversations that "glorified" extremist activities and rituals. For example,

My dad and his friends would talk about the Klan and **they made it sound so cool** and then even when I was little, **I was thinking that this is really kind of interesting**... they would always tell stories about stuff they were into. I mean, it was pretty outlawed stuff and it was like **he dropped enough about it that got me interested but never guided me**. – Rachel, Interview 68, 11/20/2015

As Rachel's account illustrates, these "tales of glory" often recount instances of betrayal, neighborhood conflict and direct encounters with white supremacist propaganda.

Moreover, such discourse typically illustrates Whites as the heroes and guardians of law and order and non-Whites as villains that need to be defeated. Such indirect messaging can spark an interest in learning more about extremist participation, especially when the storyteller is an immediate relative such as a father or grandparent. According to Hardin

and Higgins (1996), adopting the attitudes of others, even when detrimental, contributes to the development of social bonds, especially when the motivation to affiliate with that person is strong. While the details of these examples are less overt, the storytelling produces folklore surrounding extremist participation that can generate an attraction toward far-right extremism. In doing so, extremist participation becomes viewed as a noble and altruistic endeavor pursued by champions of the White race rather than a racist and violent subcultural movement.

Proximal. In addition to distal exposure, participants discussed proximal interactions, which involved the direct and focused cultivation of racial meaning. Unlike distal interactions, White caregivers nourished racist knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits by teaching participants their expected racial roles required to maintain the dominant culture. This type of socialization favors the enforcement of proscriptive norms (e.g., rules of dress) and condemning non-White associations. Such discourse served to provide racial meaning by drawing on a sense of shared belonging within their subgroup. For participants who attended racially-diverse schools, their caregivers were quick to establish and enforce appropriate boundaries associated with interracial contact. For instance,

I had a best friend in elementary school. He was an African-American kid named Quincy and we always played. I remember her [mom] telling me that **it's okay to be friends with them but don't bring them home.** – Bertha, Interview 16, 7/20/2015

As Bertha's example illustrates, her mother did not have an issue if she was friends with a Black classmate at school but forbade her to invite them over as houseguests. By establishing these racial norms, participants were socialized to the symbolic boundaries that differentiated Whites from non-Whites. For other participants, there was clear

communication that they should not associate with non-White kids and violation of these racial boundaries would initiate a corrective response. For example,

It was probably Second Grade and I had a bunch of friends that I hung out with who were Black and probably **my first thought about my racial identity** would be like my mom saying, “What are you doing hanging out with all these Black boys? **This is a boundary that you’re crossing that we’re not okay with.**” It was just this like, “Don’t you know what road you’re going?” but, like it wasn’t a diatribe. – Shayne, Interview 80, 6/28/2015

I remember like one time in probably like Second Grade my sister made friends with a Black girl and brought her home and they were just playing with their Barbie dolls. My father came home, and **he snapped. He was like, “Get these fuckin’ niggers out of our house.”** ... I remember being upset, but I kind of just followed along, you know, what is a kid supposed to do? **It’s like anything. It’s learned behavior.** – Alice, Interview 6, 10/30/2015

Both Shayne and Alice’s narratives illustrate deliberate attempts by parents to keep White spaces (i.e., their homes) separate from outgroup members. Shayne’s example illustrates a subtle encounter in which her mother informed her that she crossed a forbidden boundary. In this way, Shayne’s mother provided her with the opportunity to correct her behavior and find new friends. As Shayne discusses, this experience was the first time she reflected upon her racial identity and the meaning that accompanied interracial relationships. Moving forward, Shayne had a better understanding of the racial boundaries her mother considered appropriate. Alice’s account; however, illustrates more explicit cultivation of symbolic racial boundaries. Such an event directly conveyed to Alice the types of people that were welcome in her father’s home. In this sense, sharing personal space, even in adolescence, violated the separation of the races mandated by the dominant White culture.

Participants also discussed their caregivers’ views regarding interracial dating in which they very clearly condemned dating non-Whites. In order to protect their

Whiteness, caregivers taught participants to keep themselves physically separate from “Blackness” at all costs because sharing any intimate space resulted in an intolerable familiarity between the races. Through these experiences, participants gained racial meaning from the dominant perspective that nurtured racist views of non-Whites. In some situations, the enforcement took the form of a “soft-sell” approach in which caregivers’ casually suggested the participant date someone within their own racial group. For instance,

I remember when I was younger, I was probably only eight or nine, I didn’t really know that my grandparents were that racist, but **I remember them telling me to date Whites.** I think it was **more of the affirmative, like, “you’d better find a nice White boy,”** or whatever. It was more kind of like that. – Kay, Interview 55, 1/10/2016

While her grandparents casually suggested that Kay should “find a nice White boy,” the true imposition is that she should not date out of her race. Moreover, her grandparents’ comments also imply that non-Whites cannot be “nice boys” and that just being White qualifies you as a “nice” person. Similar to other participants, this example represents a subtle conveyance of whom she should date rather than mandate who is off-limits.

Although the racial message is subtle, the interaction is directly communicated toward Kay. For other participants, however, the message explicitness was more overt, leaving little room for misinterpretation. For example,

My mom always told me, “You can do anything, and I’ll always support you. I’ll always love you, but **if you ever bring home someone Black or woman, you’re done.**” That’s cleaning up the language. – Abby, Interview 5, 8/1/2013

My dad was more racist than what I would have considered us. **He felt like Mexicans were lower on the rung than Whites, and Blacks were down there too...** He did not believe in race mixing. He used to say, **“you’ll never date a Mexican and live in this house.”** – Keith, Interview 54, 5/4/2013

My stepdad and I had a lot of conversations, like I can't even tell you how many times I heard **that if I ever brought a Black guy home that we'd both be dead**, so yeah that wasn't allowed, definitely not. – Brittany, Interview 9, 9/17/2015

To prevent interracial liaisons with non-Whites, their caregivers conveyed that dating non-Whites was unacceptable and that certain consequences would emerge (e.g., “*You’re done;*” “*Never... live in this house;*” “*be dead*”) if they pursued such relationships. In this way, sexuality was to remain the property of White males, for these participants could only marry other Whites (and have children), and it was only in these confines of marriage that their parents consider sexual relations acceptable. Such gendered socialization implies that White women risk even more than a loss of respect from parents if they have intimate relations with non-Whites. In particular, White women who have sexual intercourse outside their race will become stigmatized, endangering the prospect of future relations with White men. This belief is in line with a prominent belief among the extremist far-right that condemns miscegenation or “race-mixing” (Bowman-Grieve, 2009). White supremacists call for the total separation of Whites from other racial/ethnic groups and promote the belief that mixing non-Whites with Whites dilutes and eventually destroys the cultural supremacy of the pure Aryan bloodline (Perry, 2000).

In the final dimension of proximal messaging, caregivers emphasized white pride and racial superiority. This type of family socialization directly cultivated the belief that Whites are superior to other races and they should be proud of who they are and where they originate. Several participants discussed experiences in which their caregivers articulated that Whites occupy a superior position relative to non-Whites. In some of the more direct experiences, caregivers physically punished participants if they did not behave in a manner reflective of their superior position. For example,

I remember there was an incident, I think, when I was probably 9 or 10. I was in the car with my grandmother and we're at a stop light. I look over, there's a little Black kid standing on the corner. He looks over at me. I kind of go back to doing what I'm doing and **my grandmother smacks me on the back of the head and says, "You never turn your eyes away from a nigger. You stare at him and let him put his fucking head down. You're White. Don't forget that."** And she made me fucking stare the kid down until he put his head down. – Dalton, Interview 30, 6/30/2015

In his grandmother's view, looking away from the African-American child was considered weak, submissive, and unbecoming of a White person. In order to display his superior position, Dalton needed to "share him down" until the African-American child submitted and looked away. This practice is in line with a unifying white supremacist ideology that promotes white pride and generally beckons Whites to be excited about being whom they perceive themselves to be as White and superior (Bowman-Grieve, 2009; Brown, 2009; Daniels, 1997). In another example, Tyler recalls an instance in which his father conveyed the significance of his "Aryan" heritage and how this influenced his racial identity. For instance,

I remember a knife, the Blut und Ehre (Blood and Honor), you know, that Hitler used to give all the youth and I remember my dad gave me one when I was 5 years old and I remember, he goes, **"This is for special people." He told me I'm a product of Germany and that I'm way more superior because I am a true Aryan Warrior...** He told me that my great-uncles worked at Auschwitz and Dachau. For me, it's like saying, "Hey, my dad's Secret Service at the White House." **That's the kind of pride I used to get** when I hear that, you know. – Tyler, Interview 85, 6/25/2015

Tyler's account underscores a major aspect of this socialization element in which his father directly cultivated the belief that Whites are superior human beings because of their racial heritage. As a result of this interaction, Tyler discusses feeling proud of his family lineage and equates his family's involvement in the Third Reich to serving protective detail for the President of the United States. Such direct socialization generated

a sense of entitlement for Tyler that he relied upon for developing his racial consciousness. According to Berbrier (2000), promoting white pride is important for white supremacists in developing “a consciousness of Whites as White” (p. 187). Moreover, his father’s emphasis on being an “Aryan warrior” and gifting him with a youth Hitler knife provided the foundation for his future involvement in violent extremism. Such an event overlaps with a white supremacist ideology that encourages men to internalize roles as racial warriors, guardians of law and order, and, if needed, martyrs (Brown, 2009; Daniels, 1997).

As illustrated throughout this section, participants were proximally related to racial messaging in two different ways. First, participants discussed distal relationships in which their caregivers made comments or behaved in a fashion that conveyed racial meaning. Through these interactions, participants discussed the transmission and absorption of racial meaning through indirect messaging from their caregivers. Participants discussed overhearing racist comments or witnessing their caregiver deliver an offensive gesture but were otherwise not involved in the exchange. Although caregivers may not have intended for the participant to observe their behavior, these experiences nevertheless served to vicariously convey racial meaning and signify dissatisfaction with outgroup members. Second, participants discussed more proximal exposure to racial messages in which participants were given clear direction as to how they should view themselves and behave as a member of the White race. For these participants, such immersive cultivation served to construct their racial consciousness and communicate racial norms. Regardless of the proximity—whether distal or proximal—

participants began to interact, interpret, and reproduce racial ideas consistent with their caregivers' views.

Conclusion

While Chapter 4 illustrates how childhood trauma can increase one's susceptibility to the pull of various types of criminally oriented groups—including violent extremism—it does not account for why these individuals become involved with the far-right over other extremist organizations (e.g., far-left, Salafi Jihadi-inspired extremism) or outlets like street gangs, religious groups, or community organizations. To address this gap and provide more context as to how participants became ideologically-aligned with the far-right, I introduced excerpts throughout the current chapter from the life-history interview data to illustrate three elements of racist family socialization including message frequency, message explicitness, and message proximity. Overall, these experiences shaped participants' social environment by making the dominant White perspective an influential aspect of their family life. Moreover, these experiences conveyed to participants that racist behavior and discourse toward non-Whites was acceptable. As a result of this socialization, participants developed racial consciousness regarding interracial relationships and began to view dehumanization, condemnation, and/or racial separation as a normalized aspect of their social world. This, in turn, increased their susceptibility for extremist participation later in life by reducing the psychological distance between everyday life and organized hate.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion and Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I relied on life-history interviews with 91 North American-based former white supremacists to examine the developmental conditions associated with extremist onset. My attention was primarily focused on individual-level experiences; particularly how childhood risk factors (e.g., abuse, mental illness) and racist family socialization strategies generated emotional and cognitive susceptibilities toward extremist recruitment. This type of investigation contributes to terrorism research by emphasizing some of the early childhood and adolescent experiences that may heighten a person's vulnerabilities to certain pulls associated with ideology and group dynamics more broadly. Overall, findings from the current dissertation build upon developmental-life course criminology and studies within terrorism that address the role of childhood and adolescent risk factors. In particular, I elaborate on the work of Simi and colleagues (2016) in three ways and offer additional context as to the precursors that influence extremist onset.

First, relying on the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) questionnaire, this project provides additional insight into the nature and extent of early childhood trauma. Results indicate that early childhood trauma could be structured around two overlapping dimensions including childhood maltreatment and family adversity. The first dimension, childhood maltreatment, occurred in several degrees of severity within the sample. For instance, participants experienced various levels of physical and sexual abuse such as getting slapped, spit on, punched, kicked, or raped by a caregiver. Some of these experiences were so severe that they resulted in bodily injuries such as black eyes, cuts,

wounds, and bruises. Childhood maltreatment also involved “invisible” elements of trauma and abuse such as emotional and physical neglect that were more difficult to identify but resulted in similar psychological and emotional distress as other forms of maltreatment. In addition to childhood maltreatment, participants simultaneously experienced a wide range of family adversity such as caregiver mental illness, caregiver loss, or caregiver substance abuse. For these participants, the mood swings, inconsistencies, and unpredictable behavior exhibited by their caregivers generated a high level of emotional distress during their formative developmental years. In addition to examining the structure of early childhood trauma, the ACE questionnaire allowed me to quantify the extent of trauma in order to compare rates of adversity for the current sample to other non-extremist samples. Overall, rates of trauma for the current sample more closely approximate a “high risk” juvenile offending sample than a non-offending adult sample with 63 percent of participants having experienced four or more adverse experiences before age 18 (as compared to 48 percent of a comparison “high risk” sample and 13 percent of a comparison non-offending sample).

Second, findings from the current dissertation build upon the work of Simi and colleagues (2016) by providing a more detailed account of the elements related to negative emotionality. Across both the childhood maltreatment and family adversity dimensions, participants were often left to manage their emotional distress with little or no support. Without social support from family members, especially parents, participants felt rejected and unable to appropriately negotiate a sense of self, which generated a variety of negative emotions. These emotions can be broadly classified as either self-directed emotions or outgroup-directed emotions. Self-directed emotions were internally

directed toward the self and included feelings of withdrawal, dissociation, and self-blame. In these situations, many participants began to develop an internalized view of their social world, which separated them from their previous identities and stripped them of their childhood innocence. Participants also experienced outgroup directed emotions, which involved attention directed externally to stimuli present in the social world (Chun et al., 2011). Outgroup-directed emotions involved different expressions of anxiety; questioning the nature of humanity, and anger. As a result of their abuse, many participants began to perceive the social world as an unpredictable place and developed a more hostile view of their environment. For these participants, experiences with physical punishment provided a role model or script for physical violence (Huggins and Straus, 1975), which laid the groundwork for the legitimacy of aggression. Operating from a family background of violence, these individuals were primed to carry this with them to the streets, increasing the probability of drifting toward deviant peer groups, including extremism.

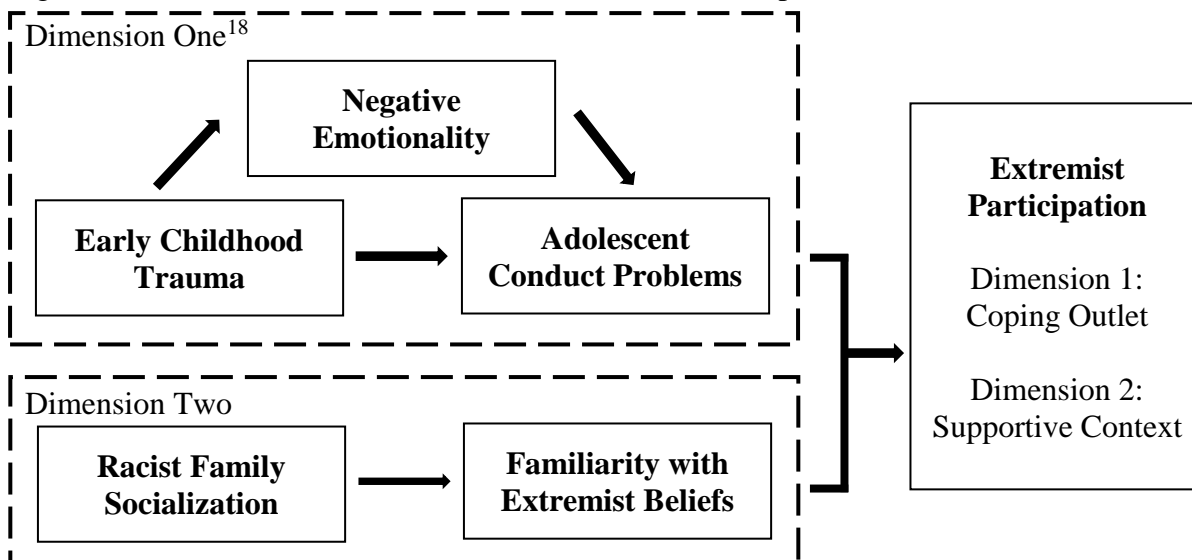
In conjunction with detailing the intricacies of early childhood trauma and negative emotionality, the current project elaborates upon Simi and colleagues' (2016) risk factor model by introducing racist family socialization as an additional precursor to extremist participation. Across the sample, participants were exposed to racist family socialization practices that, at least partially, aligned them with far-right extremism. Contrary to popular belief, most participants in the current sample were not socialized by family members who were actively involved in a white supremacist group. Only a small portion of the sample (N = 12; 13 percent) can be described as raised in households with immediate relatives who were involved in a white supremacist organization. Instead,

most participants (N = 66) were socialized during childhood with ideas somewhat consistent with extremist beliefs such as racism and/or anti-Semitism. In these situations, participants were exposed to a variety of racist comments (e.g., the telling of a racist joke, derogatory name-calling, pejorative epithets) or witnessed nonverbal mannerisms (e.g., offensive gestures) that conveyed dissatisfaction with non-Whites. Participants also discussed proscriptive norms that governed interracial dating and interracial friendships.

This complex racial socialization process consisted of three overlapping elements including message frequency, message explicitness, and message exposure. Across these elements, caregivers nourished racist knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits by informally teaching participants their expected racial roles required to maintain a dominant white culture. Such discourse and behavior provided racial meaning by drawing on a sense of shared belonging within their subgroup. Another important aspect of these messaging elements was the unspoken association between Whiteness and normalcy. That is, caregivers mediated participants' worldviews by selectively filtering and staging it in accordance with their own location in the social structure (i.e., as White, middle-class, heterosexual). In doing so, White caregivers shaped participants' social environment by making the dominant White perspective a presiding aspect of their early childhood. Caregivers' racial messages contributed to the development of participants' racial consciousness and normative expectations regarding interracial dynamics and the notion that racism toward non-Whites was acceptable. Observing their caregivers' prejudicial behavior helped foster the development of a framework to interpret the social world with similar distrust and disrespect toward non-Whites. These repeated interactions also helped participants gain familiarity with racist communications. This psychological

process referred to as *desensitization* (Wolpe, 1958; Wolpe and Lang, 1964),¹⁷ numbered participants to the shock of racism they would later encounter as members of organized hate groups.

Figure 3. Elaborated Risk Factor Model of Extremist Participation



While childhood trauma and racist family socialization processes have been discussed as separate dimensions throughout this dissertation, it is important to highlight the integrated nature of these experiences. To guide this discussion, Figure 3 illustrates the elaborated risk factor model of extremist participation, which is comprised of two overlapping dimensions. Dimension one contains the original elements from Simi and colleagues' (2016) risk factor model of extremist participation including (1) early

¹⁷ While limited, studies have examined the relationship between racist discourse and desensitization. For instance, Leets (2002) found that participants exposed to chronic racial slurs exhibited decreased sensitivity to racism. In a more recent study, Soral and colleagues (2018) found that individuals frequently exposed to anti-refugee hate speech were in general more prejudiced toward refugees. This effect was observed not only in the case of rather subtle measures of outgroup prejudice but also manifested in greater support for radical, anti-immigrant policies. This may suggest that those frequently exposed to racist discourse no longer see such statements as offensive, which results in their lower sympathy for the victims of racism.

¹⁸ Dimension one illustrates the original risk factor model of extremist participation outlined by Simi and colleagues (see Simi, P., Sporer, K., and Bubolz, B. (2016). Narratives of Childhood Adversity and Adolescent Misconduct as Precursors to Violent Extremism: A Life-Course Criminological Approach. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 53(4), 536-563). Dimension two outlines the current elaboration, which incorporates racist family socialization as another precursor to white supremacist extremism.

childhood trauma, (2) negative emotionality, and (3) adolescent conduct problems. Dimension two contains the elaborated risk factor elements including (1) racist family socialization and (2) familiarity with extremist beliefs. Across these elements, participants experienced adverse environmental and social conditions that produced a sense of rejection and status deprivation. These experiences, in turn, heightened participants' vulnerabilities to certain pulls (e.g., supportive context, coping outlet, coherent identity) associated with ideology and group dynamics more broadly by framing these "social milieus" (Cohen, 1955, p. 54) as capable of resolving their emotional distress and providing status that was denied to them by their caregivers.

Drawing from the work of Cohen (1955) and others (see also Sutherland, 1938; Lemert, 1953), communication is a central component to the formation of, and integration into, a subculture. For Cohen (1955), individuals search for a social milieu favorable to the resolution of their problems of adjustment by watching for "signs from others... or cues" (what Mead (1934) refers to as *significant gestures*) that reference a unifying outlook or living condition. As I have outlined throughout this dissertation, problems of adjustment stem from status deprivation caused by early childhood trauma (e.g., sexual abuse) and negative emotionality (e.g., anger, self-blame). As a result of their childhood trauma, participants began to generalize aggressive parenting styles to other settings, such as school and peer-group interactions (Athens, 1990). These experiences contributed to a variety of behavioral issues such as problems forming attachments with peers or struggling to trust people and feel comfortable in new environments. Participants often decided to resort to violence in their future relations with people because they no longer trusted their intentions. In this way, experiences with

physical punishment provided a role model or script for physical violence (Gagnon and Simon, 1973; Huggins and Straus, 1975) and laid the groundwork for the legitimacy of aggression. Therefore, when the individual was required to take corrective action and resolve a dilemma, violence (or fighting back) became a legitimate solution. Many participants recognized that participation in adolescent misconduct (e.g., violence, drug use, sex) could provide relief to their emotional distress and later became a source of status within the subcultural group. This is in line with prior research (Agnew, 1992, 2010), which has found that trauma can reduce social controls and weaken emotional ties, leaving these individuals with little to lose if they engage in delinquent activities. Operating from a family background of power and managing their emotions in such a way heighten participants' vulnerabilities to certain pulls associated with various types of criminally-oriented groups, including extremism.

At the same time, racist family socialization also heightened participants' vulnerabilities to certain pulls (e.g., supportive context, coherent identity) associated with ideology and group dynamics more broadly by reducing the psychological distance between everyday life and organized hate. Because subcultures are symbolic worlds—worlds of ritual, meaningful objects, and collective expressions—racist family socialization is an important mobilizing force underlying the formation of extremist participation as it provides these individuals with a common vernacular and worldview (i.e., Whites are the dominant race). In this way, racist family socialization primes individuals' responsiveness to the symbolic signs, cues, or significant gestures that give reference to a unifying outlook or living condition (Cohen, 1955; Mead, 1934). From this perspective, part of the search for a social milieu favorable to the resolution of their

problems of adjustment involves the location of *like-minded youth* with corresponding frames of references. This finding offers additional insight into how racist family socialization can mediate risk factors and predispose a person toward the perceived benefits of extremism by creating an emotion culture¹⁹ (Gordon, 1989) and symbolic boundaries, thereby strengthening feelings of collective unity. Moreover, once exposed to a white supremacist subculture, racist family socialization provided these individuals with a form of social capital they could use to demonstrate their commitment and knowledge, gain credibility and status, and navigate the extremist environment.

Taken together, the elements of dimension one and dimension two act as precursors to extremist participation by increasing the appeal of extremist pull factors (e.g., supportive context, coping outlet, sense of meaningfulness) and alternating participants' frames of reference in which the white supremacist subculture is seen as an attractive social milieu (Cohen, 1955) capable of diminishing the intensity of their emotional distress and restoring their personal significance.

Theoretical Implications

In this section, I highlight four of the most significant theoretical takeaways of this study. First, despite the wide range of theoretical perspectives used to understand extremist participation such as subcultural theory (Pisoiu, 2015), rational choice (Perry and Hasisi, 2015), social disorganization (Fahey and LaFree, 2015), deterrence (Argomaniz and Vidal-Diez, 2015), and general strain theory (Nivette, Eisner, and Ribeaud, 2017), the use of developmental and life-course criminology remains

¹⁹ Gordon (1989) defines emotion culture as a socially constructed pattern of sensations, expressive gestures, and cultural meanings organized around a relationship to a social object, usually another person. (p. 566).

substantially underdeveloped (for an exception see Simi, Sporer, and Bubolz, 2016). The neglect of this framework is unfortunate because such a perspective is well suited to examine a wide range of experiences that unfold over the life-course such as childhood risk factors, criminal behavior, and extremist violence. The current study begins to address this void in the literature by providing valuable information regarding the role early childhood experiences have on an individual's decision to join an extremist group, focusing particularly on childhood risk factors (e.g., abuse) and racist family socialization strategies. In doing so, I identified important points of similarity between extremist involvement and the broader realm of violent and criminal behavior. For instance, the current findings underscore the presence of childhood abuse and how negative emotionality directed toward the self and others can reduce bonds with conventional social relationships. Similar to adult and youth gangs, these experiences increase an individual's desire to join a collective environment because it may provide access to resources (e.g., outlet for aggression) that were previously unavailable to them (Cohen, 1955). Findings from the current dissertation benefit terrorism research by shedding light on how extremists have been influenced by a variety of internal and external factors before embracing a political ideology and becoming involved in an extremist movement. The benefit of this project is the ability to examine how extremist onset does not begin with a single life event but rather is influenced by the cascading effect of multiple factors that merge throughout one's life.

Second, while scholarship on radicalization has advanced in recent years, the varied explanations are less developed regarding the emotional consequences associated with individual trauma (e.g., sexual abuse, parental loss, emotional neglect) including

posttraumatic stress disorder, major depression, anxiety disorders, guilt, shame, aggression, and suicidal ideation (Horwitz et al., 2001), all of which have been associated with extremist participation (Forst, 2009; Victoroff, 2005). In particular, the current dissertation highlights the presence of childhood adversity such as physical abuse, caregiver loss, and caregiver substance abuse and focuses on the cognitive and emotional stressors that occurred before adopting an extremist identity. The benefit of examining adversity that occurs during childhood is to better understand the way that negative emotionality functions as an intervening mechanism between childhood adversity and extremist participation. Since radicalization has been found to be influenced by individuals' cognitive and emotional state (Kruglanski et al., 2014; Taylor and Horgan, 2001), this study provides useful information for understanding the psychological antecedents of extremist onset and radicalization by offering more fine-grained analyses that advance our understanding of the cognitive and emotional states produced by trauma. Across the current sample, bonding together with well-defined collectives and associating with like-minded individuals was seen as a "mechanism of adjustment" (Cohen, 1955, p. 54) capable of diminishing the intensity of their emotional distress.

Third, to my knowledge, no studies have examined trauma among extremists using the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) questionnaire. A benefit of this application is the ability to quantify the amount of cumulative risk present in these individuals' life-histories and the types of adverse experiences that were most prevalent. ACE scores offer a standardized measure of adversity that allows for comparisons across different samples (i.e., formers vs. non-offenders vs. "high-risk"), thus, informing our conceptualization of what makes extremists similar and different to non-extremists.

Further, this analysis advances our understanding of the relative importance of adversity in generating susceptibilities toward extremist and delinquent activities. Moreover, because the ACE questionnaire is a widely accepted and empirically-supported assessment tool, findings from this project broaden the discussion surrounding childhood trauma beyond general public health concerns (e.g., substance abuse, obesity, HIV/AIDS) to other public safety concerns including extremist participation.

Finally, the current investigation accounts for why individuals may become involved with the far-right over other extremist groups (e.g., far-left, Salafi Jihadi-inspired extremism) or different collective outlets like streets gangs, religious groups, or community organizations. This study continues to advance our understanding of the mechanisms by which young Whites develop and reproduce ideas consistent with their caregivers' racist and prejudiced beliefs. Because Whites occupy dominant positions within social institutions and because racist ideologies justify the racial status quo, findings from this dissertation can be utilized to counter ideas that promote racial inequity and White supremacy. In particular, based on the current findings, advocacy services aimed at reducing childhood adversity need a broader focus with attention also directed toward the negative long-term developmental effects of racist family socialization. While criminologists have documented many factors such as parental substance abuse or parental loss that increase the risk of delinquent and violent behavior (Dube et al., 2003), less research examines the role of racist family socialization. This is important because White parents who feel discriminated against or believe that multiculturalism threatens the dominant White culture may impart their perspective upon children. This, in turn, can lead their children to interpret the social world with similar

racist and discriminatory behavior. For these individuals, such immersive cultivation can construct their racial consciousness and communicate racial norms, effectively reducing the psychological distance between everyday life and organized hate.

Policy Implications

In terms of policy implications, early interventions designed for at-risk youth and gang members should inform how we think about and apply countering violent extremism (CVE)/preventing violent extremism (PVE) initiatives. There have been substantial lessons in the area of at-risk youth and gang interventions (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 2004; Hawkins et al., 2004; Hill et al., 1999; Howell and Hawkins, 1998; Lipsey, 2009; McGarrell et al., 2009; Papachristos, Mears, and Fagan, 2007; Thornberry et al., 2003), and there is no reason to unnecessarily “reinvent the wheel.” There are several individual-, family-, and community-level approaches that can be adopted to help address violent extremism. For example, behavioral training programs, such as parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT), which involves teaching caregivers improved parent-child interaction and discipline skills including decreased use of negative parenting behaviors (e.g., criticism, sarcasm, physical aggression), and increased use of positive parenting behaviors (e.g., attending to positive behaviors, labeled praise, reflections). PCIT is more effective than traditional group-based parent training approaches for reducing physical abuse (Hakman et al., 2009; Chaffin et al., 2004). Recent reviews of the effects of childhood maltreatment prevention (see Geeraert, Van den Noortgate, Grietens, and Onghena, 2004; Leventhal, 2001; MacLeod and Nelson, 2000; MacMillan, 2000; Sweet and Appelbaum, 2004) indicate that parent education and home visitation programs can improve family functioning leading to reduced child maltreatment if they

are intense and high in quality. Since the current study found that negative family relationships preceded extremist onset, counseling parents and youth about family patterns may be a highly promising avenue for promoting positive family attachments. This, in turn, may reduce these individuals' draw toward extremist collectives and foster resilience to extremist recruitment efforts. Such programs; however, need to be further developed and adapted to suit the organizational or interagency context of those who seek to implement them.

In conjunction with reducing or altering childhood abuse through parental training, we also need to target and address the emotional consequences associated with abuse through therapy, counseling, and other types of social support. Caregivers are notoriously poor at recognizing emotional consequences in their children (Kassam-Adams, Garcia-Espana, Miller, and Winston, 2006; Shemesh et al., 2007). It is incumbent upon child-serving systems such as pediatric emergency departments and child welfare agencies to facilitate the management of abused children in need of early intervention. Early interventions grounded in the protective factors that support resilience and recovery should be able to prevent negative emotionality and help victims develop prosocial coping skills to enhance both overall quality of life and everyday functioning across multiple domains, while also providing a healthy foundation from which to explore and reframe their abusive experiences (Hodges and Myers, 2010). Early and brief intervention strategies that prevent the development of emotional distress are a necessary and cost-effective addition to behavioral health services (Stauffer and Deblinger, 1996). Prior research suggests that cognitive behavioral approaches are successful for treating both preschool and school-aged children who have been sexually abused (Cohen and

Mannarino, 1996) when the non-offending parent is included in the treatment process (Deblinger, Lippmann, and Steer, 1996). Moreover, intervention efforts should be targeted at youth whose family members engage in deviant behavior such as drug and alcohol abuse, criminal activity, and extremist participation (Maxson, Whitlock, and Klein, 1998). These efforts are necessary for the development of prototype tools to aid mental health and public safety professionals in their assessment of individuals' suitability for participation in early intervention programs and the ability to avoid joining extremist groups.

Finally, families, schools, and communities must commit to the promotion of multiculturalism by implementing strategies, programs, and reforms with this objective. A crucial starting point for this reform is that diversity education must be integrated at an earlier age than previously thought. Based on findings from the current study and recent research, children develop racial preferences and biases as early as age three (Lee, Quinn, and Pascalis, 2017; Qian et al., 2016; Xiao et al., 2018). Children, like most people, often obtain information about other groups through mass media, educational texts, and comments made by family members, peers, and community members (Dunham, Chen, and Banaji, 2013). In some cases, these messages can often convey unflattering portrayals and stereotypes of various marginalized groups in our society, which, in turn, can generate implicit racial biases among those who receive these messages.

We must counter-balance these biased perceptions (e.g., Blacks as criminals, LGBTQIA+ as pathologized) by blunting the occurrence of racist discourse at home and reducing the likelihood these individuals will internalize and normalize the dominant White perspective. One approach would involve implementing racial sensitivity and

diversity training in childcare programs (e.g., daycare, pre-K) that provide opportunities for youth (i.e., 2-years-old and older) to self-reflect and learn about historical oppression, people of color, women, and LGBTQIA+ from sources within the group. Moreover, the factual understanding of diverse groups must be supplemented by experiences with people we hope to understand. These educational programs could identify a cultural guide who is willing to introduce youth to new experiences and who can aid in processing thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Being in new situations is uncomfortable and often awakens fears and apprehensions that can block our experiential development. Acquiring information or being exposed to minority-run businesses, poverty, and writings from minority authors allow Whites to understand the thoughts, hopes, fears, and aspirations of the people outside their racial perspective rather than from the perspective of the majority society. Doing so may counter racist programming by critically examining Whites' racial biographies and hegemonic beliefs. Ultimately, racism affects both the targets of hate speech (Mullen and Smyth, 2004) and those that witness such discourse. By understanding the many manifestations of racist socialization, we can better address racism prevention and sensitize individuals to cases of racist discourse.

While this advice contains within it some hazards, only after systematic empirical evaluations will we know how well interventions (e.g., parent-child interaction therapy, cognitive behavioral approaches, multicultural education) translate to different populations of violent extremists. Nonetheless, existing interventions offer an important starting place, and the substantial commonalities we find in the backgrounds of former violent White supremacists and more generic violent offenders suggests that generalized programming may play an important role in CVE/PVE efforts.

Future Research

While I acknowledge that experiencing an unstable family environment and racist family socialization does not guarantee involvement in violent extremism or criminality, this does not mean that these early experiences are unimportant, nor should they be ignored. Since stressful life events usually have more than one implication for well-being and more than one option for coping (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, and Gruen, 1986), more research should be conducted to understand the specific ways in which trauma, negative emotionality, and racial socialization predispose extremist onset. In particular, future research should account for causal complexity and address the relative influence of individual factors and how they combine to encourage or discourage extremist involvement. The finding that most participants reported multiple events that contributed to joining highlights the need to examine extremist participation as a process that unfolds as a result of multiple experiences. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is one data analysis technique that should be used when trying to understand how different combinations of conditions produce the same outcome such as extremist involvement (Ragin, 2000). This method preserves contextual information while incorporating algorithms to understand how multiple conditions and motives combine and contrast to produce entry (Ragin, 1999). In doing so, researchers should more accurately gauge prevalence rates and the extent to which traumatic experiences impact daily life to determine whether conditions reduce, remain stable, or increase in the time during and after extremist involvement. Furthermore, ongoing trauma should be more closely examined to determine how it may encourage or inhibit exit from extremism.

Future research should also examine the role of serendipity in terms of how youth become exposed to White supremacist groups. While the current study highlights how early childhood trauma and racist family socialization strategies generate emotional and ideological predispositions toward White supremacy, more work is needed to better understand how these predispositions become activated. The dynamic tension between reflexive action and reasoned calculation become important when opportunity and motivation converge along an axis of serendipity, which refers to chance circumstances that align to energize extremist participation (Jacobs, 2010). The challenge of serendipity is to recognize the inherent value of the unexpected discovery rather than perceive it as insignificant. Many of science and industry's most important discoveries have been products of serendipity such as Post-it Notes, Ivory Soap, Velcro, and infrared radiation (Roberts, 1989). Chance is implicated in these discoveries, but chance lies at the convergence of effort and preparation. As Louis Pasteur was once quoted as saying, "chance favors only the prepared mind" (van Andel, 1994, p. 635). Since this study highlights the role of trauma and racial socialization in altering an individual's state of reference, more research needs to examine how adverse experiences provide a scaffolding or schema, that increase individuals' receptiveness to extremist recruitment and propaganda cues and how the emotionally appealing characteristics of recruitment messaging cues activate these individuals' previously primed responsiveness.

Finally, although the current study relies on former far-right extremists, future research should examine childhood adversity among other types of ideological groups. More specifically, future research should compare the findings from this North American-based sample of former White supremacists with similar samples from various

European countries and also compare results from this sample with other types of extremists such as Salafi-Jihadi inspired and far-left extremists. Unfortunately, when terrorism scholarship only focuses on one type of extremist violence, theoretical development and intervention efforts may be undermined because conclusions will be based solely on one ideological perspective.

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Appendix A: Listing of Grant Work

- DeMichele, M., Simi, P., & Blee, K. (2015-2017). "Research and Evaluation on Domestic Radicalization to Violent Extremism: Research to Support EXIT USA." National Institute of Justice (NIJ). Washington, D.C. Total Amount: \$700,801.
- Simi, P. (2012-2014). "Desistance from Violent Right-Wing Extremism." Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. \$62,019.
- Simi, P. (2013-2015). "Recruitment and Radicalization among U.S. Far Right Terrorists." START: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. University of Maryland, College Park, MD. Total Amount: \$77,420.
- Simi, P., & Ligon, G. S. (2015-2017). "Empirical Assessment of Domestic Disengagement and Deradicalization (EAD3)." National Institute of Justice (NIJ). Washington, D.C. Total Amount: \$620,545.
- Windisch, S. & Simi, P. (2015-2016). "Coping with Adversity among Violent Extremists: Translating Childhood Risk Factors into Extremist Participation." Terrorism Research Award. START: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. University of Maryland, College Park, MD. Total Amount: \$5,000.
- Windisch, S. & Simi, P. (2015-2016). "Coping with Adversity among Violent Extremists: Translating Childhood Risk Factors into Extremist Participation." Graduate Research and Creative

Appendix B: Risk Factor Codebook

Variable 1 - - FAMEXTACT

Was the person's family involved in extremism?

- 0 = No
- 1 = Parents
- 2 = Children
- 3 = Sibling
- 4 = Multiple Members (specify)_____
- 5 = Extended Family (specify)_____
- 6 = Step-family (specify)_____
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 2 - - FAMSOC

Did family socialization overlap with movement ideas during childhood?

- 0 = No (if no, skip to question #3)
- 1 = Yes
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 2b - - WHOFAMSOC

Which family member(s) helped socialize movement ideas?

- 0 = Mother
- 1 = Father
- 2 = Grandparent
- 3 = Sibling (specify)_____
- 4 = Combination (specify)_____
- 5 = Other (specify)_____
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 2c - - TYPFAMSOC

What type of socialization occurred on behalf of family members?

- 0 = Racism
- 1 = Anti-Semitism
- 2 = Homophobia
- 3 = Multiple/Combination (specify)_____
- 4 = Other (specify)_____
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 3 - - CHLDSES

Childhood SES (As per subject self-report)

- 0 = Upper class
- 1 = Middle class
- 2 = Working class
- 3 = Lower class
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 3b - - CURRSES

Current SES (As per subject self-report)

- 0 = Upper class
- 1 = Middle class
- 2 = Working class
- 3 = Lower class
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 4 - - ANNINC

Current annual income

- 0 = Above \$100,000
- 1 = \$75,000-\$99,999
- 2 = \$50,000-\$74,999
- 3 = \$25,000-\$49,999
- 4 = Less than \$25,000
- 5 = Incarcerated
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 5 - - EDULEV

Education level

- 0 = Less than high school
- 1 = High school diploma or equivalency
- 2 = Some college
- 3 = 2-year college degree
- 4 = 4-year college degree
- 5 = Graduate school
- 6 = Trade or vocational school
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 5b - - ACAFAIL*Academic failure (K-12 yrs.)*

- 0 = None
- 1 = Expelled from school
- 2 = Dropped out of school
- 3 = Special education services
- 4 = Multiple (specify)_____
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 6 - - CURROCC*Current Occupation (if incarcerated then use last known employment prior to incarceration)*

- 0 = Professional and higher administrator (e.g., doctor, teacher, banker, government official)
- 1 = Clerical (e.g., clerk, office manager, secretary, bookkeeper)
- 2 = Sales (e.g., Sales manager, shop owner shop assistant, buyer, insurance agent)
- 3 = Service (e.g., restaurant owner, policeman, barber, janitor, military)
- 4 = Skilled worker (e.g., foreman, motor mechanic, printer, seamstress, tool maker, electrician)
- 5 = Unskilled (e.g., laborer, porter, unskilled factory worker)
- 6 = Farm (e.g., farmer, farm laborer, tractor driver)
- 7 = Unemployed
- 8 = Retired
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 7 - - CHRUNEMP*Chronic unemployment (chronic unemployment is when a person is unemployed more than 50% during his/her adult years)*

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 8 - - MARSTAT*Current marital status*

- 0 = Single
- 1 = Married
- 2 = Co-habiting
- 3 = Engaged but not married
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 8b. - - PREVMARSTAT

Most previous marital status

- 0 = Single
- 1 = Married
- 2 = Divorced
- 3 = Widowed
- 4 = Divorced more than once
- 5 = Engaged but not married
- 6 = Combination (specify)_____
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 9 - - CHLD

Children

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 10 - - PARINVOL

Parental involvement (is the person involved in rearing his/her child)

- 0 = No (If no, skip to 11)
- 1 = Yes
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 10b -- ABUSIVE

Was the subject ever abusive towards a child of theirs (lifetime)?

- 0 = Never abusive
- 1 = Physically Abusive
- 2 = Verbally Abusive
- 3 = Sexually Abusive
- 4 = Combination (specify)_____
- 98 = Not Applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 10c -- INDOCTRINATION

Did the subject ever indoctrinate a child of theirs (did the person actively teach movement rituals, beliefs or values (lifetime))?

- 0 = Never indoctrinated
- 1 = Used events to indoctrinate
- 2 = Used clothing to indoctrinate
- 3 = Used peer affiliations to indoctrinate
- 4 = Used music to indoctrinate
- 5 = Used videos to indoctrinate
- 6 = Used games to indoctrinate
- 7 = Other (specify) _____
- 8 = Combination (specify) _____
- 98 = Not Applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 11 - - CHLDREL

Childhood religious preference

- 0 = Protestant
- 1 = Catholic
- 2 = Jewish
- 3 = Mormon
- 4 = Other (specify) _____
- 5 = None
- 6 = Christian identity
- 7 = Odinism
- 8 = Christian (denomination unknown)
- 9 = Evangelical
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 12 - - CURRREL

Current religious preference

- 0 = Protestant
- 1 = Catholic
- 2 = Jewish
- 3 = Mormon
- 4 = Other (specify) _____
- 5 = None
- 6 = Christian Identity
- 7 = Odinism
- 8 = Christian
- 9 = Evangelist
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 13 - - MENHEA*History of mental illness*

0 = No

1 = Yes (type)_____

99 = Unknown

Variable 14 - - MENHEAFAM*Family history of mental illness*

0 = No

1 = Yes (type)_____

99 = Unknown

Variable 15 - - SUBABCUR*Substance abuse (current)*

0 = No (if no, skip to 16)

1 = Yes

99 = Unknown

Variable 15b - - CUSUBTYP*Type of substance(s) used*

0 = Alcohol

1 = Marijuana

2 = Crack, rock

3 = Cocaine-powdered

4 = Stimulants (e.g. speed, crystal, ice, adderall)

5 = Heroin

6 = Hallucinogens like LSD

7 = Multiple (specify)_____

8 = Other (specify)_____

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

Variable 16 - - SUBABHIS*Substance abuse (history)*

0 = No (if no, skip to 17)

1 = Yes

99 = Unknown

Variable 16b - - HISSUBTYP*Type of substance(s) used*

- 0 = Alcohol
- 1 = Marijuana
- 2 = Crack, rock
- 3 = Cocaine-powdered
- 4 = Stimulants like speed, crystal, ice
- 5 = Heroin
- 6 = Hallucinogens like LSD
- 7 = Multiple (specify)_____
- 8 = Other (specify)_____
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 17 - - HISPHYAGG*History of physical aggression (during lifetime)*

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 17b - - PHYAGGTYP*If yes, what type?*

- 0 = Bodily
- 1 = Property destruction
- 2 = Both
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 18 - - SUIIDIDEA*Suicidal ideation (ever in lifetime)*

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 19 - - CHDADISS*Childhood & adolescent adjustment issues***19a - - GANGAFF***Gang affiliation*

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes
- 99 = Unknown

19b - - FIRSTRTR*Fire starter*

0 = No
1 = Yes
99 = Unknown

19c - - RUNNER*Runner (run away)*

0 = No
1 = Yes
99 = Unknown

19d - - PROPOFF*Property offenses*

0 = No
1 = Yes
99 = Unknown

19e - - TRUANCY*Truancy*

0 = No
1 = Yes
99 = Unknown

19f - - PROAUT*Problems with authority (based on subject's perception)*

0 = No
1 = Yes
99 = Unknown

19g - - DELPEER*Delinquent peer group*

0 = No
1 = Yes
99 = Unknown

Variable 20 - - FAMHIS*Family history during childhood (ever present)***20a - - PHYABU***Physical abuse*

0 = No
 1 = Yes
 99 = Unknown

20b - - WITVIOL*Witness to violence*

0 = No
 1 = Yes
 99 = Unknown

20c - - TYPVIOUIT*If a witness to violence, what type?*

0 = Domestic violence
 1 = Neighborhood violence (specify) _____
 2 = Both
 98 = Not applicable
 99 = Unknown

20d - - FAMCOACH*Family coach (i.e. was there someone in the family who advocated for committing acts of violence?)*

0 = No
 1 = Yes
 98 = Not applicable
 99 = Unknown

20e - - WHOCOACH*Who did the coaching? - (If yes, who was the coach?)*

0 = Mother
 1 = Father
 2 = Grandparent
 3 = Sibling
 4 = Combination (specify) _____
 5 = Other (specify) _____
 98 = Not applicable
 99 = Unknown

20f - - NEGLT*Neglect*

0 = No
 1 = Yes
 99 = Unknown

20g - - SEXABU*Sexual abuse*

0 = No
 1 = Yes
 99 = Unknown

20h - - PARMAR*Status of parents' marriage during childhood*

0 = Married
 1 = Divorced/Separated
 2 = Mother and/or Father Deceased
 3 = Never Married
 4 = Biological parents not together (reason unknown)
 99 = Unknown

20i - - ABAND*Child abandoned by mother and/or father*

0 = No
 1 = Yes
 99 = Unknown

INCARCERATION HISTORY:**20j - - FATINC***Father ever incarcerated*

0 = No
 1 = Yes
 99 = Unknown

20k - - MOTINC*Mother ever incarcerated*

0 = No
 1 = Yes
 99 = Unknown

201 - - SIBINC*Siblings ever incarcerated*

0 = No

1 = Yes (specify) _____

99 = Unknown

21 - - CRMCON*Criminal Conduct (Self-report of adult criminal offense committed 18 yrs. and older)*

0 = None

1 = Property

2 = Violent

3 = Other (e.g. drug) (specify) _____

4 = Combination (specify) _____

5 = Felony record (type unknown)

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

Variable 22A - - MILEXP*Military experience*

0 = No

1 = Yes

99 = Unknown

22b - - MILBRA*Branch of service*

0 = Army

1 = Navy

2 = Air Force

3 = Marine Corps

4 = Coast Guard

5 = National Guard

6 = Other (specify) _____

7 = Foreign military

8 = Combination of core U.S. branches (specify) _____

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

22c - - MILLEN*Length of service*

- 0 = One year or less
- 1 = 2 years
- 2 = 3 years
- 3 = 3 or more years
- 96 = Discharge fitness
- 97 = Discharge for drug use
- 98 = Not applicable (non-veteran)
- 99 = Unknown

22d - - MILLEAV*Reason for leaving*

- 0 = Honorable Discharge
- 1 = Dishonorable Discharge
- 2 = General discharge
- 3 = Discharge for Fitness (Physically unable to perform)
- 4 = Discharge for Drug Use
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

22e - - MILSPTR*Special military training*

- 0 = Paratrooper
- 1 = Military police
- 2 = Tech sergeant
- 3 = Platoon leader
- 4 = Vehicle gunner/sergeant
- 5 = Security detail/sergeant
- 6 = Small arms
- 7 = Airborne
- 8 = Ranger
- 9 = Navy Seal
- 10 = Green Beret
- 11 = Sniper/assassin
- 35 = No Special Training
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 23 - - BRTORD*Birth order*

- 0 = eldest
- 1 = middle
- 2 = youngest
- 3 = multiple birth
- 4 = only child
- 5 = other_____
- 99 = unknown

Variable 24a – ACTTERR*Did the person commit an act of terrorism? *An act of violence by a non-state actor, perpetrated against a civilian population, intended to cause fear in order to achieve a political objective*

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 24b – CHARGTERR*Was the person charged with an act of terrorism?*

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes
- 98 = Not applicable
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 24c FEDCHRG*Was the person indicted on a federal charge?*

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 24d – FEDTERR*Was the person convicted of a federal terrorism charge?*

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes
- 99 = Unknown

Variable 24e – ACTTERRGRP

Was the individual involved with a group when an act of terrorism was committed?

0 = No (if no, skip to #24g)

1 = Yes

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

Variable 24f – TERRGRPNAME

If yes, which group(s) was the individual involved with when the act of terrorism was committed?

Write in the name(s) _____

Variable 24g - LONETERR

Did the individual commit the act of terrorism with any other individuals or was it committed alone?

0 = With Others

1 = Alone

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

Variable 24h – ACTTERROTHGRP

Was the individual involved with any other right wing extremist groups prior to committing an act of terrorism?

0 = No

1 = Yes

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

Variable 24i – ACTTERRNUMBPRGRP

How many prior groups was the individual involved with before committing the act of terrorism (excludes the current group if belonged to one)?

1 = 1 prior group

2 = 2 prior groups

3 = 3 prior groups

4 = 4 prior groups

5 = 5 prior groups

6 = More than 5 prior groups

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

Variable 25 – ACTTERRORTIME

How much time elapsed between the group involvement that existed prior to the act of terrorism and the actual act itself?

(Enter this number in months) _____

Variable 26 – CASEOUT

Case Outcome

0 = Acquitted

1 = Convicted

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

Variable 27a – EVERINCRCRTD

Was the individual ever incarcerated?

0 = No (if no, skip to 28)

1 = Yes

99 = Unknown

Variable 27b – TIMEINCAR

Total amount of time incarcerated

(Please fill in the amount of time in units of months) _____

Variable 27c – INCRCTNCASE

Incarcerated as a result of the federal case outcome

0 = No

1 = Yes

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

Variable 27d - STILLINCAR

If yes, is the person still incarcerated?

0 = No

1 = Yes

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

Variable 27e - YRRELEASE

If no, when was the person released?

(Enter year) _____

Variable 28 – WTNSPRO

Witness Protection Program as a Result of the Case Outcome

0 = No

1 = Yes

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

Variable 29 – LIVING

Is the person currently alive or deceased?

0 = Deceased

1 = Alive

99 = Unknown

Variable 30 – BELIEFS

At the time of case outcome did the person accept or renounce extremist beliefs?

0 = Renounces

1 = Accepts

98 = Not applicable

99 = Unknown

Variable 31 - CURBELIEFS

Does the person currently accept or renounce extremist beliefs?

0 = Renounces

1 = Accepts

99 = Unknown

Appendix C: Listing of Published Work

- Blee, K., DeMichele, M., Simi, P. & Latif, M. (2017). How Racial Violence is Provoked and Channeled. *Socio*, 9(1), 257-276.
- Bubolz, B. F., & Simi, P. (2015). Leaving the World of Hate: Life-Course Transitions and Self-Change. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59(12), 1588-1608.
- Bubolz, B. & Simi, P. (2019). The Problem of Overgeneralization: The Case of Mental Health Problems and U.S. Violent White Supremacists. *American Behavioral Scientist*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219831746>
- Fahey, S. & Simi, P. (2019). Pathways to Violent Extremism: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of the U.S. Far-Right. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 12(1), 1-26.
- Latif, M., Blee, K., DeMichele, M., & Simi, P. (2018). How Emotional Dynamics Maintain and Destroy White Supremacist Groups. *Humanity & Society*, 42(4), 480-501.
- Simi, P., Blee, K., DeMichele, M., & Windisch, S. (2017). Addicted to Hate: Identity Residual among Former White Supremacists. *American Sociological Review*, 82(6), 1167-1187.
- Simi, P., Futrell, R., & Bubolz, B. (2016). Parenting as Activism: Identity Alignment and Activist Persistence in the White Power Movement. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 57(3), 491-519.
- Simi, P., Sporer, K., & Bubolz, B (2016). Narratives of Childhood Adversity and Adolescent Misconduct as Precursors to Violent Extremism: A Life-Course Criminological Approach. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 53(4), 536-563.
- Simi, P., & Windisch, S. (2017). "Barriers to Radicalization." C-REX: Center for Research on Extremism Working Paper Series, No. 2, pp. 1-28. University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway.
- Simi, P. & Windisch, S. (2018). Why Radicalization Fails: Barriers to Mass Casualty Violence. *Terrorism and Political Violence*. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1409212>
- Simi, P., Windisch, S., Harris, D., & Ligon, G. S. (2019). Anger from Within: The Role of Emotions in Disengagement from Violent Extremism. *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology*, 7(2), 3-27.
- Simi, P., Windisch, S., & Sporer, K. (2015). "Recruitment and Radicalization among U.S. Far-Right Terrorists." START: National Consortium for the Study of

Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. University of Maryland, College Park, MD.

Windisch, S., Simi, P., Blee, K., & DeMichele, M. (2018). Understanding the Micro-Situational Dynamics of White Supremacist Violence in the United States. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 12(6), 23-37.

Windisch, S., Ligon, G. S., & Simi, P. (2017). Organizational [Dis]trust: Comparing Disengagement among Former Far-Left and Far-Right Extremists. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1404000>

Windisch, S., & Simi, P. (2017). "Neo-Nazi Music Subculture." In S. Brown and O. Sefiha (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Deviance* (pp. 111-121). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Appendix D: Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire

While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often** ...
Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?
or
Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
Yes No If yes, enter 1 _____

2. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often** ...
Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?
or
Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
Yes No If yes, enter 1 _____

3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you **ever** ...
Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?
or
Try to or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal sex with you?
Yes No If yes, enter 1 _____

4. Did you **often** feel that ...
No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?
or
Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
Yes No If yes, enter 1 _____

5. Did you **often** feel that ...
You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?
or
Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
Yes No If yes, enter 1 _____

6. Were your parents **ever** separated or divorced?
Yes No If yes, enter 1 _____

7. Was your mother or stepmother:
Often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?

or
Sometimes or often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?

or
Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
Yes No If yes, enter 1 _____
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?
Yes No If yes, enter 1 _____
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill or did a household member attempt suicide?
Yes No If yes, enter 1 _____
10. Did a household member go to prison?
Yes No If yes, enter 1 _____

Now add up your “Yes” answers: _____ This is your ACE Score