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# Factors Affecting the Longevity of Individual Terrorists

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Factors Affecting the Longevity of Individual Terrorists

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Sociology

by

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University of Arkansas  
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, and Criminal Justice, 2016

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine factors that affect the longevity of individual terrorists. Previous studies on terrorist group longevity have focused on the decisions terrorist groups have made rather than focusing on factors that help individuals evade capture. Literature also suggests that terrorists that manage to stay active may be able to use this as a valuable recruiting tool. This project examines six different relationships with longevity, including Attorney General (AG) Guidelines, demographics, ideology, level of participation, number of activities, and sophistication of attack. To examine these relationships, data will be used from the American Terrorism Study (ATS) to conduct bivariate analysis. The results support most of the exploratory hypotheses presented. This project will conclude by proposing possible avenues for future research.

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## Table of Contents

|      |  |    |
|------|--|----|
| I.   | Introduction.....  | 1  |
| II.  | Literature Review.....                                     | 3  |
|      | a. Demographics.....                                       | 4  |
|      | b. Terrorism Group Structure.....                          | 5  |
|      | c. Ideology.....   | 6  |
|      | d. Levels of Participatory Involvement.....                | 11 |
|      | e. Incident Sophistication.....                            | 12 |
|      | f. U.S. Attorney General Guidelines.....                   | 12 |
|      | g. Hypotheses.....   | 14 |
| III. | Data and Methods.....                                      | 15 |
|      | a. American Terrorism Study.....                           | 15 |
|      | b. Procedures.....   | 15 |
|      | c. Analytic Method.....                                    | 21 |
| IV.  | Results.....   | 22 |
|      | a. Descriptive Statistics.....                             | 22 |
|      | b. Results I: Analysis of Attorney General Guidelines..... | 23 |
|      | c. Results II: Analysis of Characteristics.....            | 29 |
|      | d. Results III: Analysis of Career Activity.....           | 31 |
| V.   | Discussion and Conclusions.....                            | 35 |
|      | a. Limitations and Future Research.....                    | 40 |
| VI.  | References.....  | 42 |

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement has a strong influence on how long terrorist organizations last (Freilich, Chermak, and Caspi, 2009). While they can combat terrorism, it is often not fully reflected in their training. When law enforcement trains on how to handle terrorism, they primarily focus on what they did “right,” and on their successes. In previous counterterrorism investigations, learning from past successes and failures of investigators is a significant segment of training, but they rarely discuss what terrorists are doing right to avoid capture. It is necessary to view this concept through the lens of successful terrorists to further understand how future plots can be thwarted (Smith, 2015).

It appears that the longer individuals can avoid arrest after they commit an incident, the more appeal participation will have to others when it comes to recruiting individuals who share their views and are bordering on violent radicalization. If being able to commit attacks and avoid capture can influence recruitment and radicalization, it becomes imperative that law enforcement gain a better understanding of this facet of longevity. Doing so will help solve and prevent future cases of terrorism (Jones and Libicki, 2008). Smith (2015; pg 2) stated that for this to happen, we need to focus on “factors that are associated with the survivability and sustainability of individual terrorists and, if affiliated, the manner in which they interact with their associates.” This project will aim to examine why it is important to study individual terrorists and then analyze factors that may lead to their demise.

Although, while training from the point of view of a successful terrorist may be ideal, it may not be a viable option due to the lack of data and research focusing on this topic. Given the possible relationship between longevity and its impact on recruitment and radicalization, the

phenomenon deserves to be studied. Although researchers have considered the sustainability and strategies of terrorist groups (Crenshaw, 1988; Rapoport, 1992; Hoffman, 1998; Frelich, Chermak and Caspi, 2009), they have not examined the factors that may be used by individuals to evade capture. This research is relevant to the field and lays the groundwork for being able to study individuals, giving a better understanding of how terrorists behave and how they can be stopped.

This thesis is a part of a larger project funded by the National Institute of Justice. The proposal of this project evolved from two previous projects that examined identity and framing theory<sup>1</sup> and examining patterns in the activities that terrorists engaged in before their planned incident.<sup>2</sup> Identity and framing theory find that individuals aim to emulate those who are successful. This finding would suggest that being successful in able to avoid capture may lead to an increase in individuals becoming radicalized. The sequencing project found that there are patterns in how terrorists behave before a planned incident. This result suggests that there may be a relationship between certain preparatory activities that took place before the planned incident and how long a terrorist will last. This thesis will examine individuals who have been charged with terrorism-related statutes in the United States from 1980 to 2018. The goal of the study is to analyze individuals' behaviors in an attempt to identify factors that may help sustain terrorists' careers. If terrorists' careers are shortened, the probability that individuals will be susceptible to radicalization may decrease.

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<sup>2</sup> Sequencing Terrorists' Precursor Behaviors, NIJ Grant #2013-ZA-BX-0001

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has examined the sustainability of terrorist groups and extremist movements, but they have not yet examined individual terrorists. Smith (2015) refers to two main reasons that this examination is necessary. First, there is substantial research suggesting that law enforcement involvement has a considerable impact on terrorist movements (Smith and Damphousse, 2009; Hamm, 1993, 2007; Smith, 1994). Jones and Libicki (2008) studied over 250 terrorist organizations and concluded that law enforcement was responsible for approximately 40% of groups demise when they arrested or killed their leaders. However, if law enforcement overreacts, they may receive backlash (Freilich, Chermak, and Caspi, 2009). Despite these varying outcomes, it is evident that law enforcement may be one of the most critical factors influencing group success or demise.

The second reason to study longevity of individuals, discussed by Smith (2015), is the shift in terroristic strategies over the past couple of decades. Strategies such as the leaderless resistance, were developed to avoid arrest and prosecution (Smith, 2000). Among the extreme right, “leaderless resistance” emerged, Islamic extremists employed the use of the “fatwah,” and environmental groups used the internet to communicate with individuals indirectly. These strategies demonstrate the widespread shift to uncoordinated violence models in the mid-1990s (Spaaij, 2010; Pantucci, 2011; Borum, Fein, and Vossekuil, 2012; Gill, Horgan and Deckert, 2014). As a result of the uncoordinated violence model, there was an increase of lone actors which has raised concerns for law enforcement (Michael, 2012). Among those concerned include the Department of Homeland Security, which stated in one of its briefs that “lone wolves and small cells... are the most dangerous threat to the national security of the United States” (DHS,

2009; pg 7). As lone wolves become more common, it is important to study individual and group sustainability tactics. Similarly, because it appears terrorists have learned that they can avoid arrest by restricting contact with group members, one must include uncoordinated violence strategies when analyzing longevity.

This thesis will examine six factors that may be related to longevity. These include demographic characteristics of the individual terrorists, their ideological beliefs, the extent of participatory involvement with other terrorists, the number of preparatory activities they were involved in per incident, the sophistication of the incident(s) in which the individuals were involved, and the impact that changes in the Attorney General Guidelines for Terrorism Investigations might have had on the ability of individual terrorists to evade capture. The following sections discuss these factors in greater detail.

### **Demographics**

It is possible that demographic characteristics may play a role in an individual terrorist's ability to avoid detection. Demographics such as age differences, gender, and different levels of educational attainment may have significant impacts on longevity. Prior research shows that there are measurable differences in the demographic characteristics of individuals belonging to different ideologies and that there are numerous factors that influence an individual's decision to join specific movements. Smith and Damphousse (1997), were able to identify critical demographic trends such as the average age of any indicted terrorist in the United States is 35-40. This is considerably older than the average age of persons charged in federal court. However, the average age of a member of the Islamic extremist movement is in the late 20s, which is still older than expected but much younger than the average terrorist defendant (Smith and Morgan, 1994).

While the age of a terrorist may vary, the gender of a terrorist is much more predictable. Terrorism is a male-dominated career, especially with far-right and Islamic extremists, who are overwhelmingly male (Smith and Morgan, 1994). Environmental and far-left extremists have more female members and more females in leadership roles. The increase in women in these groups are likely due to the nature of their beliefs; these groups are more egalitarian which gives females the opportunity to have higher levels of participation. Far-left and environmental extremists are typically more highly educated – many were radicalized during their post-secondary education – while far-right and Islamic extremists tend to have lower levels of education (Corley, Smith, and Damphousse, 2005). This thesis will demonstrate that demographic differences may be causally related to the longevity of individual terrorists.

### **Terrorism Group Structure**

As mentioned previously, the structure and tactics of terrorism are pursuant to the goal of longevity. The three major models are rural revolutionary; cellular; and unorganized. These models formed as a response to the failure of the model that came before it. As terrorist organizations evolve, they have become less formally structured and more fragmented.

The rural revolutionary model successfully aided Fidel Castro in his overtaking of Cuba: his strategy was to gain control of the countryside to take over urban areas. Using guerilla tactics, Castro formed a military with a hierarchal structure to implement his takeover. Subsequently, the fall of Havana in 1959 solidified the success of the revolution. The rural revolutionary model began to break down in 1967 when Castro's ally, Che Guevera, attempted to use it in Bolivia. Guevera and his men, however, were captured and killed, ending his attempt at a revolution. This failure led to a significant shift in terrorist tactics (Smith, 2000).

Before Guevara was killed, Carlos Marighella wrote *The Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla*, which was a guideline for guerrilla warfare. It became a staple in far-left literature, advocating attacking capitalism and urban centers, leading to the urban cellular model (Smith and Morgan, 1994). This model organized extremists into cells, so the leader of the group was unknown to the fighters. Marighella's *Minimanual* influenced terrorist cells to move to cities, the heart of capitalism, to attack it from within. The *Minimanual* also influenced groups during the 1970s and 1980s to target symbols of capitalism such as banks and armories (Smith, 2000).

The government enacted guidelines to crack down on terrorism during the 1970s, ultimately resulting in the indictments of approximately 200 terrorists from all ideologies. Notable leaders from the far-right, Richard Butler, Robert Miles, and Louis Beam, were all acquitted of charges linked to their involvement in the "War in '84." This failure to convict led the far-right movement to call for leaderless resistance. Leaderless resistance represents merely one of several tactics referred to as "uncoordinated violence." The new structure was intended to distance leaders from crimes to limit their liability with extremist groups. With individuals acting on their own, the leaders hoped to avoid further conspiracy charges. Uncoordinated violence and fatwas call for violent action against certain entities in which individuals will take these orders and use them as inspiration to carry out plots of their own (Smith, 2000).

## **Ideology**

Ideology can be encompassing of many different characteristics that may be beneficial to longevity, such as the types of incidents committed or the type of person drawn to the cause. While demographic differences can have an effect, unique characteristics may contribute to differences in longevity. Successful groups and individuals often take advantage of sustainability tactics that contribute to survival. Over time, different types of ideological movements have held

their place in the spotlight because movements can be reflective of the political climate of their time. Crenshaw (1991) stated that they are likely to meet their demise when the public is no longer supportive of their cause, or their purpose has been mitigated. The sections that follow will discuss ideologies, and how their unique tactics may relate to an individual's longevity.

### *Far-Left Extremism*

In the past, individuals that subscribed to far-left ideologies tended to be Marxist. Typically, their goals were to overthrow the existing government in favor of the formation of a new system, whether it be socialism, communism, anarchy. They are typically “forward-looking” – desiring society to morph into a system that the U.S. has previously never had. Far-left terrorists in the U.S. evolved out of the anti-war and civil rights movements of the 1960s. Many of these individuals were involved in the student revolution of the 1960s, or they were involved in prison reform and unionization. Individuals involved with the far-left tended to be higher educated and more diverse in gender and race (Smith and Morgan, 1994).

Far-left terrorist groups began committing severe attacks against the United States government in the 1960s and 1970s (Smith, 1994). They typically utilized the cellular model, but they sometimes worked together. For example, Marilyn Buck, of the May 19<sup>th</sup> Communist Organization (M19CO), would work with other groups such as the Black Liberation Army (BLA) to commit attacks and make it more difficult for law enforcement to decipher who committed such attacks. While this may have benefitted them in some situations, the affiliations also left them more exposed to law enforcement. Left-wing terrorism began to wane at the end of the Cold War as communism fell out of favor. Along with M19CO and the BLA, other significant far-left groups include the United Freedom Front (UFF), the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Weather Underground (WU) (Smith and Morgan, 1994).

The UFF was the most successful far-left terrorist group in the 1970s and 1980s. They were opposed to the U.S. military's intervention in, and foreign policy toward, Central America. They were a viable group for nine years, from 1975 to 1984. During that time, they managed to commit at least nine bank robberies and 20 bombings, although they are suspected of having committed additional attacks. The members of the UFF never recruited outside of their core eight members, which included racially and gender diverse individuals with prison backgrounds. They managed to avoid arrest by maintaining the appearance of typical nuclear families. The group had three couples, two of which eventually had three children each. To communicate with each other, they used public telephones and mail drops, so they could not be tracked (Smith, 1994).

### *Far-Right Extremism*

Far-right terrorists have numerous issues that they may feel compelled to fight for, such as gun rights, anti-abortion, freedom of religion, anti-tax, anti-minority, etc. The desire to maintain traditional views typically motivates their ideology, and for society to regress to opinions on civil rights and liberties more prominent in America's history. Members of the far-right tend to be white males with less than a college education, although many right-wing group leaders were highly educated. Far-right terrorism gained much of its momentum in the 1980s and 1990s, primarily as a backlash to the progress made by more liberal groups in the United States during the same period. Notable far-right groups of this time include the Order; Covenant, Sword, and Arm of the Lord (CSA); and the Aryan Nations (Smith, 1994).

In 1992, after the attempted prosecution of three prominent far-right leaders, Louis Beam wrote an essay calling for a "leaderless resistance" strategy for members of the extreme far-right. Shields (2008) found that this new approach had a significant effect on terrorists' trials, such as the average number of perpetrators per case, and how of those many turned state's evidence.

This strategy evolved from the failed use of rural compounds by the far-right and other terrorist organizations.

The leaderless resistance strategy calls for “lone actors,” which gives individuals no directions, no knowledge of anyone else in the movement, and it requires that they know that they would take full blame for any attacks if caught. Lone actor strategies require that members be self-taught in all they need to know. It is assumed that members of the cell will have the same mindset, and they will likely react to certain situations with similar levels of disgust. They are thus allowed to trust in their disgust and anger to guide them in selecting suitable targets. This strategy protects others with similar beliefs, allowing the movement to live long past the arrest or death of any individual perpetrator (Beam, 1992).

A prime example of the leaderless resistance approach is Eric Rudolph, who bombed Olympic Park in Atlanta, GA in 1996, and committed other anti-gay and anti-abortion attacks. Once police discovered that he had committed the bombings, Rudolph went into hiding, which led to a five-year manhunt. He used survival skills to live in the woods. According to those who were present, he seemed relieved and tired of running when he was finally caught (Vollers, 2007).

### *Islamic Extremism*

The Islamic extremist movement has a deep history abroad, and it is typically anti-western and anti-imperialism in nature. It operates under jihadism; this terminology became widespread after the 9/11 attacks. Members of the movement did not start attacking American entities until the 1980s, and even then, the targets were located abroad. Targets included U.S. embassies, U.S. flights, and locations where the U.S. military spent time, such as clubs. These individuals are typically less educated than other types of terrorists, as stated earlier. After 9/11,

Islamic extremism tends to be the ideology that the public most associates with the concept of “terrorism.”

Due to the relative newness of Islamic terrorism in the United States, the number of jihadists who have evaded capture for an extended period is relatively small. Their plots range from somewhat complicated, for example, the 9/11 attacks, to unsophisticated events that require minimal training or preparation, for example, the Manhattan bike path attack. Although they have taken advantage of the internet for recruitment (Bargh & McKenna, 2004), there has yet to be a radicalized domestic individual who has had substantial longevity.

### *Environmental Extremism*

Environmental terrorism is unique compared to other types of terrorism due to its motives and methods, but its adherents’ views may overlap with different ideologies as well. Their core motivation is to protect the planet and animals; they do not believe that any living thing should be killed or used in scientific testing. They often oppose urban sprawl because of its impact on nature. As a result of their beliefs, they tend to commit their attacks at night to ensure that they do not harm any humans or living creatures. They often target establishments such as logging companies or universities that test on animals (Schwartz, 1998).

The first recognized environmental group was the Eco-Raiders, who were against urban sprawl and committed attacks against newly established housing complexes in Arizona in 1971. They destroyed and vandalized houses, which led to millions of dollars in damages (Arnold, 1997). Other environmental groups include Earth First, Animal Liberation Front (ALF), Environmental Liberation Front (ELF) and The Family. ELF had a unique structure; there was no formal membership, and anyone who committed attacks in their name was considered an “Elf.” ELF was part of the movement towards an uncoordinated violence model (Liddick, 2006).

An example of overlapping views in the environmental movement is Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber. In addition to wanting to protect the environment, he also had far-left views. Kaczynski managed to commit attacks for 18 years before the FBI captured him (Freeman, 2014). During this time, he mailed 16 bombs that killed three individuals and injured 23, requiring the FBI to engage in the most expensive manhunt in U.S. history. He was against the use of technology, viewing it as being against nature and the human psyche (Arnold, 1997). Kaczynski was an isolationist and lived a self-sustained lifestyle in the woods. He took numerous precautions to throw law enforcement off his trail, such as claiming that he was a group and making sure that none of his victims had connections to each other (Freeman, 2014). His writing style in his manifesto ultimately led to his brother recognizing him and having him arrested (Simpson, 2016).

### **Levels of Participatory Involvement**

An analysis for the annual START Center meeting developed this concept (Smith et al., 2015). Researchers examined 476 indictees who were linked to 264 planned incidents from 1980 to 2018, building on the work of Pantucci (2011), Borum et al. (2012), and Gruenewald et al. (2013). Smith et al. examined the pattern of indictee involvement by creating a participatory typology. The typology (see Table 1) is based on three elements: 1) is the person affiliated with a group or movement; 2) did the individual have help committing any preparatory behaviors; and 3) did the person have help committing the planned or completed incident. Although this may be an oversimplified way to measure involvement, it forms categories that can be operationalized (Smith, 2015).

## **Incident Sophistication**

The complexity of a planned or completed attack may influence many of the factors analyzed. The level of participation, and the average number of preparatory acts, the individuals engage in per incident may impact their longevity. A project done by Smith (2016) examined the sequence of terroristic behaviors. The sequencing project used these variables as a predictor of failure or success of an incident, while this study will use the variables to examine the effect on longevity.

## **U.S. Attorney General Guidelines**

The U.S. Attorney General (AG) Guidelines provide the FBI with direction on how to conduct investigations. Since 1976, there have been four significant changes in the AG Guidelines that have influenced how terrorism investigations are handled. Many of these changes reflect substantial events that took place, the most notable being the legislation put in place after 9/11. As stated previously, law enforcement intervention is one of the top reasons for a terrorist's demise. Therefore, these guidelines will influence terrorists' successes and failures.

During the late 1970s, a restrictive set of AG Guidelines hindered the FBI. The Watergate scandal and the FBI's involvement in COINTEL were examples of the FBI engaging in "political policing." The FBI abused its power, which led to the creation of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the implementation of the Edward Levi Guidelines in 1976. These guidelines were intended to restore the FBI's muddied image by returning them to a place of "political neutrality." Due to the new restrictions on law enforcement, many terrorist investigations were discontinued, allowing groups that had survived up to that point to continue relatively free of investigation (Smith, Karlson, Damphousse, 2001).

The Levi Guidelines were in effect from 1976 to 1982. In the early 1980s, concern emerged about terrorist groups from Libya and domestic far-left groups. As a result, the William French Smith Guidelines were implemented. Within two years, the FBI initiated a series of counterterrorism programs and task forces to fight terrorism around the country. During that period there were numerous arrests of prolific far-left leaders, as well as many far-right extremists who had emerged in the mid-1980s. The 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center temporarily shifted the FBI's focus to Islamic extremism and provided a hint of things to come. It was not long before the FBI had to alter its attention back to domestic terrorism after two significant events fueled the far-right movement.

The first catalyst was the killing of the wife and son of Randy Weaver, an anti-tax advocate, during a standoff that ensued at Ruby Ridge, Idaho. Following the incident, Louis Beam held a meeting in Estes Park, Colorado, where he called for a "leaderless resistance" model (Kaplan, 1997). The second catalyst took place in April of 1993, when ATF agents used extreme tactics to force David Koresh to surrender at his Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. The compound caught on fire and over 80 people, including children, died. Both these events rallied the far-right over the separation of church and state, and gun rights (Edwards, 2001). These events were the impetus for McVeigh's bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Consequently, the late 1990s witnessed a significant increase in terrorism investigations (Smith, Karlson, and Damphousse, 2001).

The William French Smith Guidelines lasted for nearly 23 years, until the attacks on September 11, 2001. In response, Attorney General John Ashcroft altered the AG Guidelines in 2002. The Ashcroft Guidelines loosened restrictions on investigations by giving the FBI more tools. The Department of Justice made prevention a priority by providing tools to aid

communication, thus shifting the role of the FBI from an investigative agency to an intelligence agency. The Ashcroft Guidelines created fusion centers as a way to streamline intelligence across agencies (Ashcroft, 2002).

In 2008, the Mukasey Guidelines were implemented, further lessening restrictions and giving the FBI even more investigative power. Mukasey said these changes were necessary if the FBI wanted to become an intelligence-gathering agency in addition to a crime-solving agency. Soon after the guidelines went into effect, the number of individuals prosecuted for terrorism links nearly doubled. Impacts like this suggest that the less restrictive the AG Guidelines are, the shorter the longevity of terrorists will be due to the increased possibility of law enforcement intervention.

### **Hypotheses**

- H<sub>1</sub>. The fewer restrictions the Attorney General Guidelines impose on the FBI, the shorter the longevity of individual terrorists.
- H<sub>2</sub>. Demographic characteristics have an effect on the longevity of individual terrorists.
- H<sub>3</sub>. An individual's ideology will have an effect on their longevity.
- H<sub>4</sub>. The greater the level of participatory involvement, the shorter the longevity of the individual terrorist.
- H<sub>5</sub>. The greater the number of preparatory activities an individual participates in per incident, the shorter the longevity of the individual terrorist.
- H<sub>6</sub>. The more "sophisticated" the planned or committed attack is, the shorter the longevity of the individual terrorist.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **DATA AND METHODS**

#### **American Terrorism Study (ATS)**

This project will analyze data that includes officially designated terrorism cases by the FBI from 1980 to 2018, which were collected for the ATS and maintained in an Oracle database. Additionally, the ATS includes over 4,500 antecedent activities, of which 2,145 are preparatory activities for an incident. The database houses over 1,000,000 pages of court documents from federal criminal cases as well as media accounts of events. This database contains over 800 variables on approximately 2,900 individuals indicted on terrorism-related charges. Of those indicted, 865 were considered perpetrators, meaning that they were linked to a plot. Other individuals who were not linked to a terrorist incident, were excluded for engaging in crimes such as material support of a terrorist organization. It was necessary that this sample is made up of individuals linked to a plot because that is how “longevity” was operationalized. To code longevity, the date of their preparatory activity and arrest must be coded. Court records and media documents determine how cases are coded and the inconsistencies of this data led to some cases not having enough data to provide dates for the longevity measure. Of these 865 perpetrators, there was enough information to code longevity on 331 individuals.

#### **Procedures**

This project followed the procedures set out in the NIJ grant on which the project is based. These procedures were applied to the variables necessary to operationalize the hypotheses. There were three components required to complete this study. The first involves identifying and coding existing variables for use in the hypotheses. The second is the collection of data on new terrorism cases and data collection for new variables. The final component

involved coding the time-stamps of preparatory events, terrorism incidents, and post-incident behaviors that will be used to calculate and analyze individuals' longevity.

### **Component 1. Variable Selection and Coding Strategy**

I examined the variables currently in the ATS that were used to test the hypotheses. For the hypotheses, the variables can be operationalized in multiple ways. The following sections will explain how the variables were operationalized and Table 2 will provide an example.

The dependent variable in this project is the "longevity" of an individual terrorist. Although this has not been studied before, findings from prior literature on *group* longevity assisted in determining how *individual* longevity should be analyzed. Several studies have noted that the average terrorist *group* lasted for about one year (Rappoport, 1992; LaFree and Dugan, 2009). This finding helped determine how to divide longevity into categories (shown in Table 3). The shortest category is six months, half of what the average group longevity has been estimated. A second category captures six months less and six months more than the average lifespan of the group. The third category was more than six months and less than three years, because, based on the distribution of longevities, it appeared that "greater than three years" was significantly distinct from other categories. The longest category is over three years, which is three times the average longevity that has been discussed in previous literature.

Hypothesis one utilizes the longevity and AG Guidelines variable. Longevity was calculated by counting the number of days in between an individual's first preparatory act and the date of their arrest. The ATS defines a preparatory act as an act that takes place before an attack, that is in furtherance of the goal of that incident, such as a meeting to discuss, purchase of materials, or surveillance of a target. Individuals were then placed into one of four AG Guidelines eras. This was decided based on the date of the individual's first preparatory act. If an

individual's first act was during the Levi Guidelines, but they were not caught until the Smith Guidelines, their longevity would be calculated with the Levi Guidelines.

Hypothesis two examines demographics associated with longevity. The demographic of age was coded in years and then broken down into three categories. These categories were natural breaks in the data to have a similar number of individuals in each group. Education was coded into three categories: high school, college, and post-graduate. An individual did not need to finish college or post-graduate education, the only need to have some amount of education past the previous category. Lastly, gender was coded as male and female.

Hypothesis three examines longevity's relationship with an individual's ideology. The ideology variable was divided into four of the most common ideologies in the database: far-left, far-right, Islamic Extremist, and environmental extremist. This excludes individuals who are categorized as "single-issue" and "nationalist/separatist." Single-issue would be individuals whose personal ideology does not fall in line with the four major ideologies. For example, an individual who has a distaste for the American judicial system and attempts to kill judges to further their point. Nationalist/separatist would be individuals who want to take their group of people and create their own nation, such as Puerto Rican terrorists.

Hypothesis four utilized the definitions illustrated in Table 1. The number of elements mentioned previously defines the typologies. A loner would be someone who would answer "no" to all three questions. An example of a loner is Ted Kaczynski, who had no help sending bombs and was not strictly associated with a movement. James Alex Fields, Jr. is an example of an affiliated loner; he had no help preparing a vehicle attack that killed one protestor, but he was affiliated with the far-right movement. Timothy McVeigh, who committed the Oklahoma City Bombing with help from Terry Nichols, is an example of a lone conspirator because he had help

preparing for an attack but committed the attack alone. The individuals who carried out 9/11 were part of a group, having received assistance in preparing for and engaging in an attack together.

Although the typology coding would have provided more detail to the analysis, because of the small number of true loners it was necessary to collapse loner and affiliated loner into a “loner” and collapse lone conspirator and group into a “group” category. The narrative is still effective because the only difference between loner and lone conspirator is an ideology affiliation. The main difference between the collapsed group labeled “loner” and “group” is whether or not the individual had help in their planned attack.

**Table 1. Participatory Typology**

|   | Loners |                   | Group             |              |
|---|--------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|
|   | Loners | Affiliated Loners | Lone Conspirators | Cells/Groups |
| <b>Had Help Committing Incident</b>         | No     | No                | No                | Yes          |
| <b>Had Help Committing Preparatory Acts</b> | No     | No                | Yes               | Yes          |
| <b>Movement/Group Affiliation</b>           | No     | Yes               | Yes               | Yes          |

Hypothesis five and six examine longevity from an incident standpoint. Hypothesis five examines the average number of preparatory activities an individual engages in, per incident. The reason for using the average number for the measure is because if the raw number of preparatory activities an individual had was used, it would not make sense. Individuals who lasted longer would automatically have more preparatory activities because they would have had

more time to engage in them. Because the average is the necessary measure, this analysis uses perpetrator data instead of person-level data.

Hypothesis six examines the sophistication of the planned incident that the individual was engaged in. The database has 26 categories of type of weapons that the level of sophistication was based on. These categories were re-coded into three categories, least, moderate, and most sophisticated. Least sophisticated incidents use weapons that are accessible to any person, such as a knife attack. A moderately sophisticated incident uses weapons that are not as accessible such as a firearm. Lastly, a highly sophisticated incident uses a weapon that takes a special set of knowledge to utilize, such as a bomb.

**Table 2. Variable List**

| <b>Hyp.</b>                        | <b>Variable</b>   | <b>Ind/Dep</b> | <b>Measure</b>  | <b>Notes</b>  |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---|---|
| <i>Attorney General Guidelines</i> |                   |                |   |   |
| 1.                                 | Date              | Independent    | Date of first preparatory activity.                                 | Date will be used to categorize which guidelines an individual began their career in. |
| 1.                                 | Longevity         | Dependent      | Same as in #1 above.  | See #1 above.   |
| <i>Characteristics</i>             |                   |                |   |   |
| 2.                                 | <i>Age</i>        | Independent    | Age at indictment in years  | Age at first preparatory behavior   |
| 2.                                 | <i>Education</i>  | Independent    | Education in years  | Recoded to three categories   |
| 2.                                 | <i>Gender</i>     | Independent    | Male/Female   |   |
| 2.                                 | <i>Longevity</i>  | Dependent      | Ranges from date of individual's first preparatory event to arrest. | Continuous variable in "days"; collapsed categories for bivariate analysis            |
| 3.                                 | <i>Group Type</i> | Independent    | Left, Right, Environmental, AQAM                                    |   |
| 3.                                 | <i>Longevity</i>  | Dependent      | Same as in #1 above.  | See #1 above.   |

**Table 2 cont.**

| <i>Career Activity</i> |                                  |             |   |   |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|---|---|
| 4.                     | <i>Participatory Involvement</i> | Independent | Loner, Affiliated Loner, Lone Conspirator, Cell/Group Member        | Recoded into loner and group  |
| 4.                     | <i>Longevity</i>                 | Dependent   | Same as in #1 above.  | See #1 above.   |
| 5.                     | <i>Career Preparation</i>        | Independent | Average number of preparatory activities by individual.             | Total preparatory activities divided by the number of incidents they are linked to. |
| 5.                     | <i>Longevity</i>                 | Dependent   | Same as in #1 above.  | See #1 above.   |
| <i>Incident Type</i>   |                                  |             |   |   |
| 6.                     | Incident Sophistication          | Dependent   | 7 category Likert item ranging from “least” to “most” sophisticated | Used index developed in “Sequencing” Project.                                       |
| 6.                     | Longevity                        | Dependent   | Same as in #1 above.  | See #1 above.   |

**Component 2. Data Collection and Variable Coding**

As of 2018, the ATS included 1,140 case studies linked to 1,425 federal terrorism cases. All of my hypotheses were conducted at the individual level, except hypothesis five was analyzed at the perpetrator level. A perpetrator is created in ATS when an individual is linked to an incident. This change in unit is necessary because the number of average preparatory activities was calculated using the number of incidents they are linked to. Data collection was completed on 605 terrorism incidents in the United States from 1980 to 2018. Analyses were limited to the 693 indicted individuals in the ATS who were linked to the planning or completion of a terrorist attack in the United States. Individuals who were involved in material support cases were not included, because they were unable to be linked to an incident. The variable *longevity* is the dependent variable in the hypotheses stated above. It measures the length of time in days

from the individual's first preparatory act to the date of their arrest; this does not include acts that were not part of the preparatory process.

### **Component 3. Sample/Case Selection for Analysis**

Although the potential sample of perpetrators would come from the entirety of the FBI court cases designated "terrorism and terrorism-related," some cases were either not available or appropriate for this analysis. For example, defendants who were exonerated, and defendants who pleaded guilty almost immediately, did not have significant court documentation. Cases that were unresolved were excluded from the analysis, along with financial or material support cases.

#### **Analytic Method**

Once the variables were operationalized, the data was transformed into a flat data file in SPSS and analyzed using statistical tests. Analysis was conducted by examining the distribution of all variables. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the independent variables to detect outlier cases. Then, the bivariate relationships between independent and dependent variables were examined by finding correlations and testing for significance. These findings will provide tools for understanding the relationship of specific behavioral patterns and the longevity of individual terrorists.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Descriptive Statistics

This analysis used data from the ATS, which includes information on over 1,500 terrorism-related court cases. Approximately 2,000 persons were indicted in these federal criminal cases. Of those persons, 865 were linked to a terrorist incident. The eliminated persons were indicted on charges relating to material support, conspiracy, or other charges, indicating that they were supporting terrorism but had not yet committed an attack. Out of the 865 persons who were linked to an incident, 331 had enough information coded to determine their longevity. The person had to have a first preparatory date and a neutralizing arrest date coded to identify how many days they “survived.”

**Table 3: Longevity Descriptive Statistics**

|                  | <b># of Persons</b><br>(n=331) | <b>Length</b> |
|------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Short</b>     | 103                            | 0-6 months    |
| <b>Medium</b>    | 83                             | 7-18 months   |
| <b>Long</b>      | 61                             | 18-36 months  |
| <b>Very Long</b> | 84                             | 36+ months    |
| <b>Mean</b>      |                                | 28.39 months  |
| <b>Median</b>    |                                | 14.13 months  |

According to Table 3, the average “lifespan” for an individual terrorist is approximately two years. Many factors may contribute to an individual’s longevity, whether it is an internal or external characteristic of the environment in which they are operating. The following sections analyze different variables that appear to be related to an individual’s ability to survive longer than others.

## **Results I: Analysis of Attorney General Guidelines**

As mentioned previously, research has shown that law enforcement has a significant impact on a terrorist's success or failure. Based on this notion, it is worth analyzing how policing tactics have had an effect on terrorists over time. When looking at terrorism investigations, there have been four significant shifts in how these investigations are conducted. The Attorney General Guidelines determine these investigative procedures (Ashcroft, 2002). The guidelines can significantly impact law enforcement's ability to investigate terrorists' and impact terrorists' ability to avoid arrest or capture. This analysis examined longevity's relationship to the Levi, Smith, Ashcroft, and Mukasey Guidelines.

The Levi Guidelines were enacted in 1976 as a result of a political overstep by the FBI during Watergate and the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTEL). At that time, the majority of terrorists arrested identified with a far-left ideology, while none were affiliated with an environmental or Islamic extremist ideology as shown in Table 4. The period was the peak of the far-left and beginning of the far-right. Environmental and Islamic extremist ideologies had yet to make it to the U.S. at that point. Terrorists during that period tended to be well educated. Additionally, gender was the most diverse out of any guideline period, with approximately 17% of perpetrators being female. All individuals captured were part of a group, because the cellular model was the dominant choice of organization for terrorist groups. Additionally, the data only contains individuals in groups, because the FBI did not recognize individual terrorists until after the advent of the leaderless resistance approach.

**Table 4: AG Guideline Demographics**

|                        |                   | %                    |                        |                          |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|                        |                   | <b>Levi<br/>N=30</b> | <b>Smith<br/>N=232</b> | <b>Ashcroft<br/>N=36</b> | <b>Mukasey<br/>N=33</b> |
| <b>Ideology</b>        | Far-Left          | 57.9                 | 9.5                    | 0                        | 0                       |
|                        | Far-Right         | 42.1                 | 53                     | 22.9                     | 28.1                    |
|                        | Islamic Extremism | 0                    | 21.1                   | 37.1                     | 68.8                    |
|                        | Environmental     | 0                    | 16.4                   | 40                       | 3.1                     |
| <b>Education</b>       | High School       | 33.3                 | 40.1                   | 31                       | 30.8                    |
|                        | College           | 44.4                 | 50.8                   | 34.5                     | 38.5                    |
|                        | Post-Graduate     | 22.2                 | 9.1                    | 34.5                     | 30.8                    |
| <b>Gender</b>          | Male              | 83.3                 | 87.1                   | 91.7                     | 93.9                    |
|                        | Female            | 16.7                 | 12.9                   | 8.3                      | 6.1                     |
| <b>Lone Actor Type</b> | Group             | 100                  | 84.8                   | 63.9                     | 51.5                    |
|                        | Loner             | 0                    | 15.2                   | 36.1                     | 48.5                    |

The Smith Guidelines loosened restrictions on law enforcement and began investigating terrorism the same way they investigated racketeering. These guidelines lasted the longest of the four, from 1983 to 2001, resulting in an approximately eight times as many terrorists becoming active during the Smith Guidelines. At that time, the far-left had fallen out of favor as a result of the end of the cold war and the failure of their cellular structure. The far-right was on the rebound, particularly after shifting to leaderless resistance. Islamic extremists had also begun conducting attacks on U.S. soil while environmental terrorism was also on the rise. On average, individuals active during the Smith Guidelines were less educated, and gender distribution was similar to that of the Levi Guidelines. While being in a group was still the dominant actor type, there was an increase in those acting outside of a group structure.

The Ashcroft Guidelines were implemented after 9/11 and were in place until 2007. They made terrorism investigations easier for law enforcement. This shift was made in part because of

the rise of the leaderless resistance movement; the guidelines needed to be loosened to allow law enforcement to better investigate the threat of “lone wolf” terrorism. The majority of arrests at that time were environmental and Islamic extremist individuals. This is not to say that there were no persons arrested with a far-left ideology after the Smith Guidelines, only that none of them were included in this sample. Levels of education were evenly distributed among the active terrorists at the time. The percentage of individuals involved in groups continued to decline. The trend also appears in the Mukasey Guidelines.

The Mukasey Guidelines went into effect in 2008 and are still active at the time of this analysis (2018). There is an increase in the prosecution of Islamic extremists, while environmentalists have declined. As mentioned previously, the percentage of individuals involved in groups have continued to decrease. It is notable that approximately two decades prior, 100% of individuals were involved in a terrorist group as opposed to working alone, whereas, in the Mukasey Guidelines, the percentage of individuals belonging to groups dropped by 48.5% (Table 4).

**Table 5: AG Guidelines and Individual’s Longevity Distribution**

| <b>Guidelines</b> | <b>Short</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Medium</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Long</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Very Long</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>% Total</b> |
|-------------------|--------------|----------|---------------|----------|-------------|----------|------------------|----------|--------------|----------------|
| <b>Levi</b>       | 0            | 0        | 1             | 3.3      | 10          | 33.3     | 19               | 63.3     | 30           | 100            |
| <b>Smith</b>      | 70           | 30.2     | 60            | 25.9     | 47          | 20.3     | 55               | 23.7     | 232          | 100            |
| <b>Ashcroft</b>   | 9            | 25       | 13            | 36.1     | 4           | 11.1     | 10               | 27.8     | 36           | 100            |
| <b>Mukasey</b>    | 24           | 72.7     | 9             | 27.3     | 0           | 0        | 0                | 0        | 33           | 100            |

**Table 6: AG Guidelines and Individual's Longevity**

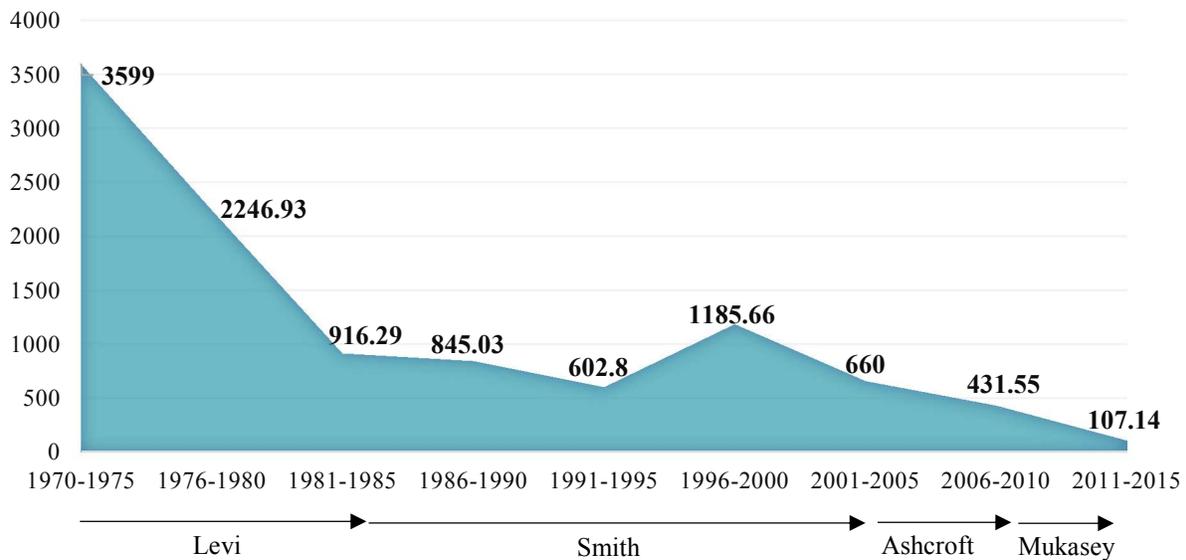
| <b>Guidelines</b> | <b>Mean in Days</b> | <b>Median in Days</b> |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Levi</b>       | 2188.8              | 1660                  |
| <b>Smith</b>      | 812.37              | 442                   |
| <b>Ashcroft</b>   | 648.69              | 396                   |
| <b>Mukasey</b>    | 133.79              | 99                    |
| <b>Total</b>      | 851.66              | 473                   |

Table 5 shows a bivariate examination of an individual's longevity and which guidelines they began their terrorist career. There is a significant ( $\chi^2=.000$ ) pattern showing a decline in longevity over time. This decline also appears in the mean differences; there was a distinct drop in the implementations of every new set of guidelines, which supports hypothesis one. On average, terrorists lasted six years if they began their careers during the Levi Guidelines. If they started their activity during the Smith Guidelines, their average longevity would only be about two years. Under the Mukasey Guidelines, terrorists have only "survived" 134 days from their first involvement with terrorism to the time of their arrest or demise. The overall average for an individual's longevity is 851 days, and their median is 473 days.

The AG Guidelines and terrorists have a reactionary relationship with one another; both evolve when the other changes. As law enforcement learns the structures of terrorist organizations, the groups need to switch to a new strategy to evade law enforcement. The shift from rural revolutionary to cellular and then to uncoordinated violence were done in attempts to lessen contact with law enforcement (Freilich, Chermak, and Caspi, 2009). These tactical changes were necessary because it had become apparent that law enforcement was the main reason that terrorist groups met their demise. As terrorists shifted their tactics, law enforcement changed their strategies to stay ahead. For example, the rise of far-left groups during the Levi Guidelines was one reason that the Smith Guidelines were implemented. As law enforcement is

given more freedom in conducting terrorist investigations, they are more likely to shorten terrorists' longevity.

Over time, the AG Guidelines have loosened restrictions against law enforcement investigations. This change is reflected in the average length of longevity during each guideline period (See Figure 1). The Levi Guidelines were the most restrictive on law enforcement and that period yields the highest average longevity for individuals. None of the terrorists who became active during the Levi Guidelines had “short” longevity, and only one had a longevity lasting between six and eighteen months. All other individuals lasted longer than a year and a half, with 63% of them lasting longer than three years. This illustrates law enforcement’s reluctance in political policing, allowing terrorists to operate with impunity during the Levi period.



**Figure 1: AG Guideline Average Longevity in Days**

Once the high volume of far-left terrorist successes became apparent, President Reagan felt it was necessary to make a change to stop leftist groups. The Smith Guidelines were a response to this rise in terrorism and made it a priority to bring these groups to an end. They

were successful. The far-left movement was decimated after their implementation. Table 4 shows that during the Levi Guidelines, approximately 58% of active terrorists were far-left, while during the Smith Guidelines the far-left only constituted 9.5%.

Although the Smith era had the highest number of terrorists overall, it is due to the guidelines lasting much longer than the others. During the Smith era, only 23% (n=55) of the terrorist had a longevity that is characterized as very long, while 63% (n=19) lasted that long during the Levi Guidelines. When comparing those who lasted less than a year and a half, Smith had 56% (n=130) of terrorists in that category while Levi had only 3.3% (n=1). Overall, the shift was successful in reducing the longevity of terrorists who were active during the Levi Guidelines. The length of the Smith Guidelines also meant that affected the far-right movement when it began to rise in popularity. As a response to the guidelines, the far-right shifted to leaderless resistance, resulting in lone actors becoming a topic of discussion for law enforcement.

Although the implementation of the Ashcroft Guidelines came after the 9/11 attacks, they were also in response to the new concept of lone wolves advanced not only by the far-right, but also by environmentalists and Islamic extremists. Even though Al Qaeda was arguably the most discussed terrorist threat at the time, there was also much discussion about the government having no response for lone wolves. This period was the beginning of the FBI becoming a preventative agency instead of a reactive agency. This priority switch became even more evident in the Mukasey Guidelines.

The Mukasey Guidelines were the least restrictive on law enforcement. The high number of individuals with longevity lasting less than six months is a reflection of this lack of restriction. While the Ashcroft Guidelines claimed to make the FBI preventative, it was not until the

Mukasey Guidelines that it was truly practiced. This preventative strategy has led to zero individuals in this analysis lasting longer than a year and a half. This is a meaningful change compared to the Levi Guidelines when nearly all terrorists active at the time lasted longer than a year. The difference in guidelines has allowed for law enforcement to investigate terrorism better and actively eliminate the threat specific terrorists pose.

## Results II: Analysis of Characteristics

It is difficult to demographically profile a terrorist because of the nature of the crime itself. Terrorism can be the result of various motivations, meaning that a wide variety of individuals will engage in this crime. Although individuals with similar motives may have comparable characteristics, it is worth analyzing them to observe any possible relationship between longevity and a specific characteristic.

**Table 7: Longevity Demographic Characteristics**

|                                  |                   | %                 |                      |                      |                        |      |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------|
|                                  |                   | Short<br>(0-6mo.) | Medium<br>(7-18 mo.) | Long<br>(1.5-3 yrs.) | Very Long<br>(3+ yrs.) | Sig. |
| <b>Age</b><br><b>n=218</b>       | Less than 26      | 33.8              | 24.7                 | 15.6                 | 26                     | .388 |
|                                  | 27-36             | 34.3              | 22.9                 | 14.3                 | 28.6                   |      |
|                                  | More than 26      | 29.6              | 26.8                 | 26.8                 | 16.9                   |      |
| <b>Gender</b><br><b>n=338</b>    | Male              | 33.3              | 25.3                 | 16.5                 | 25.3                   | .074 |
|                                  | Female            | 17.1              | 22                   | 29.3                 | 31.7                   |      |
| <b>Education</b><br><b>n=266</b> | High School       | 43.6              | 19.8                 | 16.8                 | 19.8                   | .043 |
|                                  | College           | 27.8              | 30.2                 | 20.6                 | 21.4                   |      |
|                                  | Post Graduate     | 25.6              | 20.5                 | 15.4                 | 38.5                   |      |
| <b>Ideology</b><br><b>n=324</b>  | Far-Left          | 22.2              | 16.7                 | 38.9                 | 22.2                   | .000 |
|                                  | Far-Right         | 37.1              | 23.8                 | 17.2                 | 21.9                   |      |
|                                  | Environmental     | 20.8              | 22.6                 | 9.4                  | 47.2                   |      |
|                                  | Islamic Extremist | 34.5              | 34.5                 | 15.5                 | 15.5                   |      |

| <b>Table 8: Ideology Longevity Average</b> |                        |                          |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|
|  | <b>Average in Days</b> | <b>Approximate Years</b> |
| Far-Left                                   | 1001.58                | 2.7                      |
| Far-Right                                  | 721.87                 | 2                        |
| Environmental                              | 1452.45                | 4                        |
| Islamic Extremist                          | 513.19                 | 1.4                      |

Terrorism is a male-dominated field, leaving small opportunity for females to participate. Table 7 demonstrates that females may be slightly more likely ( $\chi^2=.074$ ) to survive longer than males. Prior literature has shown that female involvement in a terrorist group is related to the movement (Corley, Smith & Damphousse, 2005; Smith, 2005). Females are very uncommon in the far-right and virtually non-existent in the Islamic extremist movement. The higher percentage of success among females may be related to the ideologies of which they associated. They were strongly related to the far-left, who were active during the Levi Guidelines, which was very beneficial to terrorist groups (Corley, Smith & Damphousse, 2005; Smith, 2005).

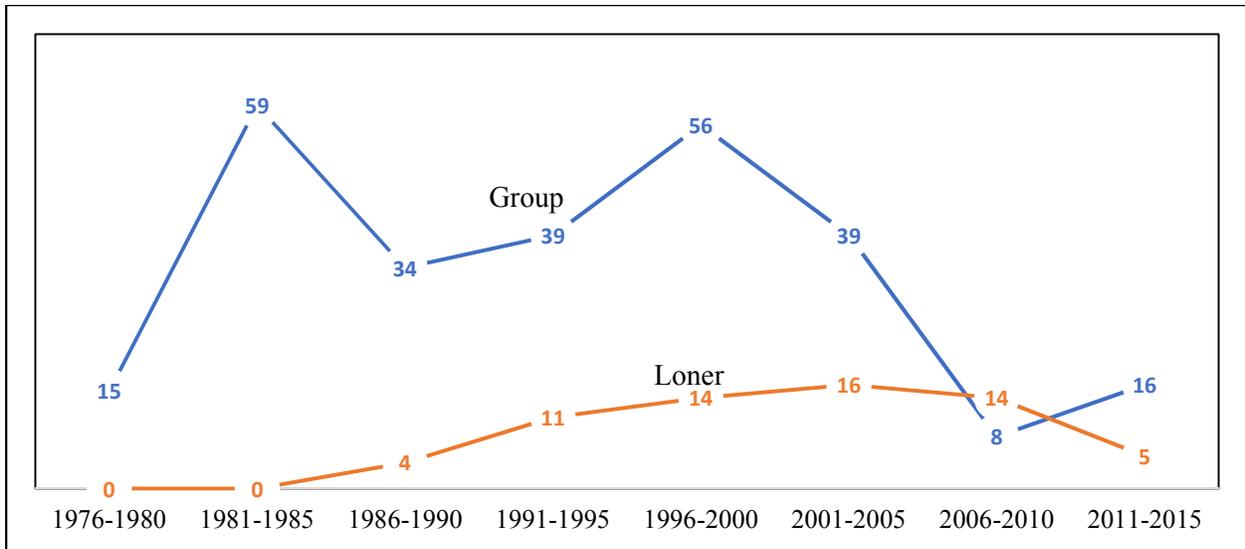
When examining an individual's education, there is a significant relationship ( $\chi^2=.043$ ) between their education and how long they can evade arrest. Table 7 illustrates that the more educated the terrorist, the less likely they are to get caught, which is supportive of hypothesis two. Nearly 44% of individuals with a high school education or less did not survive longer than six months. This relationship with education may also be related to the type of terrorism they choose to participate. Many of the environmentalist and far-leftist in this sample likely became environmentally and politically aware in college. As a result, there would likely be a correlation between ideology and education (Russell & Bowman, 1977; Corley, Smith & Damphousse, 2005; Smith, 2005). Therefore, they are more likely to be associated with having a college education. While this may be true with those two groups, it would not be fair to say that far-right and Islamic extremists had people of significantly lower education.

According to Table 7 which utilizes chi-square, the ideology of an individual has a significant relationship ( $\chi^2=.000$ ) with how long their careers are, supporting hypothesis three. Table 8 shows that environmentalists survived the longest, nearly a year longer than far-left terrorists, against whom they are often compared. Far-right terrorists survive about two years on average, while Islamic extremists last about 1.4 years on average. Table 7 breaks down the relationship further, showing which percentage of the movement lasted how long. Nearly 50% of environmentalists lasted over three years, which explains their high average. Additionally, about 60% of the Islamic extremists in this sample lasted less than one and a half years, explaining their low average.

At the height of the far-left movement, a stereotype of a terrorist began to form. People assumed that most terrorists were young because a majority of the individuals in the far-left were college-aged. Smith and Damphousse (1997) found that the average age of a terrorist is much older than the stereotype suggested. It was unknown whether a certain age had any effect on the longevity of a terrorist. Table 7 indicates that there is no relationship between age and longevity. It is all relatively evenly distributed except for the slight drop in individuals over twenty-six being active longer than three years. There is no relationship elsewhere, so this decline does not indicate much. This table reveals that whether terrorists start their careers in their early twenties or late thirties makes no difference in their ability to survive.

### **Results III: Analysis of Career Activity**

Leaderless resistance has been in the spotlight since Louis Beam called for the movement in 1992, but even more so now that ISIS has successfully utilized similar tactics. It transcends ideologies and has instilled anxiety in the public and law enforcement.



**Figure 2: Number of Loners and Groups Over Time**

Figure 2 shows how many individuals were categorized as loners and group members over time. Terrorist groups have been around much longer than lone wolves as a terrorist tactic. Group is also much larger because it is an individual measurement. There are typically multiple individuals associated with an incident perpetrated by a group, while there is only one person associated with an incident done by a loner. It is notable that the graph has a steep decline in

**Table 9: Career Activity Longevity**

|                                |          | %                 |                         |                         |                        |                  |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
|                                |          | Short<br>(0-6mo.) | Medium<br>(7-18<br>mo.) | Long<br>(1.5-3<br>yrs.) | Very Long<br>(3+ yrs.) | Sig.<br>$\chi^2$ |
| <b>Actor Type</b><br>n=337     | Group    | 29.7              | 24.2                    | 20.1                    | 25                     | .196             |
|                                | Loner    | 37.5              | 28.1                    | 9.4                     | 26                     |                  |
| <b>Average Prep</b><br>n=316   | 1-8      | 28.5              | 22.1                    | 18.3                    | 31.1                   | .018             |
|                                | 9+       | 33.3              | 32.1                    | 21                      | 13.6                   |                  |
| <b>Sophistication</b><br>n=266 | Least    | 26.1              | 19.3                    | 6.8                     | 47.7                   | .000             |
|                                | Moderate | 32.3              | 24.6                    | 27.7                    | 15.4                   |                  |
|                                | Most     | 32.9              | 27.7                    | 20.2                    | 19.1                   |                  |

terrorists involved in groups. At one point, there were more loners than there were group members. Considering the historical saturation of group members, the similar numbers of lone actors is of interest. Figure 2 shows that beginning in 2010, it appears that there has been an increase in the number of individuals in groups, this difference of eleven people may not be evident yet.

The average longevity of an individual in a group is 2.44 years while the average longevity of a loner is 2.1 years. It is difficult to compare the two, because, as Figure 2 shows, there is a vast difference in the number of groups and loners in the dataset. The dataset has 273 individuals in groups and 64 individuals identifying as loners. These trends are likely indicative of how terrorism strategies will continue. Table 9 shows how three different variables influence how long the terrorists last. While it is not significant, it is interesting to note that 45% of group members compared with only 34% of the loners fit into one of the two “long” categories, suggesting that there are some advantages to being a group member.

This analysis of participatory involvement is not supportive of hypothesis four. A potential explanation for this is, groups can distribute preparatory tasks required to complete an attack, whereas loners have to participate in all the preparatory activity on their own. If all the extra activity is linked to one individual, it may draw more attention from law enforcement. The average number of acts one engages in per incident is found to have a significant relationship with longevity.

When descriptive statistics were run, it appeared that once an individual committed, on average, nine or more preparatory acts per incident, their chances of survival decreased. This illustrates that the number of preparatory activities they engage in, is significantly ( $\chi^2=.018$ ) related to their longevity which supports hypothesis five. Only 13.6% of individuals who

committed nine or more acts lasted longer than three years, while 31.1% individuals who committed less than nine acts lasted over three years. Nearly 2/3 of individuals who engaged in nine or more preparatory acts did not last longer than a year and a half. This result may also illustrate how law enforcement handles different threats. They may not consider an individual a threat if they commit only a handful of suspicious activities. Once they pass a certain threshold, law enforcement may have more reason to investigate them. An individual who commits only one or two preparatory acts may not even appear on law enforcement's radar.

Both actor type and the average number of preparatory actions can be related to the sophistication of a plot. The more sophisticated the plot, the more preparatory activities are engaged in, and also the more likely they are to recruit others to help them with their plot. Table 9 shows a significant relationship ( $\chi^2=.000$ ) between sophistication and longevity, which supports hypothesis six. Nearly half of individuals who committed low sophistication attacks lasted over three years. In comparison with moderate and high sophistication, each with less than 20% who lasted longer than three years. It seems as though this has become a trend in terrorism recently. More terrorists are utilizing more simple strategies because they are more likely to yield success and give them a higher probability of survival.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The longevity of groups and individuals are both affected by numerous factors. Individuals are unique because if they are in a group, they can benefit from the success of those around them. If the group is not succeeding, an individual has the option to pursue their goals on their own. This flexibility may be the reason their longevity is about a year longer than terrorist groups. They can survive beyond the life of their group or bypass the interworkings of a group altogether if they so desire. It may be difficult to determine the end of a group if not all members have been caught. With groups like ELF, there is no formal membership, which makes it even more difficult to determine where a group ends and a loner begins.

As hypothesis one predicted, the Attorney General Guidelines have a significant effect on the longevity of individuals. Alternatively, terrorists also affect the AG Guidelines. Ideally, the AG Guidelines would always stay ahead of terrorists, causing them to have to switch tactics; although time has shown that sometimes it is law enforcement who must catch up with the terrorists. This is shown in the implication of the Smith Guidelines, which took the place of the Levi Guidelines.

The Levi Guidelines were very restrictive and allowed for terrorists to act freely. Once the Smith guidelines were enacted, they gave more power to law enforcement. This change in procedure was able to dismantle the massive threat far-left terrorists were posing to society. Terrorists realized they needed to change their strategy when far-right leaders, Beam, Butler, and Miles, were nearly imprisoned for their roles in terrorist organizations. They made the shift to leaderless resistance to avoid arrest. That posed a problem for law enforcement, as they were unable to handle the new threat. To manage it, they issued a new set of guidelines, the Ashcroft

Guidelines. These guidelines were then fine-tuned with the release of the Mukasey Guidelines. The FBI has transitioned from a reactionary agency to a preventative agency. They have more freedom to conduct investigations and stop attacks before they occur (Smith, 2000).

Because the Levi, Smith and Ashcroft guidelines have already closed, we can accurately measure the longevities of those guidelines. Alternatively, because the Mukasey guidelines are still in effect, there may be changes to the longevities in the future based on the cases collected. The time periods of these guidelines are all different; Levi and Ashcroft each lasted six years, Smith lasted eighteen years, and Mukasey has been in effect for ten years as of 2018. The variable used to categorize the AG Guidelines in Figure 1 categorizes the individual's longevity based on the day they engaged in their first preparatory act, not when they were arrested. If an individual engaged in their first act during the first year of the Levi Guidelines, it would be possible for them to have a longevity of forty-one years, in theory. A terrorist engaging in their first preparatory act in the first year of the Mukasey Guidelines would only be able to have a maximum longevity of ten years. While forty-one years is improbable, this highlights that more recent guidelines may not provide as much of an opportunity for extended longevity. The average longevity will likely increase for the individuals active during the Mukasey Guidelines the longer they are in place.

Personal characteristics that may assist individuals are higher education and a higher number of females, while age did not seem to have a relationship with longevity. Both far-left and environmental individuals were known for being indoctrinated into their views during their higher education, and because of the nature of their beliefs, they were more likely to have a diverse gender group than far-right and Islamic extremist groups. Environmental may have set itself apart from the far-left because of the types of attacks they utilized. They were typically

active at night, to not hurt any living thing. They also committed attacks of low sophistication such as spray painting and vandalizing targets, which required minimal preparation.

Although it seems as though a majority of the highly educated individuals were far-left and environmental, there were some highly educated members of the far-right and Islamic extremist movement as well. In their cases, they utilized their education to become leaders, such as Richard Butler, Robert Miles, and Louis Beam. When Beam, Butler, and Miles implemented leaderless resistance, they were able to distance themselves even further from the acts required to fuel the movement. They used their education and intelligence to convince other members to do the work for the benefit of the movement. This demographic supports the expectation of hypothesis two.

The analysis of gender also supports hypothesis two. It suggests that females may be more likely to survive longer in comparison to males. This may be a result of the movements and time periods in which they are active. Females were involved in the environmental movement, which initially was not viewed as a threat. If they began their careers at the beginning of the environmental movement, it is probable that they lasted until law enforcement realized the threat they posed. Females likely have a higher percentage of longer longevity because of the types of terrorism they were involved in, or the period in which they were operating. There would likely be a strong correlation between female longevity and ideological longevity. This correlation would suggest that the advantages females receive are the advantages that come with the ideologies they tend to follow.

Hypothesis two was supported by the relationships of longevity with gender and education, but it was not supported by age. Age was not significantly related to longevity, suggesting that there is no benefit to engaging in terrorism as a younger or older person. This

finding may be unexpected because historically, younger individuals associated with the far-left and environmental and these movements had long average longevities. The ages of the terrorists in this sample were equally distributed across the longevity categories, showing no clear relationship.

Ideologies go in and out of favor with different political climates. Certain demographics are related to specific ideologies. If ideologies fluctuate, demographics of terrorists would be expected to become more or less frequent during a given period. Table 4 shows the demographics of the individuals that were active during each guideline period. The ideologies of these individuals have not been consistent but have changed over time. Out of the ideologies examined, environmental had the longest longevity, but traits associated with it may also drive it. This relationship between longevity and ideology is supportive of hypothesis three, but a majority of the factors being examined in this study may be related to ideology. For example, the guidelines that the ideology was active during or the level of sophistication their incidents fall under. Both of these may be overlapping with ideology.

Even though the difference in loner and group individual's longevity was not supportive of hypothesis four, this may illustrate that the loners are virtually sacrificing themselves for the movement, allowing for higher-ups to survive longer. Groups and individuals realize that it may be easier to evade law enforcement if they act alone with guidance from another movement. There are pros and cons to both being in a group and being a loner. Individuals in a group have the support and knowledge of others to assist them in attacks, but they also have a higher chance for law enforcement contact because of the possibility of infiltration. Loners have the advantage of not being susceptible to infiltration, and if they do not tell anyone of their plans, they may go completely undetected. Typically, however, they do tell someone, which is problematic, along

with not having the knowledge and training that one may gain from being in a group. If groups continue to trend upward as Figure 4 suggests, it would be worth looking into the cause of this unexpected trend. It may be more likely that loners begin to trend upward and level out with the number of individuals in groups.

The number of preparatory activities has a relationship with the individual's longevity, supporting hypothesis five. The higher number of preparatory activities individuals engage in illustrates the concept that higher educated leaders ask others to do the work for them not to be directly involved in any acts. This shows that individuals who are committing most of the preparation for these attacks are less likely to last as long because they are more active. If a leader were to get caught, they would likely be included in the nine or less preparatory acts category, which shows that they would be more likely to last longer.

Sophistication is significantly related to longevity, as hypothesis six predicted. Sophistication is likely related to ideology because is related to the weapons and targets terrorists choose. The type of target individuals goes after will dictate the kind of weapons they need to use. For example, environmentalists' goal of damaging property is less likely to draw attention than killing civilians would. The less sophisticated the act, the longer the individual can survive. This finding is consistent with prior literature stating that sophistication is positively related to the likelihood of success of an incident (Smith, 2016). Based on this analysis the number of successful loners will likely continue to increase in the coming years. Once they notice that individuals who commit less preparatory acts last longer, they will start to pick attacks that require less preparation. If they begin to engage in less sophisticated acts, it is likely that their success will increase. This narrative has already started to come to fruition with the increased use

of cars to kill civilian pedestrians. It is not very sophisticated and does not require much preparation that would draw attention.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This research is exploratory and leads to many other questions that can be analyzed and improved. To start, this is a limited data set that was only gathered from the public domain. This constraint led to some variables being coded more than others because some information was not available, such as their education level. This database defines terrorism based on the FBI's definition, but it may not be perfect, including every terrorist that they have charged. Also, the official FBI definition of terrorism has evolved. Not every individual who would be considered a terrorist today would have been considered a terrorist in the 1980's. This change in definition may skew the consistency of the type of terrorist included in the database. While there is no method of correcting this, it is worth being aware of when analyzing trends. Given these limitations, it is expected that these trends will hold up even with the addition of currently lacking data.

Another limitation is, this data only illustrates the terrorists that have been caught. The addition of terrorism that is unknown to law enforcement that may tell a different story. Individuals who have managed to evade capture would likely influence the results found in this study. This would be a complicated issue to overcome. To include those who were not indicted, researchers would have to make critical decisions on who is included, possibly leading to bias. If this were the case, it might be best to keep consistent definitions of what is included, but also maintain the knowledge of others who may not have been included.

This project examined the difference between individual and group longevity. With this dataset, it appears that being in a group is beneficial for one's longevity, but this finding was not

significant. It seems that there are benefits and downfalls to both being in a group and operating as a loner. As time continues, more loners will become active and will help explain the differences between the two strategies. In addition to re-examining the numbers behind loners and groups, it will also be necessary to update the number of terrorists active during the Mukasey Guidelines. Once a new set of AG Guidelines has been in place for a few years, it will be interesting to see how the average longevity of individuals active during the Mukasey Guidelines compare with guidelines before them.

The trend among the guidelines illustrates that terrorism is declining, but this is just the length that a terrorist is active. Some may prefer to measure the amount of terrorism by how many incidents are committed. If the number of incidents committed follows the same trend of how long terrorists tend to last given the guidelines they are active during, this argument may be plausible. If this were the case, it would only solidify this argument. If this were not true, it would open up the discussion for other possible explanations as to how terrorism is developing in the United States.

Longevity is a complex phenomenon to explain. There are numerous variables that may influence how long a terrorist lasts. This analysis supported five out of the six hypotheses proposed in this project. Longevity has a significant relationship with the Attorney General Guidelines, gender, education, ideology, the amount of preparatory activity for an incident, and the sophistication of an incident. Whether the terrorist was a loner or a member of a group was not significant, and neither was their age. Continued research into these factors will help law enforcement better investigate terrorism to thwart plots before completion.

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